

= Willie Nelson =

Willie Hugh Nelson (born April 29 , 1933) is an American musician , singer , songwriter , author , poet , actor , and activist . The critical success of the album Shotgun Willie (1973) , combined with the critical and commercial success of Red Headed Stranger (1975) and Stardust (1978) , made Nelson one of the most recognized artists in country music . He was one of the main figures of outlaw country , a subgenre of country music that developed in the late 1960s as a reaction to the conservative restrictions of the Nashville sound . Nelson has acted in over 30 films , co-authored several books , and has been involved in activism for the use of biofuels and the legalization of marijuana .

Born during the Great Depression , and raised by his grandparents , Nelson wrote his first song at age seven and joined his first band at ten . During high school , he toured locally with the Bohemian Polka as their lead singer and guitar player . After graduating from high school in 1950 , he joined the Air Force but was later discharged due to back problems . After his return , Nelson attended Baylor University for two years but dropped out because he was succeeding in music . During this time , he worked as a disc jockey in Texas radio stations and a singer in Honky-tonks . Nelson moved to Vancouver , Washington , where he wrote " Family Bible " and recorded the song " Lumberjack " in 1956 . In 1958 , he moved to Houston , Texas after signing a contract with D Records . He sang at the Esquire Ballroom weekly and he worked as a disk jockey . During that time , he wrote songs that would become country standards , including " Funny How Time Slips Away " , " Hello Walls " , " Pretty Paper " , and " Crazy " . In 1960 he moved to Nashville , Tennessee , and later signed a publishing contract with Pamper Music which allowed him to join Ray Price 's band as a bassist . In 1962 , he recorded his first album , ... And Then I Wrote . Due to this success , Nelson signed in 1964 with RCA Victor and joined the Grand Ole Opry the following year . After mid-chart hits in the late 1960s and the early 1970s , Nelson retired in 1972 and moved to Austin , Texas . The ongoing music scene of Austin motivated Nelson to return from retirement , performing frequently at the Armadillo World Headquarters .

In 1973 , after signing with Atlantic Records , Nelson turned to outlaw country , including albums such as Shotgun Willie and Phases and Stages . In 1975 , he switched to Columbia Records , where he recorded the critically acclaimed album , Red Headed Stranger . The same year , he recorded another outlaw country album , Wanted ! The Outlaws , along with Waylon Jennings , Jessi Colter , and Tompall Glaser . During the mid-1980s , while creating hit albums like Honeysuckle Rose and recording hit songs like " On the Road Again " , " To All the Girls I 've Loved Before " , and " Pancho and Lefty " , he joined the country supergroup The Highwaymen , along with fellow singers Johnny Cash , Waylon Jennings , and Kris Kristofferson .

In 1990 , Nelson 's assets were seized by the Internal Revenue Service , which claimed that he owed US \$ 32 million . The difficulty of paying his outstanding debt was aggravated by weak investments he had made during the 1980s . In 1992 , Nelson released The IRS Tapes : Who 'll Buy My Memories ? , the profits of the double album , destined to the IRS , and the auction of Nelson 's assets cleared his debt . During the 1990s and 2000s , Nelson continued touring extensively , and released albums every year . Reviews ranged from positive to mixed . He explored genres such as reggae , blues , jazz , and folk . Nelson made his first movie appearance in the 1979 film The Electric Horseman , followed by other appearances in movies and on television . Nelson is a major liberal activist and the co-chair of the advisory board of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws , which is in favor of marijuana legalization . On the environmental front , Nelson owns the bio-diesel brand Willie Nelson Biodiesel , which is made from vegetable oil . Nelson is also the honorary chairman of the Advisory Board of the Texas Music Project , the official music charity of the state of Texas .

= = Early life = =

Willie Nelson was born in Abbott , Texas on April 29 , 1933 , during the Great Depression , to Myrle Marie (née Greenhaw) and Ira Doyle Nelson . He was born on April 29 , but his birth was recorded

by doctor F. D. Sims on April 30 . He was named Willie by his cousin Mildred , who also chose Hugh as his middle name , in honor of her recently deceased younger brother . Nelson 's ancestry includes Cherokee , English , and Irish . His parents moved from Arkansas in 1929 , to look for work . Nelson 's grandfather , William , worked as a blacksmith , while his father worked as a mechanic .

His mother left soon after he was born , and his father remarried and also moved away , leaving Willie and his sister Bobbie to be raised by their grandparents . The Nelsons , who taught singing back in Arkansas , started their grandchildren in music . Nelson 's grandfather bought him a guitar when he was six , and taught him a few chords , and with his sister Bobbie , he sang gospel songs in the local church . He wrote his first song at age seven , and when he was nine , played guitar for the local band Bohemian Polka . During the summer , the family picked cotton along with other citizens of Abbott . Nelson disliked picking cotton , so he earned money by singing in dance halls , taverns , and honky tonks from age 13 , and continuing through high school . Nelson 's musical influences were Hank Williams , Bob Wills , Lefty Frizzell , Ray Price , Ernest Tubb , Hank Snow , Django Reinhardt , Frank Sinatra and Louis Armstrong .

Nelson attended Abbott High School , where he was a halfback on the football team , guard on the basketball team and shortstop in baseball . He also raised pigs for the Future Farmers of America organization . While still at school he sang and played guitar in The Texans , a band formed by his sister 's husband , Bud Fletcher . The band played in honky tonks , and also had a Sunday morning spot at KHBR in Hillsboro , Texas . Meanwhile , Nelson had a short stint as a relief phone operator in Abbott , followed by a job as a tree trimmer for the local electrical company , as well as pawn shop employee . After leaving school , in 1950 , he joined the United States Air Force for eight to nine months .

