

# MANCE LIPSCOMB

*"Captain,  
Captain!"*

Texas  
Songster  
Vol.3



1. **CAPTAIN, CAPTAIN!**  
(M-144, April 1966, LP 1033)
2. **AIN'T YOU SORRY**  
(M-147, April 1966, LP 1033)
3. **NIGHT TIME IS THE RIGHT TIME**  
(M-158, April 1966, LP 1033)
4. **MR. TOM'S RAG** (guitar solo)  
(M-155, April 1966, LP 1033)
5. **I WANT TO DO SOMETHING FOR YOU**  
(M-156, April 1966, LP 1033)
6. **LONG TALL GIRL GOT STUCK ON ME**  
(M-162, April 1966, LP 1033)
7. **RAG IN "A"** (guitar solo)  
(M-153, April 1966, LP 1033)
8. **GOIN' UP NORTH TO SEE MY PONY RUN**  
(M-135, April 1966, unissued)
9. **SANTA FE BLUES**  
(M-141, April 1966, unissued)
10. **FRANKIE AND ALBERT**  
(M-145, April 1966, unissued)
11. **SENTIMENTAL PIECE IN "G"** (guitar solo)  
(M-146, April 1966, unissued)
12. **FAREWELL BLUES**  
(M-161, April 1966, LP 1033)
13. **SHORTY GEORGE**  
(M-26, 8/12/1960, unissued)
14. **ANGEL CHILD**  
(M-28, 8/12/1960, unissued)
15. **BLACK RAT**  
(M-35, 8/12/1960, unissued)

16. **TOM MOORE'S FARM - take 2**  
(M-7, 6/30/1960, unissued)
17. **FOGGY BOTTOM BLUES**  
(M-43, 8/13/1960, unissued)
18. **HEEL AND TOE POLKA**  
(M-44, 8/13/1960, unissued)
19. **GOING BACK TO GEORGIA**  
(M-47, 8/13/1960, unissued)
20. **EASY RIDER BLUES**  
(M-53, 8/13/1960, unissued)
21. **WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME?**  
(M-54, 8/13/1960, unissued)
22. **ME AND MY BABY**  
(M-58, 8/13/1960, unissued)
23. **MANCE'S TALKING BLUES**  
(M-59, 8/13/1960, unissued)
24. **SEGREGATION DONE PAST** (story - no guitar)  
(M-T, April 1966, unissued)

## Mance Lipscomb - guitar and vocals

All recordings by Chris Strachwitz as noted:

1960 sessions in Navasota, Texas

1966 session in Berkeley, California

Cover photo by Kelly Hart

Other photos © by Chris Strachwitz

Cover design by Wayne Pope

Booklet layout by Craig Millman

All songs composed or arranged by Mance Lipscomb and

© by Tradition Music Co. and administered by BUG Music Co.

Copyright © & © 1998 by Arhoolie Productions Inc.

The Texas Country Blues Guitar Of

# MANCE LIPSCOMB

*"Captain,  
Captain!"*

Texas  
Songster  
Vol.3







Photo © Chris Strachwitz

## MANCE LIPSCOMB

*"Captain, Captain!"*

Mance Lipscomb (1895 - 1976) was no doubt one of the most remarkable gentlemen I have had the pleasure of meeting and recording. He was also an expressive, although quiet singer and one of the most accomplished blues guitarists in the Texas tradition. Mance referred to himself as a "songster," a village musician who performed a wide ranging repertoire including blues as well as locally popular dance tunes, ballads, spirituals, pop songs, children's ditties, work songs, and he was a marvellous story teller as well. This collection concentrates, as the header indicates, on The Texas Country Blues Guitar of Mance Lipscomb.

Our initial meeting took place in the summer of 1960 on my first recording trip to Texas. I had driven to Houston to meet

up with my idol, Lightning Hopkins, with the hope of recording him at a local beer joint. However Lightning was just getting ready to leave for his first ever concert tour to California! My host in Houston, Mack McCormick who had no car, suggested we use my old Plymouth to drive towards Washington County with the hope of somehow finding the legendary Tom Moore about whom Lightning had recorded a powerful protest ballad on a 78 rpm record (now available on Arhoolie CD 330).

