

Class of 1954 – Lloyd Arnold McCollough.



Of Irish descent, Lloyd McCollough was born into a musical family as the youngest of seven children. While in high school, he developed a formidable reputation as a baseball player and was torn between a career in baseball or in show business.

After the death of Hank Williams on January 1, 1953, Lloyd decided to concentrate on a career in music. His first instrument was the mandolin, which he received as a Christmas present in 1950. All his spare time was spent practicing and by the end of 1952 he was performing for friends and neighbors.

In 1953 he formed his first band, The Drifting Hillbillies, which consisted mainly of family members. During 1953 and 1954 they recorded several demos / acetates at Sam Phillips' Memphis Recording Service, as did another young unknown artist, Elvis Presley. Lloyd Arnold and Elvis Presley were also introduced to the public at the KWEM Radio sponsored "Saturday Night Jamboree" at the Goodwyn Institute Building in downtown Memphis in 1953.

While suffering with childhood meningitis, Lloyd had lost many

school days. Due to this lost time, his graduation from Memphis Technical High School was delayed until May 1954. By then he was already somewhat of an established performer. He and the band began to travel, gaining popularity throughout the southern states.

His first record was made for the Von label from Booneville, Mississippi, in the fall of 1955. Both sides, "Oh Darling" and "Watch That Girl" were pure country. It gave Lloyd something to sell on his radio shows on KWEM. The two sides of his second record, "Until I Love Again"/"What Goes On In Your Heart" (Ekko 1023, 1956) were mid-tempo country offerings, more polished and professional than the Von sides. Not surprising, given the fact that the backing musicians included Chet Atkins and Jerry Byrd. As country music's popularity started to wane due to the explosion of rock 'n' roll, Lloyd switched to rockabilly, which was a relatively easy task for him. His third single was in this new style: "Gonna Love My Baby"/"Cause I Love You" (Republic 7129, 1956), produced by Murray Nash. His next single, "Half My Fault", again for a different label (Starday), was even better, but it was not released until March 1958, when rockabilly had already gone out of fashion. By that time Lloyd had changed the name of his band to the Rockin' Drifters. Its line-up changed constantly, but they always had plenty of work and not just in the South. While working on the East Coast, Lloyd came to the attention of Savoy's Herman Lubinsky, who cut six songs with him, but only two were

released, on Savoy's subsidiary label, Sharp. The instrumental "Dixie Doodle" (Sharp 108, 1960) was the first record to be credited to "Lloyd Arnold", as he now called himself. All earlier singles gave credit to Lloyd McCollough or McCullough. In late 1960, Lloyd recorded (probably in Philadelphia) what many consider to be his best rocker, "Red Coat, Green Pants and Red Suede Shoes" (Myers 113). Coupled with the equally strong "Hangout", it had all the right ingredients: hot vocals, blistering guitar and a raunchy sax, but like all his previous records, it sold poorly.

Around 1959, Lloyd had met Buford Cody, a charming, helpful man, who became his manager. Cody also had his own label, Memphis Records, for which Lloyd recorded six singles in 1962-64. These included good versions of "School Days" and "Go Go Go", songs by Chuck Berry, who was a major influence on Lloyd's rock n roll material. Some of the Memphis records were mainstream sixties country, like the very pleasant "Lonesome Finds Me", and by the second half of the 1960s, Lloyd had completely switched to country music, for a succession of small labels in Memphis and Nashville. In the late sixties and early seventies, a tougher bluesy orientated form of country started to emerge. Lloyd embraced this style with passion. He was now recording for John Capps's K-Ark label in Nashville, which released an album and three singles by him (1972-73). Once again Lloyd turned to Chuck Berry songs for inspiration ("Memphis" and a new version of "School Days"), but the LP

also featured several of Lloyd's own compositions. After many years on the road, Lloyd decided it was time to call it a day. He opened a night club, appropriately called "L.A.'s Country", in Memphis and was quite content playing there. But in early 1976, dogged by misfortune and personal problems, Lloyd tragically took his own life. He was only 40 years old. He never had the kind of commercial success he so richly deserved, but he will be remembered by many for his music into which he put his heart and soul.