

REBA MCENTIRE TELLS TOY BOX

“What Motherhood Means To Me”

She is the *Queen of Country Music*, selling an astounding 38 million records in a career that has so far spanned over 35 years. But don't call Reba McEntire a one-trick pony either. Her sitcom *“Reba”* ended a six-year run last season. She has starred in films like *“Tremors”* with Kevin Bacon and *“One Night At McCools”* with Matt Dillon and she's even had a run on Broadway in *“Annie Get Your Gun.”* And the multitasking performer shows no sign of slowing down. Her new CD released earlier this year called *Reba Duets* - where she teams up with Kelly Clarkson among others - marks Reba McEntire's 31st studio album.

But above all the glamour of show business, she says her most important job is being a wife to her manager husband Narvel Blackstock and mom to her 17-year-old son Shelby, she tells *Toy Box*.

BY LISA ARCELLA

Toy Box: How many children are in your life?

RM: I have one child and 3 stepchildren and 5 step grandchildren. I have always thought that you teach and preach by example. For example, we really try to stay fit and active and if they get inspired by something their dad and I are doing that's really great. Shelby is very health conscious. He has rock solid abs and works out quite a bit...

TB: Do you have particular holiday traditions you have set up? That's always a tough time to eat right with kids.

RM: That's true. They are always hard for me because I go back to Oklahoma where I'm from and to Texas where my husband's family lives. Unfortunately, there is sugar diabetes in both families. People are really cutting back and watching what they are eating, especially with the sweets. I limit my portions. Banana pudding is my favorite and pumpkin pie. Mama always makes sure I have pumpkin pie and my mother in law, Gloria Blackstock, is a terrific cook. So there is always stuff there that's low sugar and healthy foods.

TB: How have you taught Shelby to stay emotionally healthy?

RM: I am 52 years old and I do not let stress get to me any more. When I feel it coming on I just rebuke it and tell it to get away from me. It can't be all that it's cracked up to be. You can't sweat the little stuff - that's what will kill you.

Of course when you have serious problems, then you have to deal with them. I am talking about silly stuff. Like what dress am I going to wear to the CMA awards. I used to stress about that so much, but now I don't. It will get done. I think when I was the

most stressed out was when I had problems that I couldn't control and it ticked me off that I couldn't control it... but when I realized that there's nothing you can do about it anyway, you just go through with it and get on with life. There are people who have children in hospitals. Your problems are not that big or important.

TB: When did you have that epiphany?

