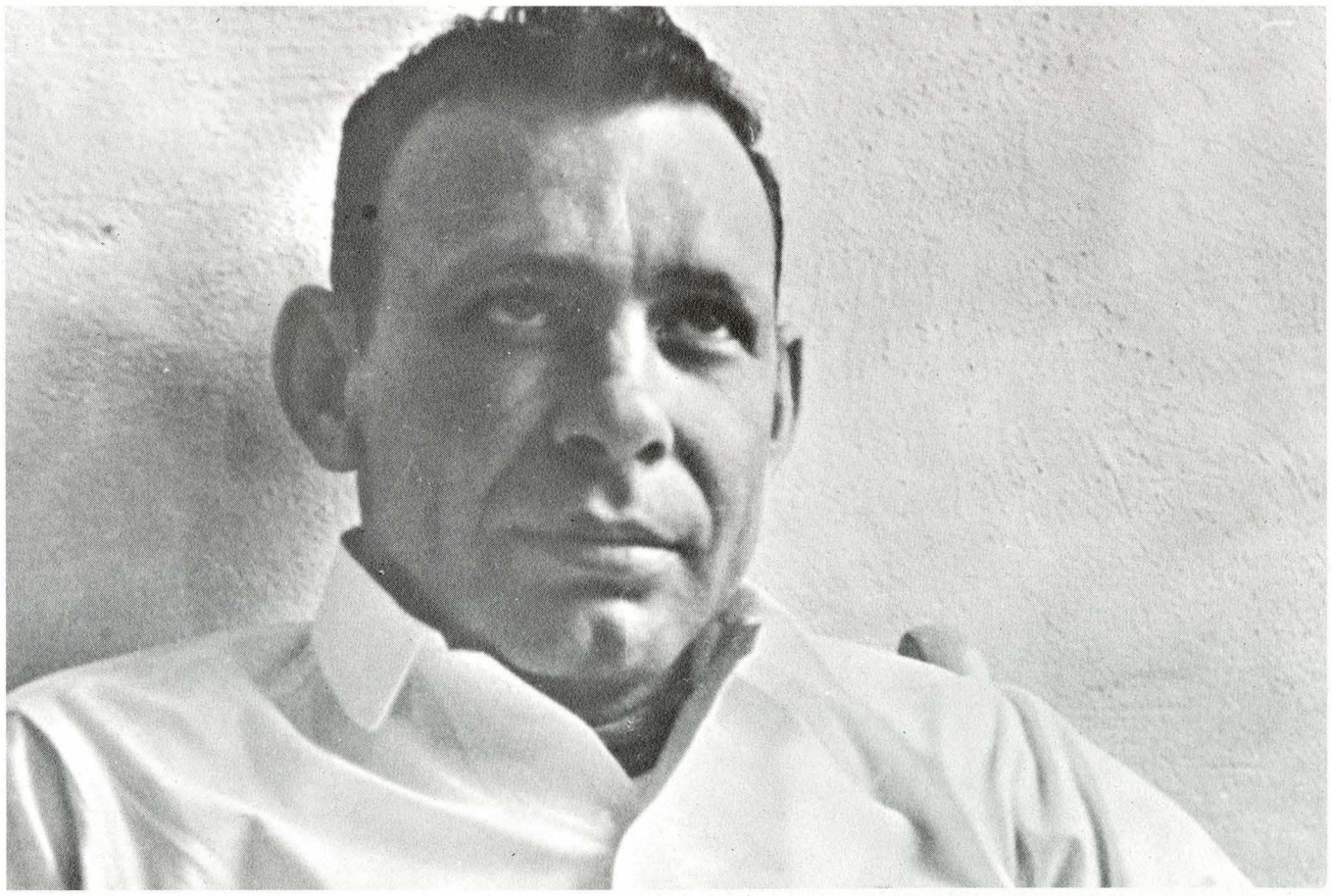
Contemporary Series FSA-13

"Behind These Walls"
HANK FERGUSON of Lenoir City, Tennessee

Sings folk, prison, and contemporary songs



FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC. HUNTINGTON, VERMONT

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"Behind These Walls"

HANK FERGUSON of Lenoir City, Tennessee

This is an unusual album for Folk-Legacy, as Hank Ferguson's musical background is clearly Country & Western. Although he has been picking up songs down in his native Tennessee all of his life, most of the songs on this record were learned from recordings of commercial singers. More important to us, however, is the fact that several of them were written by Hank himself while he was an inmate at Michigan City, Indiana. Indeed, Hank was first "discovered," as they say, through these songs he made up about prison life. Bruce Jackson, a young folklorist/sociologist, was collecting prison folklore at Michigan City when he met Hank Ferguson. This record is the result of that meeting.

Several years ago, broke and a long way from home, Hank found himself getting mixed up with a crowd whose activities he knew would lead to bad trouble. He decided that the kind of life he was living wasn't worth whatever it was he was getting out of it, so he quietly checked out and went back home. For two years he worked at a variety of jobs, including frequent appearances on Tommy Covington's "Saturday Night Picking Time," a C&W radio show originating in Knoxville. Hank was beginning to think he was safely out of the whole mess he had been in when, as he puts it, "Some people say the State Police and high sheriff himself followed me across the state line to bring me back." And back he went, to enter a plea of guilty and be sentenced to a year at Michigan City. It was Hank's first offense and, he decided, it would be his last. He avoided trouble while in prison, doing the best he could with an unpleasant situation. When prison tensions began to work on him, he channeled his feelings into the only outlet that was acceptable and available to him—his music. The songs he wrote while at Michigan City manage to tell more about prison life than any extended scholarly essay could. In fact, one line from one of his songs sums up a prisoner's feelings as poignantly and succinctly as possible: *"I'm not living, I'm just trying to last longer than my time."*

Hank Ferguson made a mistake. He knows it, he regrets it, and he has paid for it. He is free again now —and determined to stay that way.

Side 1:

I'm Not Living
The Walls
Get a Little Dirt on Your Hands
One Life's as Long as Any Man Can Live
Shackles and Chains
Thunder Road
Trouble Just Got in My Way

Side 2:

Busted
You Ain't Heard Nothing Yet
Waiting for a Train
The Wreck of Old #9
Jolly Old Time Farmer
Rich Girl, Poor Girl
The Wreck of the Old 97
Wabash Cannonball
Nine Pound Hammer
Long Black Veil
Interstate 40

"Behind These Walls"

HANK FERGUSON

Recorded by Henry Felt and Lee B. Haggerty

Notes by Bruce Jackson

Edited by Sandy Paton

FSA-13

FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC.

