

= Roger Miller =

Roger Dean Miller , Sr. (January 2 , 1936 ? October 25 , 1992) was an American singer , songwriter , musician and actor , best known for his honky @-@ tonk @-@ influenced novelty songs . His most recognized tunes included the chart @-@ topping country / pop hits " King of the Road " , " Dang Me " and " England Swings " , all from the mid @-@ 1960s Nashville sound era .

After growing up in Oklahoma and serving in the United States Army , Miller began his musical career as a songwriter in the late 1950s , penning such hits as " Billy Bayou " and " Home " for Jim Reeves and " Invitation to the Blues " for Ray Price . He later began a recording career and reached the peak of his fame in the mid @-@ 1960s , continuing to record and tour into the 1990s , charting his final top 20 country hit " Old Friends " with Willie Nelson in 1982 . Later in his life , he wrote the music and lyrics for the 1985 Tony @-@ award winning Broadway musical Big River , in which he acted .

Miller died from lung cancer in 1992 , and was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame three years later . His songs continued to be recorded by younger artists , with covers of " Tall , Tall Trees " by Alan Jackson and " Husbands and Wives " by Brooks & Dunn , each reaching the number one spot on country charts in the 1990s . The Roger Miller Museum in his home town of Erick , Oklahoma , is a tribute to Miller .

= = Early life = =

Roger Miller was born in Fort Worth , Texas , the third son of Jean and Laudene (Holt) Miller . Jean Miller died from spinal meningitis when Roger was a year old . Unable to support the family during the Great Depression , Laudene sent her three sons to live with three of Jean 's brothers . Thus , Roger grew up on a farm outside Erick , Oklahoma with Elmer and Armelia Miller .

As a boy , Miller did farm work , such as picking cotton and plowing . He would later say he was " dirt poor " and that as late as 1951 the family did not own a telephone . He received his primary education at a one @-@ room schoolhouse . Miller was an introverted child , and would often daydream or compose songs . One of his earliest compositions went : " There 's a picture on the wall . It 's the dearest of them all , Mother . "

Miller was a member of the National FFA Organization in high school . He listened to the Grand Ole Opry and Light Crust Doughboys on a Fort Worth station with his cousin 's husband , Sheb Wooley . Wooley taught Miller his first guitar chords and bought him a fiddle . Wooley , Hank Williams , and Bob Wills were the influences that led to Miller 's desire to be a singer @-@ songwriter . He began to run away and perform in Oklahoma and Texas . At 17 , he stole a guitar out of desperation to write songs ; however , he turned himself in the next day . He chose to enlist in the United States Army to avoid jail . He later quipped , " My education was Korea , Clash of ' 52 . " Near the end of his military service , while stationed in Atlanta , Georgia , Miller played fiddle in the " Circle A Wranglers , " a military musical group started by Faron Young . While Miller was stationed in South Carolina , an army sergeant whose brother was Kenneth C. " Jethro " Burns from the musical duo Homer and Jethro , persuaded him to head to Nashville after his discharge .

= = Career = =

= = = Nashville songwriter = = =

On leaving the Army , Miller traveled to Nashville to begin his musical career . He met with Chet Atkins , who asked to hear him sing , loaning him a guitar since Miller did not own one . Out of nervousness , Miller played the guitar and sang a song in two different keys . Atkins advised him to come back later , when he had more experience . Miller found work as a bellhop at Nashville 's Andrew Jackson Hotel , and he was soon known as the " singing bellhop , " He was finally hired by Minnie Pearl to play the fiddle in her band . He then met George Jones , who introduced him to

music executives from the Starday Records label , who scheduled an audition . The executives were impressed and set up a recording session with Jones in Houston . Jones and Miller collaborated to write " Tall , Tall Trees " and " Happy Child . "

After marrying and becoming a father , Miller put aside his music career and became a fireman in Amarillo , Texas . A fireman by day , he performed at night . Miller said that during his time as a fireman , he saw only two fires , one in a " chicken coop " and the other that he " slept through , " after which the department " suggested that ... [he] seek other employment . " Miller met Ray Price , and became a member of his Cherokee Cowboys . He returned to Nashville , and wrote " Invitation to the Blues , " which was covered by Rex Allen and later by Ray Price , whose recording was a number three hit on country charts . Miller then signed with Tree Publishing on a salary of \$ 50 a week . He wrote : " Half a Mind " for Ernest Tubb , " That 's the Way I Feel " for Faron Young ; and his first number one , " Billy Bayou , " which along with " Home " were recorded by Jim Reeves . Miller became one of the biggest songwriters of the 1950s . However , Bill Anderson would later remark that " Roger was the most talented , and least disciplined , person that you could imagine " citing the attempts of Miller 's Tree Publishing boss , Buddy Killen to force him to finish a piece . He was known to give away lines , inciting many Nashville songwriters to follow him around since , according to Killen , " everything he said was a potential song . "

