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Miranda Lambert

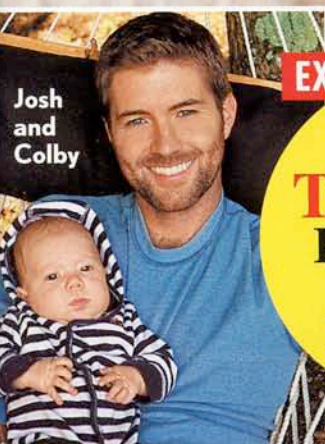
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EXCLUSIVE
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NO REGRETS

Miranda Lambert shares a valuable high school lesson, tells why some lies are *good* things and reveals surprising plans she and Beau Blake Shelton have for the fall.

STORY BY DAVID SCARLETT

Miranda Lambert isn't the kind who'll leave anything she starts unfinished. But there was a time back in her Lindale, Texas, high school days when her passion to get on with her music career almost caused her to do something early in her senior year that she now knows she would have regretted forever—drop out of school.

"My dad was always saying, 'These are the best times of your life,'" recalls Miranda. "And I was like, 'If these are the best times of my life, then I have nothing to look forward to'—'cause I didn't love high school *at all*."

"But I was starting a band and singing in a bar and still goin' to high school. I had already seen what was out there besides my little town. So I was like, 'OK, I've gotta get outta here.'"

But there was definitely a downside to leaving school early.

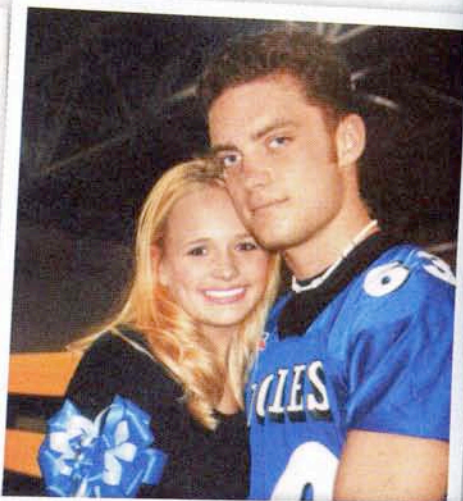
"I'm *so* not a quitter," proclaims Miranda. "But I knew I was goin' into something I was gonna do for the rest of my life, so I felt

like, 'What am I doin' in health class for my senior year? Why am I wastin' this time?'"

"I don't know if I would've dropped out. But my parents didn't want me to . . . which is another reason I *might* have," she laughs, referring to her rebellious attitude toward her folks back then. "I felt trapped. I felt like, 'I've got somethin' to say to the world. I've gotta get outta here. I want to sing, I want to play guitar.'"

Fortunately, Miranda's school had an innovative program





(Clockwise from left) Miranda performing on her Texas Tour junior year; showing off her braces in her younger days; headed for prom freshman year with Josh Johnson; with Casey Rivers at homecoming; and with April Coker, the teacher who founded Operation Graduation.

MIRANDA LAMBERT CONTINUED

called Operation Graduation, founded to give kids at risk of dropping out of school—whether because of financial concerns, a teen pregnancy or simply getting behind in studies for a variety of reasons—a way to graduate sooner. Miranda jumped at the opportunity.

The program was perfect for Miranda, who had already passed her state exit exams and just needed to accomplish the minimum state objectives, while continuing to work on her music at night.

“It was such a good program for me,” she recalls, “I could go at my own pace and graduate in November—so I only went to school for about two months.”

Operation Graduation was founded and run by April Coker, a teacher who has fond memories of Miranda’s time under her supervision. “She’s always

been a sweetheart,” recalls April. “Half of the program was coming to school in the morning, then they would go to work in the afternoon. I would oversee the job part, too. And Miranda’s job was her songwriting.”

“Miss Coker was so helpful,” proclaims Miranda. “[The program] was definitely a great thing and I’m so thankful for it, because I really don’t know if I could’ve made it to the end of my senior year.”

While Miranda says much of her time in high school wasn’t that enjoyable, the hours spent in choir were great—and she has herself and her mom to thank for it.

