

* May 26, 1949. Randall Hank Williams is born in Shreveport, Louisiana. He is the only son of Audrey Williams and country music superstar Hank Williams. His father soon nicknamed him

“Bocephus” after comedian and Grand Ole Opry Star Rod Brasfield’s ventriloquist dummy. Williams would often close radio shows by saying, “Don’t worry, Bocephus, I’m coming home.”

* Jan. 1, 1953. Hank Williams, country music’s “hillbilly Shakespeare,” dies at age 29 in the back seat of a pale blue Cadillac, on the way to play a concert.

* 1955. Audrey Williams begins molding her son into a miniature version of his late father. In a letter to the Hank Williams fan club, the widow addressed her husband in the second person:

“Little Bocephus is a prince of a little guy and every day in every way he looks more like you..... Oh and what a voice he has. One of these days before too long he’ll be singing for you.”

* 1957. Plays first show, as an eight-year-old, on a small stage in Swainsboro, Ga. Soon, he was touring, with half-sister Lycrecia and Opry greats Ernest Tubb and Grandpa Jones.

* 1960. Plays the Grand Ole Opry, singing his father’s hit, “Lovesick Blues,” and drawing an encore.

* 1963. The artist now billed as “Hank Williams, Jr.” signs with MGM Records at a guaranteed \$300,000 a year, and signs with booking agency William Morris for personal appearances.

* Feb. 8, 1964. Releases “Long Gone Lonesome Blues” on MGM. The song, a re-make of his father’s hit, climbs to #5 on the Billboard Country Singles chart.

* 1964. Records the soundtrack Your Cheatin’ Heart, a movie adaptation of his father’s life.

* May 28, 1966. His own composition, “Standing in the Shadows (Of A Very Famous Man) is released. The song addresses the son’s difficulties growing up in the shadow of his father, and it peaks at #5 on the Billboard country chart.

* 1969. Hank, Jr. and Johnny Cash join together for a sold-out show at Detroit’s Cobo Hall, playing the highest-grossing country music show to date. Hank, Jr.’s Songs My Father Left Me becomes his first top-charting country album.

* 1970. Signs the biggest contract in MGM Records history. Notches his first #1 country hit, “All for the Love of Sunshine,” recorded for the movie Kelly’s Heroes, starring Clint Eastwood.

* 1972. Hits #1 again, with “Eleven Roses.”

* Early 1970s. Alcohol and drug issues surface. Hank, Jr. later wrote of this time as “An endless nightmare of bars and shows, of sick mornings and stoned nights and big chunks of time where there are no memories at all. Of Jim Beam and cheery, multi-colored pills, and strange girls with vacant eyes.”

* 1974. An attempted suicide is the nadir for Hank, Jr., who realizes he must find his own direction in music rather than replicate his famous father.

* 1975. Records Hank Williams, Jr. and Friends, an album that signals a shift in intent and execution. The album includes an emotional version of Southern Rock anthem “Can’t You See,” and Williams’ searing “Stoned at the Jukebox” and “Living Proof.” It melds country, blues and Southern Rock and is different from anything Hank, Jr. had ever recorded. After the recording, Hank, Jr. falls off Ajax Mountain in Montana and nearly dies. “Imagine, they tell me, a chart of the human skull with all the bones in the face displayed,” he wrote. “Every single one of those bones was broken - every single one.” His slow recovery involves multiple surgeries and a radical change in his appearance. Enter the heavy beard, and the ever-present (in public) glasses.”

* 1976. Hank Williams, Jr. and Friends is finally released, revealing a different side of the singer than had been heard.

* 1977. The Waylon Jennings/Richie Albright-produced album, The New South, is released. It includes only one Top 40 hit, the autobiographical “Feelin’ Better,” but it is a template for the sound and rambunctious attitude that would characterize his later, platinum-level successes.

* 1979. Hank Williams, Jr.’s autobiography, Living Proof, is published, and it becomes an NBC-TV movie. More important to his music career, he scores two Top 5 country hits with “Family Tradition” and “Whiskey Bent and Hell Bound,” two songs that are now considered country music classics. The year 1979 is a table-setter for the ‘80s, a decade in which Hank, Jr. would rise to the top of the country world. Also in 1979, Hank Jr. released the Whiskey Bent and Hell Bound album, which would become his first million-selling album. From 1979 through 1992, every Hank, Jr. album (there were 17 of them) would go gold (sales of more than 500,000) or platinum (sales of more than 1,000,000).

* 1980. Scores two Top 10 hits, with “Women I’ve Never Had” and “Old Habits.”

