

# Mercy Dee

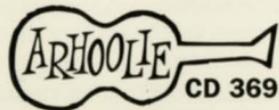
## Mercy's Troubles

Over 60 Minutes of Classic Texas Piano Blues

1. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN OUT IN THE COUNTRY (3:39) (P-8)
  2. FIVE CARD HAND (3:07) (P-7)
  3. AFTER THE FIGHT (3:16) (M-62) (\*)
  4. LADY LUCK (2:45) (M-73) (\*)
  5. BETTY JEAN (2:06) (M-76) (\*)
  6. ONE ROOM COUNTRY SHACK (4:05) (P-5)
  7. MERCY'S TROUBLES (9:32) (M-44)
  8. SUGAR DADDY (4:30) (P-11)
  9. RED LIGHT (2:30) (M-38)
  10. WALKED DOWN SO MANY TURNROWS (3:05) (M-25)
  11. CALL THE ASYLUM (4:00) (M-70) (\*)
  12. MERCY'S SHUFFLE (3:12) (P-10) (\*)
  13. TROUBLESOME MIND (5:55) (M-46)
  14. SHADY LANE (4:20) (M-68) (\*)
  15. EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD (2:37) (M-36)
  16. I BEEN A FOOL (3:20) (M-37)
- Total time - 63:58

(\*) Previously unissued performance  
Codes indicate original Arhoolie  
matrix numbers.

Recorded and produced by  
Chris Strachwitz



**Mercy Dee Walton** – piano and  
vocals (solo on #1, 3, 8, 11 & 14)  
with **Sidney Maiden** – harmonica,  
**K. C. Douglas** – guitar, and  
**Otis Cherry** – drums added on other  
selections

### Recording Data:

Stockton, Ca. 2/5/1961: #9, 10, 15 & 16  
Stockton, Ca. 2/12/1961: #7 & 13  
Stockton, Ca. 3/12/1961: #3 & 14  
Berkeley, Ca. 4/16/1961: #1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11 & 12.

### Previous releases:

#7, 9, 10 & 13 on Arhoolie LP 1007  
#8 on Arhoolie LP 1012  
#15 on Arhoolie LP 1017  
#16 on Arhoolie LP 1006  
#1, 2 & 6 on a Prestige LP  
Previously unissued: #3, 4, 5, 11, 12 & 14.

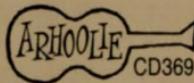
All songs by Mercy Dee Walton and (except #6) © by Tradition Music Co. - BMI.

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Cover by Wayne Pope

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# MERCY DEE

## TROUBLESOME MIND



OVER  
**60**  
MINUTES  
OF CLASSIC  
**TEXAS**  
**PIANO**  
**BLUES**

## MERCY DEE

### "Troublesome Mind"

Out in West Fresno's Jericho district, in Stockton, Pittsburg or around Bakersfield they've been playing the blues for a long time. The Black farm workers, who come into town on weekends, have had plenty to sing the blues about: wages are low, minimum wage laws have always excluded farm workers, competition is tough especially from the braceros, and the living costs are high. Still, in some ways, life is better than it was "back home," in the deep South, where many of the people came from before trying their luck in the "Golden State." A talented man at least has a chance in California.

One such talented man was **Mercy D. Walton** – one of the finest blues men of his generation. He came to California from his home state of Texas just prior to World War II. He worked in the fields by day and at night played blues in joints and bars up and down the Valley, from Los Angeles to Oakland. Around 1950 Mercy Dee made his first record for the regional Spire label in Fresno: *Lonesome Cabin Blues*. Shortly thereafter, *One Room Country Shack* on Specialty Records became a national hit and it put his name and music on every jukebox in the country. Mercy Dee's life changed suddenly – he no longer had to rely on chopping cotton, picking grapes, or cutting spinach to make ends meet. He began touring the country playing auditoriums and major dance halls, usually with other well-known Rhythm and Blues recording stars. On the West Coast he often worked with the popular jump band of **Big Jay McNeely** and met many of his contemporaries like **Smokey Hogg** and **T-Bone Walker**. They had all come from Texas to find some musical success in California.

Mercy Dee was born in Waco, Texas, on August 13, 1915. He started playing piano at the age of thirteen while earning his living in the fields – in the Brazos Bottoms – a life which became the subject for many of his songs. The music he heard on weekends and at parties impressed the young man and inspired him to try and find a more rewarding life as a musician. The Texas pianist who influenced Mercy Dee the most was one Delois Maxey, who never recorded but whom Mercy heard live. Maxey was Mercy Dee's idol and Mercy says he took much of his style of singing and playing from Maxey.

There were many others. None ever recorded but they played at the ten-cent country house parties on the weekends. There was Son Brewster from Waco and Pinetop Shorty.

Willy Woodson was another piano man, and Pete "The Grey Ghost" was "real country" according to Mercy Dee. In Ft. Worth Mercy met Sonny Vee and "Big Hand" Joe Thomas, while over in Dallas he ran into Son Putney. During the harvest seasons they would all be making the rounds, but in the winter they would play mostly in the bigger cities. Mercy Dee was impressed by the styles of these Texas pianists and learned from them. He first heard *Troublesome Mind* from Bob Jackson in Marlin, Texas. At our first recording session Mercy and I talked about life down in Texas, and the next week, at our second meeting, Mercy Dee sat down at the piano and gave me one of his most moving recorded performances: the largely autobiographical *Mercy's Troubles*. No words of mine can compare with his own – just listen to *him!*

Mercy Dee was a prolific and poetic song writer who jotted his lyrics down on paper. His lyrics are full of humor, sadness, joy, and some self-pity, which combine to make his blues unique. The songs reflect Mercy Dee's character and personality – he has been around, has played in many different places and has met a lot of people. He enjoyed music other than the blues and played with various combos. But the blues was his real love and he sang them because they released him from troubles and worries.

All of Mercy's sidemen on this CD have played the blues, real "down-home" blues, most of their lives, and had played together before on many occasions. **K. C. Douglas**, who plays mostly rhythm guitar on this record, is a magnificent singer and soloist in his own right. Born and raised in Mississippi, he came to California during the war but had mastered the Mississippi guitar style long before leaving home. K. C. met **Sidney Maiden** when they were both working in the naval shipyards in Richmond, Ca. Sidney had come from Louisiana and his idols were Sonny Boy Williamson and Little Walter. For many years K.C. and Sidney played together with the young drummer **Otis Cherry** and a second guitarist all around the Bay Area and made their first record, *Mercury Blues*, for Bob Geddings' Down Town label in 1948. It was largely due to this record that I decided to try and record them together once more. These sessions were not only a reunion for K. C. and Sidney Maiden, but for all four of them and resulted in some of the best blues I ever had the pleasure of recording.

CHRIS STRACHWITZ—1961 & 1991 notes edited by Dix Bruce

(Mercy Dee died in Stockton on Dec. 2, 1962)

# Mercy Dee

## Mercy's Troubles



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**Mercy Dee Walton** – piano and vocals (solo on # 1, 3, 8, 11, & 14)  
**Sidney Maiden** – harmonica,  
**K. C. Douglas** – guitar, **Otis Cherry** – drums

**M**ercy Dee (Walton), (1915 - 1962), was one of the finest Texas blues and barrellhouse pianists. He had an expressive voice and was among the best composers of blues, which often reflected his own experiences. Mercy Dee's lyrics were well crafted, honest, humorous, sardonic, philosophical, extra-ordinary poetry. A new version of Mercy Dee's 1950s hit *One Room Country Shack* is included in this comprehensive collection of his best recorded work.

Produced by Chris Strachwitz



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