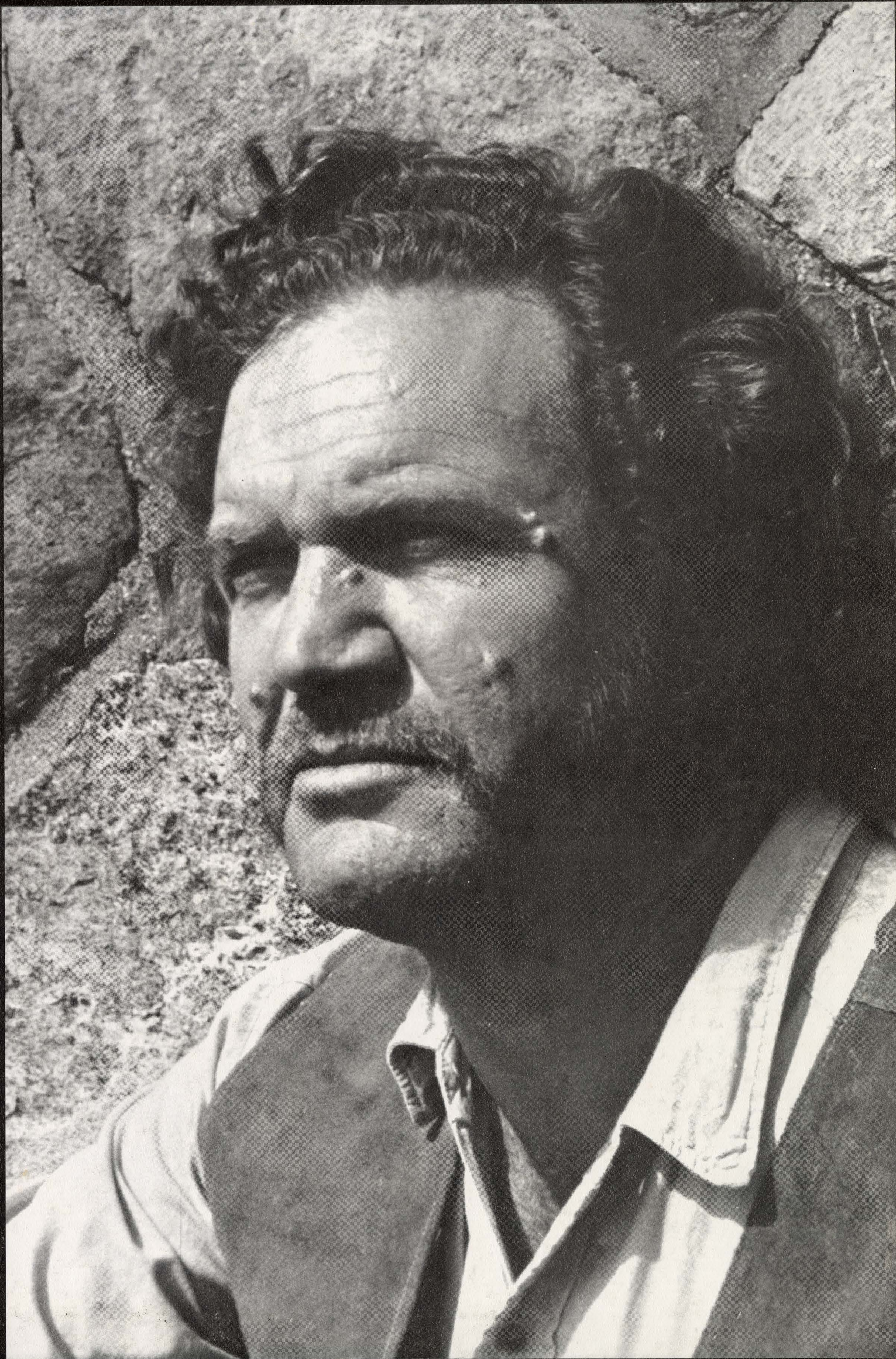


FSI-47

*“Waitin’ for the  
Hard Times to Go”*

# JIM RINGER







*“Waitin’ for the  
Hard Times to Go”*

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*With Jon Wilcox, Jay Ungar, Mary McCaslin,  
Red Crummy, Jane Voss, Caroline Paton,  
Ed Hamlett, and Nancy Katz.*