Inquiring about blues singers and guitar players among field workers along the way, we were told that in Navasota we might find some! Mack suggested the local feed store as a place where everyone was known - and there we were indeed told rather bluntly that, yes "Mr." Tom Moore had an office right



over the bank building! He invited us over and after considerable conversation Tom Moore suggested we ask Pegleg at the railroad station as to who the best guitar player might be. Pegleg was not hard to locate and without hesitation gave us the name of Mance Lipscomb and even told us where we could find him. That same evening I recorded most of the cuts on Mance's first album which we released in August 1960 as Arhoolie's first release, LP1001 (now available on Arhoolie CD 306 - Texas Songster Vol. 1).

On this CD collection, Arhoolie brings you Mance Lipscomb's performances from two recording "get-togethers." Recorded first, but presented on the second half of the CD, is much of the remaining unreleased material from the summer of 1960. For the August 1960 sessions at Mance's home in Navasota, Paul and Valerie Oliver from England were also present. Recorded second, but presented first on the CD, is the best material from a session held at my house in Berkeley, Calif. in April of 1966 for

which the late writer and record producer, Pete Welding had joined us. During the session Pete, who played guitar, tried once to help Mance tune his instrument. That gracious offer quickly taught both of us that the Texas Songster had his own ideas about tuning. As soon as Pete handed the "tuned" guitar back to Mance, he began a song during which he quickly re-tuned his instrument to his taste!

I am including here Pete Welding's original notes which first appeared on Mance Lipscomb's fourth Arhoolie release (LP 1033) which contained most of the 1966 recordings heard here. The final selection is an example of Mance Lipscomb, the story teller, recorded that same afternoon, telling us two tales he had picked up during the past two years - since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which banned discrimination in public accommodations including restaurants, hotels, and theaters.

Most of the previously unissued 1960 recordings pretty well speak for themselves.

However, a comment about "Tom Moore's Farm - take 2" might be in order. Although somewhat fragmentary, it was the 7th song we recorded that first evening. Take 1 was the second song we recorded after an initial "test" to get a balance between the voice and the guitar for my mike. Mance Lipscomb requested that we not issue his version of this song since he lived in the same town as Mr. Moore. We honored his request and I gave the actual tape of take 1 to Mack McCormick who hopefully still has it! It wasn't until many years later when Mance had become quite a local celebrity, that one of Mr. Moore's sons actually hired Mance Lipscomb to play at a party. By then Mance felt half way at ease singing this song for Mr. Moore but told me how hard it was for him to think of acceptable verses! Mance re-recorded a pretty complete version for me in 1964 which is now available on CD 398 (Vol. 2). - Chris Strachwitz (January 1998)

## Pete Welding's Original Notes

Certainly the case of Mance Lipscomb, this gentle and dignified sharecropper and songster, is one in which the folk music revival can take justifiable pride, for the folksong audience has been in large measure responsible for the continuing joyousness and vitality which course through the music heard in this album. It has been as a result of the gratifyingly warm response with which his music has met these last few years, both on record and in person, that Mance has been enabled to embark on an active performing career at a time in life when most would be content—no, eager — to settle for the easy motion of a rocking chair and a well-earned release from their labors. Not so Mance, however; he has found stimulation and new enthusiasm in the belated acclaim his songster's art has earned from a folksong audience four to five decades his junior. As a result, he is performing with a vigor and power undiminished by the ravages of time, with a zest which belies his three score and

twelve years.

Nor were they easy years, it must be remembered. The past he and his music represent was one of unrelenting, backbreaking, sunup-to-sundown toil, of harrowingly brutal exploitation and systematic victimization. Mance, born and raised in the harsh bottom-lands of the Brazos Valley of Texas—where he was discovered and where he was first recorded—has supported himself, and later a large family, since the age of eleven, more than a half-century ago. At first he hired himself out as a farmhand and from 1911, when he was sixteen, sharecropping a twenty-acre cotton plot.

