

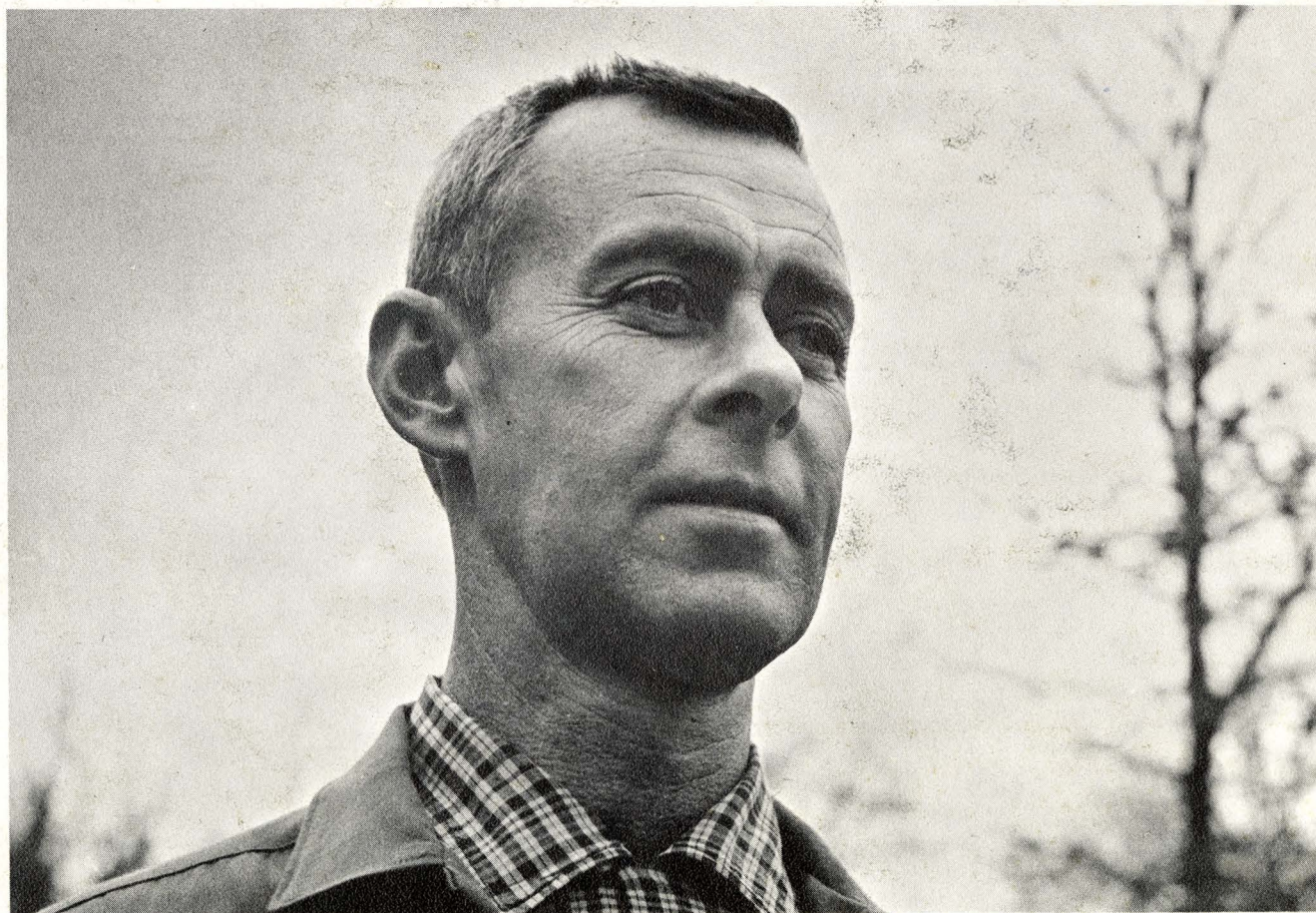
*Ozark Folksongs and Ballads sung by*

FSA-11

# MAX HUNTER

of Springfield,  
Missouri

*Notes by Mary Celestia Parler and Vance Randolph  
Recorded by Sandy Paton*



**FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC.**

**HUNTINGTON, VERMONT**





*"Ozark Folksongs and Ballads"  
Collected and sung by*

# MAX HUNTER

*Notes by Mary Celestia Parler and Vance Randolph  
Recorded and edited by Sandy Paton*

MAX HUNTER almost defies classification. While he must be considered a genuine "folk" singer, his songs have not come to him through a family tradition, but rather through a number of years of conscious collecting from his many friends in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri and Arkansas. He explains that he began collecting folksongs after he paid a handsome price for a set of "matched .41's" and suddenly realized that his pistol collection was becoming too expensive a hobby for him to continue. He sold his pistols, bought a tape recorder, and turned his immense energies to the collecting of songs, instead. His collection now numbers over 1,100 items, including 55 Child ballads, and he is constantly adding to it.

