

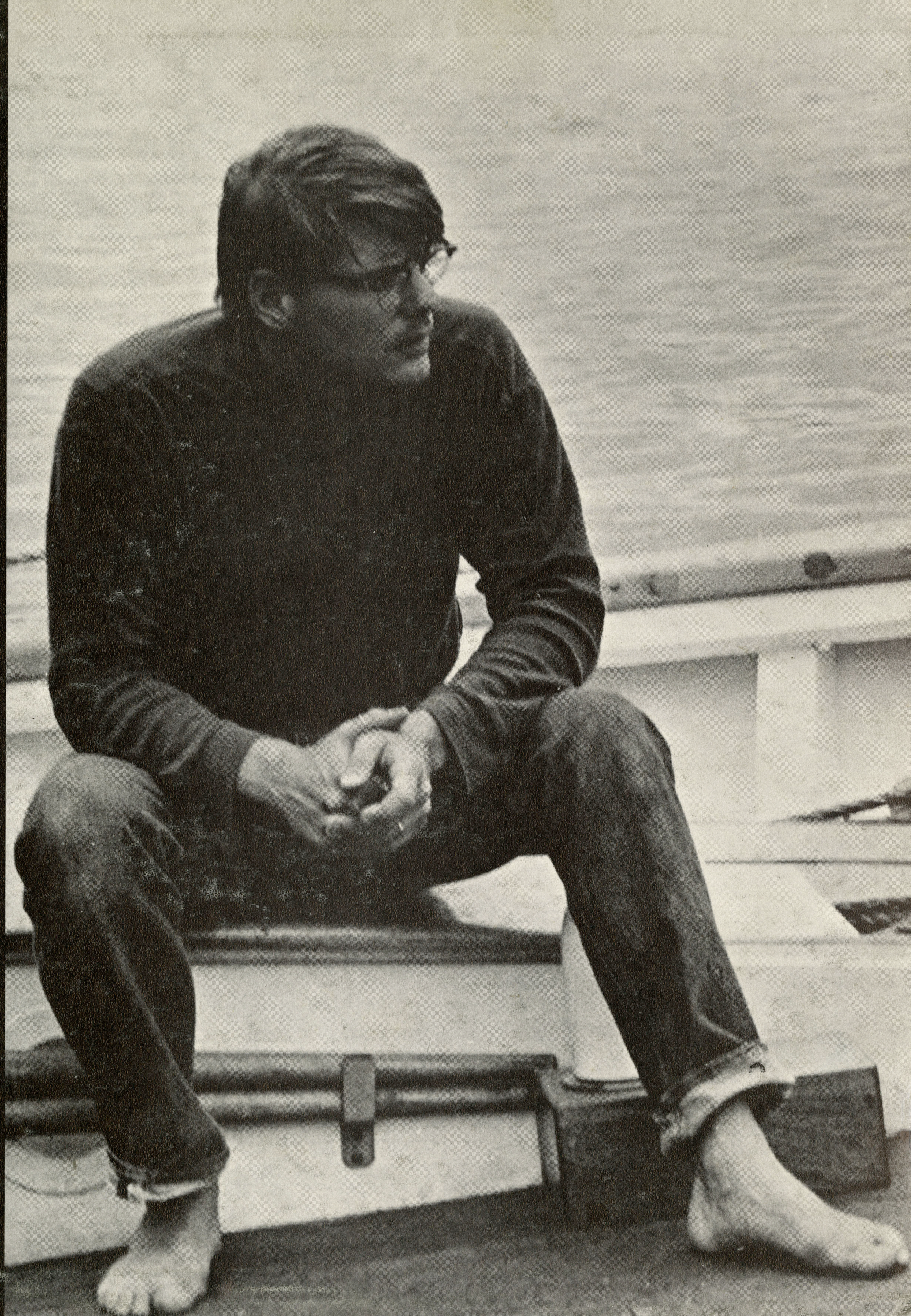
FSI-40  
STEREO

*"A Tune for November"*

# GORDON BOK



**FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC.**  
SHARON, CONNECTICUT







# GORDON BOK

## "A Tune for November"

Gordon Bok stands a solid six feet — and solid is the right word. He looks to be a good three feet across the shoulders. He moves with the easy confidence of a man who knows who he is and what he is about. There is a definite look of the sea about this young man from Camden, Maine, and there is no deception in this look; Gordon Bok has been working the big sailing vessels since he was fourteen, starting as dishwasher on the ninety-nine year old North River brick schooner, *Steven Taber*, thence from deckhand to captain of various sailing yachts, charters and deliveries along the coast of Maine. After this, he went back to the big Camden schooners for awhile, as deckhand and mate of the schooner *Alice Wentworth*. He was first mate of the schooner *Mary Day* (83') off and on for the first seven years of her life. When asked about this part of his life, he wrote: *They've all been sailing boats, mostly traditional in type (like taking a Brixham trawler from England to Portugal — and like the sloop Clearwater). Mostly America, but some Virgin Islands, Bahamas, Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island, and a few short bits of fishing, now and then. I enjoy the Camden schooners because they're mostly ex-cargo boats with heavy gear and no engines.*

