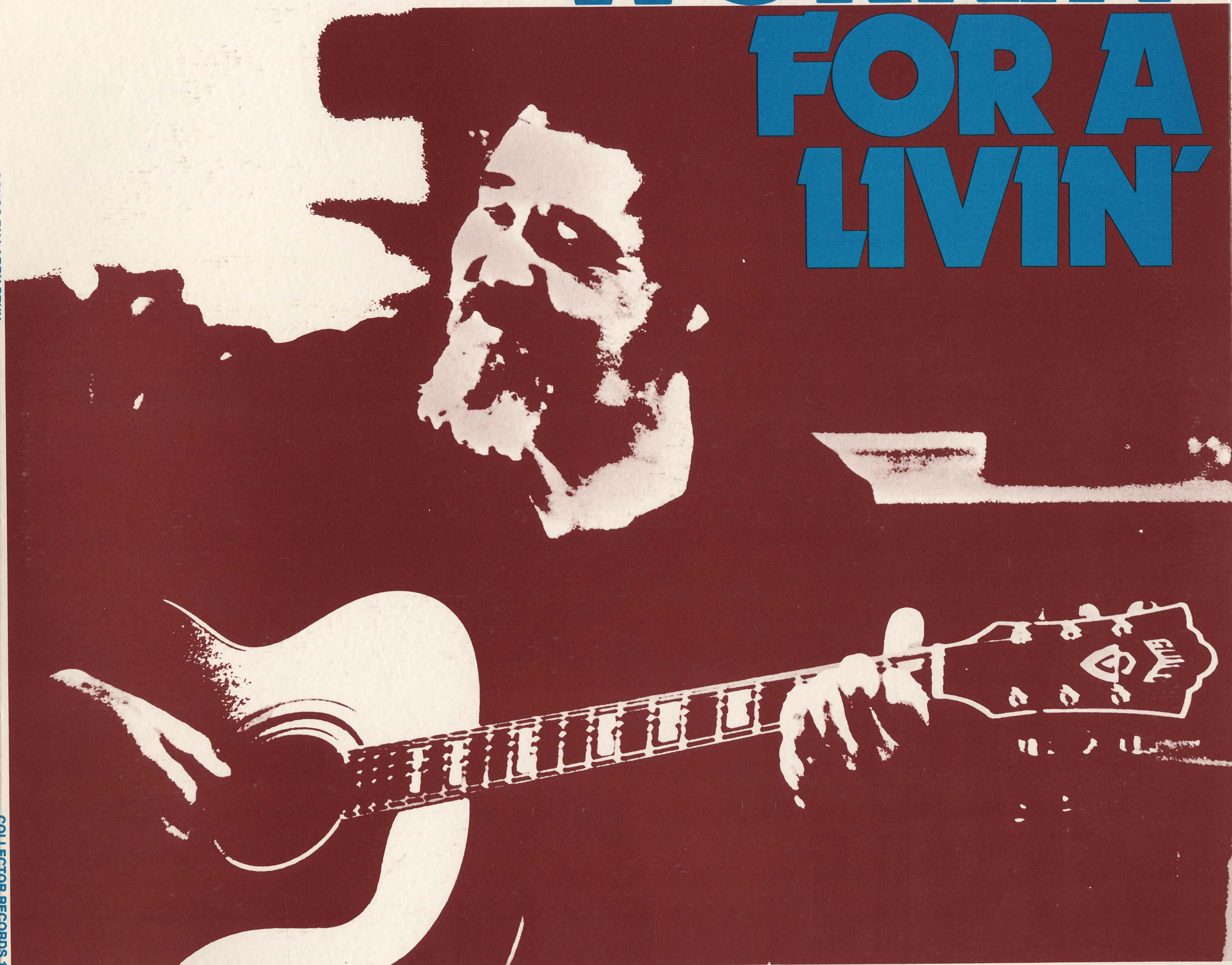


WORKIN' FOR A LIVIN'



Songs by Larry Penn

COLLECTOR RECORDS 1931

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For more than 25 years, Larry Penn has been "workin' for a livin'" as a truck driver. As a young man, he drove moving vans over-the-road, but for most of his working years, he has been driving for a cartage company in the Milwaukee area, most recently hauling steel. He is a longtime member of Teamsters Local 200.

Larry more or less stumbled into folk music some 20 years ago, after running across an old record of the legendary Leadbelly. He invested \$17 in a guitar, bought a chord book and began learning folk songs. Soon he was making up and singing songs of his own.

His songs are full of meaning and heart, for they come from his day-to-day experiences, from his observations on life.

Though he comes from an ordinary working class background and life style, Larry Penn is no ordinary man. He has been married to the same woman for 25 years, and they have lived most of that time in the same house on Milwaukee's South Side. They have raised five children. He enjoys fishing, tinkering in his basement workshop (he makes wooden toys) and conversation late at night with brandy.

He served two hitches in the Army, including time in the occupation force in Japan after World War II.

As you listen to Larry Penn you realize, that his insight into what people endure on their jobs is extraordinary. He is truly an honest artist.

When he sings "East Chicago Run" you know that he has experienced the small joys and the numbing pains which occur while driving a truck every working day. And, you can feel his anger at the money-grubbing corporate chiefs whose indifference to safety may have cost 29 sailors their lives in frigid Lake Superior, when he sings about the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald.

I first met Larry in the mid-1960s. He and his wife Pat, were hosting a group which was seeking to end racist policies in Milwaukee. Larry and I soon found ourselves spending many a night (over the inevitable bottle of brandy, of course) discoursing on subjects ranging from the inability of our children to understand common sense to the single tax theory advocated a century ago by Henry George.

