

ANGOLA PRISONERS' BLUES

with Robert Pete Williams, Hogman Maxey,
Guitar Welch, Roosevelt Charles, Otis Webster, and others



1. PRISONER'S TALKING BLUES
Robert Pete Williams
2. STAGOLEE – Hogman Maxey
3. ELECTRIC CHAIR BLUES
Guitar Welch
4. BLACK NIGHT IS FALLIN'
Hogman Maxey
5. SOME GOT SIX MONTHS
Robert Pete Williams
6. I'M GONNA LEAVE YOU MAMA
Guitar Welch
7. I'M LONESOME BLUES
Robert Pete Williams
8. ANGOLA BOUND – A Capella Group
9. WORRIED BLUES – Hogman Maxey
10. JOSEPHINE – Guitar Welch
11. SOLDIER'S PLEA – Clara Young
12. THE MOON IS RISING
Odea Mathews (at sewing machine)
13. I'M STILL IN LOVE WITH YOU
Thelma Mae Joseph (at laundry machine)
14. I MISS YOU SO – Vocal Group
15. HELLO, SUE – Butterbeans
16. FAST LIFE WOMAN
Hogman Maxey - (vocal & 12 string guitar)

17. CARELESS LOVE
Otis Webster-vocal, guitar
18. HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE CHURCH
BELLS TONE – Roosevelt Charles-vocal;
Otis Webster-guitar
19. 61 HIGHWAY – Guitar Welch
20. STRIKE AT CAMP I – Roosevelt Charles

Total time: 80:00

Recorded by Dr. Harry Oster (with some assistance from Richard B. Allen), at Angola State Penitentiary, Angola, La. between 1952 and 1959.

Selections # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 7 were originally issued as "Angola Prisoner's Blues" on Folklyric LP A-3 and re-issued on Arhoolie LP 2011, which also contained "Levee Camp Blues" and "Motherless Children Have A Hard Time" by Robert Pete Williams. These cuts are now available on Arhoolie CD 394: Robert Pete Williams - Vol. 1.

#8–20 all previously unissued.

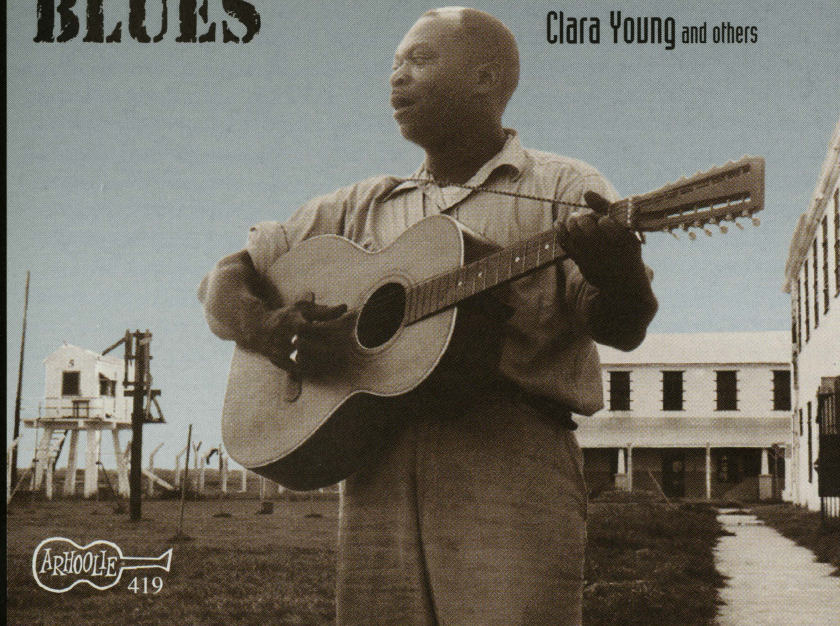
All photos © Dr. Harry Oster
Cover by Wayne Pope

CD release edited and produced by Chris Strachwitz with additional
previously unissued selections provided by Dr. Harry Oster.
Musicological notes by Paul B. Crawford

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ANGOLA PRISONERS' BLUES

Robert Pete Williams
Matthew "Hogman" Maxey
Robert "Guitar" Welch
Roosevelt Charles
Clara Young and others