Since Max is convinced that any hobby ought to have definition, he has established his own set of rules and follows them to the letter: he won't sing a song that he has not collected, himself, from a traditional singer; he won't consciously change a word or an inflection of his informants' material; he will collect only from singers who live in the Ozark Mountains which have always been his home.

Max doesn't live in an isolated mountain cabin. On the contrary, he is a successful businessman and lives in a fine new ranch house on the outskirts of Springfield, Missouri. Yet his background is as "folk" as the people from whom he has obtained his songs.

As Mary Celestia Parler and Vance Randolph point out in their notes: *"Nearly all folksingers are collectors, in a sense. They visit other singers, write down the words of their songs and 'ketch the tunes' by ear. This is just what Max does, except that he uses his tape recorder instead of a notebook. We regard Max Hunter as a true folksinger, not merely a singer of folksongs. We think he is one of the best."* Folk-Legacy agrees with this view and, therefore, includes this album in its series of recordings of America's outstanding traditional singers.

S. P.

## Side 1:

OPEN THE DOOR  
THE DEWY DENS OF YARROW (Child 214)  
THE BATTLE OF PEA RIDGE  
PRETTY SUZIE  
OH MISS, I HAVE A VERY FINE FARM  
THE DRUNKARD'S WIFE  
SWEET LOVELY JANE

## Side 2:

THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS  
SPORTING MOLLY  
LADY MARGARET (Child 74)  
HOW COME THAT BLOOD? (Child 13)  
DOWN BY THE GREENWOOD SIDE (Child 20)  
JOHN HENRY (HARDY)  
DOWN BY THE SEA SHORE



**Ozark Folksongs and Ballads**  
**sung by**

# **MAX HUNTER**

**Notes by Mary Celestia Parler  
and Vance Randolph**

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**FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC.**

**SHARON, CONNECTICUT 06069**

Oriskany Folio and Ballad

sung by

# MAX HUNTER

Notes by Mary Catherine Foster

and Victor Karpovich

Reviewed by Judy Feltz

1941



1941

POK-12345 RECORDS INC.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

## MAX HUNTER

Max Hunter knows more about the Ozark Mountains than most of the people who write Ozark books. But he doesn't look like a comic-strip hillbilly. He never lived on a farm, never plowed barefoot on the rocky hillsides. He's a substantial businessman in Springfield, Missouri, a brisk little city of some 100,000 population. Max was born there July 2, 1921. Except for service in the Navy during World War II, he has lived in Springfield all his life.

His parents were rural people, however, from the wilds of Christian County, in southwest Missouri. Mrs. Hunter played the piano by ear, and sang old ballads like "Barbara Allen", "The Blind Child", and "The Jealous Lover". An older brother, now a Methodist minister in Springfield, was a guitar-picker who kept scrapbooks of ballads, and sang in church choirs. His two sisters have good voices, and one of them used to sing on a local radio station. Max always enjoyed old-time music, and he liked to pick and sing at neighborhood gatherings.

Max's first job was with a commercial refrigeration company. He became an expert repairman, and was later sent out as a salesman. It was while on the road, with southern Missouri and northwest Arkansas as his territory, that he began to collect and sing old songs as a hobby. Some of the best singers lived in the backwoods, but Max would take time off any day to drive out and hear an old ballad.

Always interested in mechanical gadgets, he bought a tape recorder. At first he just recorded whatever anybody would sing for him. If Max liked a song he wrote down the words, and played the tape over until he had learned the tune. Then he erased the recording, so as to use the tape again. Those first songs were mostly old minstrel pieces, more recent popular songs, and feed-backs from Burl Ives records.

In 1957 he met some academic folklorists, and learned from them that collecting folksongs is regarded as a serious business in some quarters. Max still learns the songs that he likes to sing, but nowadays he keeps his tapes. He has a collection of some 1100 recordings now, and has allowed the University of Arkansas to dub them for the Folklore Archives.

He has good informants all over his territory, and as his collection grows, so does his repertoire. He sings for small groups and large, for college classes, service clubs, and other organizations. Since Max never accepts money for these recitals, he is free to sing only the songs which meet his approval.

He sings them exactly as he heard them, with no self-conscious "improvement", no tinkering with either texts or tunes. He does not condescend to use a hillbilly dialect, or to imitate the accidents of voice quality. The lyrical rather than the dramatic style, with feeling rather than expression, comes as naturally to him as it does to those from whom he learned the songs. The older tradition of unaccompanied singing, still very much alive in the Ozarks, he approximates by deliberately understating his guitar accompaniment.

Nearly all folksingers are collectors, in a sense. They visit other singers, write down the words of their songs, and "ketch the tunes" by ear. This is just what Max does, except that he uses his tape recorder instead of a notebook. We regard Max Hunter as a true folksinger, not merely a singer of folksongs. We think he is one of the best.

