

Specht: Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes

***“Don't Let the Stars Get in
Slim Willet's Idiosyncratic Chart-Topper Lives On!”***

Joe W. Specht

In the fall of 1952, and well on into 1953, the nation's radio airwaves and jukeboxes were filled with the sound of "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes." The song, penned by Abilene disc jockey Slim Willet, was all the rage with four different versions in Billboard's Country & Western Top 10. On Billboard's Pop chart, Perry Como took the song to Number 1, selling over one million copies.

Willet, born Winston Lee Moore on December 1, 1919, in Victor, Texas, (western Erath County), began his radio career in the late 1940s at Abilene's Hardin-Simmons University. While working as student manager of KHSU, the school radio station, Moore adopted the pseudonym "Slim," because he was anything but slender. He took Willet from the Willets, characters in his favorite comic strip *Out Our Way*. After graduating from Hardin-Simmons in 1949, Slim went to work for Abilene radio station KRBC. He also wrote songs, and in 1950, he recorded one of his signature tunes, "I'm a Tool Pusher from Snyder," for Dallas-based Star Talent Records. However, "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes" is the song that would earn Willet fame and fortune.²

In January 1953, at the height of "Stars" mania, Stuart Chilton was a journalism instructor at Abilene High School, while also freelancing for the *Houston Chronicle*. When a student reminded the teacher that KRBC radio disc jockey Slim Willet had composed "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes," Chilton thought, "Man, this would make a good story for the Sunday magazine supplement in the *Houston Chronicle*."³ His editor at the *Chronicle* agreed, so Chilton scheduled an interview with Willet at the KRBC studio, then headquartered on the top floor of the Windsor Hotel in downtown Abilene.

According to Willet, the inspiration for his opus came from a letter he received sometime in September 1951 from a young G.I. stationed in Korea. The soldier asked the deejay to spin a platter for his girlfriend who lived in the area and listened to KRBC. "Play her a song, tell her to wait for me," pleaded the young soldier, "and tell her not to let the stars get in her eyes."⁴ The phrase stuck with Slim, and he soon began working on a song. Willet's wife, Jimmie Moore, remembers her husband sitting on their bed strumming his guitar, piddling with the lyrics – *Don't let the stars get in your eyes, don't let the moon break your heart, love blooms at night, in daylight it dies* – while the

Your Eyes":

reflection of "the stars and moon would shine through [an open window] and splash on our bed."⁵ The finished version of the tune included a breathless Kerouacian run-on sentence with a note sustained for a few extra beats at the end of each verse before the whole thing hurtled forward again— *Don't let the stars get in your eyes, oh, keep your heart for me, for someday I'll return, and you know you're the only one I'll ever love.*

Willet eventually got around to recording the song, now appropriately titled "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes," in the spring of 1952.⁶ At the conclusion of the *Big State Jamboree*, a musical variety show hosted by Willet every Saturday evening,

By the time he recorded "Stars," Willet had a working arrangement with 4 Star Records. 4 Star, located in Pasadena, California, operated an independent custom service, and, for a nominal fee, the company pressed records in its OP (Other People) series for an individual or group to sell at personal appearances. As part of the business agreement, 4 Star acquired the publishing rights to the song(s), and the company could choose to re-release the recording under its own banner, if interest or sales warranted.⁹ But 4 Star's owner, Bill McCall, had a reputation as a no-nonsense businessman who regularly withheld royalty payments. According to fellow country music

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38 Slim and some local musicians (including members of Shorty Underwood's band, the Brush Cutters) moved recording equipment into Abilene's Fair Park Auditorium and got down to business. Buck White tinkled the ivories in his inimitable honky-tonk piano style, while Smokey Donaldson supplied the lead flattop guitar picking, and Shorty Underwood took the fiddle breaks. James Wood handled steel guitar duties, with both Mack Fletcher and Jean Stansbury on rhythm guitar, and Georgia Underwood played bass.⁷ The rollicking, freeform results were, in Slim's words, "an off meter song [in which] the band could play as long as they want between phrases, and the singer can begin singing whenever he feels like it."⁸

singer Webb Pierce, who recorded for 4 Star before finding success on Decca Records, "[McCall] thought it was a sin to pay anybody."¹⁰ This would eventually turn out to be a problem for Willet, as well.

Don Pierce, McCall's second-in-command, describes the first time he heard "Stars." "I was at a little studio in downtown Los Angeles making some masters for custom manufacturing when a tape came in from Slim Willet. When I heard that song I about jumped out of my skin."¹¹ Bill McCall was not impressed, however, and he told Slim in no uncertain terms that the song was "off beat, off meter, off everything."¹² Music historian and journalist Colin Escott concurs that, "The original version [of "Stars"] was so wretchedly sloppy and off-key that no one could see the potential."¹³ Of course, this did not dissuade McCall from taking his share of the publishing rights, once the song became successful.

Despite such misgivings, Willet went ahead and paid \$85 to have three-hundred copies pressed in the OP series for release on his own Slim Willet label.¹⁴ He also hired a salesman to help promote the record in Texas. Initially they plugged the flipside, "Hadacol Corners," but listeners soon discovered "Stars." When McCall realized the song he had panned was "getting terrific requests" in the Lone Star State, he exercised his option and re-released it on 4 Star in June 1952.¹⁵ *Billboard's* review of the disc proved oddly lukewarm— "Nothing special or exciting here."¹⁶

Nevertheless, sensing a potential hit in the making, the major record companies came calling. Bill McCall positioned himself in the thick of the action as both 4 Star Records executive and the song's publisher. In a most unique move, he bought three-hundred copies of Gisele MacKenzie's version of "Stars" on Capitol Records and sent them out to disk jockeys whom 4 Star regularly serviced.¹⁷ Willet was doing his part to plug the



The original release of 'Stars' on the Slim Willet label. Courtesy Joe W. Specht.

record, too. Ray Campi, a future rockabilly singer from Austin, met Slim in Odessa during the summer of 1952. "[Willet] had the records in his car [and] he opened up the boot of it and showed me all those 78s of 'Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes' on 4 Star...then just a few weeks later...everybody had...covered it."¹⁸