SHARON, CONNECTICUT 06069

EDITOR'S NOTE

Originally, this record was to have been produced from a series of tapes which were recorded by Bruce Jackson at the Indiana State Prison in Michigan City, Indiana, March 29-31, April 20-25, and July 1-3, 1962. Those tapes, containing a number of songs which do not appear on this record, are on deposit at the Indiana University Archives of Folk and Primitive Music under the accession numbers: 62-4-28 (11), 62-6-18 (21), 62-8-9 (27); the original tape numbers are T-7" 465-498, 503, and 539-543.

Hank Ferguson was released from prison early in the winter of 1962. This afforded Folk-Legacy a most welcome opportunity to visit with him at his home in Lenoir City, Tennessee, and to re-record most of the songs he had sung for Mr. Jackson, plus a few more. This opportunity was a welcome one for two reasons. First, and most important, it meant that Hank was a free man, at home once again, his debt to society paid in full. The second reason, by comparison a very trivial one, was that it gave us a chance to obtain tapes which were free of the inevitable background noises, the frequent interruptions, the distortions that commonly occur when recording under what are far from ideal conditions.

Only one band on this record has been taken from Jackson's original tapes — Side I; Band 7. Hank told us that this was one of the several songs he had composed while in prison, but that he had been unable to write it down at that time. As a result, he could not quite "get it together" for us during our visit. "It was one of those 'one-shot' deals," he explained, shrugging his shoulders. All of the other numbers were recorded by Lee B. Haggerty, president of Folk-Legacy Records, Inc., and Henry Felt, a Goddard College student who accompanied him on the field trip, early in July, 1963.

The notes that follow, but for a few minor changes based on our own interviews with the artist, were written while Hank Ferguson was still an inmate at Michigan City. The reader is asked to bear this fact in mind.

S.P.

HANK FERGUSON

Except for sociologists, most people notice prisons only when there is a riot, or an escape, or a scandal of some kind, in which case the public is not really noticing the prison, but is only reacting to a threatening stimulus; that is to say, the public reacts only to a sensational aspect of prison life, not to the normal ingredients of that life.[1] Folklorists seem to have done the same: they have chosen to see only that sensational aspect of prison life represented by the image of a singing and chanting throng of communally-creating Negro convicts, happily swinging hammers and axes in the southern sun, letting muscles bulge and sweat run as professors and engineers take down folklore, or something like that.[2] The picture is not particularly accurate, nor is it particularly penetrating; it is, however, extremely widespread.

As in any community, there are three classes of folklore in a maximum security institution: indigenous folklore is concerned with and grows out of life in a particular community (material directly related to aspects and conditions of prison life); exdigenous folklore is comprised of general folklore (the various streams that the various inmates have been contagiously exposed to in their home communities) and the general relevant body of occupational lore (lore directly related to criminal activity outside the walls, or that which is in circulation in prisons throughout the country); and finally, and most interesting, the body of transitional folklore, which is either exdigenous lore on the way to being indigenous or exdigenous lore superficially modified so as to appear indigenous. The first kind of transitional lore is almost impossible to detect without several extended field trips to a particular institution, since the determining factor here is process rather than state. The basic process consists of conceptually adapting an outside folklore element to the prison framework dialectically, so the resultant is a new piece of indigenous material. The modified item of exdigenous lore is more obvious: the traveling salesman is dressed in the uniform of the prison guard or the unrequited lover is presented as a convict. The total mass of folklore is composed of what the total mass of folklore from any community is composed of: argot, sayings, tales, legends, toasts, songs, etc., each existing in any or all of the three classes.

Prison folklore, then, does not grow, Topsy-like, all

by itself and all of a sudden. It has clear roots in the traditions that inmates bring in with them. It springs out of the mating of outside forms with inside conditions. I think the repertoire of Hank Ferguson, an inmate at the Indiana State Prison, clearly illustrates a number of these points.

Indiana State Prison nestles quietly in a semi-industrial area southeast of downtown Michigan City, a summer resort for a large segment of the northern Indiana and Chicago area. The prison's walls are very high and appear to have been recently whitewashed, If you drive by, you will probably see a few men in denim uniforms tending to the grounds outside the walls; there will be little other apparent activity. Signs warn you to keep moving, not to stop for hitch-hikers. There are few indications that behind the stone and bars a highly complex and very self-contained community is busily using up time: an occasional truck pulls up with supplies, personnel come and go for duty, a man moves behind the glass of a guard tower forty feet above the ground. The main line of the New York Central railroad runs along the south wall of the prison. About twenty-five yards from the southeast machine-gun tower is an unguarded road crossing, so at night the fast expresses start their screaming from a long way off, long before one can hear the chattering of the approaching wheels. The walls, the trains beyond reach, the guards, the isolation, the bars: these form the central image patterns of the prison's local folklore.

Hank's prison songs clearly reflect his C&W background. He could variously be categorized, if one felt the need to categorize, as traditional singer, commercial singer, ballad singer, hillbilly singer, prison singer. They all fit, so perhaps it would be best to leave the neat tags to the textbooks and just accept Hank's repertoire as it is, without slicing off chunks on the basis of distinctions that are, to a large extent, artificial. Everyone knows that the folk rarely bother to concern themselves with whether or not they are being folksy — that is a scholar's activity only. The selective editing here was done with the idea in mind of giving some kind of cross-section of the repertoire of a folk-sayer rather than a neat homogeneous lump of songs that one, as a folklorist, would think perfectly proper.[3] There are, by the way, two points for the admission of Hank's pwn songs as legitimate folklore items: the first is that his songs are already in circulation within the prison and a number of inmates have begun to make changes that they will not record simply because Hank is still an inmate and they are waiting for him to leave; second, the lesson of the blues has taught us that one can create folk material by performing in a traditional manner in a tradition that itself includes individual adaptation and creation.[4]

Several years ago, Hank, broke and a long way from home, found himself getting mixed up with a crowd whose activities, he knew, would lead to bad trouble. He decided that the kind of life he was living wasn't worth whatever it was he was getting out of it, so he quietly checked out and went back home to Lenoir City, Tennessee, a small town at the end of a string of suburbs stretching twenty miles across the hills outside Knoxville. He spent the next two years at a variety of jobs, including frequent appearances on Tommy Covington's "Saturday Night Picking Time", a C&W radio show originating in Knoxville. Hank was beginning to think he was safely out of the whole mess he'd been in, when, as he puts it, "Some people say the State Police and high sheriff himself followed me across the state line to bring me back. But I don't know about that — it must be hearsay." Hearsay or not, they brought him back to Indiana two years after he'd left. They convinced him that he should plead guilty, which he did, and he was sentenced to a year in Michigan City. I commented that he had gotten off lucky, that he could have pulled a much longer sentence. He replied, "There's no such thing as lucky when you're in a joint like this." It was Hank's first offense and, he decided, his last.