Mary Celestia Parler  
and Vance Randolph

Side I; Band 1. OPEN THE DOOR

John Long was "a terrible hand to sing". That is, he sang well, loved to sing, and knew many songs. He died a few years ago, at the age of ninety-six. His best songs might have been lost forever, if Max Hunter had not met Mrs. Allie Long Parker, who remembered many of her father's best pieces. Mrs. Parker lives in the Pleasant Valley community, near Hog Scald Hollow, Carroll County, Arkansas. It was there, on September 2, 1958, that she sang "Open the Door" for Max. This piece is apparently little known to ballad-hunters, but the theme is common enough, as in Burns' song "Wha Is That At My Bower Door?". See also such related items as "When a Man's in Love" (Laws, British Broad-sides, p.235) and "Barney and Katie" (Eddy, p. 309).

I made my way up to the door;  
A pretty fair maid come o'er the floor,  
and I asked her to open the door.

It rained, it hailed, it snowed, it blowed,  
And I got wet through all of my clothes,  
And I begged her to open the door.

"Oh no, sir, kind sir, that never can be;  
There's no one in this house but me,  
And I bid you begone from my door."



I turned myself around to go  
And pity compassion on me she did show,  
And she called me back again.

We spent the night in sweet content,  
And right to the church next day we went,  
And I made her my lawful bride.

Come all you young men, wherever you be;  
Kiss ever' pretty girl you chance to see,  
And they'll call you back again.

Side I; Band 2. THE DEWY DENS OF YARROW (Child 214)

This rare and beautiful ballad is one of the first that Max got after he began to use a tape recorder. Herbert Philbrick, an old man who lived in Crocker, Missouri, sang it for him in the summer of 1957. It derives partly from "The Braes of Yarrow" (Child 214), and partly from "Rare Willie Drowned in Yarrow" (Child 215). The text is close to the one first collected by Herbert Halpert from George Edwards in New York State and published in Seigmeister (p. 40), and in Cazden (pp. 40-41), but the melodies are unrelated. See Parler (pp. 195-200) for a discussion of the Philbrick version, together with "The Derry Dens of Arrow", a close variant of the J, K, and L versions of "The Braes of Yarrow" in Child. Barry (pp. 291 and 292) claims to have found three traces of the Yarrow ballads in Maine, one a jury text. Cox (p. 137) recorded one from West Virginia oral tradition that derives not from the traditional ballad but from the poem by William Hamilton, printed in Ramsay's Tea-Table Miscellany (p. 242) in 1733. These are the only Yarrow ballads we have found in the American printed collections.

There were five sons and two were twins,  
There were five sons of Yarrow;  
They all did fight for their own true love  
In the dewy dens of Yarrow.

"O Mother dear, I had a dream,  
A dream of grief and sorrow;  
I dreamed I was gathering heather bloom  
In the dewy dens of Yarrow."

"O Daughter dear, I read your dream,  
Your dream of grief and sorrow;  
Your love, your love is lying slain  
In the dewy dens of Yarrow."

She sought him up and she sought him down,  
She sought him all through Yarrow;  
And then she found him lying slain  
In the dewy dens of Yarrow.

She washed his face and she combed his hair,  
She combed it neat and narrow;  
And then she washed that bloody, bloody wound  
That he got in the Yarrow.

Her hair it was three-quarters long,  
The color it was yellow;  
She wound it round his waist so small,  
And took him home from Yarrow.

"O Mother dear, go make my bed,  
Go make it neat and narrow;  
My love, my love he died for me,  
I'll die for him tomorrow."

"O Daughter dear, don't be so grieved,  
So grieved with grief and sorrow.  
I'll wed you to a better one  
Than you lost in the Yarrow."

She dressed herself in clean white clothes,  
And away to the waters of Yarrow;  
And there she laid her own self down,  
And died on the banks of the Yarrow.

The wine that runs through the water deep  
Comes from the sons of Yarrow;  
They all did fight for their own true love  
In the dewy dens of Yarrow.

Side I; Band 3. THE BATTLE OF PEA RIDGE

Max learned this song from Mrs. Allie Long Parker, Pleasant Valley, Arkansas, on March 26, 1958. The fight at Pea Ridge, Arkansas, March 7, 1862, involved some 25,000 men, and was the most important Civil War engagement in the Ozark region. Generals Curtis and Sigel commanded the Federal troops, while Van Dorn, Price and McCulloch led the Confederate forces. Several other ballads about the Pea Ridge battle are still remembered in Missouri and Arkansas. Stockard (pp. 79-80) prints one under the title "General Price", and says that it was "often sung in Arkansas during the War". Compare a related piece in Allsopp (II, p. 227). Belden (pp. 368-9) reports a Yankee version entitled "The Battle of Elkhorn Tavern". See also Randolph (II, pp. 247-250).



