

2010 Inductee. . .

Ray Winkler

"Welcome to my World"

Ray was looking forward to the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame inaugural induction show in August 1998 which would honor his dear friend, Jim Reeves, and had given his blessing for the opening notes of "Welcome To My World" to be used in the logo. However, his attendance was not to be, as he passed away in May 1998.

Winkler, in collaboration with John Hathcock, wrote "Welcome to My World" for Reeves in 1961. Winkler and Hathcock wrote hundreds of songs together, and many have been recorded. But "Welcome To My World" was their masterpiece, a classic that would be recorded by more than 140 artists, and a standard that would provide definition for Jim Reeves.



Ray Winkler with John Hathcock, wrote "Welcome to My World" for Jim Reeves in 1961...

Rayburn Franklin Winkler was born in Bonham on October 13, 1920. After high school he moved to Dallas to pursue a business education and a career in radio broadcasting. In 1942 he married the love of his life Libby Carmical, and soon entered the U. S. Navy, working as a recruiter and on a public radio show in Little Rock, Arkansas.

After World War II, Winkler moved to sports broadcasting and announced professional league baseball games. He then had an opportunity to become General Manager of the Lubbock Hubbers and became President of the West Texas-New Mexico Pro Baseball League.

In 1955, Ray was fortunate to get back into radio with ownership of a new radio station KZIP in Amarillo. John Hathcock came to work at KZIP, sharing a gift for songwriting with Winkler.

*Welcome to my world
Won't you come on in
Miracles I guess
Still happen now and then
Step into my heart
Leave your cares behind
Welcome to my world
Built with you in mind
Knock and the door will open
Seek and you will find
Ask and you'll be given
The key to this world of mine
I'll be waiting here
With my arms unfurled
Waiting just for you
Welcome to my world...*

One regular visitor of KZIP was Jim Reeves. Jim, like many other country artists, stopped by KZIP when they were in Amarillo for personal appearances. As a former disk jockey and minor league baseball player, he had a lot in common with Ray Winkler.

Ray had hoped to write a song for Gentleman Jim, and he and Hathcock tested songs on Reeves every time he appeared in Amarillo. "You're getting better," responded Reeves.

Reeves liked the sound of "Welcome To My World," with lyrics by Winkler and music by Hathcock. Jim took the original demo by Dean Kelley to sing it on his tour bus, while playing golf, and even while getting a haircut. Gentleman Jim released the first recording in 1962. Immediately popular with the public, "Welcome To My World" became a mainstay of Jim's live performances.

Other artists found it irresistible. Elvis Presley, Dean Martin, Mel Tillis, Ray Price, Eddy Arnold, and more than 135 other performers covered the song, and tourists to Graceland are welcomed at the entrance by Elvis' version. It has been used in movies, TV shows, commercials, plays and countless Ringtones. Most recent recordings include Raul Malo, Steve Wariner and several Thomson Travel commercials in London showcasing the original recording by Jim Reeves.

But "Welcome To My World" belongs first and foremost to Gentleman Jim Reeves, which was the original intention of the composers.

Ray fondly wrote and recorded a recitation entitled "My Tribute To Jim Reeves" which depicts the life of his dear friend.