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*with Robert Pete Williams, Hogman Maxey,
Guitar Welch, Roosevelt Charles, Otis Webster, and others.*

Notes by Dr. Harry Oster

Among the 3800 convicts in the desolate flatland of the prison farm at Angola, Louisiana, there was a surprising number of talented performers, most of whom did not have musical instruments. The authorities did their best with the limited funds at their disposal to encourage musical activity; they supplied two progressive jazz ensembles, two hillbilly bands, and a rock-and-roll band with instruments; they arranged rehearsals and performances of two choirs and several vocal quartets. The few other instruments available were much in demand among the hundreds of convicts hungry for harmonicas, guitars, fiddles, trumpets, etc.

Although in theory a prison, especially one with a large African American population, is an ideal place to record folk music which has disappeared or faded badly elsewhere, in reality the mass media of entertainment exert almost the same influence on the inmates as on performers outside. In each camp there were radios which

picked up the standard popular music from stations in Louisiana and Mississippi (WXOK, an African American station in Baton Rouge was particularly influential) and there were also fifty-eight television sets, spread all over the prison. Since most of the prisoners were in their early twenties, they were accustomed to getting their entertainment from radio and television rather than folk sources. During the average stay of two years their musical tastes changed little.

There was, however, a minority of older prisoners, who were still a rich potential source of folksongs, especially group worksongs, spirituals, and blues. Even among the older prisoners, some of whom had extensive folk repertoires, there was strong evidence of acculturation.

One would suppose, for example, that the most dramatic type of folksong associated with prison life—the group worksong—would still be popular. Since it was highly important to keep as

many prisoners as possible busy, the old inefficient hand methods of cutting cane, picking cotton, chopping wood, etc. prevailed. But one almost never heard the old group worksongs. The frequent sight of African Americans wearing stocking caps to straighten out their hair was a symbol of a fundamental yearning to leave behind everything that smacks of the degraded past. Middle-class respectability had come to prison; the prisoners considered worksongs old fashioned, tainted by association with “slavery days.” Occasionally, when the sun was shining just right and the “misery” hit the “long line” of about a hundred prisoners working together with hoes, or other farm tools, they moaned a worksong like “Bullin’ Hundred,” the poignant lament of frustrated Angola “bulls.” But most of the time they toiled in sullen silence. A subsequent CD in this series (Arhoolie CD 448) will present examples of surviving worksongs. A third release (Arhoolie CD 449) will feature African American convicts’ spirituals, which have been largely supplanted by gospel songs.

The blues, however, were still very much alive, a favorite performer being Lightnin’ Hopkins, whose records were played frequently on the radio programs the convicts heard. Again, one must make a distinction between the younger

generation of blues singers, approximately eighteen to thirty years old, and the older prisoners. The former generally tried to perform a song just as they heard it, whereas the latter blues singers, like Hogman Maxey, Guitar Welch, and Robert Pete Williams were sufficiently at home in the form to improvise freely, drawing on a mental reservoir of thousands of blues phrases of their own coinage, or more often from live tradition and from the innumerable records which have appeared since the late 1920s. Since there was no necessary continuity between stanzas, the old style blues singer often went through a song by free association. If a listener asked Guitar, Hogman, or Robert Pete the name of the song he was going to sing, he was likely to scratch his head and reply, “Wait till I’ve sung it.”

These recordings were made in Camp H, which houses about four hundred prisoners. The studio was the tool room, which was decorated by primitive murals of dancing figures and clippings of pictures from newspapers. In the background a leaky pipe hissed steam insistently. Attracted by music pouring out the window, convicts of all ages crowded in to listen; the frequent variations of their expressions from moody sadness to raucous laughter demonstrated to them the blues form was still vital and alive.

ROBERT PETE WILLIAMS was born March 14, 1914, in Zachary, Louisiana, where the members of his family were sharecroppers. He worked as a farmhand, picking cotton and cutting cane until 1928 when he moved to Scotlandville, a African American community on the outskirts of Baton Rouge. In Scotlandville he worked in a lumber yard for several years, after which he got a job washing and cleaning barrels.