Record producers and A&R men were acutely aware of a country song's potential to become a "crossover" hit when recorded by a pop performer.¹⁹ Patti Page's 1950 version of "The Tennessee Waltz," which was written by Grand Ole Opry members Pee Wee King and Redd Stewart, eventually sold over six million copies.²⁰ Mitch Miller, who worked with Page at Mercury Records, is often credited with being the first major label executive to regularly plumb the hillbilly catalog. In the early 1950s, he scored big at Columbia Records by assigning Hank Williams compositions to Tony Bennett, Rosemary Clooney, Jo Stafford, and Frankie Lane.²¹ The Kapp brothers (Jack and Dave) at Decca Records had achieved similar success a decade earlier with Bing Crosby.²² The Kapp-Crosby partnership took particular interest in songs written by Texans. Two of Bing's all-time biggest sellers were Bob Wills's "New San Antonio Rose" in 1941 and Al Dexter's "Pistol Packin' Mama" in 1943.²³ During the same period, Crosby also recorded Floyd Tillman's "It Makes No Difference Now" and Ernest Tubb's "Walking the Floor Over You." Bing gave Cindy Walker, at the time a fledgling wordsmith, one of her first big breaks when he agreed to record her song "Lone Star Trail."²⁴

The 1940s and 1950s was an era in which record companies



Peggy Hayama's Japanese version of 'Stars.'
Courtesy Joe W. Specht.

of the gate, followed by Lola Amache (Mercury), Eileen Barton (Coral), Perry Como (RCA Victor), the Henry Jerome Orchestra with Jolly Joe Grimm (MGM), Robert "Bobby" Maxwell and the Windy City Orchestra (Mercury), Tony Phillips (Crest), and Loren Becker with Enoch Light Orchestra & Chorus (Prom).²⁸ In England, both Dame Gracie Fields, celebrated singer and actress, and Dennis Lotis, backed by the Ted Heath Orchestra, waxed "Stars" for UK Decca.²⁹ Perhaps even more remarkable,

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"Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes" would prove to be one of the most widely-covered crossover hits of the period.

were convinced that the song, not the recording or the performer, was most important. As a result, it was not unusual for several different versions of the same tune to be available to the buying public at the same time.²⁵ "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes" would prove to be one of the most widely-covered crossover hits of the period. In the field of country music, Capitol Records entered the fray with Skeets McDonald serving up a 1952 rendition very similar to Slim's original. Columbia Records quickly followed with a version by Ray Price, and then Decca Records issued Red Foley's more pop-oriented take on the tune. These three recordings, along with Willet's, settled into *Billboard's* Country & Western Top-10.²⁶ Other versions simultaneously in release included Johnnie and Jack on RCA Victor and Corky Carpenter and the Texas Playboys on Tops.²⁷

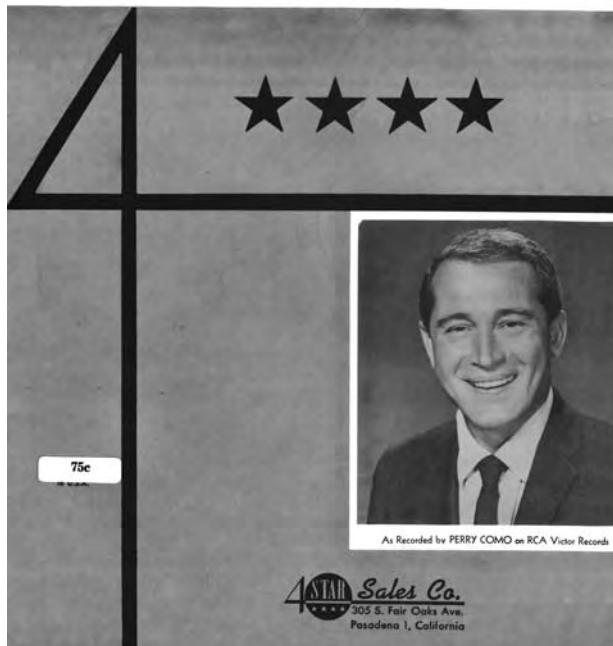
On the pop side, Gisele MacKenzie (Capitol) was first out

Peggy Hayama, who became known as one of Japan's premier jazz vocalists, recorded the song in Japanese for issue by King Records in Japan.³⁰

There were at least fourteen competing versions of "Stars" getting some play, but it was Perry Como's mammoth-selling 1952 chart-topper that insured the song's immortality, something that Slim readily acknowledged. "The break I got on 'Stars' was when Perry Como recorded the song. That's when it took off like a rocket. Without Como's record, it probably would not have hit the big time."³¹ Yet, Perry was a reluctant participant at first. He later told Don Pierce, "They [RCA Victor producers] played it for me, and I didn't think much of it, and I didn't think I could sing it."³² Como's record sales were in a bit of a slump, however, and with juke box operators, deejays, and record dealers urging him to step-up the rhythm, he agreed to

Don't Let The Stars Get In Your Eyes

By SLIM WILLET



Sheet music for Perry Como's version of 'Stars.'
Courtesy Joe W. Specht.

record one take of "Stars" with Hugo Winterhalter's Orchestra and vocal backing by The Ramblers.³³

Initial reviews were mixed. George T. Simon, writing in *Metronome*, complained that Como's recording "lacks the fire of the competing versions...Perry still can't seem to get excited about anything."³⁴ The reviewer in *Down Beat* proved to be more prophetic, stating that "Perry delivers a lively coverage

would have been if he could have read his own obituary as posted by Reuters News Service. In noting that Como had sold more than 50 million records during his career, Reuters singled out three songs for mention, and, yes, "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes" was one of them.³⁸

Slim Willet continued to record in Abilene and release his records on 4 Star or through the OP series on the Slim Willet label, but the follow-up hit remained elusive.³⁹ The royalty checks on "Stars" were not rolling in as expected either, further validation of Bill McCall's exploitative reputation. As Faron Young, a future member of the Country Music Hall of Fame, put it, "Bill McCall screwed everybody in this town [Nashville] once, or tried to."⁴⁰

Young also commented on Slim's plight. "Slim Willet...was owed over \$100,000 in 1953 and received only \$1,500. If you got in McCall's office past his ten secretaries, he was such a smoothie he could talk you out of killing him. God knows, enough of us tried! But Slim just walked in there, reached over McCall's desk, grabbed him by the neck, and like to beat the shit out of him. He left with a check for \$60,000 in his pocket."⁴¹ An exaggeration perhaps, but Bill Mack, the famed "Midnight Cowboy" and late night disc jockey, offers a similar account about Willet heading out to California to confront McCall over the royalties due him. "Really it was a scene similar to the one... in the film, *The Godfather*. Utilizing a weapon he had brought from Texas, Slim made McCall 'an offer he couldn't refuse.'⁴² Even more apocryphal and perfectly scripted for a Max Sennett slapstick comedy is the tale of a passel of Willet's "oil rigger buddies" dangling McCall out of a hotel window until he agreed to pay up.⁴³