There are a lot of hard men in prison, a lot of bitter men. Hank is neither; he is easy-going, relaxed, delightfully friendly. He made a mistake, knows it, has avoided trouble while in prison, has done the best he could with a situation that is, by definition, unpleasant. He smiles easily, concentrates on music rather than prison politics, and quietly awaits his release. When prison tensions begin to work on him more than they usually do, he tries to channel his feelings into the only outlet that is, in his situation, acceptable and available — his music. "I'm Not Living, I'm Just Lasting" is a wonderful song that captures the flavor of prison life in a way that few extended essays even approach.

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

I want to thank Warden Ward Lane, of Indiana State Prison, for permitting me to come to his institution to record and, once there, for granting me the unexpected and very much appreciated courtesy and privilege of being allowed to work free of any administrative observation or interference; Palmer Myran, the prison's Director of Music, for permitting me to completely usurp his regular schedule, and for his invaluable help in arranging interviews and recording sessions; George List, Director of A.F.P.M., for lending me tapes and equipment; and all the inmates at Indiana State Prison whose friendliness and cooperation made my trip a far greater success than I had thought possible.

I would also like to thank Joseph Hickerson for his help with the discographies, as well as for his assistance in gathering information pertaining to copyrights.

NOTES

[1] "...Large segments of our society would much prefer to forget the confined offender, for no matter how just the imprisonment may be, the free community is reluctant to face the conclusion that some men must be held in bondage for the larger good. The prison wall, then, does more than prevent escape; it also hides the prisoners from society." Sykes, Gresham; The Society of Captives; Princeton, 1958 (p.8).

[2] This is not the fault of the Lomaxes. They admirably brought the existence of Negro work songs in prisons to scholarly and public attention; unfortunately, no one has bothered to look beyond their work for prison folklore; the Negro work song or prison lament has become completely identified with prison folklore. One can hear recordings of Negro prisoners on the following discs: Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song L-1, L-3, L-4, L-10, L-80; Folk-Lyric LFS A-3, A-5, A-6, FL-109; FE 4475 (collected by Toshi and Peter Seeger, John Lomax, Jr., Chester Bower, and Fred Hellerman, en masse, at Retrieve State Farms, Texas); arty versions of some of the same songs on Leon Bibb's prison record, Vanguard VRS-9056; and echo-chamber versions with studied blaugh on Belafonte's translation of the material on Victor LPM-2194. No one has bothered with white convicts, although they also play guitars, pick cotton, and split rocks.

[3] In his notes to Philo Glee and Mandoline Society (U. of Illinois Campus Folk Song Club CFC 101), Archie Green writes:

> "For many years two general attitudes towards southern Appalachian songlore prevailed in academic-urban-intellectual circles. One view was romantic, cloying, literary: it sought and found Elizabethan culture remnants in isolated coves and lonely hills. Another set of seekers and listeners met the same people and heard the same music. Its response was cast in pejorative terms — hillbilly, commercial, Nashville Philharmonic, syrupy lyrics, banal melodies, insipid emotions.
>
> "Fortunately in the decade 1950-60 some college folksong enthusiasts began to listen to, perform, and sing mountain music — traditional, hillbilly, bluegrass — in its own terms and to find much pleasure in the process."

True, but students don't deserve all the credit for the extension of academic scope in this area, although they are to a large extent responsible for the popular recognition of it. D. K. Wilgus has for a long time been pointing out that the

roots of country music are so traditional that its presence must be considered in any geographical study when it is obviously a significant form in the area in question.

[4] See "The Satirical Song Tradition in Maine and the Maritime Provinces of Canada, with Particular Reference to Larry Gorman," an unpublished doctoral dissertation (Indiana University, 1962) by Edward Ives, for a full discussion of the place in folklore of the topical or local song by a known composer. See also, American Folksongs of Protest for several discussions on this point.

(Notes to the songs, discographies, and references are meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive.)

THE SONGS

Side I; Band 1. I'M NOT LIVING, I'M JUST LASTING

Perhaps one of the most terrible aspects of prison life is the gnawing consciousness that nothing really matters. The time, for most inmates, is a chunk that is to be simply written out of their lives. Some men learn to read, learn a trade, learn that there are advantages to earning a living the hard but honest way, but there is still the knowledge that the time is gone, that the children have grown up alone or that the world has gotten to be a different place since they've last seen it. One rarely thinks, when one is in the outside world, about how the world would get along if one were suddenly scratched out of the running — it is a scary thing to think about; prison reminds men that the world, for the most part, gets along fine. Even if one is a model convict and is never placed in punitive solitary or loses any of his good time (time off for good behavior that is credited to an inmate in advance), there is still a cancerous awareness of fearsome uselessness. Hank Ferguson wrote this song last winter while waiting in his cell for sleep to come, listening to the screaming of the approaching trains and the diminishing chatter of their wheels fading into the distance. Hank says: "Now, that's quite some whistle when the fast train comes through at night. It keeps the guys awake and it wakes up a lot of 'em that are asleep. You hear a lot of talk about the train. Some wish they was on it; some wish it would shut up. I wrote a song something along the lines of that train one night. I call it 'I'm Not Living, I'm Just Lasting'."

I hear a lonesome whistle blow as I lay in my bed;
Sometimes I think that I'd be better off if I was dead.
I look out through the cold, gray bars, but there's
not much to see;
Then I realize I'm trying hard to last until I'm free.

I'm not living, I'm just lasting while I'm here,
And I'm thinking of the freedom that once I held so dear.
So many years of my life will be wasted for a crime.
I'm not living, I'm just trying to last longer than my time.