Although he is well-known in folk music circles, a lot of people first heard Gordon Bok's music while he was first mate on the *Clearwater*, putting in at river towns and cities up and down the Hudson, giving programs with Pete Seeger and the rest of the crew, reminding people along that blighted river that the task of ending pollution was really up to them. *Clearwater* is something more than a beautiful replica of the old Hudson River sloops, she is a symbol of the river as it used to be, before man's careless ways with the waste products of civilization brought it to its present sorry state.

When Gordon signed on, it was more than his sailing skills and experience that made him the ideal choice for the job. His rich voice and brilliant guitar helped to make those programs memorable for all who heard them. Gordon Bok sings of the sea with the authority of a man who has been there, and he sings of life with the zest of a man who lives it as he chooses, and loves it. His hands are those of a working seaman, broad and strong, but when they take hold of a guitar they move with incredible precision and sensitivity. Perhaps it takes hands like these to bend that big 12-string to his musical will, but they can also caress an intricate arrangement out of the hand-made classical guitar he often plays. His voice, as much at home on the deck of a ship as it is on the concert stage, has all the strength appropriate to the hard-driving songs of the sea and of working men, but it can also shade softly to the gentle warmth of a song of a man's love for a woman. Each of these is represented here, with a number of examples of the various stages in between. The several original songs which are included reflect his great love for the rugged coast of Maine and for the people who make it their home.

Sandy Paton  
Sharon, Connecticut  
August, 1970

### SIDE 1:

THE HILLS OF ISLE AU HAUT  
(Bok) 3:26  
DUNA (arr. Bok) 1:56  
HANDSOME CABIN BOY 3:59  
SONG BY YUPANQUI 1:20  
TRAVELLING PEOPLE  
(MacColl) 3:35  
LIVERPOOL HANDY  
(arr. Bok) 2:25  
SABEN, THE WOODFITTER  
(Bok) 5:11

### SIDE 2:

LOU'S HANDY (arr. Bok) 1:38  
WHERE AM I TO GO? 2:02  
LOWLANDS 3:38  
QUEENSLAND OVERLANDERS  
2:27  
SIER LAPALANG  
(arr. Bok) 4:15  
TUNE FOR BANNARD  
(Bok) 2:34  
A TUNE FOR NOVEMBER  
(Bok) 4:11

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FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC.  
Sharon, Connecticut 06069



*"A Tune for November"*  
**GORDON BOK**

**FSI-40**



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**SHARON, CONNECTICUT 06069**

## GORDON BOK

Gordon Bok is very much his own man. There is no other folksinger anything like him. Whatever he sings is his and begets no comparisons. If that sounds like rather high praise, all I can say is that it is meant to be. No more enjoyable folksinger has come down the pike in years than Gordon Bok.

He is a self-taught guitarist, but unlike the ruck of self-taught guitarists he had something to teach himself — and he learned it. He is a competent classical guitarist, but it is in those marvelous pipe and fiddle tune adaptations that he really shines forth as an instrumentalist. He sings in a quiet, straight-forward bass that is both pleasant and authoritative, and his accompaniments form a sort of rich brocade that is the perfect setting for his voice. His own songs, the ones he has written himself, speak eloquently of the sea and the Maine coast. They are especially and uniquely his, and I cannot imagine them sung by anyone else. In addition, he sings traditional songs with great understanding and reverence. He is not "ethnic" in the sense that he tries to sing as though he were a farmer or a cowboy; neither is he an arranger or an adapter, a polisher-up. A song never becomes simply a vehicle for displaying his own brilliance. He meets the song openly, and they work together in a very happy way.

Put it this way: Gordon Bok is, fortunately, Gordon Bok. And that's good enough for me.

*Sandy Ives  
University of Maine*

Gordon Bok remains for me the best — the best singer, the best instrumentalist, the best song writer — in the realm of traditional music. The strength and richness of his voice bring majesty to any tune, however humble. His guitar-playing fills out the strongest character with the simplest of strokes. And his songs — well, his songs pass what is for me the ultimate test — they sound as though they were never written. Instead, they have always existed and he is merely the first to sing them for us.

