

AN OUTLAW WHO WORE MANY HATS

Although he didn't have the recording success of Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings, Tompall Glaser is still an important name in the Outlaw movement for his work as a publisher and studio owner. He also had a rebel spirit that helped define the era.

Born Thomas Paul Glaser on September 3, 1933, in Spalding, Nebraska, he was the fourth of six children raised on a farm. As a boy, he began singing with younger brothers Chuck and Jim on local radio and local events. In 1957, the trio made their national TV debut on a competition show. Two years later, country star Marty Robbins brought the brothers to Nashville to sing backup vocals at his concerts and on recordings.

As Tompall & The Glaser Brothers, the Glasers also recorded their own music, produced by "Cowboy" Jack Clement, and they formed their own music publishing company. In 1970, the brothers opened Glaser Sound Studios, which came to be known as "Hillbilly Central." That same year the brothers won the Country Music Association award for top vocal group. Three years later, the trio split up, and Tompall Glaser began a solo career.

The Glasers' studio quickly attracted artists and songwriters who were struggling with the strict demands of the major record labels. Glaser became close friends with Waylon Jennings, who set up an office at the studio as he fought his label, RCA, for creative freedom. Jennings's *Dreaming My Dreams*, produced by Clement, was among the important Outlaw albums created at the studio.

In 1973, Glaser and Jennings co-produced Jennings's *Honky Tonk Heroes*, another important Outlaw album that featured nine songs written by Billy Joe Shaver. Three years later, Glaser and



Jennings joined Jennings's wife, Jessi Colter, and Willie Nelson on *Wanted! The Outlaws*. It became the first country album to sell more than one million copies, and the Outlaw image stuck to all four artists.

The album included Glaser's most successful solo single, "Put Another Log on the Fire," written by Shel Silverstein; it reached #24 on the country chart in 1975.

Glaser and Jennings ended their friendship over a business battle. In the early 1980s, the Glaser Brothers had a brief reunion, earning a #2 hit with Kris Kristofferson's "Lovin' Her Was Easier (Than Anything I'll Ever Do Again)."

Glaser recorded his final solo album in 1986. He died at age seventy-nine on August 12, 2013, in Nashville after a lengthy illness.

SOURCES

Outlaw: Waylon, Willie, Kris, and the Renegades of Nashville by Michael Streissguth; *The Story of the Glaser Brothers: From Nebraska Ranchers to Nashville Rebels* documentary (as quoted in *The New York Times*); *USA Today*

LISTEN

"Put Another Log on the Fire"
(Written by Shel Silverstein)