Within the Moore family, Slim's older brother, Omar, told a slightly different story. "Winston arrived at Bill McCall's office wearing cowboy boots. To make his point, he jumped up on

A rumor began circulating that Slim was not the composer of "Stars."

of a sparkling country song. His version could well assure the song of attaining hit status."³⁵ As *Time* magazine subsequently confirmed, "The jukebox operators ate it up; so did individual record buyers...and Como was out of his slump."³⁶

Despite its enormous success, Como never took to the song. As Perry admitted to the Associated Press in a 1988 interview, he considered "Stars" just one of the "awful novelty songs" his concert audiences expected him to perform. "Me and Sinatra and all the rest of the singers used to talk about all the crap we had to sing...I still do ['Stars'] onstage once in a while...but I say 'yech' afterwards."³⁷ One wonders what Como's reaction

McCall's desk, and he stomped his feet so hard he shattered the glass on top of the desk."⁴⁴ Suffice it to say, Slim Willet's visit left an indelible impression on Bill McCall – not to mention his desk – and the royalty checks commenced to flow without interruption. In 1958, Willet could boast that "Stars" had earned him "more than \$230,000," which, if accurate, is the equivalent of \$1,600,000 in today's currency.⁴⁵

Somewhere along the way, a rumor began circulating that Slim was not the composer of "Stars." According to the story, he supposedly bought it from "some guy from around Novice" in Coleman County, Texas.⁴⁶ Dean Beard, a Willet session man

and short-lived member of the Champs (of "Tequila" fame) who led his own band the Crew Cats, is a likely source of the rumor, which finally surfaced in print in 1993 in the *Coleman Chronicle & DV*. Here columnist Roxy Gordon matter-of-factly stated, "I'm told it's common knowledge among the people of that era [1950s] that Slim Willett [sic] didn't write the song at all."⁴⁸

When Gordon repeated the allegation fifteen months later in another column in the Coleman newspaper, Bob Lapham, arts editor of the *Abilene Reporter-News*, attempted to confirm the veracity of the claim by contacting both Gordon and Rick Sikes, himself a musician and native of Coleman County who had passed along Beard's story to Gordon.⁴⁹ Neither Gordon nor Sikes could personally corroborate the rumor, and, with Dean Beard and the "guy from around Novice" both dead, Roxy Gordon ruefully suggested to Lapham, "Just leave things as they are."⁵⁰

The charge was certainly news to Slim's widow, Jimmie Moore, as well as to longtime Willet associates such as Vaughn O'Shields, who remarked that, "I was with [Slim] from the beginning until he died, and he got everything he deserved from that song."⁵¹ James Wood, the steel guitarist on the "Stars" recording, is further convinced that his boss was the composer, "because I helped him change some of the words."⁵² Bill Mack, like Willet a member of the Country Music Disc Jockey Hall of Fame, weighed in, too. "There's no doubt in my mind," Mack told Lapham, that Slim wrote the song.⁵³

The rumor of Willet's misappropriation of "Stars" has even turned up on the Internet, albeit with no mention of the "guy from around Novice." Before it was corrected, the undocumented entry for "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes" in *Wikipedia*, "the free encyclopedia," attributed the authorship of the song to Nashville Songwriter Hall of Fame member Rex Griffin. "It ['Stars'] was written by Rex Griffin stolen by Slim Willet."⁵⁴ For Texas music historian Kevin Coffey, "this is a new one on me...I don't believe it for a minute." Coffey has researched and written extensively about Rex Griffin, who died in 1959, and Coffey had ample opportunity to spend time with Rex's brother Buddy Griffin, who was more than familiar with his older brother's career. In response to the charge in *Wikipedia*, Coffey observes, "I never heard the story of Rex writing 'Stars.' Buddy never made any sort of claim like that, nor did any other Dallas musician around at the time [early 1950s when Griffin was living there] who I spoke to."⁵⁵

Bill Mack also commented on "the unusual meter" that gives "Stars" such a unique bounce.⁵⁶ There is certainly no overlooking the frenetic rhythm – what Bill McCall labeled as "off beat, off meter, off everything." *Time* magazine, in a vignette on Perry Como, was quick to point to the song's "frantic Latin beat."⁵⁷ While an anonymous music critic of the day condescendingly opined, "[Willet] made his effect chiefly

by ignoring any consistency of rhythmic pattern, as commonly practiced by the guitar-playing troubadours of the southern mountains."⁵⁸ As noted earlier, even Perry Como expressed doubt before recording the song, "I complained...I told them the meter's wrong. I don't understand it."⁵⁹

However, the unusual "Latin" beat is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the song's popularity. Perhaps as importantly, it offers additional proof of Willet's authorship of "Stars." He had already experimented with the slippery rhythmic pattern a year earlier on "Let Me Know," and when "Stars" broke out on the country and pop charts, Slim explained how he latched on to the peculiar cadence.⁶⁰ After moving to Clyde, Texas, in 1935 and attending Clyde High School, Willet worked at a variety of odd jobs, and even rode the rails. In 1937, he enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) which assigned him to a camp in Arizona.⁶¹ There were several Mexican Americans also staying in the camp, and each evening the men got together to sing and play the guitar. The Latin rhythms Slim heard around the campfire made a lasting impression on the young Texan. As he told *Cowboy Songs* magazine years later, "They sang every night. I listened. Since then, I have never been able to get my music completely away from their tempo and style."⁶²

In South Texas, Beto Villa, often called the "father" of Orquesta Tejana, quickly reciprocated by recording an instrumental dance version of "Stars" on Discos Ideal with the lyrical title "Que No Te Engañen Las Estrellas" ("So the Stars Don't Fool You").⁶³ Hispanic performers on the other side of the Rio Grande also took a liking to the beat. Latin American superstars Pedro Vargas (Mexico), Bobby Capó (Puerto Rico), and Billo's Caracas Boys (Venezuela) each recorded the Willet

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Beto Villa's Spanish-language version of 'Stars.'
Courtesy Joe W. Specht.