"The practice of my life has been farming," he told me with disarming simplicity and more than a touch of pride, the well-earned pride of a man who could ride out an oppressive way of life designed to grind him down, deny his manhood and demean his humanity. It never has.

"I started," he told McCormick of the early days, "under a general manager of one of the

big plantations. In them days it was all big places — 500, 600 acres — around here. Well, you go down there and work on half-handers. They furnish groceries, mules, feed, plows. They each 'em out (hand them out) from the commissary store. Then when you make a crop, if I get ten bales of cotton, he get five, I get five. Then it be time to settle up with the commissary for what they'd give you. Sometimes, the end of the year come you might clear a little something. Then again, they liable to say, 'Well, you didn't pay me up this year.' Nothing you could do about it. You done worked and sold the cotton and corn at their price."

Under these oppressive conditions—which would have bowed many a lesser man—Mance eked out a livelihood for forty-two years, clearing \$700 in his best year; this was an exception, since he generally realized but \$150 to \$200 in the "good years." He somehow survived the depression years, and in 1943 was enabled, by dint of years of scrimping and going without, to purchase his own farming implements and a team of

mules, and began farming rented land. On this system, he said, "I do my own furnishing and then the man that owned the land would get every third bale of cotton, every fourth load of corn. But still you never did make anything after you pay back what you had to borrow. You make thirty bales, you still come out in debt on the split."

Mance quit farming in 1956 and went to work for a Houston lumber firm, where the following year a truck overturned and falling timber injured both his eyesight and his limbs. Since then he has worked as a tractor driver for a Navasota contractor. Ironically, Mance was never able to get sufficiently ahead until he gave up farming, and then only as a result of the accident he suffered, for the small compensation he received for his injury has enabled him to purchase a plot of land near Navasota, on which he has built a house for his family.

Music making of the joyous, infectious variety heard in these performances is one of the things that sustained Mance over the years. In his life music has been a near

necessity, almost a condition for survival. Performing arduous farm labor six days of the week for forty-seven years under the merciless red Texas sun, Mance filled his weekends with music. "Saturday night I'd play all night," he says with characteristic exuberance, "till eleven o'clock Sunday morning—and go right back and play for the white dance Sunday night and then go to the field Monday."

Mance prides himself on the musical traditions of his own family. "I learnt my music right at home," he told me. "I was born in a music family. My daddy was about as good a violin player as I ever heard. I hear players that just touch his songs, 'cause I remember the sounds from my boyhood on up to now because I was raised on them... my uncle and granddad played the banjo. My granddad also was a fiddler, but he played some banjo too, I heard my father say. I was raised up around my uncle and dad; my uncle was a good banjo player, George Lipscomb.

"In a few years, here come guitars right



***“...I lived with the guitar all my life. That’s my life, you see...” - Mance Lipscomb***

after the banjo and fiddle. They got to playing a few little songs ‘round on the guitar. I was quite small: I reckon I was about eleven years old the first guitar I seen. I thought that was better than the banjo and the fiddle. I liked the sound better because it was something new to me. I had been hearing that fiddle and banjo up until I was around eleven years old. Then they played little songs ‘round there and I thought, ‘I believe I’m going to try to play that.’”

Mance’s inclination to the guitar received further impetus from the playing of two local performers, Robert Tim and Sam Collins, from whom he learned “Sugar Babe,” “All Out and Down” and “Take Me Back, Babe.” A few years later he heard and learned from the music of the Meigs brothers, Tom and Gummy, guitar players from Ennis, Texas, about 130 miles from Navasota. “They come in here playing more guitar than

