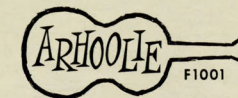


MANCIE LIPSCOMB

TEXAS SHARECROPPER AND SONGSTER





MANCE LIPSCOMB
TEXAS SHARECROPPER AND SONGSTER

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RALPH RINZLER

FREDDIE (*Lipscomb*)

SUGAR BABE, IT'S ALL OVER NOW

GOING DOWN SLOW (*Oden*)

BABY PLEASE DON'T GO (*Joe Williams*)

ROCK ME ALL NIGHT LONG

AIN'T GONNA RAIN NO MO

**JACK O'DIAMONDS IS A HARD CARD
TO PLAY**

SHAKE, SHAKE, MAMA (*Lipscomb*)

ELLA SPEED

ONE THIN DIME

GOING TO LOUISIANA (*See See Rider*)

MAMA DON'T ALLOW

AIN'T IT HARD

BOUT A SPOONFUL

PROPERTY OF
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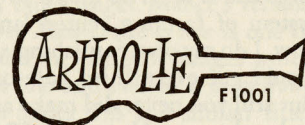
Recorded by: **CHRIS STRACHWITZ and
MACK McCORMICK at
Navasota, Texas, 1960**

Notes by: **MACK McCORMICK inside
jacket**

Produced by: **ARHOOIE RECORDS
BOX 5073
BERKELEY 5, CALIF.**

MANCE LIPSCOMB

TEXAS SHARECROPPER AND SONGSTER



by Mack McCormick

It is fitting that the first release of the International Blues Record Club should present an artist who is *not* properly a blues singer. He is more — being of that generation when the blues were but one, unseparate stream in the vast flow of Negro traditions. From such a man you will hear ballads, breakdowns, reels, shouts, drags, jubilees and blues. You will hear the firm, brisk rhythm meant for dancers, the clear ring of expressive song, and the energetic melding of tradition and personal creation. And if you describe the artist with accuracy, it will be with his own apt word: songster.

The term suggests a musician who is both performer and inventor and harks back to the time when every Southern town had its songster, a man who was virtually in charge of the community's social life. Occasionally the songsters were full-time professionals but more often they were those particular field hands who had "a gift to make music" and on week ends their neighbors gathered round them at country suppers, jook joints and open air dance platforms. They entertained, they enjoyed themselves, and they produced cultural riches. Gradually they were replaced by the growing body of traveling professionals, and with the tide of records the attention drifted to more widely famed and fashionable personalities.

Presaging this movement away from the tradition of the songsters, in the years before World War I the *word* blues became a popular commodity and there was a sudden specialization among many country musicians leading to the growth of a separate and distinct breed of primarily vocal performers who used the guitar for moody, dramatic underscore and devoted themselves more and more to the blues form alone. Because this music is so thoroughly documented on phonograph records, and because the broader ranging earlier tradition from which the "blues singer" broke away is only rarely represented, we are left with a distorted view of Negro traditions.

The listening performance of the street singer (which is what one seems to hear when it is isolated on a phonograph record) was only the part-time occupation of a relatively few individuals. Even the most notable of these, Lemon Jefferson, is not heard in proper perspective on records. Listening to one of his records we invariably conjure a picture of him amid a crowd clustered on a street corner or in some alley. We seldom picture him off to one side of a rough wooden platform playing for a mob of dancers at a country picnic; we seldom think of him at chockhouses and private parties where people heard him as they danced. Yet the testimony of nearly a hundred people who recall Lemon (and could identify his photograph to confirm the authenticity of their memory) *most often* places him at dances where he functioned both as vocal entertainer and dance musician. By the same token, records lead us to think of Lemon as only a blues singer and give no indication of him as a ballad singer whose repertoire included *Ella Speed*, *The Titanic*, *Frankie and Albert*, and *The Coon Can Game*. Thus, it appears that the "blues singers" heard on record since the 20's—whether the vaudevillian or street singer—are a specialization of the broad base of Negro tradition in which they were raised. The commercial records are a true and vital portrait of a large part of Negro tradition, but not a complete portrait. Even the most complete record collection will give little indication of the immense popularity of country dance pieces such as *Ella Speed* and *Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'*. The lop-sided perspective of recorded music, records made to be listened to, tends to obscure the obvious: that Negro song was predominantly associated with rhythms of work, of church, and of

dance. Some songs were carried along by stage and street singers, some were carried within families, but the heart of the tradition lay preponderantly in the music of the songster — the community musician who played and sang for the social affairs of his neighbors.

It is therefore a remarkable discovery to find a man who can show us a 50-year span of these traditions, a songster undiminished by age or the onslaught of industrial music.

Mance Lipscomb is a 65-year-old great-grandfather who has spent his life farming in the Brazos bottoms, struggling to feed four generations of youngsters in an environment designed to keep him ignorant, subservient and poor.