By that time he had moved from performing at church programs, to the Milwaukee area coffeehouses. He had started with songs aimed at bringing life into the scriptures for children, moved on to songs for the civil rights movement and eventually to the work songs that bring him to this record. Since then he has sung at union summer schools, for the Illinois Labor History Society, at the George Meany Labor Study Center in Maryland, for Cesar Chavez and his farm workers, and in coffeehouses and clubs around the midwest. He has walked picket-lines helping to keep up the spirit of strikers with his voice and guitar.

Larry sings whenever he can, but still gets up at 5:30 a.m. to make his living hauling steel for one of Milwaukee's larger steel warehouses, a job that gets him into the shops and mills and cafes where people are "workin' for livin'."

On a good day he'll come home with a song.

He is a large man and his voice is gruff, but he is gentle and sensitive. This is Larry's first record, and all the songs are original compositions.

Larry Penn is worth listening to. As a worker, he speaks a worker's language. As an artist, he speaks the language of the poet.

KEN GERMANSON

Milwaukee, Wisconsin; January 1980

Ken Germanson is Associate Editor of the monthly newspaper of the Allied Industrial Workers of America (AFL-CIO).

Larry Penn is walking in the footsteps of Joe Hill and Woody Guthrie. He is not just another maker of songs about working people and their lives. He is one of the very best. I predict that one of these days he will be as well known as Joe Hill and Woody Guthrie. Listen to this record and see if you don't agree with me.

Joe Glazer

COLLECTOR RECORDS 1931
STEREOPHONIC



COLLECTOR RECORDS
1604 Arbor View Rd., Silver Spring, Md. 20902

SIDE ONE

1. BEEN ROLLIN' SO LONG—A lot of songs about trucking come out of Nashville, but I get the feeling that a lot of these writers have not spent much time in a truck. Maybe you'd like to hear a song written by a real live truck driver. (5:06)

2. THE HAMMER SONG—Here is heavy industry at its romantic finest! All that power to do what can't be done; all that noise and smoke and hazard. And piece work to make you work your ass off. (2:20)

3. TOMMY THE DISHWASHER—You can go into a fine restaurant. You can flirt with the maitre d', tip the waiters, send your compliments back to the chef, buy the musicians a drink and raise hell with the bus person. But nobody ever sends a tip back for the dishwasher. And I'm sure you will have to agree that dishwashers are a vital link in the supply line of any good restaurant. (3:44)

4. EAST CHICAGO RUN—This song is dedicated to the boys in the Cartage Barns and the men who run the dock to dock turn arounds, far from the "mystique" of TV's road-man image. (A "Cartage Barn" is a trucking firm that hauls by contract, mainly local, in a hundred or so mile radius.) (4:23)

5. NO SELF-RESPECTING HOBO—Fifty or seventy-five years ago, thousands of hobos rode the freight trains looking for work, or to satisfy their wanderlust. But the railroads have seen better days and the hobos are a dying breed. (Jimmie Rodgers was the legendary country music singer who started out as a railroad brakeman. He wrote some fine songs about railroaders and hobos.) (4:43)

SIDE TWO

1. OVERTIME—We have the technology to pin-point a target with a missile hundreds of miles away. We can land a man on the moon. But the economy, which is also man-made, may not be touched, under pain of mortal sin. There must be a better way to pace the work-load. (3:28)

2. JOHN ALLEN'S RAILROAD—John Allen had the King Kong of model railroads in his home in California. People came from all over the country, just to see it, 'cause it was so magnificent. When John Allen was fifty-nine he died of a heart attack and ten days later the house caught fire and his beautiful railroad was destroyed. (Great Divide, Gorre, and the Akin Mountains were mythical points on his railroad. J. B. King was a hobo who wrote his name on thousands of box cars in perfect Palmer method script.) (2:38)

3. THE EDMUND FITZGERALD—The Edmund Fitzgerald was an ore carrier that was lost with all hands on board during a storm on the Great Lakes in November, 1975. Most of these ore boats are owned by steel companies, and the Captains are under great pressure for tonnage. This causes them to go to sea sometimes, in unsafe conditions. (This song was written while the search for the vessel's flotsam was still on.) (2:34)

4. A SONG FOR SANDHOGS—A sandhog is a man who digs tunnels; under the ground like a miner, under pressure like a diver. A few years ago in Milwaukee, two sandhogs were working 118 feet down, making repairs to a sewer system, when a pipe burst above them, washing in tons of water and gravel. One sandhog never made it to the top. They found him 12 miles away, in a pumping station outlet. (2:48)

5. DUFFY'S TRUCK—If a guy is going to be a cross-country trucker, he really has to love his truck; otherwise he'd never be able to stand being away from home that long. (2:18)

6. DOWN IN CAROLINE—J. P. Stevens is a giant textile company with dozens of mills, most of them in the Carolinas. This company has taken the art of union busting back to the days of the yellow dog contract and the goon squad, only they do it with an attache case. They keep the negotiations bogged down in legal proceedings and never sign a contract. The Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers have called for a boycott of Stevens products. (3:03)

7. UNION MAN—I read somewhere that history was the sound of hobnail boots going upstairs, and slippers coming down. The greatest single danger to unions today, is men and women who belong to unions because they have to. I say, "Brother! Sister! Study your heritage!" (3:44)

Larry Penn

All songs composed and copyrighted by Larry Penn.

WORKIN' FOR A LIVIN' is one of a series of COLLECTOR albums in the area of industrial folklore and folksong. Previous discs include songs of textile workers, coal miners, railroaders, Wobblies, woodworkers, sailors and steelworkers. Write for free brochure.

Jacket Design by DOROTHY FALL
Engineering by BILL MCELROY. Cover photo by Phil Younger.

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