Upon his return , in 1952 , he married Martha Matthews , and from 1954 to 1956 studied agriculture at Baylor University . Nelson joined the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity , but dropped out to pursue a career in music . He worked as a bouncer for a nightclub , as a partsman in an autohouse , saddle maker , tree trimmer again and as an oilfield worker . He later joined Johnny Bush 's band . Nelson moved with his family to Pleasanton , Texas , where he auditioned for a disc jockey job in KBOP . The owner of the station , Dr. Ben Parker , gave Nelson the job despite his lack of experience working on radio . With the equipment of the station , Nelson made his first two recordings in 1955 : " The Storm Has Just Begun " and " When I 've Sung My Last Hillbilly Song " . He recorded the tracks on used tapes , and sent the demos to the local label SARG Records . SARG rejected the recordings .

Nelson then had stints working for KDNT in Denton , Texas , KCUL and KCNC in Fort Worth , Texas , where he hosted The Western Express , taught Sunday school and he played in nightclubs . He then decided to move to San Diego . He was unable to find a job , and decided to go to Portland , Oregon , where his mother lived . Nelson tried to hitchhike , but after nobody picked him up , he slept in a ditch . He then found a nearby railroad yard and boarded a freight train that left him in Eugene . A truck driver then drove Nelson to a bus station and loaned him US \$ 10 for a ticket to reach Portland .

= = Music career = =

= = = Beginnings (1956 ? 1971) = = =

Nelson was hired by KVAN in Vancouver , Washington and appeared frequently on a television show . He made his first record in 1956 , " No Place For Me " , that included Leon Payne 's " Lumberjack " on the B @-@ side . The recording failed . Nelson continued working as a radio announcer and singing in Vancouver clubs . He made several appearances in a Colorado nightclub , later moving to Springfield , Missouri . After failing to land a spot on the Ozark Jubilee , he started to work as a dishwasher . Unhappy with his job , he moved back to Texas . After a short time in Waco , he settled in Fort Worth , and quit the music business for a year . He sold bibles and vacuum cleaners door @-@ to @-@ door , and eventually became a sales manager for the Encyclopedia

Americana .

After his son Billy was born in 1958 , the family moved to Houston , Texas . On the way , Nelson stopped by the Esquire Ballroom to sell his original songs to house band singer Larry Butler . Butler refused to purchase the song " Mr. Record Man " for US \$ 10 , instead giving Nelson a US \$ 50 loan to rent an apartment and a six @-@ night job singing in the club . Nelson rented the apartment near Houston in Pasadena , Texas , where he also worked at the radio station as the sign @-@ on disc jockey . During this time , he recorded two singles for Pappy Daily on D Records " Man With the Blues " / " The Storm Has Just Begun " and " What a Way to Live " / " Misery Mansion " . Nelson then was hired by guitar instructor Paul Buskirk to work as an instructor in his school . He sold " Family Bible " to Buskirk for US \$ 50 and " Night Life " for US \$ 150 . " Family Bible " turned into a hit for Claude Gray in 1960 .

Nelson moved to Nashville , Tennessee in 1960 , but was unable to find a label to sign him . During this period he often spent time at Tootsie 's Orchid Lounge , a bar near the Grand Ole Opry frequented by the show 's stars and other singers and songwriters . There Nelson met Hank Cochran , a songwriter who worked for the publishing company Pamper Music , owned by Ray Price and Hal Smith . Cochran heard Nelson during a jam session with Buddy Emmons and Jimmy Day . Cochran had just earned a raise of US \$ 50 a week , but convinced Smith to pay Nelson the money instead to sign him to Pamper Music . On hearing Nelson sing " Hello Walls " at Tootsie 's , Faron Young decided to record it . After Ray Price recorded Nelson 's " Night Life " , and his previous bassist Johnny Paycheck quit , Nelson joined Price 's touring band as a bass player . While playing with Price and the Cherokee Cowboys , his songs became hits for other artists , including " Funny How Time Slips Away " (Billy Walker) , " Pretty Paper " (Roy Orbison) , and , most famously , " Crazy " by Patsy Cline . Nelson and Cochran also met Cline 's husband , Charlie Dick at Tootsie 's . Dick liked a song of Nelson 's he heard on the bar 's jukebox . Nelson played him a demo tape of " Crazy . " Later that night Dick played the tape for Cline , who decided to record it . " Crazy " became the biggest jukebox hit of all time .

Nelson signed with Liberty Records and was recording by August 1961 at Quonset Hut Studio . His first two successful singles as an artist were released by the next year , including " Willingly " (a duet with his soon @-@ to @-@ be second wife , Shirley Collie , which became his first charting single and first Top Ten at No. 10) and " Touch Me " (his second Top Ten , stalling at No. 7) . Nelson 's tenure at Liberty yielded his first album entitled ... And Then I Wrote , released in September 1962 . In 1963 Collie and Nelson were married in Las Vegas . He then worked on the west coast offices of Pamper Records , in Pico Rivera , California . Since the job did not allow him the time to play music of his own , he left it and bought a ranch in Ridgetop , Tennessee , outside of Nashville . Fred Foster of Monument Records signed Nelson in early 1964 , but only one single was released : " I Never Cared For You " .