He is a poor man but the environment lost out on the other two counts. One sharp reflection of this is Mance's own signature. He writes with bold, handsome letters that he learned in the only way open to him. As a youngster he picked up scraps of paper from the floor of the commissary store and took them home to copy out the writing by lantern light when he should have been in bed resting up for the next hard day in the fields. Remembering those nights, he says, "If you don't have your schooling, writing's gonna come hard to a man. It was about 12, 14 years before I could write a letter. And I wasted more paper! Everytime it wasn't right, I'd tear it up and start on another. Finally, I learned. Course, my spelling is my own. I have to make my own spelling by sound."

Mance is the same kind of musician: self-taught, inventive, a perfectionist in his own way, driven by enormous energy. For more than 47 years he's worked six days a week under the burning Texas sun and devoted his week ends to making music. "Saturday night I'd play all night—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's father was born a slave in Alabama. When still a boy he and his brother were separated from their parents and shipped to the newly settled Brazos bottoms of Texas. There he made a fiddle out of a cigar box, and after emancipation became a full-time professional fiddler playing for dances in the Scotch-Irish, Bohemian, and Negro settlements of the valley. He seldom left the region and he seldom visited his wife and eleven children. Mance was born on April 9, 1895 in Brazos County and when still a youngster he began traveling with his father, bassing for him on guitar. But when Mance was 11 years old, his father stopped coming home altogether. "I had to take a man's job then. My mother was the mother of all those kids and my father look like he wanted to put her down, leave her. And I had to take a man's job. If I didn't my sisters and brothers woulda starved."

He hired out for a few years and then when he was 16 started sharecropping a 20-acre patch of the flat, rich blacklands. "I started 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 10 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."

Mance supported his family this way for 42 years. His best year he cleared \$700 but mostly the "good years" brought him \$150 to \$200. He survived the depression and saw the big plantations broken up and foreclosed. By 1943 he had managed to get together

tools and a team of mules so he could take advantage of the new system of farming rented land. "You call that third-and-fourths, now. 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 30 bales, you still come out in debt on the split."

Ironically the only satisfactory arrangement came along when Mance was about to retire from farming. In 1954 an absentee landlord put him in charge of a 200-acre farm and gave him a share of the profit from the whole. But then the owner decided to put him on straight salary and Mance—a true farmer who prefers to work for a crop rather than a wage—got disgusted and quit after the 1956 harvest. He went to work for a Houston lumber company but in September of the following year a truck overturned and he was hit by the falling lumber, injuring both his eyesight and limbs. He returned to Navasota and has since worked for a contractor who cuts the grass on the state highways. Mance drives a tractor and bosses a three-man crew. With the \$1600 compensation from the injury he bought a plot of land and is presently building a house for himself and his family.

When these recordings were made he was living in a two-room cabin on the outskirts of Navasota. He and his wife, Elenora, were married in 1913 and he says proudly, "Now, you can't find ten more around here that's been together that long a time. We ain't never been apart. We didn't have but the one boy but then we had all his children to raise. This is the second set of grandchildren we're raising for him." He turned away to count the children sprawled on the bed, "We've got four of 'em here, and the one great-grandchild. Then my boy has three of 'em over at his place."

Mance Lipscomb is in many ways a remarkable man. He has lived his entire life in a single cotton belt community where Negroes are effectively disciplined by the combination of white protectors and fearsome lawmen. He has gone without an education and never voted until the past year when he reached the age of poll tax exemption. He has spent nearly every day of his life working under the flat, red Texas sun and has little to show for it. But the burden has not lessened him.

He's had the wisdom to avoid dependency on any of the local "mercy men" and, unlike many of his generation, he's never fallen victim to the notion of his own inferiority. He deplores the whining servility he hears from "those that still think this is slavery times." While most people of his age are apprehensive of changes in the South, and particularly fearful of the day when the Navasota schools will be integrated, Mance looks forward to it, not with a crusader's zeal but with the straightforward wisdom that "them children'll get along together if we older heads leave them be."

He is a gentle soft-spoken man with that rare and wonderful air of the true gentleman. The graciousness with which he meets strangers is a reflection of his capacity for love, and of the faithfulness he has shown the three great and demanding loves of his life—his family, his native blacklands, and his music.

The folklorist who goes around accosting people in the rural communities of the South finds little of the famed hospitality. Suspicion and indifference are the typical masks which confront a stranger. It is difficult and sometimes impossible to establish any real personal contact. But with Mance quite the opposite is the case for in some subtle way he takes the initiative and is the first to offer genuine warmth.

