

WITHOUT GETTING KILLED & CAUGHT

Guy Charles Clark

November 6, 1941 – May 17, 2016

Grammy-winner, Nashville Songwriter Hall of Fame member, Academy of Country Music Poet's Award honoree, and fearless raconteur Guy Charles Clark died on Tuesday May 17, 2016 after a long illness. His musical touring partner of nearly 30 years, Verlon Thompson, was at his side.

Clark was born in the dusty west Texas town of Monahans on November 6, 1941 to Ellis and Frances Clark. The family, which grew to include Guy's younger sisters Caroline and Janis, lived at grandmother Rossie Clark's 13-room shotgun hotel; home to bomber pilots, drifters, oilmen and a wildcatter named Jack Prigg, the subject of Clark's famous song "Desperados Waiting For A Train." When Guy's father returned from WWII and graduated from law school, the Clarks moved to the Gulf coast town of Rockport, Texas. Guy came of age in the pretty little beach town. As captain and center, Guy led the football team. He played guard in basketball, ran the 100-yard dash and threw discus in track and field. He won science fairs, joined the Explorer's club, presided over the junior class as president, acted in school plays, excelled on the debate team, illustrated the yearbook, and fell in love with Mexican folk songs and the Flamenco guitar.

After a couple of false starts at university, Guy joined the Peace Corps in 1963. He trained in Rio Abajo, Puerto Rico, practicing water survival, rock climbing and trekking, followed by a month of book learning at the University of Minnesota. After turning down an assignment in Punjab, India, Guy moved to Houston, where he opened a guitar repair shop with his friend Minor Wilson. He played guitar and sang folk songs at the Houston Folklore Society, Sand Mountain coffee shop and the Jester Lounge, where he began life long friendships with fellow struggling songwriters and musicians Mickey Newbury, Townes Van Zandt, Jerry Jeff Walker, Kay Oslin, Frank Davis, Gary White and Crow Johnson. He married his first wife, folksinger Susan Spaw, and they had a son Travis in 1966.

In 1969, after splitting with Susan, Guy moved to San Francisco and again joined Minor Wilson in a guitar repair shop. Within a year, he moved back to Houston, met and fell in love with a beautiful dark-haired painter named Susanna Talley. Susanna moved from Oklahoma City to Houston to be with Guy and after a few months, she sold a painting to fund the couple's move to Los Angeles. Guy landed a job building Dobros at the Dopyera Brothers Original Musical Instruments Company. He played with a bluegrass band on the weekends and pitched his songs to publishing companies in between.

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He signed a publishing deal with Sunbury Dunbar and moved to Nashville in the fall of 1971. He and Susanna crashed on songwriter Mickey Newbury's houseboat for a few weeks and then moved into a small rental house at 1307 Chapel Avenue in East Nashville. Guy and Susanna returned to Newbury's houseboat on January 14, 1972 along with Mickey and Susan Newbury and Townes Van Zandt as best man; the five friends sailed up the Cumberland River to the Sumner County Courthouse where Guy Clark and Susanna Talley married.

In that first year in East Nashville Susanna and Townes wrote "Heavenly Houseboat Blues," while Guy turned out "Desperados Waiting for a Train," "L.A. Freeway," and "That Old Time Feeling." By the time Guy released *Old No. 1*, his debut critically acclaimed album for RCA Records in 1975, he had written several soon-to-be classic songs including "She Ain't Going Nowhere," "Let Him Roll," "Rita Ballou," and "Texas 1947."

He jumped from RCA to Warner Brothers in 1978, scoring a number one song with Ricky Skaggs's take on "Heartbroke" in 1982 and breaking into the *Billboard* country chart with "Homegrown Tomatoes" in 1983. Clark hit his stride when he signed with Sugar Hill Records in 1989, and then released a string of significant folk and Americana albums with Sugar Hill, Asylum Records and Dualtone Music Group during the next two-and-a-half decades: *Old Friends*, *Boats to Build*, *Dublin Blues*, *Keepers*, *Cold Dog Soup*, *The Dark*, *Workbench Songs*, *Somedays the Song Writes You* and his final 2013 Grammy-winning Best Folk Album, *My Favorite Picture of You*.

For more than forty years, the Clark home was a gathering place for songwriters, folk singers, artists and misfits; many who sat at the feet of the master songwriter in his element, willing Guy's essence into their own pens. Throughout his long and extraordinary career, Guy Clark blazed a trail for original and groundbreaking artists and troubadours including his good friends Rodney Crowell, Jim McGuire, Steve Earle, Emmylou Harris, Joe Ely, Lyle Lovett, Verlon Thompson, Shawn Camp, and Vince Gill.

His beloved Susanna died from complications of lung cancer in 2012. Due to ongoing health problems, Guy stopped touring and recording shortly thereafter.

Guy is survived by his son Travis (Krista), grandson Dylan (Mary) and granddaughter Ellie Clark, sisters Caroline Clark Dugan and Jan Clark, and many dear friends including his earliest songwriter compadres Rodney Crowell and Steve Earle.

A memorial celebration will be held in August at Nashville's famed Ryman Auditorium.