

Will Callery aka Billy Callery – Bio

Will Callery was born in the Spring of 1944 and christened William Woodward. His father, also named William, had perished the previous year while piloting a U.S.A.F. B17 bomber over Germany. Although he never met his father, young William undoubtedly inherited his genes – apart from being a flier, his father was a musician and played sax, flute and clarinet. Initially raised in Terre Haute, Indiana by his maternal grandparents, when William's mother remarried John Callery, who operated a whiskey distillery, young William settled in Owensboro, Kentucky. Will claims he began smoking and drinking alcohol at the age of twelve, and during his early teens also began tinkering with instruments – five string banjo, acoustic guitar and dobro.

Graduating from high school in 1962, Will promptly donned a uniform and served in the army for the ensuing four years. Back in Civvy Street, on America's West Coast, it was the Summer of Love. Will began performing music in coffeehouses and bars up and down the coast - the Ash Grove in L.A., the Ice House in Pasadena and the Golden Bear in Huntington Beach - and the budding musician shared stages with Ramblin' Jack Elliot, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee, young Arlo Guthrie and the soon to be famous David Lindley. Toward the close of the decade Will headed east again, and eventually settled in Nashville where he worked as a writer with CBS's April-Blackwood Publishing.

In 1969 Callery met Roger Bartlett and the pair headed for Austin, Texas where they performed as the duo Lusaza Goose, opening shows for Jerry Jeff Walker, Willie Nelson, Little Feat and more. Walker began cutting Callery's songs - "The First Showboat" [**"Walker Collectibles"** 1974], "The Pot Can't Call The Kettle Black" [**"Ridin' High"** 1975], "Leroy" [**"It's A Good Night For Singin'"** 1976], "Pass It On" [**"Gypsy Songman"** 1986] and probably Will's best known song "Hands On The Wheel" [**"Too Old To Change"** 1979]. Will next formed a band, that was billed as Billy C and the Austin Healys. While touring in the South West, Will learned that Willie Nelson had cut "Hands On The Wheel." Fate determined it would appear on the concept album **"The Red Headed Stranger"** [1975]. Released by CBS Records, the recording eventually went double platinum and was nominated for a Best Country Album Grammy, which doubtless went a long way in helping Callery ink a recording contract with CBS Lone Star, Nelson's boutique record label. Nelson failed to score the album Grammy [+] but picked up his first [of seven] that year, a Best Country Vocal Performance, Male, for the ballad "Blue Eyes Crying In The Rain" a track on **"The Red Headed Stranger."** Callery's ten track, self-titled debut album **"Bill Callery,"** co-produced by Bill and Bucky Meadows, surfaced in 1976.

Filmed in Nashville [and other locations] during December 1975/January 1976, Callery appeared in the music documentary **"Heartworn Highways,"** during the smoke filled, alcohol fuelled, late night song pull at Guy Clark house, which culminated in a performance of "Silent Night." The yet to be famous coterie in the room that evening included Guy, his songwriter/painter wife Susannah, Rodney Crowell, Steve Earle, Richard Dobson, Jim McGuire and Steve Young.

"Hands On The Wheel" went on to become the lead song on the soundtrack to the Jane Fonda/Robert Redford/Willie Nelson movie **"The Electric Horseman"** [1979]. While Callery was now financially solvent, he had succumbed to a serious addiction to cocaine and heroin and more. Although Will understood the extent of his addition, it wasn't until the summer of 1982 that he began recovery and rehabilitation. In July that year while appearing at Jerry Jeff's annual Birthday Bash, he met his old buddy Milton Carroll, now a born again Christian. It proved to be a pivotal point in Callery's life, but one that found him turn his back on his music career. Returning to Kentucky, Will purchased a chainsaw and began felling trees for five bucks an hour. Recovered from his addictions, and now a confirmed Christian, Callery subsequently settled in Montana and went on to work for a couple of decades as a lumberjack in nearby North Western states.

A few years ago Callery finally retired his chainsaw, and turned once again to writing songs. Over three decades after recording his debut album, Will cut his sophomore set **"Rider Comin' In"** at The Zone a Dripping Springs recording studio. The thirteen song album, which he co-produced with Joe Forlini, was released by the Feats Record label during September 2008.

Note.

[+] – Amazingly Nelson has yet to pick up a Grammy for one of his album releases.

Discography : “**Bill Callery**” [1976] ; “**Rider Comin’ In**” [2008] :

Arthur Wood

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[765 words]