It was on March the seventh  
In the year of sixty-two,  
We had a sore engagement  
With Abe Lincoln's crew.  
Van Dorn was our commander,  
As you remember be.  
We lost ten thousand of our men  
Near the Indian Territory.

Cap' Price come a-riding up the line,  
His horse was in a pace;  
And as he gave the word "retreat"  
The tears rolled down his face.  
Ten thousand deaths I'd rather die  
As they should gain the field.  
From that he got a fatal shot  
Which caused him to yield.

At Springfield and Carthage  
Many a hero fell;  
At Lexington and Drywood,  
As near the truth can tell.  
But such an utter carnage  
As did I ever see  
Happened at old Pea Ridge  
Near the Indian Territory.

I know you brave Missouri boys  
Were never yet afraid.  
Let's try and form in order,  
Retreat the best we can.  
The word "retreat" was passed around;  
It caused the heathen cry.  
Helter-skelter through the woods,  
Like lost sheep they did fly.

Side I; Band 4.     PRETTY SUZIE

This delightful piece of cynical nonchalance is another of John Long's ballads which Mrs. Allie Long Parker sang for Max at her home, April 14, 1958. Like a number of related pieces — "A Sailor's Life", in which a girl asks her father to build her a boat so that she can seek her lost sailor, is a good example — "Pretty Suzie" appears to be a distinct and unified song; yet, upon examination, it shows itself to be a patchwork of ballad cliches, wandering stanzas, floating phrases, images, and motifs. It has stanzas in common with two songs in Hubbard (pp. 176 and 177), three in Randolph (I, pp. 270-271; IV, pp. 224-225; IV, p. 242), two in Greig (LIX, p. 1, and LXI, p. 2), and the strange little



fragment "Like an Owl in the Desert" (Brown, III, p. 359). It is reminiscent of such well-known folk lyrics as "The Wagoner's Lad" and "Pretty Saro", found in practically all of the major American collections. None of the related pieces with which we are familiar, however, is quite the same song as "Pretty Suzie".

When first to this country  
A stranger I came,  
I courted a fair maid,  
Pretty Suzie by name.  
The frowns that she gave me  
Were enough for to kill.  
Says I, "My dear Suzie,  
I yet love you still.

"O Suzie, my jewel,  
They say you are rich;  
Though I have no great fortune,  
That troubles me much.  
Won't you forsake your kind father  
And your mother also?  
And away o'er this wide world  
With my darling I'd go."

"O Willie, O Willie,  
That never would do,  
To forsake my kind parents  
And ramble with you.  
My friends and relation  
Would mourn for my sake;  
They would say I had left them  
And followed a rake."

Some say that I'm rakey,  
Some say I am wild,  
Others say that I'm guilty  
Pretty maid to beguile.  
But I'll prove them all liars  
By the powers above;  
That I'm guilty of nothing  
But innocent love.

I can love like a landlady,  
I can let love alone;  
I can court an old sweetheart  
Till a new one comes on;  
I can hug them and kiss them  
To keep their hearts kind;  
I can turn my back on them  
And alter my mind.



Now away to Louisiana  
 My boat I will steer.  
 On them mossy banks there  
 Pretty maids will appear.  
 But I'll rock them like a nation,  
 And them I'll disdain.  
 I'll go back to old Missouri;  
 See Sally again.

Side I; Band 5. OH MISS, I HAVE A VERY FINE FARM

Mrs. Lizzie McGuire is a very old lady, now living in a dilapidated house on the outskirts of Fayetteville, Arkansas. In spite of poverty, rheumatism, and problem offspring, she retains the gallant pride and high spirits of the mountain-bred carrier of tradition. When she sang "Oh Miss, I Have a Very Fine Farm" for Max in June, 1959, she thoroughly enjoyed telling how, when she was a girl on Greasy Creek in Madison County, she had learned this song from a beau, and how they used to sing it to each other as they were going to play-parties or "literaries". Variants are fairly numerous in many parts of the United States. They show clear marks of family relationship wherever they have been collected, although they are by no means always close. For references to the literature of these songs see Randolph (III, p. 53) and Brown (III, p. 10).

"O Miss, have a very fine farm  
 Just sixty acres square;  
 And it will be at your command,  
 If you will only dwell there,  
     If you will only dwell there."

"O Sir, I know your very fine farm,  
 And also very fine fruit;  
 But you come in and I'll go out;  
 You know a hog will root,  
     You know a hog will root."

"O Miss, I have a very fine house  
 And also very fine yard;  
 And it will be at your command,  
 If you will only dwell there,  
     If you will only dwell there."

"O Sir, I know your very fine house  
 And also very fine yard;  
 But who will stay with me at night  
 When you are throwing cards,  
     When you are throwing cards?"



"O Miss, that's something I never did do,  
And do not think it's right;  
And if you will only be my bride,  
I'll not throw cards at night,  
I'll not throw cards at night."