By the fall of 1964 , Nelson had moved to RCA Victor at the behest of Chet Atkins , signing a contract for US \$ 10 @,@ 000 per year . Country Willie ? His Own Songs became Nelson 's first RCA Victor album , recorded in April 1965 . That same year he joined the Grand Ole Opry , and he met and became friends with Waylon Jennings after watching one of his shows in Phoenix , Arizona . In 1967 , he formed his backing band " The Record Men " , featuring Johnny Bush , Jimmy Day , Paul English and David Zettner . During his first few years on RCA Victor , Nelson had no significant hits , but from November 1966 through March 1969 , his singles reached the Top 25 in a consistent manner . " One in a Row " (# 19 , 1966) , " The Party 's Over " (# 24 during a 16 @-@ week chart run in 1967) , and his cover of Morecambe & Wise 's " Bring Me Sunshine " (# 13 , March 1969) were Nelson 's best @-@ selling records during his time with RCA .

By 1970 , most of his songwriting royalties were invested in tours that did not produce significant profits . In addition to the problems in his career , Nelson divorced Shirley Collie in 1970 . In December , his ranch in Ridgetop , Tennessee burned down . He interpreted the incident as a signal for a change . He moved to a ranch near Bandera , Texas , and married Connie Koepke . In early 1971 his single " I 'm a Memory " reached the top 30 . After recording his final RCA single ? " Mountain Dew " (backed with " Phases , Stages , Circles , Cycles and Scenes ") in late April 1972 , RCA requested that Nelson renew his contract ahead of schedule , with the implication that RCA

would not release his latest recordings if he did not . Due to the failure of his albums , and particularly frustrated by the reception of Yesterday 's Wine , although his contract was not over , Nelson decided to retire from music .

= = = Outlaw country and success (1972 ? 1989) = = =

Nelson moved to Austin , Texas , where the burgeoning hippie music scene (see Armadillo World Headquarters) rejuvenated the singer . His popularity in Austin soared as he played his own brand of country music marked by country , folk and jazz influences . In March , he performed on the final day of the Dripping Springs Reunion , a three @-@ day country music festival aimed by its producers to be an annual event . Despite the failure to reach the expected attendance , the concept of the festival inspired Nelson to create the Fourth of July Picnic , his own annual event , starting the following year .

Nelson decided to return to the recording business , he signed Neil Reshen as his manager to negotiate with RCA , who got the label to agree to end his contract upon repayment of US \$ 14 @,@ 000 . Reshen eventually signed Nelson to Atlantic Records for US \$ 25 @,@ 000 per year , where he became the label 's first country artist . He formed his backing band , The Family , and by February 1973 , he was recording his acclaimed Shotgun Willie at Atlantic Studios in New York City .

Shotgun Willie , released in May 1973 , earned excellent reviews but did not sell well . The album led Nelson to a new style , later stating that Shotgun Willie had " cleared his throat " . His next release , Phases and Stages , released in 1974 , was a concept album about a couple 's divorce , inspired by his own experience . Side one of the record is from the viewpoint of the woman , and side two is from the viewpoint of the man . The album included the hit single " Bloody Mary Morning . " The same year , he produced and starred in the pilot episode of PBS ' Austin City Limits .

Nelson then moved to Columbia Records , where he signed a contract that gave him complete creative control , made possible by the critical and commercial success of his previous albums . The result was the critically acclaimed , and massively popular 1975 concept album Red Headed Stranger . Although Columbia was reluctant to release an album with primarily a guitar and piano for accompaniment , Nelson and Waylon Jennings insisted . The album included a cover of Fred Rose 's 1945 song " Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain " , that had been released as a single previous to the album , and became Nelson 's first number one hit as a singer . Throughout his 1975 tour , Nelson raised funds for PBS @-@ affiliated stations across the south promoting Austin City Limits . The pilot was aired first on those stations , later being released nationwide . The positive reception of the show prompted PBS to order ten episodes for 1976 , formally launching the show .

As Jennings was also achieving success in country music in the early 1970s , the pair were combined into a genre called outlaw country , since it did not conform to Nashville standards . The album Wanted ! The Outlaws in 1976 with Jessi Colter and Tompall Glaser cemented the pair 's outlaw image and became country music 's first platinum album . Later that year Nelson released The Sound in Your Mind (certified gold in 1978 and platinum in 2001) and his first gospel album Troublemaker (certified gold in 1986) .

In the summer of 1977 , Nelson discovered that Reshen had been filing tax extensions and not paying the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) since he took over as his manager . In June , a package containing cocaine was sent from Reshen 's office in New York to Jennings in Nashville . The package was followed by the DEA , and Jennings was arrested . The charges were later dropped , since Reshen 's assistant , Mark Rothbaum stepped in and took the charges . Rothbaum was sentenced to serve time in jail . Impressed by his attitude , Nelson fired Reshen and hired Rothbaum as his manager . In 1978 , Nelson released two more platinum albums . One , Waylon & Willie , was a collaboration with Jennings that included " Mamas Don 't Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys " , a hit single written and performed by Ed Bruce . Though observers predicted that Stardust would ruin his career , it went platinum the same year . Nelson continued to top the charts with hit songs during the late 1970s , including " Good Hearted Woman " , " Remember Me " , " If You 've Got the Money I 've Got the Time " , and " Uncloudy Day " .

During the 1980s , Nelson recorded a series of hit singles including " Midnight Rider " , a 1980 cover of the Allman Brothers song which Nelson recorded for The Electric Horseman , the soundtrack " On the Road Again " from the movie Honeysuckle Rose , and a duet with Julio Iglesias titled " To All the Girls I 've Loved Before " .