My sweetheart told me she would wait for me until I'm free;
I wonder if she understands how long that wait could be.
There's fifty years in front of me, too long to stay alive;
But maybe, if I'm good, they'll let me out in forty-five.

I'm not living, I'm just lasting while I'm here,
And I'm thinking of the freedom that once I held so dear.
So many years of my life will be wasted for a crime.
I'm not living, I'm just trying to last longer than my time.
I'm not living, I'm just trying to last longer than my time.

Side I; Band 2. THE WALLS

According to several prisoners at both the Indiana Reformatory and the State Prison, this song was written by Freddy Hart while he was doing time at Chino, California. Hart recorded it in his Columbia album (Big Hits, CS-8161) just a short time before his death in an airplane crash a few years ago. The copyright, however, is held by Red River Songs, Inc., and Cedarwood Publications, Inc., April 24, 1959, and is listed as "words and music by Harlan Howard" (copyright number EU159641).

Regardless, "The Walls" is clearly the best known recent C&W song in the two Indiana prisons I visited. I recorded six versions of it; two were almost exactly alike, the others have minor melodic and verbal changes, The song is quite germane and, even though it has a number of stock situations and cliches, has an impact on most listeners. The prisoner's "Dear John" is certainly not rare — it takes a strong marriage to withstand several years of separation of this kind. I met several prisoners at Missouri State Prison who were back inside the walls because they had attempted escapes from the prison farm after receiving such letters. A man does not have much, while he is in prison, that gives him

the feeling of being alive, and when the few strings start to shred, he sometimes acts hastily. The wall at Indiana State Prison is about forty feet high and no one goes over it. But sometimes a man thinks about the climb, calculates how to get over without being in direct sight of several guard towers (there is no way), and usually reaches the conclusion expressed in the last line of this song.

There's a lot of strange men in Cell Block Ten;
The strangest of them all
Was a friend of mine who spent his time
Staring at the walls,
Staring at the wall.

And in his hand was a note his girl had wrote,
To prove that crime don't pay,
But the very same girl he'd robbed and stole for
Named her wedding day,
She named her wedding day.

And when he looked at that wall, so strong and tall,
I heard him softly curse:
"No man at all ever climbed that wall,
But watch me be the first,
Watch me be the first."

The warden walked by and said, "Son, don't try;
I'd hate to see you fall.
But there's no doubt, they'll carry you out
If you ever touch that wall,
Don't ever touch that wall."

Now a year's went by since he made his try
And I can still recall
How hard he tried, the way he died,
But never made that wall;
He never climbed that wall.

There's never been a man to shake this can,
But I know of one who tried.
The newspaper called it a jail break plan,
But I called it suicide,
I called it suicide.

Side I; Band 3. GET A LITTLE DIRT ON YOUR HANDS

Hank learned this from Big Bill Anderson's recent recording (Decca 31358). He told me one day that, if there was any one song that fitted his situation, this one was it. The song was written by Bill Anderson, copyright by Tree Publishing Co., Inc., and Champion Music Co., December 29,

1961 (registration number EP159641).

When I was a little boy
My daddy used to tell me, "Son,
We got a lot of big land,
We got a lot of hard work to be done.
So go and get your marbles and put 'em in the sack;
Tear down your castles in the sand
And come with me to the cotton patch
And get a little dirt on your hands.
Get a little dirt on your hands.
If you're going to grow up to be a big, big man,
You got to get a little dirt on your hands.
Get a little dirt on your hands.

I got to be twenty
And I thought I was a pretty big wheel;
I left the country for the city,
Met a slicker with a shady deal.
He said, "Hold up the tavern and take all the money
And run just as fast as you can.
If you're going to get along in this big, bad world,
You got to get a little dirt on your hands."
Get a little dirt on your hands.
If you're going to grow up to be a big, big man,
You got to get a little dirt on your hands.
Get a little dirt on your hands.

Well, it's four in the morning
And the warden he's a-calling my name.
He's a-teaching me a lesson,
Going to send me out and work me in the rain.
Saying, "Dig them ditches and hoe that corn;
I've got to make you understand
That the only way to straighten out a fellow like you
Is get a little dirt on your hands."
Get a little dirt on your hands.
If you're going to grow up to be a big, big man,
You got to get a little dirt on your hands.
Get a little dirt on your hands.

Side I; Band 4. ONE LIFE'S AS LONG AS ANY MAN CAN LIVE

Hank says: "I knew a man in here once — he was sentenced to the electric chair and I think he beat it by about twenty-four hours at one time. His sentence was commuted from 'death' to 'triple life' — that's life three times. Now, we've often wondered, how can a man live three lives? But he said, one day, to me — I never will forget — he said, 'I believe I could make the first one, or the second one; it's the third one that's going to do me in.' But, anyway, I wrote a song about him and this is it."

There's four high walls around me,
Ten thousand bars to see;
Locked inside a prison
And they'll never set me free.
I'm doing life behind these walls;
There's no more I can give.
One life's as long as any man can live.

Each night I'll sit and wonder
How long I'll have to stay
Locked inside a cold, dark cell
Where there's no light of day.
One hour or fifty years from now?
I only wish I knew,
For life's too long for any man to do.

There's four high walls around me,
Ten thousand bars to see;
Where no one thinks about me,
I live in misery.
I long to see my old home town
And friends I used to know,
But I'm doing life and life is passing slow.

Some people know the happiness
That only life can give;
But here I stay, from day to day,
Without the heart to live.
No happiness can come my way
Inside these walls, I know;
Just a lonely life, and I've got life to go.

There's four high walls around me,
Ten thousand bars to see;
I'm locked inside a prison;
They'll never set me free.
I'm doing life behind these walls;
There's no more I can give.
One life's as long as any man can live.

Side I; Band 5. SHACKLES AND CHAINS

"Shackles and Chains" was written by Jimmie Davis. The copyright is held by Peer International Corp., 1949, registration number EP40176.

Mac Wiseman, Tis Sweet to be Remembered, Dot DLP-308A
Stanley Brothers Sing Everybody's Country Favorites, King KGO-690.