* 1981. “Texas Women” becomes Hank, Jr.’s first No. 1 country hit in nine years. It is

followed
by top-charting songs "Dixie On My Mind" and "All My Rowdy Friends (Have Settled Down)."

* 1982. "Honky Tonkin'," a remake of his father's country smash, tops country charts. Hank Jr.'s self-penned "A Country Boy Can Survive" stalls at No. 2 on the charts but becomes a signature hit. Hank Williams, Jr.'s Greatest Hits is released, ultimately selling more than five million albums.

* 1983. "Leave Them Boys Alone," featuring Waylon Jennings and Ernest Tubb on guest vocals, is a Top 10 hit. It was Tubb's final appearance on country charts. Another collaboration with Jennings, "The Conversation," found the two friends reminiscing about Hank, Sr. and his Drifting Cowboys band.

* 1984. Hank, Jr. releases three Top 10 songs, including "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight." The video for "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight" features Porter Wagoner, Mel Tillis, Cheech and Chong, Kris Kristofferson, Merle Kilgore, Little Jimmy Dickens, Grandpa Jones and many others. Hank, Jr.'s Major Moves becomes the first of eight straight Hank, Jr. albums to top the country charts.

* 1985. Wins his first major awards when "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight" is named the Country Music Association and Academy of Country Music best video prize. Duets with the great Ray Charles on Top 20 hit "Two Old Cats Like Us."

* 1986. Hank, Jr.'s version of his father's "Mind Your Own Business," featuring Willie Nelson, Reba McEntire, Tom Petty and Rev. Ike, heads to No. 1. Hank, Jr. also scores with No. 1 hit "Ain't Misbehavin'" and No. 2 hit "Country State of Mind."

* 1987. Named the ACM's Entertainer of the Year. Tops charts with single "Born To Boogie." And "Young Country," a song that includes backing vocal contributions from artists including Marty Stuart, Keith Whitley and Steve Earle, becomes a No. 2 hit. The Platinum-selling Hank Live album, featuring an introduction and lead track from best friend and manager Merle Kilgore, captured the searing, sprawling nature of Hank, Jr.'s concerts.

* 1988. Wins Entertainer of the Year at the CMA and ACM Awards, and Born To Boogie wins the CMA's top album prize. Sings with Johnny Cash on "That Old Wheel."

* 1989. Wins ACM prizes for Entertainer of the Year and Video of the Year ("Young Country"). "There's A Tear In My Beer," Hank, Jr.'s technology-aided collaboration with father Hank Williams, wins CMA Awards for Best Vocal Event and Best Music Video. Hank, Jr. also begins his role as the star of the Monday Night Football intro, singing "All My Rowdy Friends Are Here on Monday Night," a re-write of his hit, "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over

Tonight.”

* 1990. “There’s A Tear In My Beer” wins a Grammy for best country vocal collaboration and also wins the ACM’s best video award and TNN/Music City News trophies for top collaboration and video.

* 1991. “All My Rowdy Friends Are Here on Monday Night” wins an Emmy for best composed theme; it’s first of four straight Emmy awards. Hank, Jr. becomes the first ever country artist to win an Emmy.

* 1992. The Maverick album goes Top 10 on the country charts and attains Gold status.

* 1996. The Three Hanks album finds Hank, Jr. singing with his father and with his son, who records under the name Hank Williams III.

* 2000. The Bocephus Box collection features highlights from a career that has included 10 No. 1 singles, 13 No. 1 albums, 20 gold albums and six platinum albums.

* 2002. The Almeria Club Recordings becomes Hank, Jr.’s first Top 10 album in a decade, on the strength of performances that critics regarded as some of the best of his career.

* 2003. Places No. 20 on CMT’s list of country music’s 40 greatest men.

* 2005. Hank, Jr.’s best friend and manager, Nashville Songwriters Hall of Famer Merle Kilgore, dies. Hank, Jr. is devastated by the loss and stays out of the public eye for much of the year.

* 2006. At the CMT Music Awards, Hank, Jr. wins the Johnny Cash Visionary Award, in celebration of his groundbreaking career.

* 2007. Named the Tennessean of the Year by the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame.

* 2008. Honored as a BMI Icon at the 56th annual BMI Country Awards, for his “unique and indelible influence on generations of music makers.”

* 2009. 127 Rose Avenue is a Top 10 country album.

* 2011. Hank, Jr. ends his 22-year-association with Monday Night Football, after ABC officials are critical of comments he made on the Fox & Friends television show.