LP cover highlighting "Stars." Courtesy Joe W. Specht

composition as "No Hay Que Dejarse Ilusionar," which literally translates as "Don't Let Yourself Be Fooled."⁶⁴

With all the various versions of "Stars" in circulation, *Billboard* magazine ranked it as the nation's "top tune" for three weeks running in January 1953.⁶⁵ The song boasted further international appeal, too, with sheet music published in French, Spanish, and Japanese.⁶⁶ The QRS Music Company even issued a piano roll as played by J. Lawrence "Piano Roll" Cook.⁶⁷ Cast members of *Your Hit Parade* sang "Stars" on the ever popular radio-television show for nineteen straight weeks.⁶⁸ Although neither recorded the song, both Bing Crosby and Dean Martin crooned the tune on their own network radio programs.⁶⁹ In response to requests he received for "Stars" at his dances, Bob Wills served up a version, with Louise Rowe handling the vocal chores, on his afternoon radio broadcast on KXLA in Pasadena, California.⁷⁰ Tennessee Ernie Ford also recorded "Stars" in 1954 for RadiOzark, a transcription service which supplied prerecorded shows to subscribing radio stations.⁷¹

Not surprisingly, Perry Como showcased his Number 1 seller on *The Perry Como Show*, which aired thrice weekly on CBS Television.⁷² According to Moore family lore, Como's producer planned to book Slim Willet for an appearance on the show. Slim's older sister, Marie Moore Cass, remembers the contract called for her brother to receive \$1,000. Before the deal could be finalized, however, Como nixed the idea because "he wanted everyone to think *he* wrote the song." The show's producer encouraged Slim to keep the \$1,000, but Willet returned the check and contract along with a barbed personal note referring to Perry's pedigree as a former coiffeur. "You tell the barber to keep his \$1,000. He needs it worse than I do."⁷³

Further indication of the widespread popularity of "Stars" is

the number of answer songs and novelty tunes it inspired. After all, this was the heyday of the answer record. Webb Pierce, for example, scored a hit with "Back Street Affair," and Kitty Wells answered with "Paying for That Back Street Affair." The same thing happened with "Stars." The Bailey Brothers & the Happy Valley Boys waxed the mournful mountain duet "I Told the Stars About You" on their own Wheeling, West Virginia, based Canary label.⁷⁴ Goldie Hill did even better on Decca with her confessional "I Let the Stars Get in My Eyes," which reached *Billboard's* Country & Western Top-10 in January 1953.⁷⁵

On the whimsical side, 4 Star released "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes #2," a fast-talking nonsensical imitation co-written and recorded by Cactus Pryor, an Austin disc jockey, humorist, and newspaper columnist.⁷⁶ Former Spike Jones sidekick Red Ingle, recording for Mercury, served up "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes" with a moonshine liquor theme.⁷⁷ Homer and Jethro, perennial parodists of musical hits, jumped on the bandwagon with "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyeballs" for RCA Victor.⁷⁸ Not to be outdone, "Borscht Belt" comedian and klezmer musician, Mickey Katz, offered a Yiddish twist to the tune with "Don't Let the Schmaltz Get in Your Eyes," on Capitol Records.⁷⁹

Just how far had the song infiltrated the American consciousness? In a bit of over-the-top black humor, a "Stars" related Christine Jorgensen question-and-answer joke soon began making the rounds. In 1953, Jorgensen created a media frenzy after being among the first to undergo sex reassignment surgery (male to female). The question posed in the joke was "What's Christine Jorgensen's theme song?" The answer, as one might guess, was "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes."⁸⁰

"Stars" earned a BMI (Broadcast Music Incorporated) award in 1953 as one of the most popular tunes of the year.⁸¹ RCA Victor also presented Perry Como with his sixth gold record, while *Billboard* noted that "'Stars' has been the fastest of all Como gold platter disks to make the grade, hitting the 1,000,000 figure in less than 10 weeks after release."⁸² In 1955, 4 Star Sales Company, the song's publisher, announced that the original manuscript had been donated to the permanent collection of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.⁸³

Slim Willet basked in the limelight and rightly so. He made appearances on the *Big D Jamboree* (KRLD) and *Saturday Night Shindig* (WFAA) in Dallas, the *Louisiana Hayride* (KWKH) in Shreveport, the *Town Hall Party* (KFI) in Compton, California, even performing once on the *Grand Ole Opry* (WSM) in Nashville.⁸⁴ He also completed a successful screen test for Paramount Pictures.⁸⁵

On the business side, Willet branched out into song publishing, and for a brief period, Slim Willet Songs supported a Sunset Boulevard address in Hollywood.⁸⁶ He built a recording studio in his backyard and began releasing his own records, as well as

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those of other Abilene-area singers, first on Edmoral and then on the Winston label.⁸⁷ The Slim Willet Advertising Agency handled local promotional activities and outside bookings for Slim Whitman, Carl Smith, Johnny Horton, and a young up-and-coming Elvis Presley, all who graced the stage at Fair Park Auditorium.⁸⁸ Slim dabbled in several other enterprises, too, including Slim Willet Ice Cream and the Slim Willet Texaco Service, and he purchased a home in a newer, upscale neighborhood on Leggett Drive in Abilene.⁸⁹

In addition to hosting the *Big State Jamboree* on Saturday night, Willet was a pioneer in live television with a Wednesday evening music variety show on KRBC-TV, which aired for three years.⁹⁰ He also continued with his radio disc jockey duties on KRBC. In 1957, Willet joined the staff of newly licensed KNIT.⁹¹ Seven years later, he assumed the general manager duties at KCAD, one of the few all-country music radio stations in the state.⁹²

Slim Willet died on July 1, 1966, (at the age of 46) of an apparent heart attack, but the glow of "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes" has never really dimmed.⁹³ The assortment of renditions that have been recorded over the years is indeed a tribute to its idiosyncratic allure. In addition to numerous renderings by country music performers, "Stars" found a home in the repertoire of a polka band, classical orchestra, jazz combo, Dutch actor-singer, lesbian chanteuse, rockabilly revivalist, Tejano trailblazer, Irish show band, and two members of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, to mention only a few.⁹⁴

Among others who have recorded "Stars," country guitar stylists have been particularly attracted to the melody with Josh Graves, Grady Martin, Arthur "Guitar Boogie" Smith, and Pete Wade each recording albums which include an instrumental version of the tune.⁹⁵ Since Gracie Fields and Dennis Lotis issued their renditions in 1953, the United Kingdom has remained a hotbed of "Stars" activity, with recordings by Simprini (1960), the Fabulous Beats (1962), Jimmy Justice (1964), Brendon O'Brien & the Dixies (1967), Matchbox (1981), Foster & Allen (1994), Okch Wranglers (1996), Los Pistoleros (2000), Paul Ansell's Number Nine (2003), and Mason Grant & the Dynamos (2003).⁹⁶

What makes a song a hit? What makes it a classic? Perhaps it is the words or the melody, or, in the parlance of Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*, "It's got a good beat and you can dance to it." There is certainly no ready explanation for the continuing popularity of "Stars." Yet, fifty-seven years after Willet gathered his musicians at Fair Park Auditorium to record, the song still retains an indescribable appeal. Jimmie Dale Gilmore, who released a version in 2005, concludes, "'Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes,' by Slim Willett [sic], has been recorded dozens, perhaps hundreds of times. It defies classification."⁹⁷ ★



Slim Willet on KNIT radio, circa 1959. Courtesy Joe W. Specht.

