

# SILLY SEASON

By Michael J. Carroll



**T**he Brits have a notion of the “silly season;” a time, usually in summer, when news stories that are not really news or stories appear in the media because there is little else to report. Sometimes the silly season can flow beyond the news into everyday life.

Silly season for my family and friends involved the singer Tom Jones, a hearty guy who has been belting out songs from the mid-1960s through the present. You might fairly question what Tom Jones has to do with silly season or anything else for that matter. It started when one of our number announced that he was attending the Midwest reunion of the Jones branch of his family. I never knew he had Jones’s in the family tree but did not demand to see a genogram or contact the Mormon genealogists for fact checking. We paused from our summer meal and summer drinks when he mentioned that the organizer of the reunion was---Tom Jones.

I blame myself, as well as the food, the friends, the drink and the sun. Before I could reflect and stop I found myself holding my clenched fist to my mouth as an imagined microphone and heard my own familiar if distant voice belting out the opening of Jones’s first big hit:

“It’s not unusual to be loved by anyone...”

I am afraid it was all down hill from there.

One or two others ignored the groans and the derisive laughter and joined in with additional approximated lines, half-remembered.

“It’s not unusual to see me cry... I wanna’ die...”

A few more skipped to the bang up finish. Everyone knew the words:

“...whoa-oh-oh-oh-oh...”

We are not usually like that. Honestly. Or at least I do not think so. Blame it on the silly season.

Tom Jones has been around for a while. He was born in Wales in 1940, the son of a coal miner. Those Welsh miners you might remember were famous for their singing on the way to

the pits. I suppose singing may be all they have now after Maggie Thatcher closed the collieries and made them all, as the Brits are fond of saying, “redundant.”

Jones spent a year in bed as a kid recovering from Tuberculosis. He married at 16 and stayed married to the same woman with probably hundreds of detours and dalliances over the decades. At 75 he may now be a paragon of fidelity.

Jones exploded on the world in the 1960s----a pretty explosive time.

He has sung and recorded in most every style from rock, to soul to blues, to country. He was good friends with Elvis until the “King’s” demise.

I have images of Tom Jones belting out his “Unusual” song over the decades, sometimes in a tuxedo, sometimes in a fancy glittering Las Vegas body suit, occasionally in a Neru/Mao jacket.

He and his music may be timeless if the word can be applied to someone who never seemed completely in and never completely out of style.

After his initial mid-1960s entry splash, Tom went on to sing for James Bond films (What’s New Pussy Cat... whoa a whoa a whoa... Thunderball... whoa a whoa...). He even walked onto a show my children watched as kids, “Fresh Prince of Bel-Air.”

Tom Jones became “Sir Tom Jones” and entertained the British Royal Family at their charity fundraisers. He outdid all the aging rockers with a voice that was still going strong. The Royals and the thousands in the crowd swayed to the refrain of his hit “Why, why, why, Delilah?”, managing to ignore the very politically incorrect if not downright misogynist lyrics that told the tale of a jealous man who killed his lover because she slept with another.

There were years when he recorded little and cashed in for millions doing Las Vegas shows. But he always came back.

I saw him once on a New Year’s Eve “Dame Edna” television show. The Dame is a hilarious cross-dressing character created by Barry Humphries, an Australian comedian, known for her wild tinted hair, cat’s eye glasses, and outrageous comical questions put to hapless guests. She was not quite buying Tom’s story that his nose job surgery was due to damage from fistfights in his youth. “If that’s your story, sweetie...”

So silly the season just might be, but I suppose that in the end:

It’s not unusual...“...whoa-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh...”

## Epilogue:

I eagerly awaited the return of my brother-in-law from his Jones reunion foray. I waited a decent interval before questioning him while he unpacked his luggage including the t-Shirt, that proclaimed, “I’m from Milwaukee and that’s not funny.” I could finally wait no longer and asked him point blank if Tom Jones had appeared.

Yes, he responded. There was a Tom Jones. But he was not a singer. He was a lawyer. ■

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*Michael J. Carroll (mcarroll@clsphila.org), a public interest attorney, is a member of the Editorial Board of The Philadelphia Lawyer.*