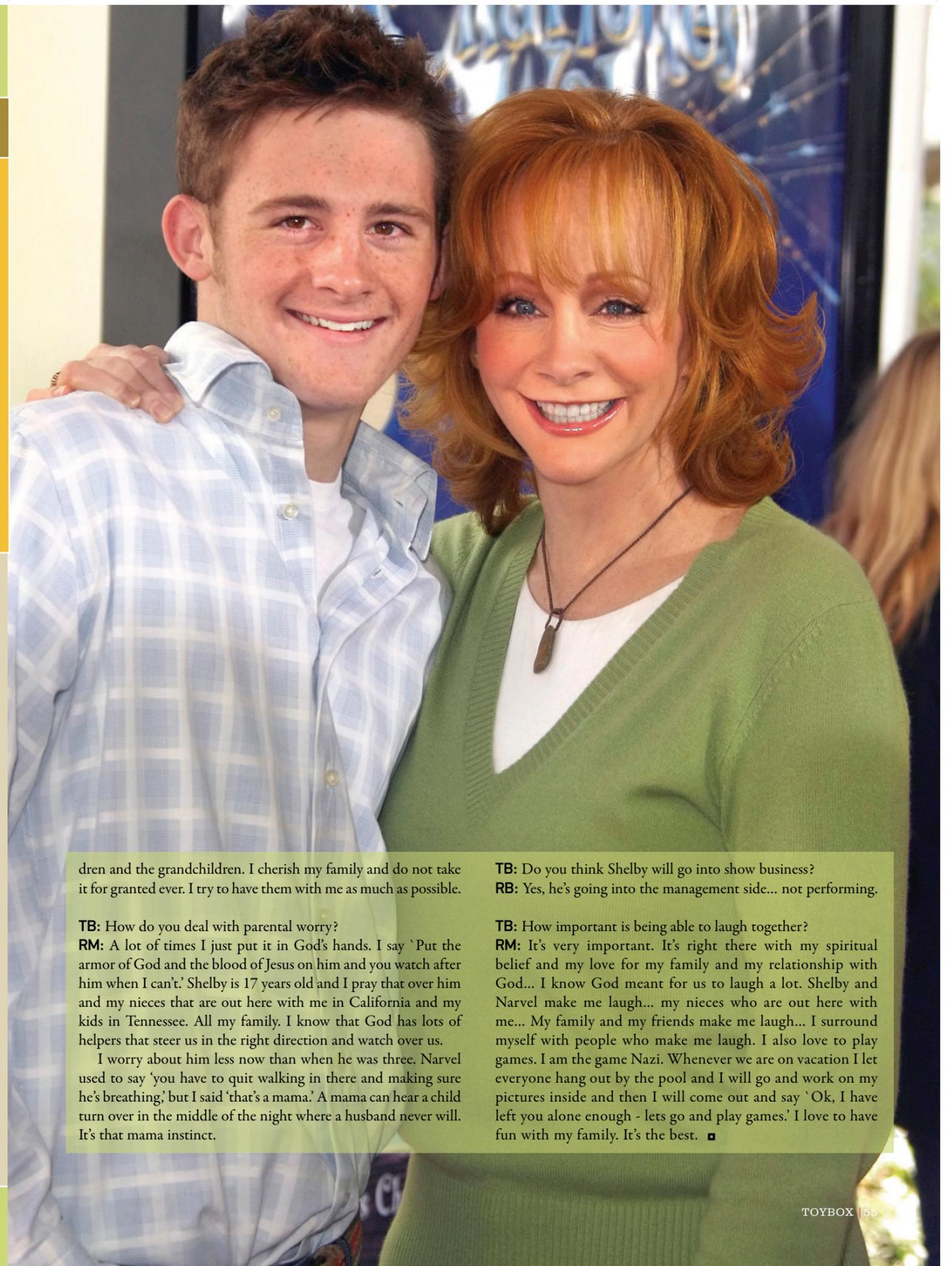
RM: I just think it comes with maturity. It started probably when my oldest sister Alice had her youngest daughter Hallie, who is a chromosome 18 baby. She's handicapped and never walked and never will. She is 21 years old and so I think, 'Wow, here I am stressing out about what to wear somewhere or how I am going to deal with this small problem and Alice has a child who will never walk.' But Hallie has brought so much into our lives. She made us realize that you don't have to be perfect to be loved... that you can contribute something to everyone else's lives just because you are here on earth - and she has with us.

TB: Are you a spiritual person?

RM: Very much, just not with a particular religion. My religion is with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ who died on the cross for me and he is there for me any time of day and night. I know he's always on my side and asking me 'What do you want me to do now?'

TB: Do you think motherhood grounded you?

RM: Yes. Very much so. There is nothing greater in this world than having a child. That is the greatest thing. I cherish the chil-



dren and the grandchildren. I cherish my family and do not take it for granted ever. I try to have them with me as much as possible.

TB: How do you deal with parental worry?

RM: A lot of times I just put it in God's hands. I say 'Put the armor of God and the blood of Jesus on him and you watch after him when I can't.' Shelby is 17 years old and I pray that over him and my nieces that are out here with me in California and my kids in Tennessee. All my family. I know that God has lots of helpers that steer us in the right direction and watch over us.

I worry about him less now than when he was three. Narvel used to say 'you have to quit walking in there and making sure he's breathing,' but I said 'that's a mama.' A mama can hear a child turn over in the middle of the night where a husband never will. It's that mama instinct.

TB: Do you think Shelby will go into show business?

RB: Yes, he's going into the management side... not performing.

TB: How important is being able to laugh together?

RM: It's very important. It's right there with my spiritual belief and my love for my family and my relationship with God... I know God meant for us to laugh a lot. Shelby and Narvel make me laugh... my nieces who are out here with me... My family and my friends make me laugh... I surround myself with people who make me laugh. I also love to play games. I am the game Nazi. Whenever we are on vacation I let everyone hang out by the pool and I will go and work on my pictures inside and then I will come out and say 'Ok, I have left you alone enough - lets go and play games.' I love to have fun with my family. It's the best. ■