**Recorded Versions of "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes"
(as of June 24, 2009)**

1952 – Lola Amache – Mercury
1952 – Eileen Barton – Coral
1952 – Corky Carpenter – Tops
1952 – Perry Como – RCA Victor
1952 – Jimmy Fair – Queen City
1952 – Red Foley – Decca
1952 – Henry Jerome Orchestra – MGM
1952 – Johnnie & Jack – RCA Victor
1952 – Gisele MacKenzie – Capitol
1952 – Skeets McDonald – Capitol
1952 – Ray Price – Columbia
1952 – Sagebrush Willie – Recorded in Hollywood
1952 – Slim Willet – Slim Willet OP; 4 Star
1953 – Billo's Caracas Boys (in Spanish) – Billos
1953 – Loren Becker – Prom
1953 – Bobby Capó (in Spanish) – Seeco
1953 – Gracie Fields – UK Decca
1953 – Peggy Hayama (in Japanese) – King [Japan]
1953 – Homer & Jethro (parody) – RCA Victor
1953 – Red Ingle (parody) – Mercury
1953 – Mickey Katz (parody) – Capitol
1953 – Dennis Lotis – UK Decca
1953 – Robert "Bobby" Maxwell – Mercury
1953 – Tony Phillips – Crest
1953 – Cactus Pryor (parody) – 4 Star
1953 – Pedro Vargas (in Spanish) – RCA Victor Mexicana
1953? – Beto Villa (instrumental) – Discos Ideal
1953? – Red Warrick – Black Mountain
1959 – Keely Smith – Dot
1959 – Faron Young – Capitol
196? – [Alberto] Samprini (instrumental) – EMI
196? – Tommie Tolleson (instrumental) – Collector
1960 – Carl Mann – Sun
1961 – Warner Mack – Kapp
1962 – Lavern Baker – Atlantic
1962 – Tommy Edwards – MGM
1962 – Fabulous Beats – Design
1962 – George Jones – United Artists
1962 – Werner Müller (instrumental) – London
1962 – The Parisian Sextet – Challenge
1962 – Leroy Van Dyke – Mercury
1963 – Dean Beard (instrumental) – Winston
1963 – Jimmy Jay – Phillips
1963 – Jimmy Justice – Pye; Blue Cat
1963 – Jack White – Country & Western Hits
1964 – The Browns – RCA Victor
1964 – Canadian Sweethearts – Quality; A&M
1964 – Billy Hayden (instrumental) – Crown

1964 – Shady Oaks Boys (instrumental) – Cumberland
1965 – Pat Boone – Dot
1965 – The New Yorkers (instrumental) – Panorama
1965 – Jerry Sedlar (instrumental) – Kapp
1966 – Chucho Avellanet (in English and Spanish) – UA Latino
1966 – Frank Chacksfield – London
1966 – Mexicali Singers – Warner Brothers
1967 – Grady Martin (instrumental) – Decca
1967 – Brendon O'Brien & the Dixies – Pye
1968 – Little Joe and the Latinaires – Tear Drop
1969 – Al Dean – Stop
1969 – Dave Dudley – Mercury
1969 – Conway Twitty – MGM
1970 – Roy Acuff, Jr. & Sue Thompson – Hickory
1970 – The Music City Sounds featuring Lloyd Green & Pete Wade
(instrumental) – MGM
1971 – Stompin' Tom Connors – Dominion
1971 – Bobby Lee Trammell – Suncot
1972 – Sylvia Mobley – Villa
1973 – Slim Whitman – United Artists
1973 – Johnny Wright – Decca
1975 – Joe Douglas – Monument
1975 – [Arthur] Smith & Son (instrumental) – Monument
1976 – Danny Davis and the Nashville Brass (instrumental)
– RCA Victor
1977 – Bonded Stock featuring Dave Coggins - Solar
1977 – Jerry Lee Lewis – Mercury
1977 – James Pastell – Paula
1977 – Ray Price – ABC Dot
1980 – Boxcar Willie – Main Street
1981 – Matchbox – Magnet
1983 – Sonny James – Dimension
1984 – Hank Wilson [Leon Russell] – Paradise
1987 – André van Duin (in Dutch) – CNR
1988 – Josh Graves (instrumental) – CMH
1988 – k. d. Lang – Sire
1989 – Doug Dillard Band – Flying Fish
1990 – Ray Campi – Real Music
1991 – Rocky Hernández – Sony Discos
1994 – Foster & Allen – Ronco
2000 – Okeh Wranglers – Fury
2000 – Los Pistoleros – Track
2003 – Paul Ansell's Number Nine – Coolville
2003 – Don Cherry – doncherrysinger.com
2003 – Mason Grant & the Dynamos – Pan
2004 – Laurie Lewis & Tom Rozum – Hightone
2005 – Jimmie Dale Gilmore – Rounder
2006 – Reverse Cowgirl – Side Show
2006 – Studio Group (instrumental) – Crown MP3
2008 – ALFIO [Alfio Bonanno] – One Voice