In 1982 , Pancho & Lefty , a duet album with Merle Haggard produced by Chips Moman was released . During the recording sessions of Pancho and Lefty , session guitarist Johnny Christopher and co @-@ writer of " Always on My Mind " , tried to pitch the song to an uninterested Haggard . Nelson , who was unaware of Elvis Presley 's version of the song asked him to record it . Produced by Moman , the single of the song was released , as well as the album of the same name . The single topped Billboard 's Hot Country Singles , while it reached number five on the Billboard Hot 100 . The release won three awards during the 25th Annual Grammy Awards : Song of the Year , Best Country Song and Best Male Country Vocal Performance . The single was certified platinum ; while the album was certified quadruple @-@ platinum , and later inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2008 .

Meanwhile , two collaborations with Waylon Jennings were released ; WWII in 1982 , and Take it to the Limit , another collaboration with Waylon Jennings was released in 1983 . In the mid @-@ 1980s , Nelson , Jennings , Kristofferson , and Johnny Cash formed The Highwaymen , who achieved platinum record sales and toured the world . Meanwhile , he became more involved with charity work , such as singing on We are the World in 1984 . In 1985 , Nelson had another success with Half Nelson , a compilation album of duets with a range of artists such as Ray Charles and Neil Young . In 1980 , Nelson performed on the south lawn of the White House . The concert of September 13 featured First Lady Rosalynn Carter and Nelson in a duet of Ray Wylie Hubbard 's " Up Against the Wall Redneck Mother " . Nelson frequently visited the White House , where according to the biography by Joe Nick Patoski , Willie Nelson : An Epic Life , he smoked marijuana on the White House roof .

= = = IRS and later career (1990 ? present) = = =

In 1990 , the IRS seized most of Nelson 's assets , claiming that he owed US \$ 32 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 . In addition to the unpaid taxes , Nelson 's situation was worsened by the weak investments he had made during the early 1980s . In 1978 , after he fired Reshen , Nelson was introduced by Dallas lawyer Terry Bray to the accounting firm Price Waterhouse . To repay the debt Reshen had created with the IRS , Nelson was recommended to invest in tax shelters that ultimately flopped . While the IRS disallowed his deductions for 1980 , 1981 and 1982 (at a time that Nelson 's income multiplied) , due to penalties and interests , the debt increased by the end of the decade .

His lawyer , Jay Goldberg , negotiated the sum to be lowered to US \$ 16 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 . Later , Nelson 's attorney renegotiated a settlement with the IRS in which he paid US \$ 6 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 , although Nelson did not comply with the agreement . Nelson released The IRS Tapes : Who 'll Buy My Memories ? as a double album , with all profits destined for the IRS . Many of his assets were auctioned and purchased by friends , who donated or rented his possessions to him for a nominal fee . He sued Price Waterhouse , contending that they put his money in illegal tax shelters . The lawsuit was settled for an undisclosed amount and Nelson cleared his debts by 1993 .

During the 1990s and 2000s , Nelson toured continuously , recording several albums including 1998 's critically acclaimed Teatro , and performed and recorded with other acts including Phish , Johnny Cash , and Toby Keith . His duet with Keith , " Beer for My Horses " , was released as a single and topped the Billboard Hot Country Songs charts for six consecutive weeks in 2003 , while the accompanying video won an award for " Best Video " at the 2004 Academy of Country Music Awards . A USA Network television special celebrated Nelson 's 70th birthday , and Nelson released The Essential Willie Nelson as part of the celebration . Nelson also appeared on Ringo Starr 's 2003 album , Ringo Rama , as a guest vocal on " Write One for Me " .

Nelson headlined the 2005 Tsunami Relief Austin to Asia concert to benefit the victims of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake , which raised an estimated US \$ 75 @,@ 000 for UNICEF . Also in 2005 ,

a live performance of the Johnny Cash song " Busted " with Ray Charles was released on Charles ' duets album Genius & Friends . Nelson 's 2007 performance with jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis at the Lincoln Center , was released as the live album Two Men with the Blues in 2008 ; reaching number one in Billboard 's Top Jazz Albums and number twenty on the Billboard 200 . The same year , Nelson recorded his first album with Buddy Cannon as the producer , Moment of Forever . Cannon acquainted Nelson earlier , during the production of his collaboration with Kenny Chesney on the duet " That Lucky Old Sun " , for Chesney 's album of the same name . In 2009 Nelson and Marsalis joined with Norah Jones in a tribute concert to Ray Charles , which resulted in the Here We Go Again : Celebrating the Genius of Ray Charles album , released in 2011 .

In 2010 , Nelson released Country Music , a compilation of standards produced by T @-@ Bone Burnett . The album peaked number four in Billboard 's Top Country Albums , and twenty on the Billboard 200 . It was nominated for Best Americana Album at the 2011 Grammy Awards . In 2011 Nelson participated in the concert Kokua For Japan , a fund raising event for the victims of the 2011 T?hoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan which raised US \$ 1 @.@ 6 million .

In February 2012 , Legacy Recordings signed a deal with Nelson that included the release of new material , as well as past releases that would be selected and complemented with outtakes and other material selected by him . With the new deal , Buddy Cannon returned to produce the recordings of Nelson . After selecting the material and the sound of the tunes with the singer , Cannon 's work method consisted in the recording of the tracks with studio musicians , with the takes later completed on a separate session by Nelson with his guitar . Cannon 's association to Nelson also extended to songwriting , with singer and producer composing the lyrics by exchanging text messages .

Nelson 's first release for the Legacy Recordings was Heroes , that included guest appearances by his sons Lukas and Micah of the band Insects vs Robots , Ray Price , Merle Haggard , Snoop Dogg , Kris Kristofferson , Jamey Johnson , Billy Joe Shaver and Sheryl Crow . The album reached number four on Billboard 's Top Country Albums . His 2013 release To All the Girls ... , a collection of duets with all female partners , featured among others Dolly Parton , Loretta Lynn , Rosanne Cash , Sheryl Crow , Mavis Staples , Norah Jones , Emmylou Harris , Carrie Underwood and Miranda Lambert . The album entered Billboard 's Top Country Albums at number two , marking his highest position on the chart since the release of his 1989 A Horse Called Music , and extending his record to a total of forty @-@ six top ten albums on the country charts . Nelson scored as well his second top ten album on the Billboard 200 , with the release entering at number nine .