"O Sir, I know what all this is for,  
It's just to pull me in.  
And do you think I'm foolish enough  
To marry a barrel of gin,  
To marry a barrel of gin?"

"O Miss, I know you're very young  
And very hard to please;  
But when you're out a-shivering in the cold,  
I hope to God you'll freeze,  
I hope to God you'll freeze."

"O Sir, I know I'm very young  
And very hard to please;  
But when I'm out a-shivering in the cold  
I won't have no drunkard to please,  
I won't have no drunkard to please."

"O Miss, I have a very fine mule  
That pulls a bucket so well.  
I'll drink my liquor and throw my cards,  
And you can go to hell,  
And you can go to hell."

Side I; Band 6. THE DRUNKARD'S WIFE

The lot of a wife on the frontier was hard enough, even when her husband was sober and industrious, what with children to care for, carding and spinning, and going to the spring. But when she was married to a lazy, drunken gambler, it is no wonder that she wished to be a single girl again. This bitter complaint was sung for Max by D. J. Ingenthron, a jolly old farmer who lives near Forsyth, Missouri, July 15, 1958. For other texts and references see Sharp (II, pp. 32-34), Belden (p. 437), Randolph (III, pp. 69-70), and Brown (II, pp. 54-56).

A drunken man leads a life of his own;  
But who could it be but a drunkard alone?  
And it's, oh, I wish I was a single girl again.

CHORUS: For single I would be, and single I'd remain;  
I'd ne'er be controlled by a drunkard again;  
And it's, oh, I wish I was a single girl again.



For three little children I must entertain,  
And not nary one big enough to do a thing.  
And it's, oh, I wish I was a single girl again.

CHORUS —

To card and to spin is obliged to be done,  
To sweep out the house and to go to the spring.  
And it's, oh, I wish I was a single girl again.

CHORUS —

From midnight to morning the drunkard comes home;  
He comes to your bed with a curse and a damn,  
And he wish you all dead, and he had another dram.  
And it's, oh, I wish I was a single girl again.

Side I; Band 7. SWEET LOVELY JANE

Virgil Lance, who works at a boat dock on Lake Norfolk, Arkansas, remembers many of his father's songs. Most of them, he says, "come over when my people was run out of England on account of Prince Charlie." Some of the songs that he recorded for Max Hunter in February, 1958, are older than the eighteenth century, but "Sweet Lovely Jane" has not been traced back beyond 1855. It appears as "A True Song" in American Rhymes by a Southern Poet, printed at Knoxville, Tennessee, by John B. J. Kinsloe, 1855. A copy of this slender volume is in the possession of Mrs. Ara Ash of Carrollton, Arkansas. According to the anonymous author, the poem tells the story of a young South Carolinian who spent three years in the Australian gold fields, where "he lived very economical — procured a fortune — and returned to his native home, and married the girl of his choice." For the full text of "A True Song" see Jim Lee (Southern Folklore Quarterly, XXIV, 1960, pp. 284-286). It was first reported as folksong in 1911 by Shearin and Combs (p. 13). See also Combs (Folk-Songs du midi des Etats-Unis, pp. 206-207), the Archive of American Folksongs (Library of Congress, 1942, II, p. 385) and Brown (II, p. 608).

Oh, do not weep, sweet lovely Jane;  
Come dry your tearful eyes.  
I will return to you again  
Unless your true love dies.

She wet my lips with flowing tears,  
And then I kissed her hand.  
Farewell, farewell, sweet lovely Jane,  
I must leave for a far off land.



For three long years I labored hard  
A-laying up some wealth;  
I lived on bread and salty lard,  
But I never lost my health.

I loaded up my trunk with gold,  
And then I thought of Jane;  
And also in an hour or so  
I was on the bounding main.

For eight long weeks we sailed along,  
All on the foamy deep.  
I thought one day that we were lost;  
Our captain was asleep.

We hove in sight of land at last,  
Of our old native town.  
The captain shouted out, "All right,  
Now take that rigging down."

I spied a crowd of lovely girls  
Come a-walking to the ship;  
I spied sweet Jane, with all her curls,  
And then I begin to skip.

I ran and met her on the walk;  
My soul was filled with charms;  
So full of joy that we could not talk,  
But I caught her in my arms.

We walked up and down the street,  
Unto her father's door;  
And ever'thing looked nice and neat  
While standing on the floor.

The parson read the marriage vows  
Which branded us for life;  
Now Jane is mine, without a flaw,  
A sweet and lovely wife.

#### Side II; Band 1. THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

Frances Majors, a student at the University of Arkansas, learned this song from old Sam Stewart of Muskogee, Oklahoma, in 1958. Sam lived in the Indian Territory in the 1870's and 1880's. He knew such notorious outlaws as Belle Starr and Cherokee Bill. Mrs. Majors sang the song into Max's microphone on May 23, 1959. It has many lines in common with "Blue Stone Mountain", "My Father Was a Gambler", and "The Horse Traders' Song". They are all sung to the same tune.