= = = Recording career = = =

Miller signed a recording deal with Decca Records in 1958 . He was paired with singer Donny Lytle , who later gained fame under the name Johnny Paycheck , to perform the Miller @-@ penned " A Man Like Me " , and later " The Wrong Kind of Girl . " Both songs were honky @-@ tonk @-@ style and did not chart . His second single with the label , featuring the B @-@ side " Jason Fleming , " foreshadowed Miller 's future style . To make money , Miller went on tour with Faron Young 's band as a drummer , although he had never drummed . During this period , he signed a record deal with Chet Atkins at RCA Victor , for whom Miller recorded " You Don 't Want My Love " (also known as " In the Summertime ") in 1960 , which marked his first appearance on country charts , peaking at No. 14 . The next year , he would make an even bigger impact , breaking through the top 10 with his single " When Two Worlds Collide " , co @-@ written with Bill Anderson . But Miller soon tired of writing songs , divorced his wife and began a party lifestyle that earned him the moniker " wild child . " He was dropped from his record label and began to pursue other interests .

After numerous appearances on late night comedy shows , Miller decided that he might have a chance in Hollywood as an actor . Short of money , he signed with the up @-@ and @-@ coming label Smash Records , asked the label for \$ 1 @,@ 600 in cash , in exchange for recording 16 sides . Smash agreed to the proposal , and Miller performed his first session for the company early in 1964 , when he recorded the hits " Dang Me " and " Chug @-@ a @-@ Lug " . Both were released as singles , peaking at No. 1 and No. 3 respectively on country charts ; both fared well on the Billboard Hot 100 reaching No. 7 and No. 9 . The songs transformed Miller 's career , although the former was penned by Miller in just four minutes . Later that year , he recorded the No. 15 hit " Do @-@ Wacka @-@ Do , " and soon after the biggest hit of his career " King of the Road " , which topped Country and Adult Contemporary charts while peaking at No. 4 on the Billboard 100 . The song was inspired by a sign in Chicago that read " Trailers for Sale or Rent " and a hobo happened upon by Miller at an airport in Boise , but took months for Miller to write . The song was certified gold in May 1965 after selling a million copies . It won numerous awards , and earned a royalty check of \$ 160 @,@ 000 that summer . Later in the year Miller scored hits with " Engine Engine No. 9 " , " Kansas City Star " (a Top Ten country hit in 1965 about a local television children 's show personality who would rather stay in the safety and security of his success in Kansas City rather than become a bigger star ? or risk failure ? in Omaha) and " England Swings " (an adult contemporary No. 1) . He began 1966 with the hit " Husbands and Wives . "

Miller was given his own TV show on NBC in September 1966 but it was canceled after 13 weeks in January 1967 . During this period Miller recorded songs written by other songwriters . The final hit of his own composition was " Walkin in the Sunshine , " which reached No. 7 and No. 6 on the country

and adult contemporary charts in 1967 . Later in the year he scored his final top 10 hit with a lowkey cover of Bobby Russell 's " Little Green Apples " . The next year , he was first to cover Kris Kristofferson 's " Me and Bobby McGee , " taking the song to No. 12 on country charts . In 1970 , Miller recorded the album A Trip in the Country , honky @-@ tonk @-@ style standards penned by Miller , including " Tall , Tall Trees . " Later that year , after Smash Records folded , Miller was signed by Columbia Records , for whom he released Dear Folks : Sorry I Haven 't Written Lately in 1973 . Later that year , Miller wrote and performed three songs in the Walt Disney animated feature Robin Hood as the rooster / minstrel Allan @-@ a @-@ Dale , including " Whistle @-@ Stop " which was sampled for use in the popular Hampster Dance web site . The other songs are Oo @-@ De @-@ Lally and Not In Nottingham . He provided the voice of Speiltoe , the equine narrator of the Rankin / Bass holiday special Nestor the Long @-@ Eared Christmas Donkey in 1978 . Miller collaborated with Willie Nelson on an album titled Old Friends . The title track was based on a song he had previously penned for his family in Oklahoma . The song , with guest vocals from Ray Price , was the last hit of Miller 's career , peaking at No. 19 on country charts in 1982 .