“I was a cheerleader in eighth and ninth grade,” recalls Miranda. “And my sophomore year, I didn’t make it. I

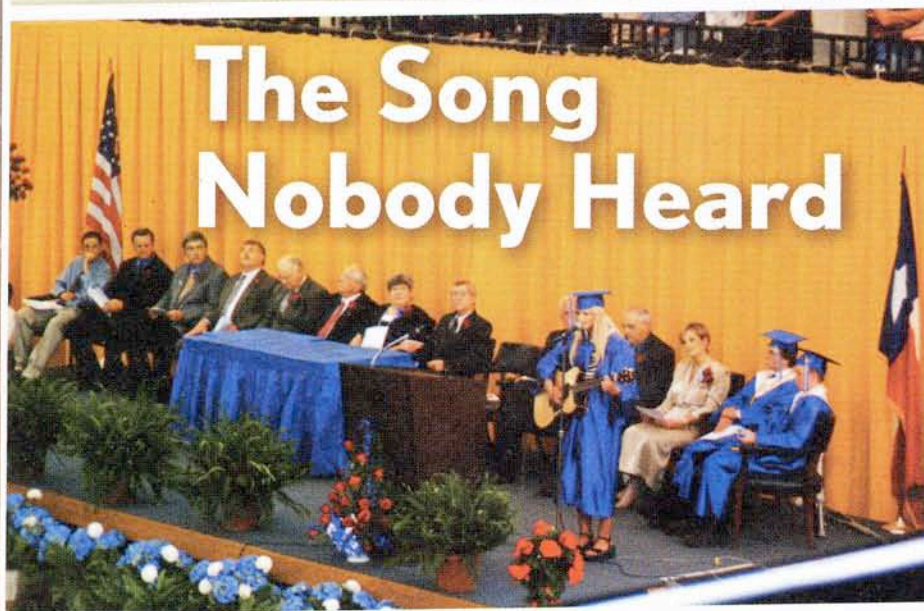
was devastated.

“When we were drivin’ home from the tryouts, my mom said, ‘Miranda, you can sing. I don’t really think a singer like you needs to be out in 40-degree weather screaming for three hours every Friday night. You could be ruining your voice just because you want to be a cheerleader in high school.’

“I thought, ‘That’s a really good way to think about it.’ So I dove into music. Also, I was in the band for a while. I still play saxophone a little. I played it onstage the other day. My bass player, who plays trombone, and I worked up a solo for Wilson Pickett’s ‘Midnight Hour.’ So band did me good!” (Check out Miranda’s sax rehearsal and performance at countryweekly.com/link/miranda_sax.)

“They didn’t have a choir at all in





When Miranda stepped to the microphone at her 2002 high school graduation ceremony with her guitar and began to sing a song she wrote especially for the ceremony, she looked out in the audience, saw her best friend Laci and absolutely lost it. "I started bawling," she recalls. "I couldn't even finish the song. They had to publish the lyrics in the Lindale paper."

So, thanks to an assist from Terry Cannon at the *Lindale News & Times*, here are the lyrics to the song nobody heard. At the end is a note from Miranda that ran in the paper with the lyrics.

I WILL REMEMBER
(For the LHS Class of 2002)

Let's take a little time to go back in our lives
And reminisce about our time together
Remember in the first grade, we thought we were so big
And swore we'd stay best friends forever
Things change . . . everything changes

High school days finally came
We thought we'd never leave this place
I can't believe the time went by so fast
Now we're up here on this stage
We're stepping out to turn life's page
And leaving our old lives in the past
Those memories we've made, they will always last

Chorus: I will remember the times that we shared
And you can think of me when you get scared
We don't know where we're going, or who we're gonna be
But I know we'll never be alone . . . we have these memories
So I will remember you

Dear Class of 2002:
I am extremely honored to have graduated with such special people. Thank you all for making my high school days something I will never forget. I wish you all the best of luck in all your endeavors. I am sorry I wasn't able to sing the song but I want to share my heart with you. See you at our 10 year!

Love,
Miranda

MIRANDA LAMBERT CONTINUED

high school, and I don't play sports. So I was like, 'OK, I'll just be a huge loser and be part of nothing.' There wasn't anything for me.

"I talked to my mom and we went to a school board meeting to talk about getting a choir. They said, 'Kids are not gonna sign up.' And I said, 'Yes they will. I promise they will.'"

"The vote was 'yes'—and 60 kids signed up the first day. They still have a choir now. It was really good for me because that's really where I should've been the whole time. Thank God for choir. My sophomore and junior years, I was really into it."

But the big question is, is it called the Lambert Choir? If not . . . why not?

