

## *Cindy Walker: Queen of Country Songwriters*

"I'm a songwriter and a good one, too!" said 22-year-old Texas native Cindy Walker in 1940 as she waltzed unannounced into Bing Crosby's Hollywood office to pitch a tune. Crosby liked what he heard and recorded Cindy's western song, *Lone Star Trail*. Within months, Cindy tracked down Bob Wills, the king of Western Swing, and convinced him to record several of her songs. One of them, *Cherokee Maiden*, remains a Western Swing standard.

And Cindy Walker--at age 85 still writing songs from her home in Mexia--remains one of the most famous songwriters in country music history. More than 500 of her songs have been recorded. Many became top 10 hits.

Cindy was drawn to music early. Her grandfather, Professor F.L. Eiland, was a noted church hymnist. Her mother, Oree Walker, was an accomplished pianist who, until her death in 1991, played on all of Cindy's song demo tapes sent to artists.

During 13 years in Hollywood, Cindy wrote songs and also pursued a short-lived recording career, charting a hit in 1944 with *When My Blue Moon Turns to Gold Again*, ironically not one of her own songs. She appeared in movies with the singing cowboy, Gene Autry, and even made "soundies," the 1940s-filmed predecessors to music videos.

But songwriting was her love. She eventually wrote more than 50 songs recorded by Bob Wills, including the hits *Bubbles in My Beer*, *You're From Texas*, and *Dusty Skies*, a song she wrote at age 12.

In 1954 Cindy brought her songwriting career back home to Texas, moving with her widowed mother to Mexia.

Both country and pop artists covered her classic songs--including *Dream Baby* (recorded by Roy Orbison, Glen Campbell, Patti Page, and Perry Como), *In the Misty Moonlight* (Jerry Wallace and Dean Martin), *I Don't Care* (Webb Pierce, Faron Young, and Ricky Skaggs) and *You Don't Know Me* (Eddie Arnold, Ray Charles, and Mickey Gilley).

During four decades, her songs garnered more than 20 awards from BMI (Broadcast Music, Inc.). In 1970, Cindy became the first woman inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame. In 1997 she was inducted into the Country Music Association Hall of Fame in Nashville and, the following year, into the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame.

Cindy's latest project is writing the theme song for the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame, which will be performed publicly for the first time at this year's induction ceremony and show (see accompanying article).

Asked about her legacy, Cindy Walker says, "I don't count. It's my songs I want people to remember."

--Randy Mallory

--00--

#### RESOURCES:

--Cindy Walker interview, 254-562-3301

--*Panola Watchman*, Aug. 16, 1998 (supplied)

--*Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum Encyclopedia of Country Music*, Oxford Press, 1998 (enclosed)

Web:

[http://artist.country.com/cmt/art/search/art.bios.jhtml?ai\\_id=507760](http://artist.country.com/cmt/art/search/art.bios.jhtml?ai_id=507760)

<http://www.texasalmanac.com/texasmusicwomen.shtml>

[http://www.carthagetexas.com/Tx\\_web/cindy\\_walker.htm](http://www.carthagetexas.com/Tx_web/cindy_walker.htm)

<http://www.halloffame.org/hall/mem/cindy-walker.html>

<http://www.nashvillesongwritersfoundation.com/fame/walker.html>