*Recorded by Sandy Paton*

Jim Ringer's not as mean as he looks, but a fellow would sure think twice before choosing him in a free-for-all at the local tavern. One look at that craggy, slightly stomped-on face and you know you're looking at a man who's been there and back a few times during the thirty-odd years that he's been making his way through the world. Years of knocking around out west as a construction bum, operating heavy equipment on the big dam jobs and highway projects, filling in the dry spells with some timber cutting in the logging camps of northern California and Oregon, shape a man pretty hard. They also prime a man to sing the songs of working men with a kind of authority that's rarely heard in the folksong revival. When you've seen those hard times, first-hand, you just naturally learn how to sing about them.

Jim was born 'way back in the Ozarks and was still pretty small when his father moved the family down to the flats to try his hand at farming down there. When that didn't pan out, he shifted from Arkansas to California in an old Dodge pickup loaded with all he could pile into it and still leave room for his wife and six kids. Jim was big enough by then to help patch and pump up the constant string of flat tires the old truck had along the way. They settled in Clovis, near Fresno, where Jim lived until he dropped out of school to follow his father into construction work. Drifting to where the jobs were, things got pretty rough, sometimes, and Jim can describe the interiors of a handful of western jails with the kind of detail that is born of familiarity. Still, he always managed to keep singing the old-time Ozark songs he had learned from his family, and added new songs to his large repertoire every time he heard one that spoke to him in his own language. He picked up folksongs, country songs, a few home-made songs — any kind of a song as long as it was a good song, and each one soon became his own.

Jim is still drifting around the country, but now he's paying his way with his music. Since he has no permanent address, those who want to hire him should contact Folk-Legacy and we'll get in touch with him for you. This much is sure — you'll be hiring a man who really knows what he's singing about, and sings for real.

*Sandy Paton  
Sharon, Connecticut  
October 1972*

## SIDE 1:

WAITIN' FOR THE HARD TIMES TO GO (Ringer, BMI)	3:24
PARADISE (Prine)	3:13
EVERY BUSH AND TREE (Pierce)	3:17
TOWSER JENKINS (Trad.)	1:23
I GOTTA GET DRUNK (Dickens)	:49
GRANNY'S SONG (Trad.)	2:17
CALIFORNIA JOE (Trad.)	10:23

## SIDE 2:

DREARY BLACK HILLS (Trad.)	3:31
GROUND SO POOR THAT GRASS WON'T GROW (Jones)	3:40
OLD BILL PICKETT (Ross)	4:15
GOING AWAY (Phillips)	3:30
THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND (Trad.)	3:02
BLACK WATERS (Ritchie)	3:35
I BELIEVE IF I LIVED MY LIFE AGAIN (Phillips)	3:48



*"Waiting for the  
Hard Times to Go"*

**JIM RINGER**

**FSI-47**



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**FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC.**

**SHARON, CONNECTICUT 06069**

"Waiting for the  
Good Times to Go"

JIM RINGER

1974



1974

FOUR-SEVEN RECORDS, INC.

10000 UNIVERSITY DRIVE



JIM RINGER

"WAITIN' FOR THE HARD TIMES TO GO"

I was born thirty-six years ago in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas. My folks on my mom's side had moved there from Tennessee, most likely to avoid prosecution for something or another. Some family trees may boast of Kings, Dukes and Earls, but mine lays claim to bootleggers, bums, moonshiners and other prominent ne'er-do-wells.

When I was very young, we moved down to the flatlands where Dad farmed till I was nine. Farming is hard to make a go at anywhere, but I can see now where it must have been next to impossible in Arkansas back then.

After the war, Daddy loaded all us kids (six) and Momma into an old Dodge Brothers two-ton truck, and headed for California. The connecting rods rattled if you got over about thirty miles an hour, but that was all right, as several of the tires had "boots" in them, so you wouldn't want to drive much faster than that anyhow...

I remember a number of times sitting beside the road and helping Daddy patch a tire and pump it up with a hand pump, knowing it wouldn't be very far down the road till we had it to do again. We must have been a funny looking sight, with the old truck looking like a covered wagon and a passel of tow-headed kids standing around... Shades of "Grapes of Wrath"!!