On a long, lonesome journey I'll travel,
And when I'm gone, baby, please, don't you cry.
For in shackles and chains they'll take me
To a prison to live till I die.
And every night through the bars,
When I gaze at the stars
And I dream of your kisses in vain,
A piece of stone I will use for my pillow
While I'm sleeping in shackles and chains.

Put your arms through these bars once, my darling;
Let me kiss those sweet lips I love best.
For in heartaches you were my consolation
And in sorrow my haven of rest.
And every night through the bars,
When I gaze at the stars
And I dream of your kisses in vain,
A piece of stone I will use for my pillow
While I'm sleeping in shackles and chains.
While I'm sleeping in shackles and chains.

Side I; Band 6. THUNDER ROAD

This song, apparently written for the movie of the same name, is copyright by Leeds Music Corp., September 9, 1957. Don Raye and Robert Mitchum (who starred in the film) are listed as the composers. Registration number EU492135. It has been recorded by Robert Mitchum (Capitol 3986) and by Tex Williams (Decca 30672).

As Hank puts it: "This all took place down in my home country, down in Knoxville, Tennessee. This boy was killed. He hauled moonshine out of the mountains from up in Harlan, Kentucky, and on up in that part of the country, and he was giving the federal officers, the revenuers, quite a stir. They was having a hard time getting him and, well, as a matter of fact, they never did get him. A few of them lost their lives in the tries. But Robert Mitchum, a fellow out in California I'm sure everybody is familiar with, he made a picture of Thunder Road and it just about tells the tale. There's one particular part that I remember, I've seen the place many times. As I've said before, I'm from Lenoir City, a suburb of Knoxville only about twenty miles, business district all the way, from Knoxville. And down this Kingston Pike there's some transformers that sets on a curve just a few feet off of the road and there's a fence around them says 'DANGER - HIGH VOLTAGE'. It was here that he left the road and he wound up right in the middle of these transformers, with all this electricity a-firing through him. I guess he was getting a lot of electricity; he never come out of it alive anyway, so that was the end of the story for him. He was a real young guy; he was a nice guy, too, so they say, just a little 'rugged'."

Well, listen to my story,
I can tell it all,
About a mountain boy who ran
Illegal alcohol.
His daddy made the moonshine;
The boy he hauled the load
And when his engine roared they called
The highway Thunder Road.

Sometimes into Asheville,
Sometimes Memphis town,
Them revenuers chased him, but
They couldn't bring him down.
Just when they thought they had him,
His engine would explode
And he'd go by like they were standing
Still on Thunder Road.

There was thunder, thunder,
Over Thunder Road;
Thunder was his engine,
White lightning was his load.
Moonshine, moonshine
To quench the devil's thirst —
The lawmen swore they'd get him,
But the devil got him first.

It was on the fourth of April,
Nineteen fifty-four,
That federal man sent word, "You'd better
Make that run no more."
He said two hundred agents
Was covering the state;
Whichever road he took that night,
They'd get him, sure as fate.

"Son," his daddy told him,
"Make this run your last.
Your tanks filled up with hundred proof;
You're all tuned up with gas.
Don't take any chances,
If you can't get through;
I'd rather have you back with me
Than all this mountain dew.

There was thunder, thunder
Over Thunder Road;
Thunder was his engine,
White lightning was his load.
Moonshine, moonshine
To quench the devil's thirst —
The lawmen swore they'd get him,
But the devil got him first.

He rolled out of Harlan,
Revving up his mill;
Shot the gap at Cumberland
And on through Maynardsville.
G-Men on his tail-light,
Road-blocks up ahead,
That mountain boy took trails that night
Angels fear to tread.

He rolled into Knoxville,
Out on Kingston Pike,
And just outside of Bearden
They made their fatal strike.
He left the road at ninety;
That's all there is to say.
The devil got the moonshine
And the mountain boy that day.

There was thunder, thunder,
Over Thunder Road;
Thunder was his engine,
White lightning was his load.
Moonshine, moonshine,
To quench the devil's thirst —
The lawmen never got him
For the devil got him first.

Side I; Band 7. TROUBLE JUST GOT IN MY WAY

This isn't the way things happened to Hank; he wrote the song about someone else. But lately, he says, "Seems like trouble follows me every place I go, except since I've been in here."

"I can't understand how it happened to me,"
That's what I've heard many men say;
"I never done wrong, but as time went along,
Trouble just got in my way."

Downtown in a honky-tonk tavern one night,
I was dancing and having some fun,
When my best friend walked in and he said, with a grin,
"The heat's on, so you'd better run."
I told him he must be out of his mind;
I couldn't believe such a tale.
But I guess he was right, for they came in that night
And they carried me down to the jail.

"And I don't understand how it happened to me,"
That's what I've heard many men say;
"I never done wrong, but as time went along,
Trouble just got in my way."

In the courthouse, my trial didn't last very long;
All evidence pointed to me.
When the jury went out, I knew without doubt
There was no way they could set me free.
They sent me to prison for robbing a home
And there's one thing I don't understand —
How I broke the glass, reached in for the cash,
And my friend got the cut on his hand.

"No, I don't understand how it happened to me,"
That's what I've heard many men say;
"I never done wrong, but as time went along,
Trouble just got in my way."

Side II; Band 1. BUSTED

Copyright by Pamper Music, Inc., January 14, 1962. Registration number EP164339. Words and music by Harlan Howard. Hank learned the song, which, incidentally, tells an altogether too common story of personal tragedy in the depressed regions of southern Appalachia today (see Harvey M. Caudill's Night Comes to the Cumberlands), from the recent recording by Johnny Cash.

The bills are all due and the baby needs shoes
And I'm busted;
And cotton is down to a quarter a pound,
But I'm busted.
I got a cow that went dry and a hen that won't lay
And a big stack of bills, getting bigger each day;
Tomorrow they'll haul my belongings away,
'Cause I'm busted.

My friends are all leaving this old mining town;
They're all busted.
They're heading up north where there's work to be found
And trusted.
Lord, I hate to give up this acre of land,
It's been in the family since mining began,
But kids they get hungry and don't understand
Dad's busted.

I went to my brother Bill and I asked for a loan;
I was busted.
Lord, I hate to beg like a dog for a bone,
But I'm busted.
But Bill lost his job and the rent's overdue,
His wife and his kids been down with the flu,
And he said, "I've been thinking of calling on you,
'Cause I'm busted."