Gordon's performances reveal him to be a sailor. Each one is like the prow of a ship, which even on the calmest of seas leans forward, forever pressing its voyage. None of us can sign aboard his ship, but perhaps we can dare to set sail ourselves.

*Ralph Earle  
Cambridge, Massachusetts*



## THE SONGS

In the notes that follow, Gordon's remarks will appear in italics, those of the editor in regular type.

### Side I, Band 1. THE HILLS OF ISLE AU HAUT (Bok)

*Isle au Haut is a high, mountainous island in the Gulf of Maine with a couple of villages on it. Mostly fishermen there in the winter, good people.*

Away and to the westward  
Is a place a man should go,  
Where the fishing's always easy;  
They've got no ice or snow.

But I'll haul down the sail  
Where the bays come together,  
Bide away the days  
On the hills of Isle au Haut.

Now, the Plymouth girls are fine,  
They put their hearts in your hand;  
And the Plymouth boys are able,  
First-class sailor, every man.

Now, the trouble with old Martir,  
You don't try her in a trawler,  
For those Bay of Biscay swells  
They roll your head from off your shoulder.

Away and to the westward  
Is a place a man should go,  
Where the fishing's always easy;  
They've got no ice or snow.

Now, the winters drive you crazy  
And the fishing's hard and slow;  
You're a damn fool if you stay,  
But there's no better place to go.

(Gordon generally sings another verse, not on the record:)

The girls of Cascais,  
They are strong across the shoulder;  
They don't give a man advice,  
They don't want to cook his supper.

### Side I, Band 2. DUNA (arr. Bok)

*This was originally a poem by John Masefield, England's poet-laureate. I was first introduced to his poetry by a cook on the Alice Wentworth whose only saving grace was his taste in sea-poetry.*

When I was a little lad  
With folly on my lips,  
Fain was I for journeying  
All the seas in ships.  
But I'm weary of the sea wind,  
I'm weary of the foam,  
And the little stars of Duna  
Call me home.

When I was a young man,  
Before my beard was grey,  
All to seas and islands  
I gave my heart away.  
But now across the southern swell  
Every dawn I hear  
The little streams of Duna  
Running clear.

### Side I, Band 3. HANDSOME CABIN BOY

*I learned this from Bete Franklin, years ago, on the schooner Owl. He said he learned it from a record.*

It's just a pretty female  
As you may understand,  
Her mind being bent on rambling  
Unto a foreign land,  
She dressed herself in sailor's clothes,  
Or so it does appear,  
And she signed with a captain  
To serve him for a year.

The captain's wife she being on board,  
She seemed in great joy  
To think the captain had engaged  
Such a handsome cabin boy,  
That now and then she'd slip him a kiss  
And she'd have liked to toy,  
But 'twas the captain found out the secret  
Of the handsome cabin boy.



Whose cheeks they were like roses  
 And her hair all in a curl.  
 The sailors often smiled and said  
 He looked just like a girl.  
 But eating of the captain's biscuits  
 Her color did destroy,  
 And the waist did swell of pretty Nell,  
 The handsome cabin boy.

'Twas down the Bay of Biscay  
 Our gallant ship did plow.  
 One night amongst the sailors  
 A hell of a flurry and row,  
 It tumbled the men from out their hammocks,  
 Their sleep it did destroy,  
 Terrible cursing and the moaning of  
 The handsome cabin boy.

"Oh, doctor, dear, oh, doctor,"  
 The cabin boy did cry,  
 "My time has come, I am undone,  
 And I must surely die."  
 The doctor come a-running  
 And smiling at the fun,  
 For to think a sailor lad should have  
 A daughter or a son.

The sailors, when they heard the news,  
 They all did stand and stare.  
 The child belonged to none of them,  
 They solemnly do swear.  
 The captain's wife, she says to him,  
 "My dear, I wish you joy,  
 For 'tis either you or I have betrayed  
 The handsome cabin boy."

Now, sailors, take your tot of rum  
 And drink success to trade,  
 And likewise to the cabin boy  
 That was neither man nor maid.  
 Here's hoping the wars don't rise again  
 Our sailors to destroy,  
 And here's hoping for a jolly lot more  
 Like the handsome cabin boy.