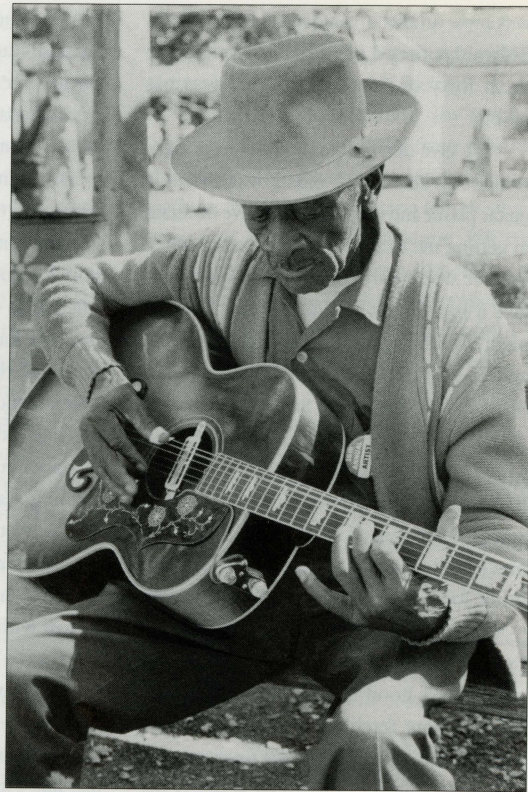
anybody,” Mance recalled, adding that he had gotten “Alabama Bound” and “If I Miss the Train (Got a Big Black Mule to Ride)” from their performances of these songs.

“Music runs in families,” Mance observed. “Every one of my brothers and sisters could play some kind of music, a portion of it. And according to what they liked about it they would hang onto it longer than the others, because some of them played it a while and put it down, do other things. But I lived with the guitar all my life. That’s my life, you see; I likes it. If I get a little bit worried — get my old guitar. Nights I be at home, now, I get out on my porch — everybody asleep; I set out there, play till eleven o’clock. Tell you what I’m doing: I’m playing some of my songs... then I’ll stop and get to thinking and make up something.

“I started playing guitar — what I’d call playing — three or four pieces, when I was

about fourteen years old. Then I went out playing for parties, ring parties, and they discovered I was playing pretty good and they got me set up and playing for suppers, Saturday night dances. The way they arranged those dances then, they’d kill hogs and chickens and turkeys and have apples and peanuts and candy, and they’d come there and dance all night and they’d buy and eat. They’d sell that whole hog out, I don’t care how large it was. They’d have it at somebody’s house and you would dance there all night till you give out. They had gamblers all ‘round the house, all out in the grounds and in cribs when it was too bad to set outdoors. There

Photo © Chris Strachwitz





was two or three hundred people there. Before day they'd sold that hog out, made them forty or fifty dollars. That was big money.

"You give one tonight and the next night somebody else'd give one. I was the only guitar player and they wouldn't have no strain in getting me to play from one to the other. You see, everybody couldn't get me, so you'd give it tonight and the next fellow the next night, and the next then they'd get it around and I'd start right back where I'd started. So that kept me busy every Saturday night."

Thanks to his years of playing at these rough country dances and suppers, Mance has retained a vast repertoire of traditional song, most of it of considerable age and much of it — thanks to his borrowings from other local performers heard in his youth — even older than his seventy-two years. In this compelling album, for example, Mance performs a good sampling of traditional pieces, some fetching instrumental work and original songs. Among the finer samples of his work in the traditional genre is the

understated worksong-based "Captain, Captain!," as well as a pair of pieces he learned circa 1914 from a local performer, Son McFarland, "Farewell Blues" and "Long Tall Girl Got Stuck on Me." The wry "I Want to Do Something for You" is a fine representative of the ageless courtship-dialogue song; the references to several early model automobiles give it an interesting touch. The raggy instrumentals "Mr. Tom's Rag" and "Rag In A" recall the sprightly dance music of the country entertainments at which Mance played for so long, as does the pop-derived "Keep on Trucking."

Mance recalled the circumstances of his learning "Captain, Captain!":

"Convicts would work their time out and get in different areas, so one came to us at the time he got out and was chopping cotton with us. That was his favorite song, and I was a boy at the time I heard that, and I said, 'Now how can that be played?' He just sing it flat from his mouth; he didn't have no guitar. And that just ring in my ear, just like I say I hear things and remember,

memorize them until I work them up. And he sung that song day by day and I couldn't forget it, because away long when the sun commenced getting hot, about ten or eleven o'clock, he'd break out and go to singing his life back where he lived. And that was his favorite song. I don't know how he come by it, but he brought it there. He might have heard somebody sing it; he may have made it up himself. Oh, he sure could sing it too!