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Notes

- This article is based on a paper originally presented at the annual meeting of the West Texas Historical Association held in Abilene on March 30, 2007. For their assistance, a tip of the hat goes to John Broven, C.C. Caldwell, Bruce Campbell, David Coffey, Kevin Coffey, Scott Downing, Erin Hamilton, Melody Kelly, Jimmie Moore, Vaughn O'Shields, Mike Pierce, John Rumble, Gary Shanafelt, Mary Helen Specht, Jean Stansbury, Ron Underwood, Cassandra Volpe, James Wood, Greg Young, and Terry Young. And a very special thank you to Shelia Moore Barrow, daughter of Slim Willet's older brother Omar Moore, who shared family history and Willet memorabilia, along with her personal memories of growing up in the Moore clan.
- Joe W. Specht, "Willet, Slim," Roy R. Barkley, ed., *The Handbook of Texas Music* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2003), 354.
- Stuart Chilton, "Don't let the Stars get in Your Eyes," *Stephenville Empire-Tribune*, September 28, 1995, A4.
- Stuart Chilton, "Stars In His Eyes," *Houston Chronicle Rotogravure Magazine*, March 8, 1953, 5. For Willet's own similar account of the incident, see Slim Willet, "Shootin' Star," *Cowboy Songs*, No. 25 (March 1953), 10.
- Bob Lapham, "Don't Let the Stories Get in the Way, Or Who Wrote Slim's Greatest Hit?" *Abilene Reporter-News*, December 24, 1995, 2C.
- Although the exact date of the recording is unknown, it may have been in April 1952. Dick Grant, "Slim Willet: Smell That Sweet Perfume," *Rockin' Fifties*, no. 68 (June 1998), 14.
- James Wood and Jean Stansbury verified the names of the musicians who played on "Stars," and each provided additional information on the recording session. See James Wood, e-mail message to author, January 31, 2007, James Wood, interview with author, February 4, 2007, and Jean Stansbury, interview with author, March 29, 2008.
- Jane Sedberry, "Ad-Libbing, Song-Writing Slim Is in the Money Now," *Abilene Reporter-News*, October 1, 1952, Evening Edition, 5B.
- Al Turner, "Four Star 'OP'-Series Record Discography," *American Music Magazine*, no. 86 (December 2000), 4; see also *The 4 Star 'OP' Listing* (Edgware, Middlesex, UK: Hillbilly Researcher, 1996).
- Johnny Whiteside, "Four Star Records," Paul Kingsbury, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Country Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 179.
- Colin Escott, "Inside Starday Records: A Conversation with Don Pierce," *Journal of Country Music*, 17, no. 1 (1994), 33.
- Willet, "Shootin' Star," 10.
- Colin Escott, *Roadkill on the Three-chord Highway: Art and Trash in American Popular Music* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 49; Escott's negative assessment of Willet's version of "Stars" is most definitely open for debate. If Slim's voice was lacking, he had presence, and the fiery improvised instrumentation provided by Buck White, Smokey Donaldson, and Shorty Underwood has yet to be topped.
- Escott, "Inside Starday Records," 33; John Broven, *Record Makers and Breakers: Voices of the Independent Rock 'n' Roll Pioneers* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 283.
- "Disk Pitfalls Reflected in Slim Willet's 'Eyes' Etching," *Billboard*, December 20, 1952, 20.
- "Reviews of This Week's Records: Country & Western," *Billboard*, September 27, 1952, 47.
- "So They Both Get a Break," *Billboard*, November 8, 1952, 34.
- "Rockin' Texas - Ray Campi & Mac Curtis in Conversation with Adam Komorowski, Ray Topping & Bill Millar," *New Kommotion*, no. 23 (1980), 55.
- For succinct comments on the cover records phenomenon of the era and the commercial forces behind it, see Hank Davis and Scott Parker, "Sneak a Peek Beneath the Covers," *Goldmine*, August 1, 2008, 23, 47.
- Joel Whitburn's Top Pop Memories, 1890-1954* (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research, 1986), 346; Colin Escott devotes a chapter to Patti Page's career and the impact of "The Tennessee Waltz" in *Roadkill on the Three-Chord Highway*.
- Charlie Gillett, "New York 1950s Overview," Encyclopedia Britannica Online; Joseph Lanza, *Vanilla Pop: Sweet Sounds from Frankie Avalon to ABBA* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2005), 23-25.
- Colin Escott provides an overview of Jack and Dave Kapp's activities at Decca Records in "How to Start a Record Company, 1," a chapter in his *Tattooed on Their Tongues: A Journey Through the Backrooms of American Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996).
- "San Antonio Rose" was Bing's second gold record... 'Pistol Packin' Mama' became [his] seventh gold record," J. Roger Osterholm, *Bing Crosby: A Bio-Bibliography* (West Port, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 118, 124.
- Bill Malone, the dean of country music historians, was among the first to point out Bing Crosby's affinity for recording "many of the country and western favorites of the period." See Bill C. Malone, *Country Music, U.S.A.*, Rev. ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 180. The Texas association is particularly distinctive and is something I will explore further in "Crosby & Western: Bing Crosby's Texas Country Music Connection."
- Other country songs with multiple recorded versions in release at the same time include "Candy Kisses" (1949), "Detour" (1946), "Filipino Baby" (1946), "I Love You Because" (1950), "Release Me" (1954), "Signed Sealed and Delivered" (1948), and "Slipping Around" (1949).
- For *Billboard* chart information, see *Joel Whitburn's Top Country Singles* [5th ed.] (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research, 2002).
- The Corky Carpenter recording on Tops is a further indication of how popular "Stars" was; Tops Records issued "soundalike" versions of the hits of the day for the always low price of 39 cents.
- For *Billboard* chart information see *Joel Whitburn's Top Pop Memories*.
- "Fields, Gracie," Colin Larkin, ed. & comp., *The Encyclopedia of Music*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), Vol. 3, 442; "Lotis, Dennis," Larkin, *The Encyclopedia of Music*, Vol. 5, 333-334.
- The flipside, also sung in Japanese, was "Pretend," a Top-10 hit for Nat King Cole in 1953; Peggy Hayama's role in the Japanese "cover version" scene of the 1950s is discussed in Toru Mitsui, "Interactions of Imported and Indigenous Musics in Japan: A Historical Overview of the Music Industry," Alison J. Ewbank and Fouli T. Papageorgiou, *Whose Master's Voice?: The Development of Popular Music in Thirteen Cultures* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 167-168.
- Chilton, "Don't let the Stars get in Your Eyes," A4.
- Escott, "Inside Starday Records," 33; session guitarist Billy Mure also agreed "that Como was totally unable to get the 'feel' of ['Stars'], and after just two takes...the somnolent crooner couldn't wait to get to the golf course;" see Broven, *Record Makers and Breakers*, 388.
- George Townsend, Notes, *The Incomparable Como* (Readers Digest UK GINC-6A, 1975); Escott, *Roadkill on the Three-chord Highway*, 48-49.
- George T. Simon, "Popular Record Reviews," *Metronome*, 69, no. 1 (January 1953), 27.
- "Record Reviews," *Down Beat*, 19, no. 26 (December 31, 1952), 10.
- "Blue Chip," *Time*, 61, no. 26 (June 29, 1953), 58.
- "Como Haunted by Songs," *Abilene Reporter-News*, October 6, 1988, 8B.
- "Rites Held for Singer Perry Como," *Houston Chronicle*, May 19, 2001, 10A.
- No doubt realizing his error in ignoring "Stars," Bill McCall decided Willet's next 4 Star release would be "Let Me Know," a song Slim had written and recorded a year earlier with the same off beat rhythm, a song the record company had already issued in the 4 Star X series but had refused to promote; the second time around in an attempt to replicate the success of "Stars," several major record companies also released versions of "Let Me Know," including Capitol (Skeets McDonald), Decca (Dick Todd), Mercury (Richard Haynes), and RCA Victor (Diana Shore).
- Ellis Nassour, *Honky Tonk Angel: The Intimate Story of Patsy Cline* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 117.
- Ellis Amburn, *Dark Star: The Roy Orbison Story* (New York: Lyle Stuart, 1990), 58.
- "Bill Mack Remembers Slim Willet," *West Texas Music Central*, Digest Number 22 (January 27, 2002). Border (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).
- Colin Escott, Notes, *That'll Flat Git It, Vol. 26: Rockabilly from the Vault of 4 Star Records* (Bear Family Records BCD 16876, 2008).
- Shelia Moore Barrow (Omar Moore's daughter and Willet's niece), interview with author, November 3, 2006.
- George Dolan, "This Is West Texas," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, November 18, 1958, 1. To compute the change in value of the dollar from 1958 to 2007 (the latest year available), see <http://www.measuringworth.com> (accessed January 29, 2009).
- Roxy Gordon, "Songwriter...," *Coleman Chronicle & DV*, March 21, 1995, 5A.
- For more on Dean Beard, see Joe W. Specht, "Beard, Dean," Barkley ed., *The Handbook of Texas Music*, 16-17.
- Roxy Gordon, "Dean Beard...," *Coleman Chronicle & DV*, December 14, 1993, 5B; Dash Crofts, later of Seals & Crofts, was a member of Beard's band in addition to doing session work for Willet, and he was also privy