His following release was Band of Brothers , in 2014 , the first Nelson album to feature the most newly self @-@ penned songs since 1996 's Spirit . Upon its release , it topped Billboard 's Top Country albums chart , the first time since 1986 's The Promiseland , the last Nelson album to top it . The release reached number five on the Billboard 200 , Nelson 's highest position on the chart since 1982 's Always on My Mind . In December 2014 , a duet with Rhonda Vincent , " Only Me " , topped Bluegrass Unlimited 's National Airplay chart . In June 2015 , his collaboration with Haggard Django and Jimmie topped Billboard 's Top Country albums chart and reached number seven on the Billboard 200 .

His two sons Lukas and Micah with the band Promise of the Real have backed Neil Young on his single " A Rock Star Bucks A Coffee Shop " which is from Young 's concept album The Monsanto Years which was set for release at the end of June 2015.The song is aimed at Starbucks , Monsanto , and genetically modified food . By the end of May 2015 , the song was Video of the week on the Food Consumer website .

= = Other ventures = =

Nelson 's acting debut was in the 1979 film , The Electric Horseman , followed by appearances in Honeysuckle Rose , Thief , and Barbarosa . He played the role of Red Loon in Coming Out of the Ice in 1982 and starred in Songwriter two years later . He portrayed the lead role in the 1986 film version of his album Red Headed Stranger . Other movies that Nelson acted in include Wag the Dog , Gone Fishin ' (as Billy ' Catch ' Pooler) , the 1986 television movie Stagecoach (with Johnny

Cash), Half Baked , Beerfest , The Dukes of Hazzard , Surfer , Dude and Swing Vote. He has also made guest appearances on Miami Vice (1986 's " El Viejo " episode) , Delta , Nash Bridges , The Simpsons , Monk , Adventures in Wonderland , Dr. Quinn , Medicine Woman , King of the Hill , The Colbert Report , Swing Vote and Space Ghost Coast to Coast .

In 1988 his first book , Willie : An Autobiography , was published . The Facts of Life : And Other Dirty Jokes , a personal recollection of tour and musical stories from his career , combined with song lyrics , followed in 2002 . In 2005 he co -authored Farm Aid : A Song for America , a commemorative book about the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of Farm Aid . His third book , co -authored with long time friend Turk Pipkin , The Tao of Willie : A Guide to the Happiness in Your Heart , was published in 2006 . In 2007 a book advocating the use of bio diesel and the reduction of gas emissions , On The Clean Road Again : Biodiesel and The Future of the Family Farm , was published . His next book , A Tale Out of Luck , published in 2008 and co -authored by Mike Blakely , was Nelson 's first fictional book . In 2012 , it was announced the release of a new autobiography by Nelson , Roll Me Up and Smoke Me When I Die : Musings from the Road . Released on November 13 , it was named after the song from his album Heroes . The book contained further biographical details , as well as family pictures and stories about Nelson 's political views , as well as his advocacy for marijuana . The artwork of the book was designed by Nelson 's son , Micah , and the foreword written by Kinky Friedman . In 2015 , the publication of a second Nelson autobiography entitled It 's a Long Story : My Life was announced . Co -authored with David Ritz , the book was published on May 5 , 2015 .

In 2002 , Nelson became the official spokesman of the Texas Roadhouse , a chain of steakhouses . Nelson heavily promoted the chain and appeared on a special on Food Network . The chain installed Willie 's Corner , a section dedicated to him and decked out with Willie memorabilia , at several locations .

In 2008 , Nelson reopened Willie 's Place , a truck stop in Carl 's Corner , Texas . The U.S. Bankruptcy Court allowed Nelson to invest in it . The establishment had about 80 employees and was used as a concert hall with a bar and a 1 @, @ 000 square feet (93 m2) dance floor . It closed in 2011 after defaulting on a loan , leading to foreclosure and bankruptcy . In 2010 , Nelson founded with the collaboration of producers and filmmakers Luck Films , a company dedicated to produce feature films , documentaries and concerts . The next year , he created Willie 's Roadhouse , aired on channel 56 of SiriusXM radio . The channel was a result of the merger of his two other channels The Roadhouse and Willie 's Place .

In November 2014 , it was announced that Nelson would be the host of the television series Inside Arlyn , shot at Arlyn Studio in Austin , Texas . The thirteen @-@ episode first season would feature artists being interviewed by Nelson and Dan Rather , followed by a performance . The series concept received attention from cable channels that requested to see the pilot episode .

Following the legalization of marijuana in different states , Nelson announced in 2015 through spokesman Michael Bowman the establishment of his own marijuana brand , Willie 's Reserve . Plans to open chain stores in the states where marijuana was legalized were announced , to be expanded state @-@ to @-@ state if marijuana legalization is further expanded . Bowman called the brand " a culmination of (Nelson 's) vision , and his whole life " .

= = Music style = =

Nelson uses a variety of music styles to create his own distinctive blend of country music , a hybrid of jazz , pop , blues , rock and folk . His " unique sound " , which uses a " relaxed , behind @-@ the @-@ beat singing style and gut @-@ string guitar " and his " nasal voice and jazzy , off @-@ center phrasing " , has been responsible for his wide appeal , and has made him a " vital icon in country music " , influencing the " new country , new traditionalist , and alternative country movements of the ' 80s and ' 90s " .