He has an exceptional position in his community, for of a dozen or more people were asked where someone who sings old songs could be found, nearly all of them mentioned Mance. When he was located, there was a notable promptness and pride with which he fetched his guitar, an unquestioning readiness to satisfy the interests of strangers. Only in his first song did he show a bit of prejudice. Because he frequently plays for white dances, he assumed that he had best sing what he later described as "white people's idea of blues" and so offered a tepid *St. Louis Blues*. When he finished he was asked if he knew a particular song with a great deal of personal meaning for Negroes of the Brazos bottoms. And with that a sense of understanding was instantly established. "Oh, well,

then," he smiled, "you want to hear the real stuff." From 8 o'clock till 1 a.m. he played, evidently overjoyed in the interest shown his music, and unconcerned that he would have to rise at 5 a.m. to go to work. Much of this LP was recorded on that first evening, a session that was broken up only because five hours was long enough to impose on his graciousness. And as he insisted on helping to load the equipment in the car, his last comment was. "Well, now you ain't gonna make this your last time up here, are you?"

On a subsequent visit Mance talked about other songsters of his generation and described the vital part they played in the life of the communities to which they were bound by church, blood, segregation, heritage, and common circumstances. These men did not think of themselves as blues singers. They were singers whose employment was often to provide music for dancers and thus they thought of its rhythms, not its poetic structure. Thus, to Mance, the ballad *Ella Speed* is a breakdown; the work song *Alabama Bound* is a cakewalk; the bawdy *Bout A Spoonful* is a slow drag. For the most part he thinks of "blues" as a particular slow-tempoed dance that became fashionable around World War I. But of the form, the expression, and the content of the blues, he says, "That was old when my daddy was young. But so far what was called blues, that didn't come till round 1917. One of the first pieces that was strictly a blues was *Blues in the Bottle*. What we had in my coming up days was music for dancing and it was of all different sorts."

It is instructive to hear Mance talk about the men of his generation, realizing how many there must have been and how few are known to the record collector:

Hamp Walker: "He's dead. About the best guitar man and songster as I ever met.

Richard Dean: "He was around Conroe. Last I heard he was in the penitentiary."

Blind Lemon Jefferson: "I went up to Dallas one time on a cotton pick and a fellow I met pointed him out to me—big, puffy fellow, had a high clear voice that you could hear over all the noise people'd be making."

Ralph Lipscomb: "That's my older brother. He was better'n me I feel like. He's somewhere out in California now."

Blind Bob Connor: "He died right down the road here. He was a piano man but he used to play *Ella Speed* on the guitar. He was blind but you know he could tune up a piano all by himself. I used to play behind him when I was young. We made many a dollar."

Lead Belly: "That was a fellow used to be around Houston and Galveston. People told me I got some of my songs like him."

Robert Timm: "He played cakewalks mostly but he was about the first one around here had the blues. I got *All Out and Down* and I got *Sugar Babe, It's All Over Now* from him."

Their music is reflected in what Mance sings but as Mance himself realizes the tradition will not be carried on. He was especially happy to make these recordings knowing that this music will die with him. In his own household the youngsters respect and enjoy the old man's songs but they haven't absorbed them as their own. His grandson, Frank, is learning to play electric guitar and frequently busses for Mance at dances. But Frank's inclination is to imitate Jimmy Reed records. Mance's granddaughters listen to him but frankly prefer the records of a popular singer named Ricky Nelson. Although Mance has had an enormous influence on many other singers and is remembered by the younger blues singers like T-bone Walker and Lightnin Hopkins, the process seems to have ended with these men. They have learned from him but then became caught up in the more modern trends. In Mance's family only his nephew, T. Lipscomb, has learned from him, but in the past decade T. has fallen under the influence of Lightnin Hopkins and into the habits of stylistic cliques, formless songs, and the same melody endlessly repeated.

To hear the music of Mance's generation is a rare treat. Any of the oldsters in Texas can tell you about it but it is remarkable indeed to find a man of such exceptional ability that he can play it for you with the vigor of a 20-year-old. This record may be the last such document.

Freddie is one of the most fascinating pieces that has been found in recent years, apparently a well-known piece when Mance

learned it from a passing stranger in 1928, the ballad seems never before to have been recorded or published. In short, it is the story of a cuckold who murders and then reasons his way out of punishment with a strongly stated appeal. It is interesting to note by way of background that the so-called "unwritten law" is, in Texas, in fact a *written* law which deems it justifiable homicide when a husband murders a man found in a compromising situation with his wife.

By way of introduction, Mance tells one of the classic legends of Texas singers, that of the man who sings his way out of prison. It is well known that Huddie Ledbetter sang his way out of Texas's Central (nee Imperial) Prison Farm and that Lightnin Hopkins sang his way out of an East Texas road gang. They say Texas Alexander did the same and, in fact, the story is told about most singers with any reputation at all. The weight of presumption is that these stories are probably *true* in most cases for it is an honored Texas tradition to release Negro prisoners who make an eloquent plea. To understand this it is necessary to bear in mind that the concept of southern penology is not to punish the individual but to maintain a threat against an entire race (and to provide free labor, in which regard it is interesting to note that the Texas Prison System is not only self-supporting but actually makes a profit for the state). Under this system it is easy for a Negro to be sent to prison, and by the same token, it is relatively easy for the individual to obtain his release. One of the best ways is to make up a song pleading for release or justifying the crime which is presented to a sympathetic judge or warden or governor. This is a privilege reserved for poor people since those with any money were required to purchase their pardons. Those in authority enjoy the sense of power they demonstrate by releasing a man or dropping charges merely on the strength of a song. At times the system works in reverse: former Houston detective George Peyton (who has been remembered in song and comment by both Jelly Roll Morton and Huddie Ledbetter) used to pick up singers just to hear them sing. He reasoned, "If they could sing and make up a song, I'd figure that was how they made a living. If not, I'd figure they made their money some other way and I'd take 'em on in."