In 1934 he learned to play the guitar on a crude instrument he had fashioned out of five copper strings and a cigar box. After a while he managed to buy himself a cheap guitar, "an old box, strings about an inch from the neck."

The blues of Robert Pete Williams are more original, more directly personal, and more evocative in their expression of love, frustration, and despair. This difference in intensity were apparent even in Williams' attitude toward music; he saw it as a force which engulfed him. In describing his first guitar playing he said: "Music begin to follow me then. I bin tryin' to stop playin' music, thinkin' 'bout lookin' out for preparin' my soul for Jesus. I was a Christian man before I got here. I can play church songs too, jest as well so I kin blues... What Jesus gave me, He didn't take it away from me. I walked away from Him. He sent me to be a preacher, and I didn't

take it. . . So by me not taking up preachin' and leadin' the peoples, he throwed it on my little kid, he's right at eight years old. Yes suh, he preachin' now himself.

"Well I didn't take it. Jest look like to me I can't put music down. Time I get hold of one guitar and I maybe sell it to somebody, well, music just come back and worry me so, I jest have to go back and buy me another guitar.

"All the music I play, I jest hear it in the air. You can hear the sound of it, comin' forth, soundin' good. Well, all of my blues that I put out, that was made-up blues. I make up my own blues you see. Why, I may be walkin' along or ridin' in a car and blues come to me, and I jest get it all in my head Well, I come back and I get my guitar and then I play it."

These remarks suggest that Robert Pete feels the traditionally sharp dichotomy between the singers of sinful songs, and the singers of spirituals. Usually once an African American has gotten religion, he puts aside his guitar and refuses to sing any more blues, songs which are so frequently concerned with sexual desire and drinking. It is also significant to note that his description of the process of composing a song suggests that the musician passively receives music which comes to him through a powerful

inspirational force from outside himself, a theory of creation essentially similar to that of the poet Shelley.

MATTHEW "HOGMAN" MAXEY was born in Haynesville, Louisiana, on January 18, 1917. He acquired his western accent in Las Vegas, where his family moved when he was fourteen. There too he earned his nickname, "Hogman." In his own words:

"When I was a kid I always believe' that I was a hog doctor, so every time daddy'd get a bunch of pigs and he'd leave home, I'd give a hog doctorin'. Every time my folks'd leave I'd find two or three of the hogs had appendicitis. And so I messed around and operated on too many of 'em; they begin to get scarce. And so they begin to check on it, and they find out that I was the doctor. After they got through talkin' to me round in the smokehouse, nobody there but me and them, they doctored on me, but the only thing they didn't use no knife! So they gave me the name "Hogman;" I been wearing it off and on ever since."

Working in his father's smithy, Maxey learned the trade of blacksmith and mechanic. He later also became a bulldozer operator.

Growing up in a musical family, Maxey early in life became an expert fiddler. When he was

nineteen he started learning to play the guitar in an attempt to win out over a romantic rival. He says:

"Really what caused me to get it on my mind was me and another man was sittin' down with one lady between us all night long. So jes' before day she reach back in the window an' picked up a guitar and set it down between us both. So she spoke, 'So now this is yo'all's choice. Is either of yo'll kin play?' Well, I couldn't play but the other boy could Well, the minute I walked away I says, 'I'm got to learn to play the blues.'"

In 1936 he bought his first guitar, a twelve stringer; also that year he started his own band, which consisted of three guitars, a fiddle, and a washboard with thimbles. The band made good money playing frequently around Jonesboro, Louisiana.

Hogman remarks about the blues: "Whenever I have the blues that's a lonesome feelin' to have, jest for a man to be standin' around, lonesome. Whenever you sing the blues jest right, why you feels like a million, when you may not have a dime... If you playin' the guitar you got the blues mostly anytime you tune it up. That's the best part of my life is blues."

Hogman Maxey had one unusual practice in his harmony: he employed polytonality, that is



Matthew "Hogman" Maxey

he sang in one key and played in another. However, his general style and his chord progressions; like those of Guitar Welch, were strongly influenced by the conventions of most recorded blues. Though both Hogman and Guitar are gifted performers, they were primarily the heirs of a clearly defined and standardized blues tradition, rather than innovators.