For further information about these songs see Randolph (II, pp. 80- 82; III, pp. 261-262). ED. NOTE: Two other versions of this song are known to the editor — one which Sam Eskin learned from Sydney Cowell who collected it, I believe, in the Ozarks, and one which was collected by Margaret MacArthur of Marlboro, Vermont, from a lady who, though living now in Kentucky, was raised in the Ozarks.

I rode those prairies over,  
I rode those prairies round,  
I rode those prairies over,  
I rode those prairies round;  
Whenever I come to a big fat steer,  
I fanned, I shot him down.

God knows,  
I been all around the world.

For the charge of cattle stealing  
I had to leave the range,  
For the charge of cattle stealing  
I had to leave the range.

God knows,  
I been all around the world.

'Twas in the Blue Ridge Mountains  
Where I first took my stand,  
'Twas in the Blue Ridge Mountains  
That I first took my stand,  
Six-shooters buckled around me,  
Winchester in my hand.

God knows,  
I been all around the world.

Oh, where was I last winter, boys,  
When the wind was cold and snow?  
Oh, where was I last winter, boys,  
When the wind blew frosty and cold?  
I was climbing the Blue Ridge Mountains,  
Was hungry and damn high froze.

God knows,  
I been all around the world.

Was down in Bonham, Texas,  
When they landed me in jail,  
Was down in Bonham, Texas,  
When they landed me in jail;  
No one to go my security,  
No one to go my bail.

God knows,  
I been all around the world.



The jury found me guilty,  
The clerk he wrote it down,  
The jury found me guilty,  
The clerk he wrote it down;  
The judge he passed the sentence.

God knows,  
I been all around this world.

Oh, go and tell my sweetheart  
Tomorrow's my hanging day,  
Oh, go and tell my sweetheart  
Tomorrow's my hanging day.  
If she don't want to see me,  
She'd better stay away.

God knows,  
I been all around the world.

Hang me, oh, hang me,  
And I'll be dead and gone,  
Hang me, oh, hang me,  
And I'll be dead and gone.  
Well, I don't mind your hanging,  
It's laying in the ground so long.

God knows,  
I been all around the world.

#### Side II; Band 2. SPORTING MOLLY

Mrs. Allie Long Parker sang "Sporting Molly", another of her father's old songs, when Max visited her home in the Pleasant Valley community, August 14, 1958. This is a version of the Irish ballad "Whiskey in the Jar". It goes back to the days of muzzle-loading firearms, when the easiest way to put a pistol out of commission was to fill the barrel with water. For an Irish text see Colm O'Lochlainn (p. 24). Compare Perrow's West Virginia text (Journal of American Folklore, XXV, 1912, p. 152). It was reported from Nova Scotia by Helen Creighton (p. 192). NOTE: Folk-Legacy will soon release an album of New Brunswick loggers' songs containing a version of this ballad sung by James Brown of South Branch, Kent County, N. B., Canada. Compare also the version recently popularized under the title "Darling Sporting Jenny" which was originally collected from Lena Bourne Fish of New Hampshire.

'Twas early in the morning  
Just as the day was dawning,  
I saw the captain setting  
And a-counting out his money,  
With a ringle jingle ling.



I robbed him of his money  
Which was ten thousand dollars;  
I put it in my pocket  
And I took it home to Molly,  
With a ringle jingle ling.

They put me to rest  
Way up in Molly's chamber;  
They took my pistols from me  
And they filled them up with water,  
With a ringle jingle ling.

I went to fire my pistols;  
I found they were mistaken.  
A company surrounded me;  
A prisoner I was taken,  
With a ringle jingle ling.

She swore by her life  
She never would deceive me.  
Now the devil take the women,  
For their tongues are never easy,  
With a ringle jingle ling.

I have two brothers  
Enlisted in the army;  
One of them's in jail  
And the other's in Car'liny,  
With a ringle jingle ling.

They're way off down yonder,  
And you are here close by me;  
I'd rather be with them tonight  
Than you, my sporting Molly,  
With a ringle jingle ling.

Side II; Band 3. LADY MARGARET (Child 74)

A student from the University heard some children in Pocahontas, Arkansas, singing "Hangman, Hangman, Hold Your Hand" (Child 95). The children said they had learned it from their "Grandma Brewer". Max found Mrs. Pearl Brewer living on a farm about six miles from Pocahontas. It was there on November 12, 1958, that she sang "Lady Margaret". Mrs. Brewer recorded fifty-nine old songs, including eight other Child ballads. She learned most of these songs from a blind uncle who lived in her home when she was a girl. "Lady Margaret" is pretty old; it was mentioned twice in Beaumont's Knight of the Burning Pestle, which is dated 1611. It was found in nearly all British and American ballad collections. Bronson (II, pp. 155-188) prints seventy-nine texts and tunes.