to the rumor: "He [Willet] took credit for writing the thing ['Stars'], but I think he stole it;" see Michael B. Smith, "Blowing Through Jasmine in My Mind: The Return of Dash Croft," *BuddyMiles.com*, January 2001, <http://www.gritz.net> (accessed August 16, 2006).

49. Gordon, "Songwriter..." 5A.
50. Lapham, "Don't Let the Stories Get in the Way, Or Who Wrote Slim's Greatest Hit?" 2C.
51. *Ibid.*; Bob Lapham, "Backing Up Slim Willet," *Abilene Reporter-News*, December 31, 1995, 3B; Vaughn O'Shields again reiterated his firm belief that Willet wrote "Stars." See Vaughn O'Shields, interview with author, January 18, 2007; Jimmie Moore remained adamant, too. See Jimmie Moore, interview with author, December 23, 2008.
52. James Wood, e-mail message to author, January 31, 2007.
53. Bob Lapham, "More on Slim's 'Star,'" *Abilene Reporter-News*, January 14, 1996, 2B.
54. "Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes," *Wikipedia*, <http://en.wikipedia.org> (accessed January 27, 2007); even though this entry was later corrected to properly credit Willet, this is just one example as to why *Wikipedia*, a now widely accepted online reference source, must be used with caution.
55. Kevin Coffey, e-mail message to author, January 30, 2007. See also Kevin Coffey's Notes to Rex Griffin, *The Last Letter* (Bear Family Records BCD 15911, 1996).
56. Lapham, "More on Slim's 'Star,'" 2B.
57. "Blue Chip," *Time*, 58.
58. *Paperpast Yearbook*, 1953, <http://www.paperbast.com/html/1953> (accessed August 27, 2006).
59. Townsend, Notes, *The Incomparable Como*.
60. When "Let Me Know" was first released in the 4 Star X series, Willet said Bill McCall "refused to push it" because the song employed the same "off-beat and tricky meter" he would later use on "Stars;" see "They Laughed As He Played; Now Slim's 'Stars' Is No. 1," *Abilene Reporter-News*, January 17, 1953, 1B.
61. After enrolling in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) on January 12, 1937, Willet took his physical examination at CCC Camp SP-41-T in Sweetwater, Texas, and he was then assigned to Company 2881 and stationed at CCC Camp SCS-14-A in San Simon, Arizona; on July 20, 1937, Company 2881 transferred to CCC Camp F-29-A in Globe, Arizona; Willet was honorably discharged on September 1, 1937; see National Archives and Records Administration, St. Louis, MO., National Personnel Records Center, Civilian Personnel Records, "Individual Record - Civilian Conservation Corps, No. CC8.2881379," copy in author's possession.
62. Willet, "Shootin' Star," 10.
63. "Villa, Beto," Ramiro Burr, *The Billboard Guide to Tejano and Regional Mexican Music* (New York: Billboard Books, 1999), 214-215.
64. Recording information for Pedro Vargas, Bobby Capó, and Billo's Caracas Boys is available at *Enciclopedia Discográfica de la Música Cubana*, 1925-1960, <http://library.fiu.edu/latinpop/bibliografia.html> (accessed March 21, 2008); Billo's version of "Stars" remains popular as witnessed by its reissue on compact disc, *3 Epocas Exitosas De La Billo's Caracas Boys* (Discomoda 601497, 1995)
65. "The Billboard Music Popularity Charts HONOR ROLL OF HITS The Nation's Ten Top Tunes ... for Week Ending ... January 17, 24, 31, 1953," *Billboard*, January 24, 1953, 22; January 31, 1953, 22; February 7, 1953, 24.
66. "Funeral Here Sunday For Song Writer Slim Willet," *Abilene Reporter-News*, July 2, 1966, 4A.
67. "Piano Roll" Cook, a friend and contemporary of Eubie Blake, W.C. Handy, and Jelly Roll Morton, arranged and performed thousands of rolls; see *Ragtime, Blues, Hot Piano* <http://www.doctorjazz.co.uk/page11.html> (accessed July 3, 2008).
68. "1952 Hit Parade Winners," <http://www.nfo.net/hits/1952.html> (accessed August 27, 2006).
69. Bing Crosby sang "Stars" on three occasions - January 29, February 5, February 19, 1953 - on *The Bing Crosby Show for General Electric*, which was broadcasted on CBS; see "...And Here's Bing": *Bing Crosby - The Radio Directories*, compiled by Lionel Pairpoint, <http://www.members.aol.com/macwilson/author.html> (accessed August 25, 2006); the February 5 air check has turned up on several LPs and CDs including Bing Crosby - *The Radio Years* (GNP/Crescendo GNP 9051, 1987); Dean Martin sang "Stars" on the December 30, 1952, edition of *The Martin and Lewis Show* on NBC; see John Chintala, *Dean Martin: A Complete Guide to the "Total Entertainer"* (Exeter, PA: Chi Productions, 1998), 262; the live version is readily available on a variety of budget-priced CDs including Dean Martin, *The Love Songs* (Dejavu Retro R2CD 42-66, 2004).
70. The Bob Wills air checks dating from January 1953 on KXLA are preserved on Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys, *Harmony Park Airshots, January 1953* (Country Routes RFD C21, 1999); in introducing "Stars," Bob jokes with Louise Rowe. "I had a lot of requests last night for... 'Don't Let the Stars Get in Your Eyes.' Was you [Louise] lookin' a little star-eyed up there [on the stage] last night for some reason or other... lots of Marines out there, you know."
71. Tennessee Ernie Ford's RadiOzark transcription of "Stars" is included on *Early Country Days of the Late Tennessee Ernie Ford* (Cowgirlboy LP 5068, 1991?).