"It was just in my mind to learn it, because I like it. If you like a thing it'll follow you. If you is just picking up something as a habit you can soon forget about it, but anything you like, that means something to you—and that's the way most music should be worked up. If you play something you like, probably if you play it the way you like it, somebody else will like it because it's

coming just from you. It means somethin' to you and you can hand it to the individual. It has to have some kind of feeling.

"A song that doesn't have any feeling, well, you don't feel nothing from it when the fellow hands it to you. It's kind of dead—nothing to it. But if you hear a fellow sing a song and it's sad and lonesome, it'll run through you, and you'll get something or other out of it. But a lot of this 'jumped-up' stuff, you just hear it, you forget about it because it don't mean nothing to you."

— Pete Welding (1967)

Also available by Mance Lipscomb:  
CD/C 306 "Texas Songster" Vol. 1  
CD 398 "You Got To Reap What You Sow"  
(Texas Songster, Vol. 2)  
CD 001 "Texas Blues Guitar" (A companion to the Mel Bay instruction book, Mance Lipscomb: Texas Blues Guitar)

---

*Down Home Music Since 1960: Blues • Cajun • Tex-Mex • Zydeco • Country • Jazz • Regional & World Music*  
**For credit card orders call toll free: 1-888-ARHOLIE (1-888-274-6654)**

VISIT OUR WEB PAGE AT: [HTTP://WWW.ARHOLIE.COM](http://www.ARHOLIE.COM)

For our complete 120-page illustrated catalog of CDs, Cassettes, Videos, & more, send \$3.00 to:

**ARHOLIE CATALOG, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530**



# MANCE LIPSCOMB

*"Captain,  
Captain!"*

Texas  
Songster  
Vol.3



1. CAPTAIN, CAPTAIN!
2. AIN'T YOU SORRY
3. NIGHT TIME IS THE RIGHT TIME
4. MR. TOM'S RAG (guitar solo)
5. I WANT TO DO SOMETHING FOR YOU
6. LONG TALL GIRL GOT STUCK ON ME
7. RAG IN "A" (guitar solo)
8. GOIN' UP NORTH TO SEE MY PONY RUN\*
9. SANTA FE BLUES\*
10. FRANKIE AND ALBERT\*
11. SENTIMENTAL PIECE IN "G" (guitar solo)\*
12. FAREWELL BLUES
13. SHORTY GEORGE\*
14. ANGEL CHILD\*
15. BLACK RAT\*
16. TOM MOORE'S FARM - take 2\*
17. FOGGY BOTTOM BLUES\*
18. HEEL AND TOE POLKA\*
19. GOING BACK TO GEORGIA\*
20. EASY RIDER BLUES\*
21. WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME?\*
22. ME AND MY BABY\*
23. MANCE'S TALKING BLUES\*
24. SEGREGATION DONE PAST (story - no guitar)\*

\* Previously Unissued

**Mance Lipscomb** - guitar and vocals

Mance Lipscomb spent his entire life in Navasota, TX where he became known as THE "Songster" to play house parties, picnics, etc. - for both black and white audiences. He mastered an extraordinarily large and varied repertoire reflecting the full range of rural Texas African-American culture as well as many pop songs and fiddle tunes. Mance influenced many folk artists, Bob Dylan and Taj Mahal among them, during the 1960's & 70's when he appeared with many of the stars at folk festivals. This CD contains the balance of his first recordings in 1960 and the best from a session in Berkeley, California in 1966.

## FEATURING 16 PREVIOUSLY UNISSUED SELECTIONS

All recordings by Chris Strachwitz as noted:

1960 sessions in Navasota, Texas

1966 session in Berkeley, California

Cover photo by Kelly Hart. Other photos © by Chris Strachwitz

Cover design by Wayne Pope. Booklet layout by Craig Millman

All songs composed or arranged by Mance Lipscomb and

© by Tradition Music Co. and administered by BUG Music Co.

**File Under: Blues**



0

96297 04652

4

Copyright © & © 1998  
by Arhoolie Productions Inc.