= = = Late career = = =

He continued to record for different record labels and charted a few songs , but stopped writing in 1978 , feeling that his more " artistic " works were not appreciated . This was the time when his only visit to England led him to Kippax , he played the social club there but was outdone by 17 Elvis performers . He was absent from the entertainment business following the release of Old Friends in 1981 , but returned after receiving an offer to write a Broadway score for a musical based upon Mark Twain 's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn . Although he had not read the novel , Miller accepted the offer after discovering how the story brought him back to his childhood in rural Oklahoma . It took a year and a half to write the opening , but he eventually finished . The work , entitled Big River premiered at Eugene O 'Neill Theatre in New York on April 25 , 1985 . The musical received glowing reviews , earning seven Tony Awards including " Best Score " for Miller . He acted the part of Huck Finn 's father Pap for three months after the exit of actor John Goodman , who left for Hollywood . In 1983 , Miller played a dramatic role on an episode of Quincy ME . He played a country and western singer who is severely burned while freebasing cocaine .

Miller left for Santa Fe to live with his family following the success of Big River . He co @-@ wrote Dwight Yoakam 's hit " It Only Hurts When I Cry " from his 1990 album If There Was a Way , and supplied background vocals . The song was released as a single in 1991 , peaking at No. 7 on country charts . He began a solo guitar tour in 1990 , ending the following year after being diagnosed with lung cancer . His last performance on television occurred on a special tribute to Minnie Pearl which aired on TNN on October 26 , 1992 , the day after Miller 's death .

= = Style = =

Although he is usually grouped with country music singers , Miller 's unique style defies easy classification . Many of his recordings were humorous novelty songs with whimsical lyrics , coupled with scat singing or vocalese riffs filled with nonsense syllables . Others were sincere ballads , which caught the public 's fancy , none more so than his signature song , " King of the Road . " The biographical book Ain 't Got No Cigarettes described Miller as an " uncategorizable talent " , and stated that many regarded him as a genius .

On his own style , Miller remarked that he " tried to do " things like other artists but that it " always came out different " so he got " frustrated " until realizing " I 'm the only one that knows what I 'm thinking . " He commented that the favorite song that he wrote was " You Can 't Rollerskate in a Buffalo Herd . " Johnny Cash discussed Miller 's bass vocal range in his 1997 autobiography . He commented that it was the closest to his own that he had heard .

= = Personal life and death = =

Miller was married three times , and fathered seven children . Miller 's first wife Barbara bore his first child , Michael , who later died . The couple had three more children subsequent to Michael 's death ? Alan , Rhonda and Shari . By the time Shari was born , Miller 's career was blossoming into national popularity . The family remained in Inglewood for a short time after Miller found fame . The increasing interest in Miller caused struggles for the performer : He suffered from depression and insomnia , and had a drug addiction which contributed to the end of his first and second marriages . Miller was known to walk off shows and to fight .

After the divorce from his first wife , he married Leah Kendrick . She gave birth to two children , Shannon and Dean Miller , who like his father , went on to become a singer @-@ songwriter . The Christmas song " Old Toy Trains " was written by Miller about his son , who was two years old when it was released in 1967 .

After divorcing Leah , Miller married Mary Arnold , whom he met through Kenny Rogers . Arnold was a member of The First Edition , a band that included Rogers . They adopted two children : Taylor and Adam . After the break @-@ up of The First Edition , she performed with her husband Miller on tours , including a White House performance for President Gerald Ford . In 2009 , she was inducted into the Iowa Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame , She currently manages Roger Miller 's estate . She sued Sony for copyright infringement in the 2007 case Roger Miller Music , Inc. v. Sony / ATV Publishing , LLC , which went to the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit . Arnold was ultimately awarded nearly \$ 1 million in royalties and rights to the songs Miller wrote in 1964 .

Miller was a lifelong cigarette smoker . During a television interview , Miller explained that he composed his songs from " bits and pieces " of ideas he wrote on scraps of paper . When asked what he did with the unused bits and pieces , he half @-@ joked , " I smoke ' em ! " Miller died of lung and throat cancer in 1992 , at age 56 , shortly after the discovery of a malignant tumor under his vocal cords . His remains were cremated .

A main street in Erick , Oklahoma was named Roger Miller Boulevard in his memory .

= = In popular culture = =

In 1969 , Miller appeared on the television show Daniel Boone as American folk hero Johnny Appleseed . In Miller 's version of Appleseed , singing was quite common.Daniel Boone tv series season 6 episode 140 , " A Very Small Rifle . "

In 1987 , a rambling , drunken rendition of " King of the Road " was included on R.E.M. ' s collection of B @-@ sides , Dead Letter Office (album) .