In California, we settled in Clovis, about twelve miles northeast of Fresno. After getting over the initial shock at finding that it really did rain in California, we settled down to the work in the fruit orchards and fields that made the San Joaquin Valley a veritable Garden of Eden.

About the time I was thirteen or fourteen, my dad got into construction work. After I had quit high-school, spent a few months in the Air Force, a lot of months in-and-out of jails, been married and divorced, and a few other things, I followed Dad into construction work by the time I was eighteen.

Since then, I have been a heavy equipment operator, a logger, a vacuum cleaner salesman, a mechanic, a carpenter, a writer, a body-and-fender man... but I never quit being what I've always been.... a singer.

It would take forever to list what people have done to make this record possible, but if I just name a few, at least they and I will know that their help was appreciated. Thanks



to: Sandy & Caroline, Lee Haggerty & Jack Daniels, Bruce Phillips & Red Crummy, Ron Tinkler, Jay Ungar, Mary McCaslin, Jane Voss, and special thanks to Jon Wilcox and his beautiful harmonies.

*Jim Ringer*  
October, 1972

Side 1; Band 1. WAITIN' FOR THE HARD TIMES TO GO (*Ringer*)

A man with a family to take care of has to work! That's a fact of life that applies whether you're a nine-to-five banker or an irresponsible musician.

If you live in a place like Fresno, where nearly ninety percent of the work is farm work, you're in for a rough time of it. If you want to give those kids more than a tar-paper shack and a bowl of beans, you either have to be a farm owner, or go someplace else!

In nineteen~~ty~~<sup>sixty</sup>-eight I loaded my wife and four kids into my beat-up old '56 Ford sedan, along with all our belongings we had room for, and headed for the big city of Los Angeles. I had a brother-in-law in Pomona whom I left the family with until I could find work.

I hated L.A. with a passion the very first time I saw it, and that hate is just as strong today as it was then. There wasn't a tree or a blade of grass that hadn't been turned a dark, ugly brown by the lack of clean air. There were no birds, or butterflies, or any friendly people. I'm sure all these things live in L.A., but I couldn't find them.

I'm sure, too, that other places have since gotten as smoggy and as impersonal as Los Angeles. Almost any major city is as bad now, but L.A. was the first I saw, and I've never quite forgotten it, or forgiven it...

*My name it don't matter; you don't know me no-how.  
But I wish you would listen to what I'm saying now.  
I need someone to talk to, and I want you to know  
I ain't putting you down,  
But I don't like your town,  
Just hanging around, waiting for the hard times to go.*

*I came here from Fresno, and that is my home.  
If I ever get back there, I won't feel so alone.  
I came looking for work here just a few weeks ago,  
Now my spirit is beat,  
I got sores on my feet  
From walking your streets, waiting for the hard times  
to go.*



My home seems as far, now, as the earth is from Mars.  
Any way that I look here, I see buildings and cars.  
I want to hear the birds singing, want to feel the  
    breeze blow,  
But I know that can't be.  
I can't yet be free.  
Gotta stay in your city, waiting for the hard times to go.

Sometimes I wonder 'bout the workings of life.  
Can't a man make a living for his kids and his wife  
Without leaving his home town to a strange place to go  
Where he spends every cent  
Paying groceries and rent  
Till his whole life is spent waiting for the hard times  
    to go.

Side 1; Band 2.    PARADISE (Prine)

"Mr. Peabody's coal train has hauled it away".. That line  
pretty well says it!

A contemporary song-writer from Chicago (as far as I know)  
writes a song like this, and it just has to be worth hearing  
and re-hearing...

I get pretty discouraged sometimes, listening to bad songs  
that preach to people. I have this theory that a really bad  
song will make people disinterested in the subject, by making  
them disinterested in the song. If you want to get people in-  
volved in a good cause, you have to have a damn good song about  
it. This is a damn good song about it!

When I was a child my family would travel  
Down to western Kentucky where my parents were born.  
There's a backwards old town that's often remembered,  
So many times that my memories are worn.

And, Daddy, won't you take me back to Muhlenberg  
County,  
Down by the Green River where paradise lay.  
I'm sorry, my son, but you're too late in asking,  
Mr. Peabody's coal train has hauled it away.