Lord knows I'm no thief, but a man can go bad
When he's busted.
The kids, they're not well, and it's driving me mad
'Cause I'm busted.
I'll sell this old Guernsey and leave this old shack;
So, Billy and Joe, help nommy get packed.
We're heading up north and we ain't coming back,
'Cause we're busted.

Side II; Band 2. YOU AIN'T HEARD NOTHING YET

Hank learned this from a recording by Marvin Rainwater, although we were unable to locate any information concerning its composer or the copyright.

Well, you think that you've got trouble;
The more you pet 'em, well, the worse off you get.
Well, you think the world don't like you;
Well, brother, you ain't heard nothin' yet.

Now, my car it sounds like an old tin can
And my wife run off with another man
And I sprained a muscle in my fishin' hand;
My income tax are due.
Lost all my money in a poker game
And my left leg it's a-goin' lame
And my brother asked me to change my name
And that's what I think I'll do.

Had every ailment known to man
From the (asthma and mumps) to the dishpan hands;
Lost every race that I ever ran —
Didn't even get a start.
And the doctor he told me that I shouldn't smoke,
Shouldn't drink nothin' stronger than a coke
And I shouldn't even listen to a dirty joke —
If I laugh, it'll strain my heart.

(CHORUS)

Now, some folks say that I'm a pestident (?)
And I oughta try to get the best of it.
Well, I might be a little pestident,
That's somethin' that I wouldn't know.
But there's somethin' wrong and I'll tell you now,
I been a-milkin' the wrong end of this old cow
And there's too many wrinkles in this boy's brow.
That stuff has got to go!

(CHORUS)

Gonna build me a bar
In the back of my car
And drive myself to drinkin'.

Side II; Band 3. WAITING FOR A TRAIN

The drifter in this song asks nothing other than that he be left alone and achieves a kind of pathetic dignity in comparison to the employed grafter's avariciousness. Jimmie Rodgers wrote this song, using, as he often did, a goodly number of traditional motifs and phrases, and it was from one of his recordings that Hank learned the song. The original copyright was by Southern Music Publishing Co., Inc., March 23, 1929, EP4483. The copyright was renewed by Carrie Rodgers, March 23, 1956, renewal number R167237.

I'm all around a water-tank
A-waiting for a train;
A thousand miles away from home,
A-sleeping in the rain.
I walked up to a brakeman
Just to give him a line of talk;
He said, "If you've got money,
I'll see that you don't walk."
"I haven't got a nickel,
Not a penny can I show."
He said, "Get off, you railroad bum!"
And slammed the boxcar door.

He put me off in Texas,
The state I dearly love,
The wide open spaces around me,
The moon and stars above.
Nobody seems to want me
Or to lend me a helping hand;
I'm on my way from 'Frisco,
Going back to Dixieland.
My pocketbook is empty
And my heart is filled with pain;
A thousand miles away from home,
A-waiting for a train.

Side II; Band 4. THE WRECK OF OLD #9

Copyright by Carson J. Robison under the title The Wreck of Number Nine, January 13, 1927, E653129; words and music by Carson J. Robison. Copyright renewed by Carson J. Robison, February 15, 1954, R125710. Randolph (IV, p.134) and Davis (p. 293) both included it in their collections of folksongs from the Ozarks and Virginia, respectively, but neither predate Robison's copyright. There have been many popular recordings of the song (see below for a brief list),

although, to the best of Hank's recollection, he learned it from the singing of Hank Snow.

Cisco Houston, "The Brave Engineer", 900 Miles, Folkways FP-13
Rosalie Sorrels, Folk Songs of Idaho and Utah, Folkways FH-5343
Stanley G. Triggs, Bunkhouse and Forecastle Songs, Folkways FG-3569
Mac Wiseman, Great Folk Ballads, Dot DLP-3213
Lonnie Donnegan, An Englishman Sings American Folk Songs, Mercury MG-20229

On a cold winter night,
Not a star was in sight
And that north wind was howling down the line,
With his sweetheart so dear
Stood a brave engineer
And his orders to pull the Number Nine.
He kissed her goodbye
With a tear in his eye,
And the joy in his heart he couldn't hide,
When he looked down the track
And he knew he'd be back,
For tomorrow she'd be his blushing bride.

Them old wheels hummed a song
As the train rolled along
And the black smoke was rolling from the stack;
And the headlight agleam
Seemed to brighten his dream
Of tomorrow, when he'd be coming back.
When he spinned around the hill,
His brave heart stood still;
A headlight was shining in his face.
And he whispered a prayer
When he threw on the air,
For he knew he had run his final race.

In that wreck he was found,
Lying there on the ground,
And he told them to raise his weary head.
As his breath slowly went,
Here's the message he sent
To that maiden he thought he would be wed.
"There's a little cabin home
We've built for our own,
And thought we'd be happy by and by;
But I'm leaving it with you,
For I know you'll be true
Till we meet on that peaceful shore — goodbye."

Side II; Band 5. JOLLY OLD TIME FARMER

The lament of the unhappily broke rustic being done in by the quick talking city-slicker is not a unique one in story or song. Woody Guthrie recorded a "Wagon Yard Blues" for the Library of Congress in 1940 (AFS 3418A3), but this version is probably closer to Grandpa Jones' "Stay in the Wagon Yard" on his Strictly Country Tunes, King 625.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Hank was almost reluctant to record this one for us; he is really more interested in new songs than old and, to him, this one is terribly 'old hat'. "That old thing?" he said, when we asked him where he had learned it, "Why, I can remember whistling that when I was just a little kid. That must be thirty-two years ago, anyway." Nevertheless, a check at the Library of Congress shows that the song has been copyright by Lois Publishing Co., November 8, 1950, EU220712; words and music by Grandpa Jones.

I'm a jolly old-time farmer;
Last night I come to town.
Brought me a bale of cotton
That I worked this whole year around.
And I put my team in the wagon yard
And I bought me a bottle of gin.
I went down to the electric lights
To watch the cars come in.

Well, I met a dude upon the street,
The clock was striking nine;
He said, "Come all you (hayseeds?)
And have a drink of mine."
Well, I must have had me a thousand drinks,
Because it hit my pocketbook hard;
And I wish I'd bought me a half a pint
And stayed in the wagon yard.

I'm just a jolly old-time farmer;
Last night I come to town.
Brought that bale of cotton,
Because I worked it the whole year around.
And I put that team in the wagon yard;
I got me a bottle of gin,
And I went down to the electric lights,
Gonna watch the cars come in.