Lady Margret was standing in her high parlor door,  
Combing back her yellow hair;  
But none did she see but sweet William and his bride,  
Who were going to the Roman fair.

Lady Margret threw down her polished comb,  
Dashed back her yellow hair;  
Lady Margret lie her poor self down,  
Never any more for to rise.

Sweet William arose quite early in the morning,  
When most other men were in bed;  
Sweet William said that he was troubled in his head  
From the dream he had dreamed last night.

He said he dreamed that he saw Lady Margret  
Standing at his bed feet,  
Saying, "How do you like your fine feather bed?  
Or how do you like your sheet?  
Or how do you like your own dear girl  
Who lies in your arms asleep?"

"Very well do I like my fine feather bed;  
And better do I like my sheet;  
Though the best of all is my own dear girl  
Who lies in my arms asleep."

Sweet William asked leaves of his own dear girl,  
Lady Margret that he might go and see.  
He rode and he rode till he came to the gate;  
He tingled on the ring;  
And none were so ready as her seven, seven brothers  
For arise and let him in.

"Where is Lady Margret, in her dining room?  
Or is she in her hall?  
Or is she in her high parlor door,  
Talking to the jolly girls all?"

"Lady Margret's neither in her dining room;  
Nor neither is she in her hall.  
Lady Margret's lying in her long coffin  
That sets against yonders wall."

"Go pull back the snow-white sheet,  
Dash back that yellow hair,  
And let me kiss those cold pale lips,  
Who ever oft times kissed me."

The first he kissed was her red rosy cheeks,  
And the next was her dimpled chin;  
The last of all was her cold pale lips,  
Who had oft times kissed him.



Clyde Johnson, pastor of a rural Baptist church near Fayetteville, Arkansas, learned "How Come That Blood on Your Coat Sleeve?" from his father. He and his twin brother, Claude, sometimes sing it at informal get-togethers as part of a comedy routine. He sang it for Max Hunter on October 1, 1958. Usually known as "Edward", this ballad is found not only in Britain, but in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. Although the text of this Ozark version keeps some of the tragic irony of the poem in Percy's Reliques, the tune and tempo clearly indicate that it has become a humorous song for children. Belden (Brown, II, p. 41) refers to a comic text of this great tragic ballad in a Danish manuscript of the 1640's, and to a parody of it printed as a broadside in 1794. For further texts, tunes and references see Coffin (pp. 45-46), Bronson (I, pp. 237-247), and Randolph (I, pp. 67-71).

"How come that blood on your coat sleeve?

My son, come tell it to me."

"It is the blood of the little yellow pony

That plowed a furr' for me me me,

That plowed a furr' for me."

"Oh, it is too red for that;

My son, come tell it to me."

"It is the blood of the guinea gray hawk

That sailed away from me me me,

That sailed away from me."

"Oh, it is too red for that;

My son, come tell it to me."

"It is the blood of the old gray hound

That treed a coon for me me me,

That treed a coon for me."

"Oh, it is too red for that;

My son, come tell it to me."

"It is the blood of my old dear brother

That rode aside of me me me,

That rode aside of me."

"What'd you and your brother fall out about?

My son, come tell it to me."

"We fell out about a sycamore bush

That might have made a tree tree tree,

That might have made a tree."

"Oh, what you gonna do when your father comes home?  
My son, come tell it to me."  
"I'll set my foot on yonder ship  
And sail across the sea sea sea,  
And sail across the sea."

"Oh, what you gonna do with your pretty little children?  
My son, come tell it to me."  
"I'll leave them here for my dear old mother  
To keep her company nee nee,  
To keep her company."

"Oh, what you gonna do with your house and barn?  
My son, come tell it to me."  
"I'll leave them here for my dear old mother  
To raise my children on on on,  
To raise my children on."

"Oh, what you gonna do with your pretty little wife?  
My son, come tell it to me."  
"I'll set her foot on yonder ship  
And sail across the sea sea sea,  
And sail across the sea."

"Oh, when you coming back?  
My son, come tell it to me."  
"I'm not coming back until the sun and the moon  
Both set in the north.  
And I'm sure it'll never be be be,  
And I'm sure it'll never be."

Side II; Band 5. DOWN BY THE GREENWOOD SIDE (Child 20)

Max Hunter collected this "Cruel Mother" from Mrs. Pearl Brewer, Pocahontas, Arkansas, May 27, 1959. The ballad has been widely reported in both Britain and America, but to judge by the large number of fragments, its absence in such major collections as those of Belden and Brown, and the number of collections with only one text, it seems to be thinly spread. The chilling impact of this beautiful ballad of guilt and supernatural retribution is heightened in Mrs. Brewer's version by the omission of refrain lines and the consequent almost intolerable building up of tension in the penultimate stanza. This was no accidental omission, she sings it the same way every time. For reference to the literature see Coffin (p. 50) and Bronson (I, pp. 276-296).