Mance tells this story as the background to *Freddie*: "That fella was really in Marlin (County) jail and he sung his way out. Way it come up, you know we have a jailer feed you every morning, and he went down to the jail to feed this fella and when he got to the jail, the fella was on the inside with his guitar playing and he heard it and he just stood there with the breakfast and listened at him, and it struck his attention so he went back to town and didn't give him anything to eat. Went on back and told the sheriff from that fella's request on the guitar, his song and the way he rimed it out and made it up, 'I don't think you should find anything agin him.' So the sheriff he went back down there and this fella was still playing *Freddie* and they both stood on the outside and listened at him. Then they went in there and unlocked the door and told him he could go. He just declared himself with a song."

Sugar Babe, It's All Over Now was a widely known dance piece early in the century but it is only remembered now by old timers. The song is not known to have appeared on record or in song collections though many similar pieces have been collected. Mance says, "It was the first piece I learnt when I was a little boy about 12 or 13 years old. Reason I remember it so good, I got a whipping about it. Come outa the cotton patch to get some water and I went in the house, started playing guitar. And my mother come in and whupped me cause I didn't come back to work. I was playing guitar."

Going Down Slow is one of the finer narrative blues circulated in recent years. Although it may be interpreted in terms of any of the slow killers such as pellegra or tuberculosis, the usual association is syphilis—with the song telling of one's life, asking forgiveness for the sins, and outlining the dying requests. Thus it is a parallel to the old Irish balad *The Unfortunate Rake* whose American descendants include *The Streets of Laredo* and *St. James Infirmary*. Other versions of *Going Down Slow* are by Joe Hill Louis (Modern), Billy Wright (Savoy), and St. Louis Jimmy (Bluebird & Parrott) with his later variant *Bad Condition* (Victor).

Baby Please Don't Go is one of that small, select group of songs

that has found favor with nearly every blues singer. Mance's version which harks back to the older *Another Man Done Gone* is one of the best with its hard-biting rhythm and the pungent images struck by lines such as *turn your lamp down low* and *believe a man done gone to the county farm*. Recordings under this and similar titles are by Big Bill Broonzy (Period), Lightnin Hopkins (Gold Star), John Lee Hooker (King, Audio Lab), Muddy Waters (Chess), Joe Williams (Bluebird, Columbia, Delmar), and a bilingual zydeco version by Dudley Alexander in Vol. I of *A Treasury of Field Recordings* (Dobell's 77 label in England).

Rock Me All Night Long is a relatively modern piece although many of its verses are among the oldest known blues. Most of Mance's songs were learned in the 1910's but he has continued to absorb songs such as this over the years. He knows such modern material as *Going Down Slow*, *Angel Child* and a "new" song he learned in the last few years when his granddaughters brought it home from school: *Polly Wolly Doodle*. Related recordings of this piece are *Rock Me Mama* by Lightnin Slim (Feature) and *Rockin' and Rollin'* Nos. 1 and 2 by Lii Son Jackson (Imp.).

Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo' is at least a hundred years old and probably a good deal more. It is such a familiar piece as popular novelty fare that we forget it originated as a country dance tune and remains a favorite in both the white and Negro tradition. Typically it serves as a catch-all for the ironic verses the singer can toss in. A white midwestern version was published in Carl Sandburg's *The American Songbag* and others are to be found in most of the old-time song books. There was once a song known as *Black Girl* which was an extension of the idea presented in Mance's last verse.

Jack O'Diamonds Is A Hard Card To Play is one of the oldest and best-known Texas gambling songs. The collecting fraternity is most familiar with it in the recording by Blind Lemon Jefferson (Paramount) but this record was never well known in Texas and the song is not strictly associated with any particular artist. The many different versions which are still circulated give a sequence of advice on how to bet the Jack O'Diamonds in the popular gambling game Monte in which the players bet for or against "layouts" of various cards. After the bets the dealer turns up a card from the stock—called the Monte or Mountain—which determines the winning and losing bets. Typically it is a knife blues played with open tuning (*Motherless Children* is another song typically played in this style) and uses the same tune as another well-known blues, *Poor Boy A Long Way From Home*.