Side I, Band 4. SONG BY YUPANQUI

*The first song I learned by Atahualpa Yupanqui, I learned from a Bulgarian guitarist, Sergei Cherkassow. Later, friends brought back tapes of him from South America. A phenomenal guitarist (and singer) from Argentina with a unique imagination and sense of humor.*

Side I, Band 5. TRAVELLING PEOPLE (MacColl)

*This song was written by Ewan MacColl about the efforts on the part of the British government to legislate the journey-men, tinkers and gypsies out of existence.*

I'm a freeborn man of the travelling people,  
 Got no fixed abode, with nomads I am numbered.  
 Country lanes and byways were always my ways;  
 I never fancied being numbered.

Oh, we knew the woods and the resting places,  
 And the small birds sang when winter time was over.  
 Then we'd pack our load and be on the road;  
 Those were good old times for the rover.

In the open ground you could stop and linger  
 For a week or two, for time was not your master;  
 Then away you'd jog with your horse and dog,  
 Nice and easy, no need to go faster.

Sometimes you'd meet all the other people  
 For the news or swapping family information;  
 At the country fair, we'd be meeting there,  
 All the people of the travelling nation.

All you freeborn men of the travelling people,  
 Every tinker, rolling stone, and gypsy rover,  
 Winds of change are blowing, old ways are going,  
 Your travelling days will soon be over.

Side I, Band 6. LIVERPOOL HANDY (arr. Bok)

*The first tune here, Liverpool Hornpipe, I learned from Everett Grieve who was originally from New Brunswick but lived in Camden. He played the piano in the "Old New Englanders." I'se the B'y is the Newfoundland fishermen's national anthem.*

I'ze the b'y that builds the boat;  
 I'ze the b'y that sails her;  
 I'ze the b'y that catches the fish  
 And takes them home to 'Liza.

Swing your partner, Sally Thibault;  
 Swing your partner, Sally Brown;  
 Fogo, Twillingate, Morton's Harbor;  
 All around the circle.



I took 'Liza to a dance and,  
Faith, but she could travel,  
And every step that she would take  
Was up to her knees in gravel.

Susan White, she's out of sight,  
Her petticoat wants a border;  
Old Sam Oliver, in the dark,  
He kissed her in the corner.

Salts and rinds\* to cover your flake,  
And cake and tea for supper;  
Codfish in the spring of the year  
Fried in maggoty butter.

(\*salts and rinds - That's the 2-meal-a-day of the  
Downeasters, and many Maritime fishermen: rendered-  
out pork. You dip the "rinds" in the "salts" - the  
melted fat - also pour the salts on your potatoes.  
Good recipe.)

Side I, Band 7. SABEN, THE WOODFITTER (Bok)

*The important thing about Saben, the Woodfitter is that  
he's such a good example of the fact that the more you put into  
a thing, the more you get out of it.*

East wind's rain and north wind's clearing,  
Cold old southwest wind's a fair wind home.

One bell, two bells, don't go grieving,  
All our bad times past and blown alee.

Stars thy compass, cloud thy canvas,  
Rock thy keelson, wind thy course to steer.

One bell, two bells, don't go grieving,  
All our bad times past and blown alee.

Side II, Band 1. LOU'S HANDY (arr. Bok)

*When Lou Killen would play the whistle, he'd usually warm  
up with these two tunes: Boys of North Tyne and Reedsdale Horn-  
pipe.*

Side II, Band 2. WHERE AM I TO GO

*A corruption from a sailor's "growl" - short work, perhaps  
stamp-and-go.*

Stan Hugill, who first printed this in his excellent book,

*Shanties from the Seven Seas*, describes this as a halyard  
shanty. He learned it from a West Indian sailor named Harding,  
who "sang it with many wild yelps and 'hitches'."

Where am I to go, me Johnnies,  
Where am I to go?  
Gimme way, hey, hey,  
Hey, the roll and go.  
Where am I to go, me Johnnies,  
Where am I to go?  
I'm a young and sailor lad  
And where am I to go?

Way out on that tops'l yard,  
That's where you're bound to go,  
Gimme way, hey, hey,  
Hey the roll and go;  
Way out on that tops'l yard  
And take that tops'l in,  
And I'm a young and sailor lad  
And where am I to go?

Way out on that royal yard  
That's where you're bound to go,  
Gimme way, hey, hey,  
Hey the roll and go;  
Way out on that royal yard  
That royal for to stow,  
I'm a young and sailor lad  
And Where am I to go?

You're bound away around Cape Horn,  
That's where you're bound to go,  
Gimme way, hey, hey,  
Hey the roll and go,  
You're bound away around Cape Horn  
All in the ice and snow,  
And I'm a young and sailor lad,  
Where am I to go?

