



The Wittliff Collections

Guide to the Jerry Jeff Walker Collection 1970–1979

Collection SWWC-047

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Walker, Jerry Jeff
Title:	Guide to the Jerry Jeff Walker Collection
Dates:	1970–1979
Abstract:	This small collection is comprised of the handwritten lyrics and chord notations to the country western song “Charlie Dunn”, written in the 1970s by Jerry Jeff Walker for the Texas boot maker by that name. Also included is the first pair of custom lizard skin boots made for Walker by Dunn.
Identification:	SWWC-047
Extent:	2 boxes (plus 1 framed item), 2 Linear Feet
Language:	English
Repository:	The Wittliff Collections, Texas State University

Table Of Contents

Biographical Note	3
Scope and Contents	4
Administrative Information	5
Conditions Governing Access	5
Immediate Source of Acquisition	5
Physical Location	5
Preferred Citation	5
Conditions Governing Use	5
Controlled Access Headings	5
Detailed Description of the Collection	6
Series I: Lyrics, undated	6

Biographical Note

Singer-songwriter Jerry Jeff Walker was born Ronald Clyde Crosby on March 16, 1942, in Oneonta, New York. In the early 1960s, he hitchhiked cross-country, singing in bars and on street corners, adopting the name Jerry Jeff Walker in 1966. While performing in Texas, Walker met songwriter Bob Bruno, with whom he formed a band called the Lost Sea Dreamers (and later Circus Maximus), and relocated to New York City.

In 1968, Walker wrote the song he would become famous for, “Mr. Bojangles”, which enabled him to embark on a solo career, this time based in Austin. Although Walker’s recording of the song barely broke the charts, artists such as Tom T. Hall, Sammy Davis, Jr., Harry Belafonte, George Burns, and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band covered it, making Walker and his music known to a national audience.

Walker became a central figure in the burgeoning alternative country scene in Austin beginning in the early 1970s. In 1973, he recorded the album “Viva Terlingua” in Luckenbach, Texas, a ghost town which was memorialized by Waylon Jennings’ 1977 hit song of the same name. Walker began to celebrate his birthday in Luckenbach, an event which has grown to legendary proportions. From the early 1970s to 1978, he played with the Lost Gonzo Band, which was known for its skilled musicians, including singer-songwriter Gary P. Nunn.

In 1986, Walker formed his own production company, Tried and True Music, and began to take more time with each of his recording projects. In 1991, he began hosting the television show “The Texas Connection”, on the Nashville Network (TNN). In that same year, he played at the inauguration of Texas Governor, Ann Richards, and two years later at the inauguration of President Bill Clinton. Walker continues to play in packed halls to audiences ranging in age from teenagers to retirees.

Scope and Contents

This small collection is comprised of the handwritten lyrics and chord notations to the country western song “Charlie Dunn”, written in the 1970s by Jerry Jeff Walker for the Texas boot maker by that name, who worked with Buck Steiner, at the Capital Saddlery, on Lavaca Street in Austin, Texas. Also included is the first pair of custom lizard skin boots made for Walker by Dunn, which bear Walker’s initials on the front shaft of each boot.

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

Collection is open for research.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Jerry Jeff and Susan Walker, 1991

Physical Location

Materials may be stored off-site. Advance notice is required for use: .
<https://www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu/research/makearesearchappointment.html>.

Preferred Citation

Jerry Jeff Walker Collection, The Wittliff Collections, Texas State University.

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<https://www.thewittliffcollections.txstate.edu/research/visit/policies/publication.html>

Controlled Access Headings

- Cowboy boots
- Lyrics
- Music -- Texas
- Musicians -- Texas
- Songs -- Texts

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Lyrics, undated

Box	Folder	Description
1	1	"Charlie Dunn" (Handwritten), undated
1	2	"Night Rider's Lament," by Michael Burton, "as sung by Jerry Jeff Walker," signed by Walker, undated
Frame Case, row 3		"To the Artist" (handwritten, framed), undated
2		Lizard skin boots made for Walker by Charlie Dunn. They bear "JJW" on the front shafts of each boot.