Sometimes we'd travel right down the Green River  
To the abandoned old prison down by Adrie Hill  
Where the air smelled like snakes, and we'd shoot with  
    our pistols,  
But empty pop bottles was all we would kill.



*Then the coal company came with the world's biggest shovel;  
They tortured the timber and stripped all the land.  
They dug for the coal till the land was forsaken  
And they wrote it all down to the progress of man.*

*When I die, let my ashes float down the Green River;  
Let my soul roll on up to the Rochester Dam.  
I'll be five miles from heaven with paradise waiting  
Just a half mile away from wherever I am.*

Side 1; Band 3.    EVERY BUSH AND TREE (Pierce)

One of the biggest influences on my music, and possibly on me as a whole, is an old man named Otis Pierce. I met Otis when I was a boy of about twelve. He ran a little country beer bar outside of Fresno on the King's River. I guess I sort of grew up there in a lot of ways.

Otis is a contradiction in terms unless you know and understand some of those old mountain people. He is, perhaps, the most gentle person I know, but he is perfectly capable of killing to protect himself or what's his. He may be the most generous person you've ever met, yet he knows every trick in the book to make a customer spend a little more than he planned to spend. His word is as good as any written contract, but watch him closely if you play cards or dice with him.

Otis Pierce left an orphanage in Missouri when he was twelve, and struck out to see the world. He has been a hobo, a fighter, a cowboy, a rancher, a tavern owner, and, as he often tells it, almost a movie star. Above all, though, Otis has always been a musician.

All his songs are true stories, and this one is especially so. His mother died when Otis was quite young, and his dad couldn't face raising seven or eight kids by himself. He walked off and left them. Otis told me once that he didn't think he'd ever considered suicide, but he thought about it for a bit then.

Otis left the orphanage when he was twelve, but he has never forgotten it. He has pretty well raised all his grand-kids, as well as his own children, and probably had a hand in helping to raise a hundred or so like me.

Here is one of my favorite Otis Pierce songs...

*I hear the soft wing sweeping  
In every bush and tree.  
I know my mother's waiting  
In her heavenly home for me.*



I was born in old Missouri;  
My family they were poor.  
And my mother's name was Laura  
And my daddy, his name was Joe.

Mama called me to her bedside,  
Saying, "Son, I've got to go,  
But I'll meet you again up yonder  
Where the parting will be no more."

Then my daddy moved back to Northfork,  
And he left us there all alone.  
And the sheriff came around one evening  
And he took us to an orphan's home.

Come all you orphan children  
That stays down here below,  
We'll go and live with our mothers  
Where the parting will be no more.

Side 1; Band 4. TOWSER JENKINS

Towser Jenkins was a dog! In that respect, he was similar  
to Old Blue, or Old Shep, but there the resemblance ends.

Towser didn't tree many 'possoms in 'simmon trees, but he  
chased cats a lot...

He wasn't too good at dragging drowning kids out of the  
old swimming hole, like Old Shep, but he was pretty adept at  
dragging link sausages off the meat rack, till the butcher  
caught him.

Towser was the kind of dog everybody has had and loved,  
but would never want another one like!

Once I had a yeller dawg, his name was Towser Jenkins.  
The butcher cut his tail off with a cleaver.  
Towser had his trademark on all the cats in town  
And when he spotted one, he'd never leave her.

He wore his legs off stumpy chasing milk carts 'round  
the country;  
Had bunions on his knees from jumping ditches.  
Had all the hair wore off his ribs from chasing cats  
around the corn cribs,  
But empty is the dog-house, Towser's poisoned.



Yes, he's gone to look for liver far across the Swanee  
River;  
No more will boys baptize him in the sewer.  
No more homeward will he sail with tin cans tied on his  
tail,  
For empty is the dog-house, Towser's poisoned.

Side 1; Band 5. I GOTTA GET DRUNK (Dickens)

Anyone who has ever sung around country music bars very much has either seen this guy, or been this guy.

He feels a very real obligation to all his friends and acquaintances who come down to watch his show. He buys drinks for all and sundry, pounds on the bar, and hollers "Aah-haaw!" when the band strikes up.