ROBERT WELCH whom the convicts called "Guitar" and "King of the Blues," was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on May 5, 1896. When he was seven, his family moved to a small town near Greenville, Mississippi, on the outskirts of which his mother worked as a sharecropper. At the age of eight he went to work tying bales of cotton in a linseed oil mill. After thirteen years in the mill, he worked for five years as an auto mechanic.

Guitar's first instrument was the old five string banjo played by his two grandparents, who picked away at "that old way-back music" (round dances). He also heard many guitar players at country balls. Sometimes the musicians would leave their guitars behind at his mother's house—an exciting opportunity for the young boy. In his words:

"I'd plow till my mule got hot; I'd let him cool off and run to the house and practice on

the guitar, and jest kep' on that way till I learn'a note or two. I came to town an' stop' at those juke houses round there where they play pianos and things. I just taken the guitar and ast the piano player would he mind me tryin' to learn a little bit. Well, he showed me, I mean he played the piano, and I just felt the music and felt the notes until I found them on the guitar. When I found the notes, well there I was."

Welch also was an eager listener to the records of Ma Rainey, Lonnie Johnson, Papa Charlie Jackson, and Blind Lemon Jefferson; Bessie Smith, whom he knew personally, was a special favorite of his.

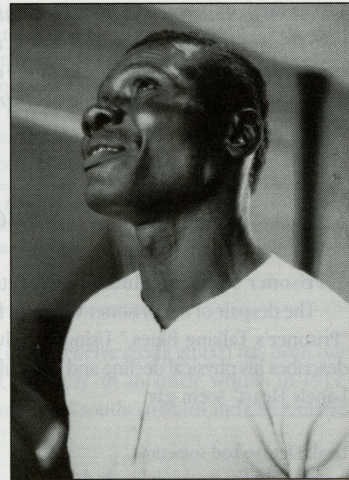
In 1938 he began playing the guitar for the Greenville Pepper Shakers, making the rounds of house parties, bar rooms, and country suppers. He later played with the Texas Serenaders, a band led by his brother in Tallulah, Louisiana.

His style of singing blues and playing the guitar was slow and relaxed, ruefully ironic, rather than intensely sad. As he poured out his well controlled complaints about prison life or the infidelity of women, the guitar kept chiming in antiphonally like a human voice, breezily saying, "That's tough brother, but that's the way the world is and the way it's always gonna be."



Robert "Guitar" Welch

Classified as a habitual criminal, a four time loser, **ROOSEVELT CHARLES** has spent most of his adult life — he was born ca. 1915 — in prisons, principally Angola, alternating short periods of freedom with long sentences. During the many times I have interviewed and taped him, first in the spring of 1959 just before he was paroled from his third sentence at Angola, a few weeks later in Baton Rouge when I paid him to come to my house to work at odd jobs and record his songs and experiences, and the last time during three all day recording sessions at Angola in November, 1960, I was repeatedly struck by a sense of tragic waste. Despite his lengthy police record, Charles is sensitive, personable, intelligent, and imaginative - a highly gifted creator, performer, and interpreter of African American music. His rebellion against society appears to be at least in part the explosion which results when a driving, intensely creative man can find no outlet for his energies and talents — a particularly difficult problem for a bright but almost illiterate African American born in the Louisiana farm country.



Roosevelt Charles

Note: Selections #8 through 20 have been added to the original LP of this historic collection. The Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola also contains a section for female inmates. Dr. Oster, on his various visits to the prison, did record several women, including Clara Young, Odea Mathews, and Thelma Mae Joseph, and was able to locate the tapes of the three

selections we have included. Unfortunately Dr. Oster did not interview or spend as much time with the women as he did with the men, who were obviously more outgoing and used to being entertainers. The three selections by the women are rather baunting in their a capella delivery and two of them, sung while working, could have been included in *Angola Prison Worksongs* (CD 448).

Chris Strachwitz

Some of the songs:

1. Prisoner's Talking Blues (Robert Pete Williams, vocal & twelve string guitar)

The despair of the prisoner who is in for life has never been better captured than in Williams' "Prisoner's Talking Blues." Using a twelve string guitar for rhythmic background, Robert Pete describes his physical decline and his soul's sorrow with a poignancy which makes "None But the Lonely Heart" seem gay.

