

A CELEBRITY FROM SHADY SHORES

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If you were around in 1943, you might remember hearing the refrain to this song on the radio written and sung by Al Dexter.

Lay that pistol down, babe.
Lay that pistol down.
Pistol packin' mama
Lay that pistol down.

The lyrics were just controversial enough for the times, that Pistol Packin' Mama sold a million copies in its first six months. This was quite a feat considering the population of the U.S was less than half of today's and record players were a luxury during the war.

Al Dexter —Clarence Albert Poindexter was his given name — was born in Jacksonville, Texas in 1902. During his beginnings as a house painter, he performed in local bars and nightclubs singing country music. With a band he put together in 1936 he recorded "Honky Tonk Blues", the first country song to use the term *honky-tonk*. From his ownership of a bar in Turnertown, Texas and playing in roadhouses across the state, he got the idea for Pistol Packin' Mama. His producer arranged for him to record the song at Columbia's Hollywood studio using Gene Autry's backup band. Al Dexter admired Gene and evidently followed in his career footsteps. With the money he made from this song and many others, he went into real estate. Although he didn't build the empire that Autry did in California, he did become quite wealthy.

He owned a bar in Dallas until his retirement, and in 1952 he bought seven lots in Shady Shores where he built his home on Sixth Street. One might think it was a 100 acre mansion, but seven lots back then were platted for seven duck hunters' cottages, each with a lot size of barely 1100 square feet. Al bought and sold other properties in Shady Shores, and in 1960, he and 40 other persons filed a petition to incorporate two square miles that would be known as the Town of Shady Shores. The election drew 55 votes For the incorporation and one Against — sort of makes you wonder who was that lone dissenter. Al died of a heart attack in his home here in 1984; his wife, Frankie M. Poindexter, lived there until 1994.

Al was the first country singer to perform on Broadway and was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1971. The website, www.Aldexter.com, has been constructed to petition his induction into the

Country Music Hall of Fame. We, who remember his talent, feel he belongs.

Al Dexter is buried in RoseLawn Memorial Park, Garden of Faith section, Denton. A bronze plate notes: "Writer of Pistol Packin' Mama." His marker notes: "Songwriters Hall of Fame."

Pistol Packin' Mama can be heard at www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uESJJAj7g

1. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Dexter
2. Denton County Courthouse records
3. www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fpo38
4. Roselawn Memorial Park, 3801 Roselawn Dr, Denton, Texas