

seen a farm or real, live farm animals up that close. We all laughed at how Arnold laid on the front porch like the family dog. You could pet him, and he would follow you around. He was awesome. The kids even let him in the house while we were there, but when Mom found out, she screamed, "Get that filthy pig out of here." The drummer got up and went outside, because he thought she was talking about him.

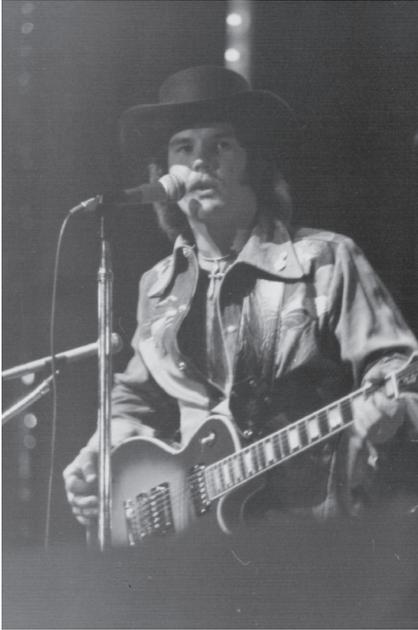
### *Where's Arnold?*

We went on to play our gigs, and on the way back to California, we stopped by the farm and spent the night. Mom fixed a big dinner, and everyone in the band was eating like they had never eaten before. The kept saying how the food was incredible and how tired they were of eating hotel food. There were about fifteen of us sitting around the table, laughing and having a great time, when Angela told my mom that those were the best pork chops that she had ever eaten. I said to my mom, "Speaking of pork chops, where's Arnold?" Mom looked at the pork chop in Angela's hand and said, "You're eating him." We couldn't believe it. Angela ran outside threw up. The rest of the band was just plain grossed out and feeling guilty, except for the drummer, of course, who never missed a beat and kept right on eating.

After we returned to California, Angela came to me and said she had something she wanted to talk about. We went outside and sat in the front yard. She told me that she had gone to the doctor that morning, and she was pregnant. I was so thrilled that I yelled out. I had never been so excited in my life. This was my chance to make up for screwing up my first marriage to Rhonda and not deserving to be a father to my first son, Danny. That night when we went to bed, I held her close all night while we slept. I was about to be a father again, and we were going to start a family.

Keith quit working with Kenny and the First Edition as a roadie and joined our band as a rhythm guitar player and singer. I had taken over the duty of playing lead guitar and singing.

Known for its original songs and hard-driving rock and roll country music, The Dann Rogers County Line was making a name for itself in Southern California. We had developed a following that came to sit and listen, rather than dance. Club owners didn't like the fact that we were turning their dance clubs into concert halls, because



Dann Rogers and The Dann Rogers  
County Line

people don't drink as much when they aren't dancing. Our agent saw what was developing, and he began to get gigs in more of a concert environment.

We started playing at Knott's Berry Farm theme park, and our Orange County following began to grow. They started us out in an outdoor amphitheatre called the Wagon Camp. We would play four, 45-minute shows with 30-minute breaks in between. Kenny and The First Edition also played Knott's Berry Farm, headlining in a concert hall known as The Goodtime Theatre. Between shows, some of the First Edition members would walk over and catch one of our shows.

I'm sure they were amused at watching this other Rogers trying to make his mark, but they were always supportive and kind with their comments. They were great role models.

### *A Star Comes Calling*

During that time, I played a 1959 Gibson Les Paul Sunburst Standard guitar. Anyone who knew guitars knew that it was a very rare guitar, a collector's item. Anyone who knew me also knew that I didn't let anybody touch that guitar, except me and my roadie. One night when I was sitting in my dressing room between shows, one of the stagehands came running in and told me that B.J. Thomas was out on the stage with my guitar in his hands. He had asked someone if he could meet me. B.J. was a big star and a great singer who had put out some great songs like "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry," "Hooked on a Feeling," and "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head." The band seemed to be really excited that such a big star was standing out on our stage, waiting to meet me. I was more interested in finding out why he had my guitar in his hands.

When I walked out of the dressing room, I saw B.J. put my guitar back on the stand and smile real big at me. I shook hands with him, and, just as I did, someone popped out and took a picture of us.



B.J. Thomas and me at Knott's Berry Farm. B.J. told me I had a new sound that was totally unique

B.J. was headlining the Goodtime Theatre that night, and told me he had been hearing about me from different people in the business. He had been told that I had a new sound called Rock and Roll Country, and he needed to hear it for himself. When I explained to him how I put the band together and arranged my songs, he seemed really impressed. B.J. was from Houston and had known my dad and my uncle for a long time. Before long, it was time for us to go on and do our next show. I excused myself and thanked B.J. for coming over to see me. He invited me over to watch his show later on that night. Around the third song of our first set, I looked out in the audience, and there was B.J., standing in the back, moving his hips, and giving me a thumbs up.

Later that night, after we finished our shows, I went over to watch B.J.'s show. I went backstage, and he invited me into his dressing room. B.J. and I had a great visit. Before I left, B.J. looked at me and said,

“Now I know what Rock and Roll Country music sounds like. I really think you have a great sound. You’re onto something, Dann.”

I thanked him, and we shook hands. As I walked out the door, B.J. Thomas reached around and gave me the old slap on the back, and then he asked me to send him some of my songs. A star had come calling that day and given me approval. Man, I loved the Showbiz Train, and I was determined to ride it all the way to the top.