Related songs by similar title are those by Sippie Wallace (Okeh), Brother John Sellers (Vanguard), Jesse Thomas (Speciality), Lightnin Hopkins (unissued), and Bob Campbell's *Dice's Blues* (Vocalion). Jack O'Diamonds is one of the major folk symbols of North America who appears as representative of Fate in songs ranging from the cowboy's *Rye Whiskey* to the convict chant *Grizzly Bear*, although in this song the reference is more literal. An early variant related to dice rather than cards was collected in 1909 in Mississippi (published in the *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 28):

If I come out on six,
Then you knows yo money's fixed.
Diamond Joe, Diamond Joe
Run get me Diamond Joe.

Shake, Shake Mama is Mance's own piece, "a hop I made myself," based on the traditional:

Shake, shake, Mattie, shake, a-rattle an' a-roll,
Oh, shake, shake, Mattie, Mattie want to win my gol'.

Its elements are both old and new: one verse lauding the "box back nittie" which replaced the "teddy bear" garment which men found unappealing, and another a fascinating contribution to the modern automobile symbolism which is replacing the "easy rider" themes in Negro lore.

Ella Speed is, judging from the number of people who know and know of the piece, probably the best-known Texas ballad next to *Casey Jones*. It is far more familiar than *Frankie and Albert* or *John Henry* or the other oft-published pieces. However, the ballad is known to collectors almost entirely through Lead Belly's dif-

ferent versions of it—on Capitol Records and in *Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Lead Belly* and in *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (the last-named comes nearest to Mance's version). Carl Sandburg published a variant *Alice B* in his *American Songbag* and Finious Rockmere recorded a version for the Library of Congress at Lufkin, Texas in 1940. Lightnin Hopkins sings a version which (like Lead Belly) he gets tangled up with *The Bully of the Town*. According to Lead Belly not long before he moved to Dallas, Bill Martin shot down Ella Speed in the street and that along with the other musicians of that area he composed this ballad. There is at this writing a request off to the Dallas County Clerk asking him to burrow into the dusty records piled in the courthouse basement to locate details of the actual crime. Mance's version of the ballad is distinct from any of those previously known, telling a more concise story with slightly different implications.

One Thin Dime is part of a group of old field blues known generically as *All Out and Down* (in which form Lead Belly sang it) that were popularized by Blind Lemon Jefferson who spread the verses over a number of his records. Here Mance is playing in Lemon's style and singing the song much as he heard it from Lemon. The first verse "... all the way from East St. Louis" harks back to the little-known ballad *Becky Dean*, a once notorious gambling woman about whom stories are still told but the only evidence of the ballad itself is Lead Belly's rare Melotone recording.

Going To Louisiana, better known as *See See Rider*, is an unusual cluster of the verses. A number of songs by similar titles have been circulated, as Jim Jackson's *I'm Gonna Move to Louisiana* on Vocalion, some of which are probably related.

Mama Don't Allow seems to have and probably did originate with children. As far back as 1909 an adaptation of it ("Mr. Crump don't allow no easy riders here") was one of the features of a Memphis mayoralty campaign. It is one of the songs which has spread across all levels of American culture and might be heard from popular dance orchestras, hot string ensembles, jazz bands, vaudeville entertainers, hillbilly singers, etc., as well as from a songster like Mance. (Others in this select category are *Fan It*, *Salty Dog*, *Trouble In Mind*, *Look Down That Lonesome Road*, *Crawdad Song*, and *Corrine Corina*.) In fact it has been so well and widely known that people have taken it for granted and only rarely has anyone bothered to include it in recordings or publications.

Ain't It Hard combines elements that are best known in the white hillbilly song *Hard*, *Ain't It Hard* and the old hymn-based *See That My Grave Is Kept Clean*. Mance is not the sort to casually throw together random verses and the composite is intentional. It seems to reflect, as does much Negro lore, the sense of competition between one's sweetheart and fidelity to a mother: thus, three verses about a mistreating woman who has left and three verses repeating mother's dying requests are linked by a "poor boy" verse describing the singer as "left in this wide world alone."

Bout A Spoonful would elicit denunciation from the United States Post Office if their moral arbiters were better acquainted with the vigorous symbolism of Negro language. This is one of the oldest and most venerated pieces of bawdy lore. It has none of the contrived leers of the double-entendre blues which were encouraged by the commercial record companies and is by comparison a much more delicate yet straightforward expression on the subject of lust. The older generation sang this piece very widely but it seems to have been rejected by later singers. It is mentioned by Gilmore Millen in his novel *Sweet Man* (Viking, 1930) in describing the early barrelhouse music.

