

**This interview with
BILL ANDERSON
was conducted by the Library of Congress
on June 4, 2021**



Library of Congress: You, quite famously, discovered Connie Smith. When you first heard that voice, what struck you the most about it?

Bill Anderson: I couldn't believe such a big voice could be coming out of such a petite lady. In fact, at first, I actually thought she was lip syncing to someone else's record.

LOC: The actual writing of "Once A Day": Do you remember the inspiration for this song? How quickly was it written? Do you remember any other particulars: Where? When?

BA: It was in the summer of 1963. I don't recall any particular inspiration, but I vividly remember writing the chorus and the first verse in my car while stopped at a four-way stop sign in the Nashville suburbs. I didn't have a guitar, but I heard the melody in my head and I tapped out the rhythm on the dashboard. I scribbled the words onto my ever-present writing pad and finished the song when I got home.

LOC: Following up on the above question: as a songwriter, where and when are you most productive or inspired? Day? Night? At home? On the road?

BA: The classic answer here would be that I am most inspired to write when I am hungry...but I'll refrain from going there. I really don't have any set pattern. I've written successful songs at 10 a.m. and at three a.m. I can't control when or where an idea might pop into my head, so I try and stay flexible. I will say that I rarely write a complete song on the road. There are too many distractions out there. I'll mostly jot ideas down when I'm traveling then leave the "crafting" for a later time when I can be by myself and truly concentrate.

LOC: What does it take to be a good songwriter?

BA: Having a touch of insanity might be a good place to start. Seriously, there are so many elements involved that I couldn't possibly list them all here. However, if you asked me to give you one attribute that a songwriter...and particularly a country songwriter... should have I would say, "empathy." The ability to put yourself into the listener's place...to feel what he or she feels...is ultra-important, particularly in country music where the lyrics are so important in painting the picture. Obviously, I haven't lived every song I have written, but in most cases I

know somebody or know *of* somebody who has. And I've been fortunate enough to be able to identify with so many of those people. The ultimate compliment I can be paid is for a listener to say, "You must have written that song just for me because that's exactly the way I feel." That's when I know I've hit the jackpot.

LOC: Of all the songs in the world, if there was one song that you wish you had written?

BA: "Happy Birthday To You." Do you have any idea how many times that song has been performed? If I had written it, we'd be having this conversation on my 200-foot yacht cruising the Caribbean!

LOC: "Once A Day" was a massive hit and established Connie Smith as a country star. Why do you think the song hit such a chord at that time?

BA: The stars were all aligned. She was a great, new, fresh voice who didn't sound like any other singer at the time...the instrumentation on the record sounded different from any of the other records that were out on the market...and the song was one the listener could hear a couple of times and go around humming it, whistling it, or singing it. And the little catch phrase, "*Once a day...every day...all day long,*" was easy to remember. I wish the stars would align like that every time I tried to write a song. It was truly the perfect storm.