While Miranda officially graduated in November, her parents convinced her to wear a cap and gown and walk the stage with her classmates at the school's May graduation in 2002. She was even asked to write a special song to perform at the ceremony (see sidebar).

"I'd gone to school with these people from first grade on," declares Miranda. "And I'm really, really glad I [went to graduation] now. Because I did graduate, and I'm glad I got to accept it like everybody else."

The passion for music that was ignited during her school choir and early bar-band days has truly blossomed in Miranda's professional career. Her third and latest record, *Revolution*, out Sept. 29, is the most recent example of how far she's come.

Miranda's performance of the CD's debut single, "Dead Flowers," was a major highlight of this year's ACM Awards in April, and the second release, "White Liar," is receiving great reviews as it, too, climbs the charts.

Miranda jokes that, while she's usually not a fan of lies *at all*, there are occasions when it's not only permissible, but *required*, to tell a fib. "When your girlfriend asks, 'Do I look fat in these jeans?' 'No.' *That's* the answer. No matter what the truth is!" she laughs.

As she talks about the album's 15 tracks, 11 of which she wrote or co-wrote, the pride in Miranda's voice is unmistakable. "[*Revolution*] is describing my life in music. I also feel like it's innovative. When you start to lose the passion and

don't reinvent yourself every album, then there's somethin' missing."

While the record has its share of the rockers Miranda's fans have come to love from her—including "Somewhere Trouble Don't Go" and the excellent "Maintain the Pain," featuring a great guitar lick Miranda's honey Blake Shelton came up with—a true standout tune on *Revolution* is the more subdued "Only Prettier." Simply put, it's hilarious. With lines like *I don't have to be hateful, I can just say bless your heart*, it's the ultimate Southern woman's song.

"I love that one," exclaims Miranda with a laugh. "Bless



It's not a bunch of roses and dinners and movies. It's just the real everyday love."

A gorgeous tune Miranda wrote alone while driving home from the airport, "Makin' Plans," raises the question . . . are she and Blake making any plans?

"Three different times this last week people have asked me if I'm secretly married," she reveals. "I don't think you can be secretly married, 'cause it's probably documented if you get married. So, that's ridiculous.

"Our next plan together is for huntin' season. We're excited about that, 'cause that's our time to spend together starting in October and

"OUR NEXT PLAN TOGETHER IS FOR HUNTIN' SEASON. WE'RE EXCITED ABOUT THAT."

your heart' really *is* sometimes meant as bless your heart." Of course, it can also mean something on the other end of the sweetness spectrum.

The record has image-filled ballads like "The House That Built Me" and "Virginia Bluebell," both of them simply beautiful.

Blake was involved in writing three tunes with Miranda and other co-writers—"Me and Your Cigarettes," "Sin for a Sin" and "Love Song." The latter was co-written with Charles Kelley and Dave Haywood of Lady Antebellum.

The "Love Song" line *I was standin' there cryin' in the kitchen* prompts one to ask, what makes Miranda cry? Does it depend on how much sleep she's gotten? How much stress?

"It's all that, 'cause I'm a woman," chuckles Miranda. "But also, the smallest thoughtful things mean the most to me, as far as romance goes. 'Cause Blake and I aren't the epitome of romantic.

"But he'll just do the smallest thing. To me, somebody knowin' what you like on your sandwich . . . that's real love.

November. Just the two of us huntin' together, sittin' in a deer stand. That's when we spend our best time, because there's no distraction."

And that's the perfect segue to another great tune on the record, "Time to Get a Gun," a song Miranda's fans might be surprised to know she didn't write.

"I actually got a gun three weeks ago," relates Miranda with a chuckle. "I went to Bass Pro and got a .38 Special revolver Ladysmith Airweight. It has the pink grips. I got that and a bikini . . . at the same place.

"So people are like, 'Oh my gosh. This girl *is* a redneck!'"

Maybe so, but Miranda's also one talented artist who is setting the bar higher for herself and others with every album she releases. And she's never forgotten how she got here.

"I think [finishing high school] taught me a lot," she admits. "You can't be a quitter. And it started with my high school, definitely. Buying my farm, being successful and having this great life all comes from that one lesson—don't be a quitter." **CW**

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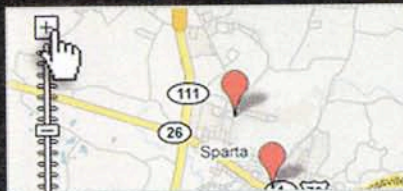
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