FREDDIE

- 1) *Now Freddie's woman she done something
She had never done before
She was in the bed with another man
Made Freddie's pallet on the floor
He got mad—he got bad
Come with his gun in his hand.*
- 2) *Freddie's woman saw him coming
Went and fell down on her knees
I can hear her cryin' now: "Freddie
Spare my life if you please
I know you're mad — you got bad
And with a gun in your hand."*
- 3) *Freddie meets the policeman
With his big gun in his hand
"Fred, I heard you done killed your woman."
He said: "Yes, I'm looking for that man
He made me mad — I got bad
With my gun in my hand."*
- 4) *Freddie said: "Look-a-here Judge
Judge wouldn't you have got mad
You'd a-come home and found your woman
With another man in your bed
You'd got mad — You'd got bad
Took your gun in your hand."*
- 5) *Freddie say: "Now Mama
Mama you have to let me go
Cause the woman's mistreated me
And I had to shoot her so
You'd got mad — I got bad
With my gun in my hand."*
- 6) *Now Freddie say he laid down
Tried not to pay no mind
But a while befo' day
Freddie was woke — heard some stranger
He got mad — he got bad
He put his gun in his hand.*
- 7) *"Freddie!" Papa told Freddie
"Son, here where you done wrong
When you saw that that woman wasn't treatin' you right
Son, why didn't you let her alone?
You got mad — you got bad
With your gun in your hand."*
- 8) *Freddie said: "Look-a-here Papa
Papa, wouldn't you got mad
You'da come home and found Mama
With another man in your bed
You'd got mad — you'd got bad
With your gun in your hand."*
- 9) *Freddie's Papa said: "Yes,
Son, I'm gonna tell you what I'm gonna do
If the judge give you forty years
I'll have em pardon you
For being bad — mad
With your gun."*

SUGAR BABE, IT'S ALL OVER NOW

(Mance Lipscomb)

- 1) *Sugar Babe, I'm tired of you
Ain't your honey, but's the way you do
Sugar Babe, it's all over now.*
- 2) *All I want my babe to do
Make five dollars and give me two
Sugar Babe, it's all over now.*
- 3) *Went down-town and bought me a rope
Whipped my baby till she Buzzard Lope¹
Sugar Babe, it's all over now.*
- 4) *Sugar Babe, what's the matter with you?
You don't treat me like you used to do
Sugar Babe, it's all over now.*
- 5) *Went to town and bought me a line
Whipped my baby till she changed her mind
Sugar Babe, Sugar Babe, it's all over now.*
- 6) *Sugar Babe, I'm tired of you
Ain't your honey, but the way you do
Sugar Babe, it's all over now.*

¹ Buzzard Lope—a strutting dance step; in this context to make her get a move on.

GOING DOWN SLOW

(Jimmy Oden)

- 1) *Well, I done had my fun
Lord, (if I) don't get well no more
(repeat)
My health is failing me
And I'm going down slow*
- 2) *I want you to ring my mother
Tell her the shape I'm in
(repeat)
Tell her to pray for me
Forgiveness for my sin.*
- 3) *Mama, don't send no doctor
He can't do no good
(repeat)
It's all my fault now Mama
I didn't do the things I should*
- 4) *Next Train South
Look for my clothes (to come) home
(repeat)
You don't see my body
All you can do is moan*
- 5) *Mama, please don't worry
This is all in my prayer
(repeat)
You know your son is dead
Gone out this world somewhere.*

BABY PLEASE DON'T GO

(Joe Williams)

- 1) *Baby please don't go*
(repeat)
Baby please don't go back to New Orleans
You know I love you so.
- 2) *Got me way down here*
(repeat)
Got me way down here, bout to roll an' fall,
Treat me like some dog
Baby please don't go.
- 3) *Believe a man done gone*
I believe a man done gone
Believe a man done gone to the county farm
He's got his shackles on.
- 4) *Turn your lamp down low*
(repeat)
Turn your lamp down low, beg you all night long
Baby please don't go.
- 5) *Don't call my name*
Don't you call my name
Don't call my name, you got me way down here
Wearin' ball and chain.

ROCK ME ALL NIGHT LONG

- 1) *I want you to rock me*
Rock me all night long
(repeat)
I want you to rock me, Baby
Like my back ain't got no bone.
- 2) *When you see me comin'*
Go get your rockin' chair
(repeat)
You know I ain't no stranger
Used to live right here.
- 3) *I want you to rock me till*
The hair rise on my head
(repeat)
I want you to rock me till ya
Know I wish that I were dead.
- 4) *I want you to rock me*
Rock me every day
(repeat)
I want you to rock me
Till this bad feeling goes away.
- 5) *Rock me Mama*
Rock me all night long
(repeat)
I want you to rock me
Like my back ain't got no bone.
- 6) *I want you to rock me*
Like you never done before
(repeat)
I want you to rock me
Till I dreamt it on your ...
- 7) *See me comin'*
Go get your rockin' chair
(repeat)
Daddy, you ain't no stranger
Cause you used to live right here.