Lord, I feel so bad sometime,
seems like I'm weakenin' every day.
You know begin to get grey since I got here,
well a whole lot of worryin' causin' that.
But I can feel myself weakenin',
I don't keep well no more. I keeps sickly.
I takes a lot of medicine,
but it looks like it don't do no good
All I have to do is pray;
that's the only thing'll help me here,
One foot in the grave look like,
And the other 'un out
Sometime looks like my best day
gotta be my last day

Sometime I feel like I never see my
little ol' kids anymore
But if I don't never see 'em no more,
leave 'em in the hands of God.
You know my sister she like a mother to me.
She do all in the world that she can;
She went all the way along with me
in this trouble till the end.
In a way, I was glad my pore mother had
(de)ceased because she suffered with heart
trouble, and trouble behind me
Sho' would-a went hard with her.
But if she were livin', I could call on her sometime.
But my ol' father dead, too,

That'd make me be motherless and fatherless.
It's six of us sister,
Three boys.
Family done got small now,
looks like they're dyin' out fast.
I don't know but God been good to us in a way
'Cause ol' death have stayed away a long time.

Sung: Lord, my worry sho' carryin' me down (2X)
Sometimes I feel like, baby, committin' suicide. (2X)
I got the nerve if I just had anythin' to do it with.
I'm goin' down slow, somethin' wrong with me.
Yes, I'm goin' down slow, somethin' wrong with me,
I've got to make a change while that I'm still young
If I don't, I won't never get old.

The spoken part is accompanied in a D minor tonality, mostly D minor seventh, with occasional C seventh chord. Accompanying his singing, he anticipates his dominant (A seventh) with the second of the scale. Williams uses an unusual pentatonic scale, 1,3,4,5, and 7, here D, F, G, A, C natural. In the guitar accompaniment he ends on the second note of the scale.

2. "Stagolee" (Hogman Maxey, accompanying himself on the twelve string guitar) has been one of the best known badman ballads for more than half a century. In an article written in 1911, Howard Odum describes the song as being widely sung in several southern states and also remarks that it is "sung by Negro vagrants all over the country."

One early variant tells us:

*It was in the year of eighteen hundred and sixty-one
In St. Louis on Market Street where Stackalee was born.*

To attain such wide circulation the song must have originated many years earlier. There are numerous and highly different variants both in oral tradition and on records. Archibald (Leon Gross), a professional entertainer and pianist who had been appearing around New Orleans for a long time, said that everyone he met had a different version of "Stagolee." The best selling record of it by Lloyd Price in the late 1950s was patterned after the recording Archibald made on Imperial years ago. Maxey's variant, which he learned about twenty years ago, resembles that of Archibald, but is quite different from "Ma" Rainey's early "Stack O'Lee Blues," (Paramount 12357) which closely resembles "Frankie and Johnny" in tune and text. Jesse Fuller's recording (Good Time Jazz 12031) is another significantly different variant.

1. I was standin' on the corner
When I heard my bulldog bark;
He was barkin' at the two mens
Who gamblin' in the dark.

2. It was Stagolee and Billy,
Two men who gamble' late;
Stagolee throw seven,
Billy swore that he throwed eight.

3. Stagolee told Billy,
"I can't let you go with that;
You have win my money
And my brand-new Stetson hat."

4. Stagolee went home,
And got his forty-four
Says, "I'm goin' to the bar room,
To pay the debt I owe."

Musicological note: Maxey generally performs polytonally; here he is usually singing in D major but accompanying usually with a C chord. Conversely, when he plays a tonic chord his voice fits into a subdominant chord. He often uses F natural in the bass, the "blue" note for D major.