= = = Guitars = = =

In 1969 , the Baldwin company gave Nelson an amplifier and a three @-@ cord pickup electric guitar . During a show in Helotes , Texas , Nelson left the guitar on the floor of the stage , and it was later stepped on by a drunk man . He sent it to be repaired in Nashville by Shot Jackson , who told Nelson that the damage was too great . Jackson offered him a Martin N @-@ 20 Classical guitar , and , at Nelson 's request , moved the pickup to the Martin . Nelson purchased the guitar unseen for US \$ 750 and named it after Roy Rogers ' horse " Trigger " . The next year Nelson rescued the guitar from his burning ranch .

Constant strumming with a guitar pick over the decades has worn a large sweeping hole into the guitar 's body near the sound hole ? the N @-@ 20 has no pick @-@ guard since classical guitars are meant to be played fingerstyle instead of with picks . Its soundboard has been signed by over a hundred of Nelson 's friends and associates , ranging from fellow musicians to lawyers and football coaches. The first signature on the guitar was Leon Russell 's , who asked Nelson initially to sign his guitar . When Nelson was about to sign it with a marker , Russell requested him to scratch it instead , explaining that the guitar would be more valuable in the future . Interested in the concept , Nelson requested Russell to also sign his guitar . In 1991 , during his process with the IRS , Nelson was worried that Trigger could be auctioned off , stating : " When Trigger goes , I 'll quit " . He asked his daughter , Lana , to take the guitar from the studio before any IRS agent got there , and bring it to him on Maui . Nelson then hid the guitar in his manager 's house until his debt was paid in 1993 .

= = Activism = =

Nelson is active in a number of issues . Along with Neil Young and John Mellencamp , he set up Farm Aid in 1985 to assist and increase awareness of the importance of family farms , after Bob Dylan 's comments during the Live Aid concert that he hoped some of the money would help American farmers in danger of losing their farms through mortgage debt . The first concert included Bob Dylan , Billy Joel , B.B. King , Roy Orbison , and Neil Young among many others , and raised over \$ 9 million for America 's family farmers . Besides organizing and performing in the annual concerts , Nelson is the president of the board of Farm Aid .

Nelson is a co @-@ chair of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) advisory board . He has worked with NORML for years , fighting for marijuana legalization . In 2005 Nelson and his family hosted the first annual " Willie Nelson & NORML Benefit Golf Tournament " , leading to a cover appearance and inside interview in the January 2008 issue of High Times magazine . After his arrest for possession of marijuana in 2010 , Nelson created the TeaPot party under the motto " Tax it , regulate it and legalize it ! " .

In 2001 , following the September 11 attacks , he participated in the benefit telethon America : A Tribute to Heroes , leading the rest of the celebrities singing the song " America the Beautiful " . In 2010 , during an interview with Larry King , Nelson expressed his doubts with regards to the attacks and the official story . Nelson explained that he could not believe that the buildings could collapse due to the planes , attributing instead the result to an implosion .

Nelson supported Dennis Kucinich 's campaign in the 2004 Democratic presidential primaries . He raised money , appeared at events , and composed the song " Whatever Happened to Peace on Earth ? " , criticizing the war in Iraq . He recorded a radio advertisement asking for support to put musician / author Kinky Friedman on the ballot as an independent candidate for the 2006 Texas gubernatorial election . Friedman promised Nelson a job in Austin as the head of a new Texas Energy Commission due to his support of bio @-@ fuels . In January 2008 , Nelson filed a suit against the Texas Democratic Party , alleging that the party violated the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the United States Constitution by refusing to allow co @-@ plaintiff Kucinich to appear on the primary ballot because he had scratched out part of the loyalty oath on his application .

In 2004 , he and his wife Annie became partners with Bob and Kelly King in the building of two Pacific Bio @-@ diesel plants , one in Salem , Oregon , and the other at Carl 's Corner , Texas (the Texas plant was founded by Carl Cornelius , a longtime Nelson friend and the namesake for Carl 's Corner) . In 2005 , Nelson and several other business partners formed Willie Nelson Biodiesel ("

Bio @-@ Willie ") , a company that is marketing bio @-@ diesel bio @-@ fuel to truck stops . The fuel is made from vegetable oil (mainly soybean oil) , and can be burned without modification in diesel engines .

Nelson is an advocate for better treatment for horses and has been campaigning for the passage of the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act (H.R. 503 / S. 311) alongside the Animal Welfare Institute . He is on its board of directors and has adopted a number of horses from Habitat for Horses . In 2008 , Nelson signed on to warn consumers about the cruel and illegal living conditions for calves raised to produce milk for dairy products . He wrote letters to Land O 'Lakes and Challenge Dairy , two of the major corporations that use milk from calves raised at California 's Mendes Calf Ranch , which employs an intensive confinement practice that was the subject of a lawsuit and campaign brought by the Animal Legal Defense Fund .

A supporter of the LGBT movement , Nelson published in 2006 through iTunes a version of Ned Sublette 's " Cowboys Are Frequently , Secretly Fond of Each Other " , that met instant success . During an interview with Texas Monthly in 2013 , regarding the Defense of Marriage Act and Same @-@ sex marriage in the United States , Nelson responded to a comparison the interviewer made with the Civil Rights Movement , stating : " We 'll look back and say it was crazy that we ever even argued about this " . He also presented two logos with the pink equal sign , symbol of the LGBT movement . The first one , featured the sign represented with two long braids ; while the second one , featured the sign represented with two marijuana cigarettes . The use of the logos became viral instantly in social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook .

= = Personal life = =

Nelson lives in Maui , Hawaii , in a largely self @-@ sustaining community where all the homes use only solar power . Neighbors include Kris Kristofferson , Woody Harrelson , and Owen Wilson . Nelson also owns a ranch near Austin , Texas .

Willie Nelson has married four times and fathered seven children . His first marriage was to Martha Matthews ; it lasted from 1952 to 1962 . The couple had three children : Lana , Susie and Willie " Billy " Hugh , Jr . Billy died by suicide in 1991 . The marriage was marked by violence , with Matthews assaulting Nelson several times , including one incident when she sewed him up in a bed sheet and then beat him with a broomstick . Nelson 's next marriage was to Shirley Collie in 1963 . The couple divorced in 1971 , after Collie found a bill from the maternity ward of a Houston hospital charged to Nelson and Connie Koepke for the birth of Paula Carlene Nelson . Koepke and Nelson married the same year and had two daughters , Paula Carlene and Amy Lee . Following a divorce in 1988 , he married his current wife , Annie D 'Angelo , in 1991 . They have two sons , Lukas Autry and Jacob Micah . Nelson traces his genealogy to the American Revolutionary War , in which his ancestor John Nelson served as a major .

While swimming in Hawaii in 1981 , Nelson 's lung collapsed . He was taken to the Maui Memorial Hospital and his scheduled concerts were canceled . Nelson temporarily stopped smoking cigarettes each time his lungs became congested , and resumed when the congestion ended . He was then smoking between two and three packages per day . After suffering from pneumonia several times , he decided to quit either marijuana or tobacco . He chose to quit tobacco . In 2008 he started to smoke marijuana with a carbon @-@ free system to avoid the effects of smoke . In 2004 Nelson underwent surgery for carpal tunnel syndrome , as he had damaged his wrists by continuously playing the guitar . On the recommendation of his doctor , he canceled his scheduled concerts and only wrote songs during his recovery . In 2012 he canceled a fund @-@ raising appearance in the Denver area . He suffered from breathing problems due to high altitude and emphysema and was taken to a local hospital . His publicist Elaine Schock confirmed soon after that Nelson 's health was good and that he was heading to his next scheduled concert in Dallas , Texas . After repeated instances of pneumonia and emphysema through the years , Nelson underwent stem @-@ cell therapy in 2015 to improve the state of his lungs .

During his childhood , Nelson grew interested in martial arts . He ordered self @-@ defense manuals on jujitsu and judo that he saw advertised in Batman and Superman comic books . Nelson

started to formally practice kung fu after he moved to Nashville , in the 1960s . During the 1980s , Nelson began training in tae kwon do and now holds a second @-@ degree black belt in that discipline . During the 1990s , Nelson started to practice the Korean martial art GongKwon Yusul . In 2014 , after twenty years in the discipline , his Grand Master Sam Um presented him with a fifth @-@ degree black belt in a ceremony held in Austin , Texas . A 2014 Tae Kwon Do Times magazine interview revealed that Nelson had developed an unorthodox manner of training during the lengthy periods of time he was on tour . Nelson would conduct his martial arts training on his tour bus " The Honeysuckle Rose " and send videos to his supervising Master for review and critique .

= = = Legal issues = = =

Nelson has been arrested several times for marijuana possession . The first occasion was in 1974 in Dallas , Texas . In 1977 after a tour with Hank Cochran , Nelson traveled to The Bahamas . Nelson and Cochran arrived late to the airport and boarded the flight without luggage . The bags were later sent to them . As Nelson and Cochran claimed their luggage in the Bahamas , a customs officer questioned Nelson after marijuana was found in a pair of his jeans . Nelson was arrested and jailed . As Cochran made arrangements to pay the bail , he took Nelson a six @-@ pack of beer to his cell . Nelson was released a few hours later . Inebriated , he fell after he jumped celebrating and was taken to the emergency room . He then appeared before the judge , who dropped the charges but ordered Nelson to never return to the country .

In 1994 , highway patrolmen found marijuana in his car near Waco , Texas . His requirement to appear in court prevented him attending the Grammy awards that year . While traveling to Ann W. Richards ' funeral in 2006 , Nelson , along with his manager and his sister , Bobbi , were arrested in St. Martin Parish , Louisiana and charged with possession of marijuana and hallucinogenic mushrooms . Nelson received six months probation .

On November 26 , 2010 , Nelson was arrested in Sierra Blanca , Texas , for possession of six ounces of marijuana found in his tour bus while traveling from Los Angeles back to Texas . He was released after paying bail of US \$ 2 @, @ 500 . Prosecutor Kit Bramblett supported not sentencing Nelson to jail due to the small amount of marijuana involved , but suggested instead a US \$ 100 fine and told Nelson that he would have him sing " Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain " for the court . Judge Becky Dean @-@ Walker said that Nelson would have to pay the fine but not to perform the song , explaining that the prosecutor was joking . Nelson 's lawyer Joe Turner reached an agreement with the prosecutor . Nelson was set to pay a US \$ 500 fine to avoid a two @-@ year jail sentence with a 30 @-@ day review period , which in case of another incident would end the agreement . The judge later rejected the agreement , claiming that Nelson was receiving preferential treatment for his celebrity status ; the offense normally carried a one @-@ year jail sentence . Bramblett declared that the case would remain open until it was either dismissed or the judge changed her opinion .

= = Legacy = =

Nelson is widely recognized as an American icon . He was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1993 , and he received the Kennedy Center Honors in 1998 . In 2011 , Nelson was inducted to the National Agricultural Hall of Fame , for his labor in Farm Aid and other fund risers to benefit farmers . In 2015 Nelson won the Gershwin Prize , the lifetime award of the Library of Congress . He was included by Rolling Stone on its 100 Greatest Singers and 100 Greatest Guitarists lists .