AIN'T GONNA RAIN NO MO'

- 1) *Well, it ain't gonna rain no mo'*
Ain't gonna rain no mo'
How in the world do the old folk know (tell)
It ain't gonna rain no mo'.
- 2) *Kissed my girl the other night*
I edged up to her a-sneaking
I missed her mouth and I kissed her nose
Doggone thing was a-leaking.
- 3) *Taken my girl to the barbecue*
Sot her down to the table
She ate so much of that hoghead cheese
Grease run outa her ...
- 4) *Brownskin sleeps in a folding bed*
Yellow girl do the same
Black girl she sleeps on a pallet on the floor
But she's sleeping just the same.

JACK O'DIAMONDS IS A HARD CARD TO PLAY

- 1) *Well, I played him in the spring*
And he never won a thing
Jack O'Diamonds was a hard card to play.
- 2) *Well, I played him in the fall*
And he never won atall
Jack O'Diamonds was a hard card to play.
- 3) *I fell down on my knees*
Tryin' to play Jack O'Spades
Jack O'Diamonds was a hard card to play.
- 4) *Well, I played him 'gainst the Ace*
He was a starvation in my face
Jack O'Diamonds was a hard card to play.
- 5) *Well, I played him 'gainst the deuce*
Putting the Jack when it weren't no use
Jack O'Diamonds was a hard card to play.
- 6) *Well, I played him 'gainst the trey*
It was on a fiver-lay¹
Jack O'Diamonds was a hard card to play.
- 7) *And I played the Jack 'gainst the four*
Turnt the Jack right in the door²
Jack O'Diamonds was a hard card to play.
- 8) *I played him 'gainst the five*
That lay like to make me cry
Jack O'Diamonds was a hard card to play.
- 9) *I played him 'gainst the six*
It left me in a terrible fix
Jack O'Diamonds was a hard card to play.
- 10) *And I told you last week*
Just as plain as a man could speak
I want to send you to your papa pay day.
- 11) *And I played the Jack 'gainst the King*
And it made the dealer sing
Jack O'Diamonds was a hard card to play.
- 12) *I played him 'gainst the Queen*
And it turnt my money green
Jack O'Diamonds was a hard card to play.

¹ In the game of Monte bets are made on layouts, in this case a layout of five cards.

² When cards are turned from the deck, they are said to jump in the door; from Faro (which this resembles) where a dealing box is used.

SHAKE, SHAKE MAMA

(Mance Lipscomb)

- 1) *Ob! Ain't gonna give you no more cherry ball,
(repeat)
You done got drunk and showed your "Santa Claus."*
- 2) *Ob, little bitty woman, hips just like a snake,
(repeat)
Come little women, babe, really takes.*
- 3) *Ob, late last night my love come falling down
Me and my baby are on our last go-round.*
- 4) *Ob, shake, shake Mama, buy you a diamond ring
(repeat)
You don't shake, ain't gonna buy you a doggone thing.*
- 5) *Ob, my clutch start slipping, car won't even sing
(repeat)
Losing compression from my piston rings.*
- 6) *Ob, Rider you ain't fooling me
(repeat)
You been slipping (back) to your old-time used to be.*
- 7) *Ob, like my baby but don't like her teddy bear
(repeat)
I'm gonna buy her box-back nitties to wear.*

ELLA SPEED

- 1) *Well, the first time I shot Ella
I shot her through the side
Second time I could not tell where
But the third time I shot Ella
I shot her through the head
You know, that shot must have killed poor Ella dead.*
- 2) *When they all got the news
That Ella Speed was dead
They goes home and dresses up in red
That was two white horses side 'n side
Gonna take Ella for her last fare-well ride.*
- 3) *Ella 'fore she died last word she said
"Tell my sisters please don't do like me
That's fall in love with everyone
With everyone that you see."*
- 4) *One of these mornings while you're having fun
Somebody's gonna do like Ella done
Now Ella she went out just to have some fun
She got shot down with a Colt .41*
- 5) *Well, they shot Ella once — didn't shoot her no more
She staggered 'cross the barroom floor
Ain't it hard . . . man but it's the truth
You can love someone don't love you.*
- 6) *Well, de last word I heard Ella say
"Tell my sisters don't do like me
That is — fall in love with everyone
With everyone that she sees."*

ONE THIN DIME

- 1) *I walked all the way from East St. Louis
Didn't have but the one thin dime
(repeat twice last line)*
- 2) *'Fore I would spend it for my own use
Save it for the girl of mine
(repeat twice last line)*
- 3) *When I was sick — couldn't hardly creep
I was sick and couldn't hardly creep
(repeat once last line)
You passed by me and wouldn't hardly speak.*
- 4) *Tell me Baby, tell me now
Where you been so long
(repeat twice last line)*
- 5) *All I got is done gone
(repeat twice last line)
Somethin' keep a-tellin' me I won't be here long.*
- 6) *Standin' on the Cairo Street one day
One dime was all that I had
(repeat twice last line)
Didn't have but the one thin dime.*
- 7) *'Fore I would spend it for my own use
Save it for the lady friend of mine
(repeat twice last line)*
- 8) *Followin' my Baby — far as I could go
Down to the jailhouse door
(repeat twice last line)*
- 9) *I stayed and heard the paper read
And I heard the paper read
(repeat once last line)
Stayed and I heard what the judge gonna say.*