Side II; Band 6. RICH GIRL, POOR GIRL

This is related to a Negro song of variations on the same title ("Brown Girl, Black Girl", "White Girl, Brown Girl, My Girl", etc.).

EDITOR'S NOTE: The vast number of bawdy verses generally found with this song would indicate that it has led quite a colorful life through its years of oral transmission. The structure of the song, in both its Negro and white versions, certainly lends itself to individual invention. Scholars studying the processes of oral transmission have found their work vastly complicated by the effect of the stall ballad or broadside, the songster, and the early recordings of country music on oral tradition. It has been observed that only in the case of blatantly bawdy material can the folklorist be sure that his collectanea is free of such influences. When Hank Ferguson originally recorded this song for Bruce Jackson, he had no way of knowing that it might, eventually, be used in an album produced for sale to the general public. At that time, he freely sang those verses which clearly establish that he could have learned the song only from oral sources. At our own recording session, he chose to omit those verses. This note is inserted here for a particular reason: in recent years, several copyrights have been filed on this song, or, rather, on "arrangements" of this song, which brings up an important point — namely, the difficulty in assessing the validity of copyrights now being filed on traditional or semi-traditional material. This difficulty is becoming increasingly obvious to those who are working in the field of folksong and is causing a great deal of discussion among folklorists, both in America and in Great Britain, who, almost unanimously, deplore the attempts of individuals to possess, privately, portions of that traditional heritage which properly, it would seem, should remain the property of all the people. I realize that this observation is not especially appropriate in this particular instance, "Rich Girl, Poor Girl" being an unimportant song by comparison. But the unfortunate fact remains that a number of professional performers and songwriters are currently filing copyrights by the score on songs which have been in oral tradition for years — indeed, in many cases, for centuries. We, of Folk-Legacy Records, Inc., share the growing concern of the academic folklorists in this regard and look forward, with them, to a prompt and thorough examination and legal resolution of the problem.

S.P.

CHORUS:

She'll be coming around the mountain, charming Betsy;
Coming around the mountain, Cora Lee;
And, if I never see you again,
Good Lord, remember me.

Rich gal she rides in a big Cadillac;
Poor gal she does the same.
But my gal she rides in a Model-T Ford,
But she gets there just the same.

(CHORUS)

Rich gal she sleeps in a big brick house;
Poor gal she does the same.
And my gal she sleeps in the county jail,
But it's a brick house just the same.

(CHORUS)

Now, rich gal she uses fine perfume;
Poor gal she does the same.
But my gal don't use no perfume at all,
But you can smell her just the same.

(CHORUS)

Side II; Band 7. THE WRECK OF THE OLD 97

Much less sentimental and bathetic than "The Wreck of Old #9", this song has long been a favorite with both rural and urban performers and audiences. I remember one entire platoon of Parris Island Marine recruits who, about ten years ago, could be heard singing this song as they marched to and from the mess hall. A minister's son from midtown Manhattan had convinced them that they needed a song of their own because everyone knew the Corps' Hymn. There is even a Thomas Hart Benton painting that depicts the train leaping the tracks before the eyes of a startled surrey driver.

The "facts" behind the ballad seem to vary somewhat with locale, but essentials are fairly constant. Old 97 is supposed to have been the fastest train on the Southern Railway. On September 27, 1903, she was running far behind schedule and Joe Brodie, the engineer, was trying to make up some lost time by opening up the throttle on the downgrade of White Oak Mountain, not far from Danville, Virginia. The train's air brakes gave out, however, and she careened wildly down the grade and finally leapt the tracks.

"To the tune of Henry C. Work's 'The Ship That Never Returned'," writes Oscar Brand, "balladeer David Graves George wrote 'The Wreck of the Old 97'. In 1924, Victor Talking Machine Company issued the record of Vernon Dalhart singing the ballad. It sold more than a million copies." (p. 92) The immense popularity of this recording led to a long and intricate series of court proceedings which finally ended up in the Supreme Court. Randolph (IV, p. 132) goes into this in some detail, but perhaps the best account of the litigation is to be found in Railroad Avenue: Great Stories and Legends of American Railroading by Freeman H. Hubbard, New York, 1945. See also Davis, p. 293.

Well, they handed him his orders
Down in Monroe, Virginia,
Saying, "Steve, you're a-way behind time;
This is not '38', but it's old '97',
You must set her in Atlanta on time."

Oh, he turned and he told
That big, greasy fireman
To shovel in a little more coal.
"When we round the top
Of that wide old mountain,
You can watch '97' roll."

There's a mighty rough road
From Glendale to Asheville
With a climb of a three mile grade.
It was on this grade
That he lost his air brakes;
You can see what a jump he made.

They were going down the grade,
Making ninety miles an hour,
When that whistle broke into a scream;
He was found in the wreck
With his hand on the throttle
And was scalded to death by the steam.

Now, ladies all, won't you take warning
From this day on and learn?
Never speak harsh words
To your true loving husband;
He may leave you and never return.

Side II; Band 8. WABASH CANNONBALL

Even a 'bo takes some pride in the trains he hops. This rather hyperbolic description of the greatest train that never was is in circulation all over the country. The earliest copyright is dated November 6, 1905, Pioneer Publishing Co., C106744, composed by William Kindt. Since that time, five other copyrights have been filed, including that of A. P. Carter (Southern Music Publishing Co.), so, once again, confusion reigns. References to the song may be found in Botkin (p. 462), Lomax I (p. 420), Milburn (p. 189) and Randolph IV (p. 363).

Bill Bundy, LOCAFS 1510A (1937)
The Original and Great Carter Family, Camden CAL-586
Roy Acuff and His Smoky Mountain Boys, Songs of the Smoky Mountains, Capitol T-617
Pete Seeger, American Favorite Ballads, Vol. II, Folkways FA-2320

Lonnie Donnegan, An Englishman Sings American Folk Songs, Mercury MG-20229

From the great Atlantic Ocean
To the wide Pacific shore,
From the stream of flowing mountain
To the southland by the shore,
She's a mighty tall and handsome
And known quite well by all;
She's the combination
Of the Wabash Cannonball.