There was a maid who had two babes,  
All alone and lone;  
She laid those babes down hand in hand,  
And took a knife, cut off their heads,  
All down by the greenwood side.



She buried those babes all under a stone,  
All alone and lone,  
And prayed to the Lord it'd never be known,  
All down by the greenwood side.

This maid was passing by one day,  
All alone and lone;  
She saw those babes all out for play,  
All down by the greenwood side.

"O Babes, O Babes, if you were mine,  
All alone and lone,  
I'd dress you up in silk so fine,  
All down by the greenwood side."

"O Mother, dear Mother, we once were yourn,  
All alone and lone;  
You neither gave us coarse nor fine;  
You killed and buried us under a stone,  
And prayed to the Lord it'd never be known,  
All down by the greenwood side.

"For seven long years you shall hear a bell,  
All alone and lone;  
At the end of seven years you'll land in hell,  
All down by the greenwood side."

Side II; Band 6. JOHN HENRY (HARDY)

It was August 6, 1958, when Max first went to see Odus Bird. Odus was helping his father put up hay on the family farm near Marshall, Arkansas. Singing couldn't begin until the hay was attended to, so Max spent the whole hot afternoon driving an ancient truck which served as a hay rack. There was no electricity on the Bird farm, no running water, no screens. It is not that the Birds are poorer than their neighbors. One gets the feeling that they do without these things because they like it that way. Max's labors were rewarded that evening, when Odus went with him to his motel where they had electric current, and recorded a dozen good songs, including this "John Henry" ballad. The central figure is really John Hardy, a badman who was executed for murder in McDowell County, West Virginia, in 1894. "John Henry, the steel driving man" was another character altogether, but the ballads about them have become confused. For references to the literature of John Henry and John Hardy see Cox (JAF, XXXII, 1920, pp. 505-520), Brown (II, p. 563), Lomax (Folk-song USA, p. 306), and Randolph (II, p. 144). Louis W. Chapell has written a whole book about the semi-mythical "John Henry" (John Henry, A Folklore Study, Jena, 1933).

John Henry he was a little man;  
He carried two guns every day.  
And he shot him a man on the West Virginia line,  
You ought to see Johnny getting away,  
And you ought to see Johnny getting away.

Oh, he went to the east, and he went to the west,  
And he went this wide world 'round;  
And he went to the river and he were baptized;  
But now he's on his hanging ground,  
But now he's on his hanging ground.

John Henry he had a little loving girl;  
The dress that she wore was blue.  
She come a-skiping through the old jail hall,  
Saying, "Daddy, I've been true."  
Saying, "Daddy, I've been true."

John Henry he had another little girl;  
The dress that she wore was red.  
She come a-skiping through the old jail hall,  
Saying, "Daddy, I'd rather be dead."  
Saying, "Daddy, I'd rather be dead."

John Henry he had a loving little wife;  
She point to his scaffold high;  
And the very last words that we heard Johnny say:  
"I'll meet you in that sweet bye and bye,  
"I'll meet you in the sweet bye and bye."

Side II; Band 7. DOWN BY THE SEA SHORE

Max got this song from Mrs. Pearl Brewer, Pocahontas, Arkansas, November 12, 1958. It was originally a product of the British broadside press (Roxburghe Ballads, IV, p. 397), all about the narrator proposing marriage to a distressed damsel on the beach. She refused him, and drowned herself because some other man had deserted her. In Mrs. Brewer's version, the plot has become so attenuated that the song approximates pure lyric. See Belden (p. 161), Randolph (I, pp. 341-342), and Henry (p. 304). Anita Carter, of the famous Carter Family, and Hank Snow recorded a similar piece in 1962, with the title "I Never Will Marry" (RCA Victor album LPM/LSP -2580).

As I walked out one evening  
All on the sea shore,  
Where the wind it did whistle  
And the waters did roar,



I saw a fair maiden,  
As I walked on my way;  
And I stopped there to listen  
To the words she did say:

"Cry on, my love's sure gone;  
He's the lad I adore;  
He's gone where I never  
Can see him any more.

"I 'tend to never marry,  
Nor be no man's slave;  
I intend to live single  
All the rest of my days.

"Cry on, my love's sure gone;  
He's the lad I adore;  
He's gone where I never  
Can see him any more.

"The shells of this ocean  
My death bed shall be;  
And the fish in this water  
Shall float over me.

"Cry on, my love's sure gone;  
He's the lad I adore;  
He's gone where I never  
Can see him any more."

She plunged her fair body  
In the water so deep;  
She closed her pretty blue eyes  
In the evening to sleep.

"Cry on, my love's sure gone;  
He's the lad I adore;  
He's gone where I never  
Can see him any more."

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