GOIN' TO LOUISIANA (SEE SEE RIDER)

- 1) *See see rider, see what you done done. (3)
You done made me love you, honey, now your man done come.*
- 2) *I'm goin' to Louisiana, you know that's 'cross the line. (3)
I'll be seldom seen, baby, and hard to find.*
- 3) *If I had two women and my partner didn't have none (3)
I'd take one o' my women and give my partner one.*
- 4) *Soon one morning, blues knocked on my door. (3)
"Come here to stay with you, won't be leavin' no more."*

MAMA DON'T ALLOW

- 1) *Well, Mama don't allow no boogie woogie in here*
(repeat)
I don't care what Mama don't allow
Gonna boogie woogie anyhow
Mama don't allow no boogie woogie in here.
- 2) *Well, Mama don't allow no loud talk in here*
(repeat)
I don't care what your Mama don't allow
Gonna loud talk here anyhow
Mama don't 'low no loud talk in here.
- 3) *Well, Mama don't 'low no boys and girls around here*
(repeat)
I don't care what Mama don't allow
Boys, girls come here anyhow
She don't 'low no boys and girls in here.
- 4) *Well, Mama don't 'low no two-steppin' around here*
(repeat)
I don't care what Mama don't allow
Gonna two-step a little bit anyhow
Mama don't allow no two-steppin' in here.
- 5) *Well, Mama don't 'low no whiskey drinkin' here*
(repeat)
I don't care what Mama don't allow
Goin' to drink a little whiskey anyhow
Mama don't 'low no whiskey drinkin' here.
- 6) *Well, Mama don't 'low no banjo pickin' here*
(repeat)
I don't care what Mama don't allow
Goin' to pick this banjo anyhow
Mama don't 'low no banjo pickin' here.

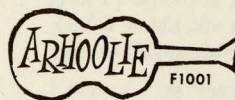
AIN'T IT HARD

- 1) *Ain't it hard, ain't it hard, ain't it hard,*
(repeat)
Ain't it hard, ain't it hard, man but you know it's true
You can love someone and she don't love you.
- 2) *Sometime, sometime, sometime*
Sometime I think by Baby's too good to die
(repeat last line)
And again I think she should be burried alive.
- 3) *Wonder where my friends done gone*
(repeat)
Went away in the fall — didn't come back home at all
Well, you went away and you stayed so long.
- 4) *Got a mother and a father both dead and gone*
(repeat twice)
And they left me in this wide world alone.
- 5) *Well the last word I heard Mama say*
When she lay on her dyin' bedside
Was the last word I heard my mother say before she died
Son, I don't want you to grieve and cry.
- 6) *Just one more kind favor I ask of you*
(repeat)
When I'm dead, son, and sleepin' in the ground
Would you see to my grave is kept clean.
- 7) *When I'm dead and gone dead and gone*
I want you to dig my grave wide and deep
Then two, three, four, just to let me down
And someone to sing a song.

BOUT A SPOONFUL

(Mance Lipscomb)

- 1) *I been drinking that whiskey all night long*
Got the headache now.
Yes, I been drinking bad whiskey all night long,
Oh, Lord, mama, got the headache now.
- 2) *Tell me what you gonna do with your brand new daddy,*
Bout a spoonful?
Tell me what you gonna do with your brand new papa,
Oh, Lord, mama, bout a spoonful?
- 3) *Out late last night, come home from gettin'*
A spoonful.
It was late last night, I come home from gettin'
A spoonful.
- 4) *Oh, Lawdy, mama, Oh, Lawdy, daddy got some*
Spoonful.
All I want baby, in this world, oh baby, is just
A spoonful.
- 5) *Eve n' Adam was the first two people*
Got a spoonful.
Tell me Eve n' Adam was the first two people, oh mama,
Got a spoonful.
- 6) *Late last night when I lay down,*
Got a Spoonful.
Baby, late last night, I lay down, oh, mama,
Got a Spoonful.
- 7) *Oh, drinking bad whiskey all night long,*
Got a headache now.
I been drinking bad whiskey all night long,
Oh, mama, got the headache now.
- 8) *Tell me what you gonna do with your brand new daddy,*
Bout a spoonful?
Oh, what you gonna do with your brand new daddy,
Bout a spoonful?
- 9) *Put him in the bed, gonna run him crazy*
Bout a spoonful.
Put him in the bed, gonna run him crazy,
Oh, Lawdy mama, bout a spoonful.
- 10) *All I want in this wide world is just*
A spoonful.
Baby, all I want in this wide world is just
A spoonful.
- 11) *Tell me what you gonna do with your brand new mama*
Bout a spoonful?
Tell me what you gonna do with your brand new mama
Oh, Lawd, baby, bout a spoonful?



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