The refrain in his song " England Swings " was used in 1998 in BBC Radio program 15 Minutes of Misery .

The same song was used in the soundtrack of film Shanghai Knights .

In 2007 , music of " King of the Road " was used in a scene in the film Into The Wild , where a character in the film makes a mention of the song in writing a letter .

He composed and performed a number of songs in the Disney production of the cartoon Robin Hood . The Roger Miller song " Whistle @-@ Stop " was whistled by the rooster character Alan @-@ a @-@ Dale . Other Miller songs sung by him included " Oo @-@ De @-@ Lally " in two versions and " Not In Nottingham " .

The " Hampster Dance " single in 2000 was based on the melody of " Whistle Stop " . The Internet Meme that the " Hampster Dance " was based on used a sped @-@ up version of Roger Miller 's recording . The commercial song for Hampton the Hamster was altered to a sound @-@ alike sample when the producers failed to obtain the rights to the original song .

In the 2010 film Jackass 3 , Miller 's song " You Can 't Rollerskate in a Buffalo Herd " is featured during the stunt which illustrates the songs title .

In 2015 , his song " Oo @-@ De @-@ Lally " was featured in the popular Android television commercial titled " Friends Furever . "

= = Discography = =

= = = Main albums = = =

Roger and Out (1964)
The Return of Roger Miller (1965)
The 3rd Time Around (1965)
Words and Music (1966)
Walkin ' in the Sunshine (1967)
A Tender Look at Love (1968)
Roger Miller (1969)
Roger Miller Featuring Dang Me ! (1969)
A Trip in the Country (1970)
Roger Miller 1970 (1970)
Dear Folks , Sorry I Haven 't Written Lately (1973)
Celebration (1976)
Painted Poetry (1977)
Off the Wall (1978)
Waterhole No. 3 (1978)
Making a Name for Myself (1979)
Old Friends (with Willie Nelson) (1982)
The Country Side of Roger Miller (1986)
Green Green Grass of Home (1994)
King of the Road : The Genius of Roger Miller (1995)

= = = # 1 singles = = =

Released and recorded by Miller

" Dang Me " (1964)
" King of the Road " (1965)
" England Swings " (1966)

Recorded and released by other artists

" Billy Bayou " ? Jim Reeves (1958)
" Don 't We All Have the Right " ? Ricky Van Shelton (1988)
" Tall , Tall Trees " ? Alan Jackson (1995)
" Husbands and Wives " ? Brooks & Dunn (1998)

= = Awards = =

In addition to 11 Grammy Awards , Roger Miller won Broadway 's Tony Award for writing the music and lyrics for Big River , which won a total of 7 Tony 's including best musical in 1985 . He was voted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1973 and the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1995 . Miller 's 11 Grammy Awards held the record as the most won by a single artist until Michael Jackson 's 1982 album Thriller . In Erick , Oklahoma where he grew up , a thoroughfare was renamed " Roger Miller Boulevard " and a museum dedicated to Miller was built on the road in 2004 .

Below is a list of awards won by Miller :

1964 ? Grammy Award : Best Country Song : " Dang Me "
1964 ? Grammy Award : Best New Country and Western Artist
1964 ? Grammy Award : Best Country and Western Recording , Single : " Dang Me "
1964 ? Grammy Award : Best Country and Western Performance , Male : " Dang Me "
1964 ? Grammy Award : Best Country and Western Album : " Dang Me " / " Chug @-@ a @-@ Lug
" 1965 ? Jukebox Artist of the Year

1965 ? Grammy Award : Best Country Song : " King of the Road "
1965 ? Grammy Award : Best Country Vocal Performance , Male : " King of the Road "
1965 ? Grammy Award : Best Country and Western Recording , Single : " King of the Road "
1965 ? Grammy Award : Best Contemporary Vocal Performance , Male : " King of the Road "
1965 ? Grammy Award : Best Contemporary (Rock ' N Roll) , Single : " King of the Road "
1965 ? Grammy Award : Best Country and Western Album : " The Return of Roger Miller "
1965 ? Academy of Country and Western Music : " Best Songwriter "
1965 ? Academy of Country and Western Music : " Man of the Year "
1973 ? Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame
1985 ? Tony Award for Best Score and Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Lyrics for Big River
1988 ? Academy of Country Music : Pioneer Award
1995 ? Country Music Hall of Fame
1997 ? Grammy Hall of Fame Song : " Dang Me "
1998 ? Grammy Hall of Fame Song : " King of the Road "
2003 ? CMT 's 40 Greatest Men of Country Music : Ranked No. 23 .