In 2003 , Texas Governor Perry signed bill No. 2582 , introduced by State Representative Elizabeth Ames Jones and Senator Jeff Wentworth , which funded the Texas Music Project , the state 's official music charity . Nelson was named Honorary Chairman of the Advisory Board of the project . In 2005 , Democratic Texas Senator Gonzalo Barrientos introduced a bill to name 49 miles (79 km) of the Travis County section of State Highway 130 after Nelson , and at one point 23 of the 31 state Senators were co @-@ sponsors of the bill . The legislation was dropped after two Republican

senators , Florence Shapiro and Wentworth , objected , citing Nelson 's lack of connection to the highway , his fund raisers for Democrats , his drinking , and his marijuana advocacy .

An important collection of Willie Nelson materials (1975 ? 1994) became part of the Wittliff collections of Southwestern Writers , Texas State University , San Marcos , Texas . The collection contains lyrics , screenplays , letters , concert programs , tour itineraries , posters , articles , clippings , personal effects , promotional items , souvenirs , and documents . It documents Nelson 's IRS troubles and how Farm Aid contributions were used . Most of the material was collected by Nelson 's friend Bill Wittliff , who wrote or co @-@ wrote Honeysuckle Rose , Barbarosa and Red Headed Stranger . In 2014 , Nelson donated his personal collection to the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History . The items include photographs , correspondence , song manuscripts , posters , certificate records , awards , signed books , screenplays , personal items and gifts and tributes from Nelson 's fans .

In April 2010 , Nelson received the " Feed the Peace " award from The Nobility Project for his extensive work with Farm Aid and overall contributions to world peace . On June 23 , 2010 he was inducted into the Library of Congress 's National Recording Registry . Nelson is an honorary trustee of the Dayton International Peace Museum . In 2010 , Austin , Texas renamed Second Street to Willie Nelson Boulevard . The city also unveiled a life @-@ size statue to honor him , placed at the entrance of Austin City Limits ' new studio . The non @-@ profit organization Capital Area Statues commissioned sculptor Clete Shields to execute the project . The statue was unveiled on April 20 , 2012 . The date selected by the city of Austin unintentionally coincided with the number 4 / 20 , associated with cannabis culture . In spite of the coincidence and Nelson 's advocacy for the legalization of marijuana , the ceremony was scheduled also for 4 : 20 pm . During the ceremony , Nelson performed the song " Roll Me Up and Smoke Me When I Die " . The same year , Nelson was honored during the 46th Annual Country Music Association Awards as the first recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award , which was also named after him . In 2013 , he received an honorary doctorate from the Berklee College of Music . The following year , he was part of the inaugural class inducted into the Austin City Limits Hall of Fame . Also included among the first inductees was his friend Darrell Royal , whose jamming parties that Nelson participated in were the source of inspiration for the show .

For many years , Nelson 's image was marked by his red hair , often divided into two long braids partially concealed under a bandanna . In the April 2007 issue of Stuff Magazine Nelson was interviewed about his long locks . " I started braiding my hair when it started getting too long , and that was , I don 't know , probably in the 70 's . " On May 26 , 2010 , the Associated Press reported that Nelson had cut his hair , and Nashville music journalist Jimmy Carter published a photograph of the pigtail @-@ free Nelson on his website . Nelson wanted a more maintainable hairstyle , as well helping him stay cool more easily at his Maui home . In October 2014 , the braids of Nelson were sold for US \$ 37 @,@ 000 at an auction of the Waylon Jennings State . In 1983 , Nelson cut his braids and gave them to Jennings as a gift during a party celebrating Jennings ' sobriety .

Nelson 's touring and recording group , the Family , is full of longstanding members . The original lineup included his sister Bobbie Nelson , drummer Paul English , harmonicist Mickey Raphael , bassist Bee Spears , Billy English (Paul 's younger brother) , and Jody Payne . The current lineup includes all the members but Jody Payne , who retired , and Bee Spears , who died in 2011 . Willie & Family tours North America in the bio @-@ diesel bus Honeysuckle Rose , which is fueled by Bio @-@ Willie . Nelson 's tour buses were customized by Florida Coach since 1979 . The company built the Honeysuckle Rose I in 1983 , which was replaced after a collision in Nova Scotia , Canada , in 1990 . The interior was salvaged and reused for the second version of the bus the same year . Nelson changed his tour bus in 1996 , 2005 and 2013 , currently touring on the Honeysuckle Rose V.

= = Discography and other works = =

As well as recording over sixty studio albums , Nelson has appeared in over thirty films and TV shows . His acting debut was in the 1979 film , The Electric Horseman , followed by appearances in

Honeysuckle Rose , Thief , and Barbarosa .

Recordings

Films

Books

Willie : An Autobiography , Simon & Schuster , 1988 , with Bud Shrake

The Facts of Life and Other Dirty Jokes , Random House , 2002

Farm Aid : A Song for America , Rodale Books , foreword by Willie Nelson , 2005

The Tao of Willie : A Guide to the Happiness in Your Heart , Gotham , 2006 , with Turk Pipkin

On The Clean Road Again : Biodiesel and The Future of the Family Farm , Fulcrum Publishing , 2007

A Tale Out of Luck (a novel) , Center Street , 2008 , with Mike Blakely

Roll Me Up and Smoke Me When I Die : Musings From the Road , William Morrow , foreword by Kinky Friedman , 2012

It 's a Long Story : My Life , Little , Brown and Company , 2015 with David Ritz