5. Stagolee went to the bar room,
Stood four feet from the door,
Didn't nobody know when he
Pulled his forty-four

6. Stagolee found Billy,
"Oh please don't take my life!"
I got three little children
And a very sick little wife "

7. Stagolee shot Billy
Oh he shot that boy so fas'
That the bullet came through him,
And broke my window glass.

8. Some folks don't believe,
Oh Lord that Billy dead
You don't believe he gone,
Just look what a hole in his head.

3. "Electric Chair Blues" sung by Guitar Welch, accompanying himself on the guitar.
Spoken: "Say there, old partner, how about let's goin' down the road apiece and havin' a ball."
"O.K, Bob, I don't care if I do"

1. I'm gonna shake hands with my partner, } 2X
I'm gonna ask him how come he here,
You know I had a wreck in my family
They're gonna send me to the ole electric chair.

2. Wonder why they electrocute a man at the one
o'clock hour at night?(2X)
The current much stronger, people turn out all the
light.

3. Oh well, I guess I'll have to go back home (2X)
Seem like my trouble, baby, it ain't gonna last me
long.

4. I believe, I believe, baby, I believe I'll go back
home, (2X)
This old life I'm livin', baby, Lord, it ain't gonna last
me long.

5. Good-bye little girl, fare you well good-bye,
good-bye, (2X)
I've got a special deliver pretty momma,
Baby, and I've gotta leave your town.

6. I heard a rumblin' this mornin', Baby, was deep
down in the groun', (2X)
Oh that must have been that old devil, tryin' to chain
my baby down.

Musicological note: Welch uses all open chord tuning with A major tonality; in his chording he includes the tonic, subdominant, and the dominant. Between the subdominant and tonic he uses a chord built on a flatted third (a C chord), a basic feature of his style. There are frequent appearances in the guitar responses and in the voice of flatted sevenths and thirds — a feature typical of the blues.

4. "Black Night Fallin'" Hogman Maxey, accompanying himself on the twelve string guitar.

1. Oh, black night fallin', my pains comin' down
again, (3X)

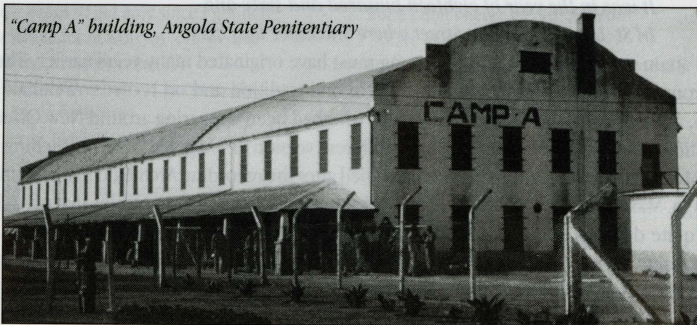
Oh, I feel so lonesome, oh I ain't got no frien'.

2. Oh, oh, just another pain, oh Lord oh it hurts so bad; (2X)
Lord I feel so lonesome, baby,

Lost the best friend I've ever had.

3. Oh sheets and pillow cases torn all to pieces, baby,
blood stain all over the wall, (2X)

Oh Lord, I wasn't aimin' when I left baby, and the
telephone wasn't in the hall.



4. Oh, Rocky Mountain, that's a lonesome place to go, (2X)
Oh, I'm goin' up on the mountain, knock upon my baby's do'.

Musical note: The tonality is D major. The chords are mostly the tonic and the dominant, with the sub dominant inferred. C natural with the D triad infers that the chord will go to the sub dominant G, but the chord actually remains D with a lowered third, (F natural). B natural and G pass through occasionally. The "blue" notes are F natural and C natural.

5. "Some Got Six Months" Robert Pete Williams, accompanying himself on the guitar. In this extemporaneous piece of biography, Robert Pete Williams sometimes omits a word and lets the guitar speak it for him.

When Richard Allen asked Robert Pete to sing a song about doing time in prison, he replied he didn't know such a song, but he would make one up.

1. Some got six months, some got a solid year } 2X
But me and my buddy we got life time here.

2. Six months, oh baby let me go to bed,
I've drunk white lightnin',
Gone to my head.
(aside) It gone to my head.

3. I've got so much time, darlin',
It worryin' me, oh babe,
You know this time killin' (me) (?)
But I just can help it, darlin', I just got to roll.

Musicological note: This is in a D major tonality. Williams uses the tonic, subdominant, and dominant in his accompaniment. G in almost every chord is a drone or pedal.