Listen to the jingle,
Hear the rumble and the roar
As she glides along the woodland,
Through the hills and by the shore.
Hear the mighty rush of the engine;
Hear the lonesome hobo's squall.
She came down to Birmingham
On the Wabash Cannonball.

As she pulled into Birmingham
One bright December day,
When she rolled into that station,
You could hear the people say,
"There's a gal from Tennessee, boys,
She's long and she's tall;
She came down from Birmingham
On the Wabash Cannonball."

Now, daddy he's a tracksman,
May his name forever stand
And always be remembered
In the courts throughout the land.
When the earthly race is over
And the curtains 'round him fall,
They'll carry him home to victory
On the Wabash Cannonball.

Listen to that jingle,
Hear the rumble and the roar
As she glides along the woodland,
Through the hills and by the shore.
Hear the mighty rush of the engine;
Hear the lonesome hobo's squall.
She's traveling through that jungle
On the Wabash Cannonball.

Side II; Band 9. NINE POUND HAMMER

Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co. obtained a copyright on a song titled "Nine Pound Hammer", June 29, 1927, E665883, and

listed the composers as Al Hopkins and Charles Bowman. This version, however, is not in the Library of Congress. In 1929, another copyright was filed on a song titled "The Nine Pound Hammer" and listed the composer as G. B. Grayson; that song is quite distinct from the one recorded here, however. In 1947, American Music, Inc., obtained a copyright on the version Hank Ferguson sings (EP98030), giving Merle Travis credit for the words. There is no doubt that the present song is the Travis version; although Hank learned it from a fellow in Indianapolis named Sonny Grubbs, he is aware that Grubbs learned it from Travis' recording. The song is currently both a bluegrass and a C&W favorite.

Merle Travis, Back Home, Capitol T-891
Pearl and Craig Steele, banjo accompaniment by Pete Steele, LOCAFS 1705B1 (1938)
Hank Thompson, At the Golden Nugget, ST-1632
Laurel River Valley Boys, Music for Moonshiners, Judson J-303
Southern Mountain Folksongs and Ballads, Riverside RLP-12-617
G. B. Grayson and Henry Whitter, Victor 40105
Philo Glee and Mandoline Society, U. of Illinois CFC-101

It's a nine pound hammer,
Just a little too heavy
For my size, baby, for my size.

I'm going on the mountain;
Gonna see my baby,
But I ain't coming back; well, I ain't a-coming back.

Well, roll on, buddy;
Don't you roll so slow.
How can I roll when the wheels won't go?

Well, it's a long way to Harlan;
It's a long way to Hazard.
I'm gonna get a little brew, just to get a little brew.

You better roll on, buddy,
And pull a load of coal.
But how can I roll when the wheels won't go?

Now, when I'm long gone,
You can make my tombstone
Out of number nine coal, out of number nine coal.

Yeah, roll on, buddy,
But don't you roll so slow.
How can I roll when the wheels won't go?
How can I roll when the wheels won't go?

Side II; Band 10. LONG BLACK VEIL

Here we have a new song that manages to capture some of the qualities of the popular broadside ballads of the last century. Its appeal to the folk of the southern Appalachians is clearly established by the fact that singers with repertoires which are generally traditional have already adopted it and are beginning to adapt it to their varying styles. It was written by Marijohn Wilkin and Danny Dill and is copyright by Cedarwood Publishing Co., April 27, 1959, EU577749.

Ten years ago, on a cold dark night,
Someone was killed 'neath the town hall light.
Few were at the scene, but they all agreed
That the slayer who ran looked a lot like me.

The judge he said, "Son, what is your alibi?
If you were somewheres else, then you won't have to die."
I spoke not a word, though it meant my life;
I had been in the arms of my best friend's wife.

Now she walks these hills in a long, black veil
And she visits my grave when the night winds wail.
Nobody knows, nobody sees;
Nobody knows but me.

The scaffold was high, eternity near;
She stood in the crowd and shed not a tear.
But sometimes at night, when the cold wind moans,
In a long, black veil, she's watching o'er my bones.

And she walks these hills in a long, black veil;
Visits my grave when the night winds wail.
Nobody knows, nobody sees;
Nobody knows but me.
Nobody knows but me.

Side II; Band 11. INTERSTATE 40

One wonders why songs of the happy wanderer, content, somehow, in his very restlessness, seem to appeal so much to the American public. This song by John D. Loudermilk (Copyright by Acuff-Rose Publications, Inc., February 27, 1963, EP172731) is but one of many with a similar theme to capture the imagination of the people and become popular. Perhaps they appeal to a desire to be free of responsibility, unencumbered by the burden of routine that is the lot of Everyman in a complex society. Perhaps we have yet to shake off the collective memory of what was once, as Frederick Jackson Turner termed it, America's "safety-valve" — the freedom of a restless, dynamic people to pull up stakes and release its pent-up energies in migration westward. What-

ever the explanation, young America seems to find it quite easy to identify with the fellow in this song and in songs like it.

Well, I'm walkin' up a shoulder of Interstate 40;
I'm a-cussin' every rock that I kick.
Since I lost everything in the last depression,
Well, I just give up and I've quit.
But I'm happy though I ain't had nothin' since morning
But a cold drink and a pie;
And it rained up the road about an hour ago,
But I've walked these brogans dry.

But that's just life out on Interstate 40
And I'm a lucky son of a gun,
'Cause the government give me Interstate 40
And the good Lord he give me a thumb.

Well, you've got to be careful out on Interstate 40
'Cause the Highway men ain't dumb;
There's a law agin hikin' out on Interstate 40,
So you gotta know who to thumb.
But, if you're like me, you don't worry at all
What the law calls punishment;
Just nineteen wonderful days of patchin' up
Old Interstate 40 cement.

Well, that's just life out on Interstate 40
And I'm a lucky son of a gun,
'Cause the government's give me Interstate 40
And the good Lord he give me a thumb.

Well, the world's my castle and the grass my carpet
And my heart it's all my own;
And the rain's my bath and old Interstate 40
Is my home sweet home sweet home.
When I die, won't you bury me close
To where the big trucks whine and moan?
Just any old place along Interstate 40
Will rest my weary bones.

But that's just life out on Interstate 40
And I'm a lucky son of a gun,
'Cause the government's give me Interstate 40
And the good Lord he give me a thumb.
Yes, the good Lord he give me a thumb.
The good Lord he give me a thumb.

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