Side II, Band 3. LOWLANDS

*I don't know where this is from - I heard it when I was  
a kid. I don't even remember learning it.*

Hugill prints several versions of this song, which he says  
was originally a pumping song, later used at windlass and cap-  
stan. Several versions have the theme of a lost lover who ap-  
pears in a dream, and Hugill believes this to be based on a  
shore-ballad from either the north of England or Scotland, but  
as the ballad passed into shanty use and filtered through the



Gulf cotton ports it changed, losing much of its earlier sentimental nature. In fact, Hugill's southern version has lost the dream element altogether. The song, as sung by Gordon, seems closer to the latter. Colcord, in *Roll and Go*, says that this is what happened to the "lost lover" song after it had been adopted by the negro shanty-singers of Mobile.

Lowlands,  
Lowlands no more, my John,  
My old mother said to me,  
Don't go to sea no more.

Lowlands,  
Lowlands no more, my John,  
A dollar a day is hoosier's pay,  
My dollar and a half a day.

Five dollars a day is sailor's pay,  
Mm-mm-mm.

Lowlands,  
Lowlands no more, my John,  
I had a dream the other night,  
Mm-mm-mm.

I dreamed I was coming home from sea,  
Oh, mm-mm.

Lowlands,  
Lowlands no more, my John,  
My old mother said to me,  
Don't go to sea no more.  
Don't go to sea no more.

Side II, Band 4. QUEENSLAND OVERLANDERS

*I learned this from Ray Wales of Australia.*

Lionel Long and Graham Jenkin, in *Favorite Australian Bush Songs*, note that the earliest version of this drover's song can be dated back to the 1840's. They also observe that "it seems particularly suited to be sung in the camp when the destination is not far away, or on the return trip, after recovery from the inevitable spree." This version seems to be the most recent and is the best known today.

There's a trade you all know well,  
It's bringing cattle over,  
On every track, to the gulf and back,  
Men know the Queensland drover.

Pass the billy 'round, me boys,  
Don't let the pint pot stand there,  
For tonight we'll drink the health  
Of every Overlander.

There are men from every land,  
From Spain and France and Flanders;  
We're a well-mixed pack, both white and black,  
Men call the Overlanders.

I come from the northern plains  
Where the girls and grass are scanty,  
Where the creeks run dry or ten foot high  
And it's either drought or plenty.

When we've earned a spree in town,  
We live like pigs in clover,  
And a whole month's check goes down the neck  
Of many a Queensland drover.

As I pass along the road,  
The children raise my dander,  
Crying, "Mother, dear, take in the clothes,  
Here comes an Overlander."

(Thanks to Michael Cooney and Ed Trickett, who dropped by during the recording session and helped on this chorus.)

Side II, Band 5. SIER LAPALANG (arr. Bok)

*This is a mother deer's lament for her child. She warns the child not to go down to the land of the Khasi (northwest India) for fear it will be killed. Khasi is of the Mon-Khmer language stock. I learned it from Mrs. George Allen, who is herself a Khasi.*

Ko lapalang phrang sngi jong nga  
Kum ba ting shein u mankara  
Ha ba na nga kin rem me khlad  
Do hnuh sngew sih nga im suh sadh.

Wo la shet ka tieh pong deng  
Y ka minsem u kinremreng  
Wo la kjit u nam sarang  
Y ka minsem u lapalang.

Side II, Band 6. TUNE FOR BANNARD (Bok)

*Made a long time ago when Bannard was feeling gloomy in Philadelphia.*



*A tune for November.*

When the wind backs around  
To the north in November,  
Wild geese go a-ganging out to sea.  
There's snow on the wind,  
And it's ever been the same;  
That north wind don't even know my name,  
That north wind don't even know my name.

Long time ago  
I had a pretty little girl;  
She had pretty ways and silver in her tongue.  
But that winter wind come prowling 'round;  
That pretty girl did go.  
She found a man whose house was snug and warm,  
A man whose house was warm in the wind and snow.

When the wind backs around  
To the north in November,  
Wild geese go a-ganging out to sea.  
There's snow on the wind,  
Oh, it's ever been the same;  
That north wind don't even know my name,  
That north wind don't even know my name.

Now the days come 'round,  
I've got another kind of woman;  
She's got no teasing eyes  
And her tongue is still.  
And she likes the snowflakes falling,  
She doesn't mind the rain,  
She knows what's in her heart like she knows her name,  
She knows what's in her heart like she knows her name.

I'll build her a house  
Of the winds of November,  
Shingled with the sun along the shore.  
With the wind for her blanket,  
The rain will be her door,  
The pine for her pillow and her floor,  
The pine for her pillow and her floor.