5. Take me back, baby, try me one more time,
Oh take me back, baby, try me one more time.
Oh Lord, if I don't treat you no better, I'm gonna
break my back a-tryin'.

4. You know that ole judge must been mad.
Yeah hey that ole judge must been mad, darlin'.
When he gave me my sentence,
He throwed the book at (me)

5. First time in trouble, I done get no fair trial at all,
oh Lord
Seem like to me, baby, they locked the poor
boy in jail (?).

6. "I'm Gonna Leave You Mama" Guitar Welch, accompanying himself on the guitar, with a bottle neck on the little finger of his left hand.

In playing this blues, Guitar Welch uses "thimble thumbing," a technique which is now almost legendary. The guitar is tuned to an open G chord as in the Hawaiian style, but the musician frets the bass strings with the first three fingers (and sometimes thumb) of his left hand and at the same time slides the neck broken off a bottle or a thimble worn on his little finger up and down the treble strings. Guitar, who uses the neck of a small green bottle, says he observed this technique for the first time in 1924.

1. Oh I'm gonna leave you, mama,
Lord but I won't be back till fall,
Oh if you don't take good care of me, baby,
Lord I won't be back at all.

2. I'm gonna leave you, mama,
I want you to hang crepe on your do',
I want you to leave, mamma,
I want you to hang crepe on your do';
Lord, if my mind don't change little woman,
Lord, I'll never knock there no mo'

3. I woke up this mornin',
Lord, with the blues all round my bed

Lord, I woke up this mornin',
Lord, with the blues all round my bed;
I had the blues so bad baby,
Lord, I need my baby.

4. Baby you may be beautiful, Lord, but you swear
you got to die some day,
Yes, you may be beautiful,
Lord, but I swear you got to die some day;
Then you gonna be sorry little woman,
You ever done me dis-da-way (this-a-way)

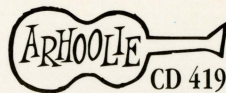
Spoken: Play it now man.

Musicological note: The song has a D major tonality, an open D tuning, and Welch uses the basic chords with frequent flatted thirds and sevenths. In some places, however, he uses the mediant seventh chord (the first degree of the scale is sharpened),

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Robert Pete Williams (5:10)
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3. ELECTRIC CHAIR BLUES – Guitar Welch (5:08)
4. BLACK NIGHT IS FALLIN' – Hogman Maxey (4:27)
5. SOME GOT SIX MONTHS – Robert Pete Williams (3:44)
6. I'M GONNA LEAVE YOU MAMA – Guitar Welch (2:48)
7. I'M LONESOME BLUES – Robert Pete Williams (4:00)
8. ANGOLA BOUND – A Capella Group (5:50)
9. WORRIED BLUES – Hogman Maxey (4:23)
10. JOSEPHINE – Guitar Welch (5:11)
11. SOLDIER'S PLEA – Clara Young (2:55)
12. THE MOON IS RISING
Odea Mathews (at sewing machine) (2:03)
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Thelma Mae Joseph (at laundry machine) (1:48)
14. I MISS YOU SO – Vocal Group (3:39)
15. HELLO, SUE – Butterbeans (1:10)
16. FAST LIFE WOMAN – Hogman Maxey (4:09)
17. CARELESS LOVE – Otis Webster (2:39)

18. HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE CHURCH BELLS TONE
Roosevelt Charles-vocal; Otis Webster-guitar (2:38)

19. 61 HIGHWAY – Guitar Welch (4:26)

20. STRIKE AT CAMP I – Roosevelt Charles (9:34)

Total time: 79:00

Edited by Chris Strachwitz & Harry Oster

All photos © Dr. Harry Oster

Cover by Wayne Pope

CD release produced by Chris Strachwitz.

Raw, powerful, largely improvised and often very personal blues, stories, and traditional songs, performed by inmates and recorded in the 1950s by Dr. Harry Oster at Louisiana's infamous state penitentiary at Angola, La. All previously unreleased except #1-7 which were available on Arhoolie/FL LP 2011. Part of the royalties from this CD will go to the Inmate Welfare Fund at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, Louisiana, which is responsible for recreation and providing musical instruments.

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