

# RAY HICKS

of Beech Mountain, North Carolina

*Tells Four Traditional Jack Tales*

1. **Jack and the Three Steers (10:16)**
2. **Big Man Jack, Killed Seven at a Whack (12:02)**
3. **Jack and Old Fire Dragon (12:44)**
4. **Whickety-Whack, Into My Sack (10:02)**

*“Used to be, whenever we had a long, slow job to be done, like a corn-huskin’ or something, we’d just gather all the young’uns around and put ‘em to work. Then’s when we’d tell the old tales about Jack. Why, them kids would work for hours and never a sound out of ‘em, long as I’d keep tellin’ ‘em tales.”*

Thus, Ray Hicks, North Carolina mountain farmer and part-time mechanic, put into words, more concisely than a folklorist could, one function of the traditional folk tale in the lives of the mountain people of Appalachia.

The Hicks family has been farming the steep slopes of Beech Mountain for many generations, each generation transmitting to the next its store of old songs, ballads and tales. Ray Hicks learned these tales as a boy and I’m convinced his children will pass them on to their children in the years to come. Folk traditions on “the Beech” fade slowly and die hard.

It takes a special sort of genius to tell a tale the way Ray does, delighting in it, inventing just a little each time to keep it fresh, coloring it freely with his rich, mountain speech. Throughout Appalachia there are folk who sing old songs; occasionally one may discover a real ballad singer, a master of an ancient art. But the true *folksayer* is rare, indeed. Without question, Ray Hicks is one of these.



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*Sandy Paton*

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 on Beech Mountain, NC, in 1963  
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