72. The American Music Research Center (AMRC) at the University of Colorado, Boulder, is the repository for the Perry Como Collection, which contains the scripts from Como's television program; the AMRC has yet to index the scripts by song title, so there is no way to ascertain how many times Como sang "Stars" on the program; Cassandra Volpe (AMRC archivist), e-mail message to author, January 2, 2007.
73. Marie Moore Cass to Bonnie Moore Singleton (Willet's cousin), January 23, 1996, copy in author's possession; on occasion, it has been reported that Willet performed on the *Como Show* (for example, see Bob Lapham, "Slim Fit," *Abilene Reporter-News*, December 24, 1995, 2C), but his name is not listed in the index, prepared by the American Music Research Center (AMRC), of the guests who appeared on the program; Cassandra Volpe (AMRC archivist), e-mail message to author, December 5, 2006.
74. The Rounder Collective, Notes, *Have You Forgotten? The Bailey Brothers* (Rounder Records 1018, 1974).
75. Barry McCloud, *Definitive Country: The Ultimate Encyclopedia of Country Music and Its Performers* (New York: Perigee, 1995), 383; Goldie Hill's "I Let the Stars Get in My Eyes" is available back-to-back with Skeets McDonald's version of "Stars" on *...And the Answer Is: Great Country Answer Discs From the '50s and Their Original Versions* (Bear Family Records BCD 15791, 1994).
76. 4 Star Records released Pryor's parody in March 1953 just about the time Willet's "Stars" was slipping off *Billboard's* Country & Western chart(s); Willet received co-writer credit along with Pryor and Barbara Trammel, and this combination - Willet, Pryor, and Trammel - has also received occasional credit for Slim's original; for example, see Bill Friskics-Warren and David Cantwell, *Heartaches by the Number: Country Music's 500 Greatest Singles* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press/Country Music Foundation Press, 2003), 210.
77. "Ingle, Red," Larkin, *The Encyclopedia of Music*. Vol. 4, 473.
78. Barry McCloud, *Definitive Country*, 391-392.
79. Jordan R. Young, "Mickey Katz," *Allmusic*, <http://www.allmusic.com> (accessed January 16, 2007); Yale Strom, *The Book of Klezmer: The History, The Music, The Folklore* (Chicago: A Cappella Books, 2002), 178-183.
80. Nolan Porterfield, e-mail message to author, February 20, 2007.
81. Grant, "Slim Willet," 11.
82. "Como to Get 6th Gold Disk," *Billboard*, January 17, 1953, 26, 59.
83. "Slim Willet's Hit To Be Displayed in Library of Congress," *Abilene Reporter-News*, November 30, 1955, 3B.
84. Linell Gentry, *A History And Encyclopedia of Country, Western, And Gospel Music* (St. Clair Shores, MI: Scholarly Press, 1972), 340-341.
85. "Slim Willet May Be Hollywood-Bound," *Abilene Reporter-News*, March 22, 1953, 9A; "Composer Slim Willet Signed For Saturday Nite Shindig," *Dallas Morning News*, March 19, 1953, 16.
86. Gentry, *A History And Encyclopedia of Country, Western, And Gospel Music*, 340.
87. Specht, "Willet, Slim," 354.
88. Bob Lapham, "Slim Fit," *Abilene Reporter-News*, December 24, 1995, 1C.
89. *Worley's Abilene City Directory 1955* (Dallas: John F. Worley Directory Co., 1955), 368, 552; Lapham, "Slim Fit," 1C.
90. Specht, "Willet, Slim," 354; Willet's television program debuted on January 27, 1954, on KRBC-TV (Channel 9) in the 8:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. time period; it moved to 9:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. slot on October 31, 1956; the last broadcast was on January 23, 1957.
91. "Slim Willet Heard Daily 'Live' on KNIT," *Abilene Reporter-News*, June 16, 1957, 9B.
92. "Slim Willet Gets Top KCAD Post," *Abilene Reporter-News*, May 31, 1964, 1B; although not reported at the time, Willet purchased ownership of 49% of KCAD from H. S. Higginbotham and Jack Hughes and assumed

- \$50,000 of the station's debt; Jimmie Moore, interview by the author, December 23, 2008; two months after Willet's death, Mrs. Moore and Higginbotham sold the station to Del Morton of the All-Tex Network; "KCAD Sold For 'Over \$200,000,'" *Abilene Reporter-News*, September 30, 1966, 1A.
93. In 1961, Willet recorded a sequel to "Stars" entitled "If the Stars Get in Your Eyes" (Winston 1056-45), but the largely recycled lyrics – *if the stars get in your eyes and blind you to the love we knew...please remember stars are in my eyes for you* – failed to capture the magic of the original.
 94. To date, the author has identified ninety-two versions of "Stars," along with four parodies.
 95. Josh Graves & Billy Troy, *Dad the Dobro Man* (CMH Records CMH 6264, 1988) Grady Martin, *A Touch of Country* (Decca DL 4865, 1967), Smith & Son, *Guitars Galore* (Monument KZ 33429, 1975) , *The Music City Sounds Featuring Lloyd Green and Pete Wade* (MGM SE-4672, 1970).
 96. The popularity of "Stars" in the United Kingdom and Commonwealth countries is further confirmed by the sheet music available for sale in 1953. For example, Edwin H. Morris & Co., LTD. issued sheet music by Leslie Howard in England and Colin Anderson and His Royal Prince Edwardians in Australia and New Zealand, even though neither performer actually recorded "Stars."
 97. Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Notes, *Come On Back* (Rounder Records 11661-3193, 2005)