A closely related species has been found in suburban living rooms, wearing a lamp shade as a hat.

This song, by little Jimmy Dickens, from the early fifties has captured his whole personality and philosophy.

I sing this song a lot, always keeping in mind that the old doctors are probably gaining on me, and watching over my shoulder for 'em.

Well, I gotta get drunk and I sure do dread it,  
'Cause I know just what I'm gonna do.  
I'm gonna spend my money, call everybody Honey  
And wind up singin' the blues,  
Spend my whole paycheck on some old wreck,  
And, buddy, I can name you a few.  
Well, I gotta get drunk and I sure do dread it,  
'Cause I know just what I'm gonna do.

Well, I gotta get drunk, I can't stay sober;  
There's a lot of good people down town  
Who like to hear me holler, see me spend my dollars,  
And I wouldn't think of lettin' 'em down.  
There's a whole lot of good old doctors  
Say I better start slowin' it down.  
But there's more old drunks than there are old doctors,  
So I guess I better have another round.

Side 1; Band 6. GRANNY'S SONG

I remember all the neighbors coming around on Saturday night to listen to the Grand Ole Opry on our radio. I don't quite understand why we had the only radio around, as I'm sure



we were as poor as everybody else in that neck of the woods. I've always sort of suspected that, the way my Dad and Mom loved music, they were willing to do without something else in order to have the radio.

After the 'Opry', we made our own music. My dad played guitar, fiddle, and a mean bluesy-ragtime piano. Momma didn't play an instrument, but she had an uncanny memory for songs and poems.

For want of a better word, these get-togethers were simply called "musicals". No one in our area had ever heard of Bing Crosby or Fred Astaire or Gene Kelly in those days, so we didn't know what a real musical was.

All the aunts and uncles and neighbors were free to sing anything they wanted, except for one song. That one was Granny's. There were a number of songs that Granny sang, including a nice rendition of "The House Carpenter", but this was her favorite.

I don't believe there was ever a day she didn't at least hum it as she swept the worn-out linoleum or sat churning butter, or snapping beans for supper.

I never knew a name for the song, so if anyone knows what it is, let me know, and I'll stop calling it "Granny's Song."

*Oh, can you see that turtle dove  
Sitting in yonders pine?  
He's mourning for his own true love  
Just like I mourn for mine.*

*I'm going away, and I ain't coming back;  
And if I'm gone a hundred years,  
This heart of mine'll never be at ease  
Until I see your face again.*

*I'll put my right foot in my stirrup;  
My bridle in my hand.  
So, fare thee well, my own little love,  
I'm bound for a foreign land.*

*Oh, who will shoe your feet, my love,  
And who will glove your hand?  
And who will kiss your red ruby lips  
While I'm in a foreign land?*

*My papa'll shoe my feet, my love;  
My mama'll glove my hand.  
Ain't a man on earth can kiss my lips  
While you're in a foreign land.*



*I'll put my right foot in my stirrup;  
My bridle in my hand.  
So, fare thee well, my own little love,  
I'm bound for a foreign land.*

Side 1; Band 7. CALIFORNIA JOE

Being a hopeless romantic has always been a full-time occupation with me, but I believe the person who wrote "California Joe" was about twice as hopelessly romantic as anyone I've ever met.

It was one of the first songs I remember hearing as a kid, and I've always loved it.

When I finally decided to try it for an audience, I found that I had forgotten quite a bit of it. Whenever this happens, I go back to the source. Together with my mom and a cousin named Coke (Coralee) Briant, I reconstructed the song. When Mom and Coke finally nodded their heads, agreeing that it was right, I knew I had it just the way they had learned it, as they have both been known to correct me on a single word.

It always seemed to me that possibly a verse or two was missing in the middle of the song, maybe something to fill the space of however many years pass between the separation and reunion of our leading lady and Joe, but my "sources" say "No" and none have ever turned up. Maybe no such verses ever existed.

I am always astounded that an audience will sit still for twenty-three verses, but, if the story and the word-pictures grab the listener the way they do the singer, it could be an hour long and no one would mind.

*Now, folks, I don't like stories, nor am I going to act,  
Nor 'part around the campfire what ain't a truthful fact.  
Fill up your pipes and listen; I'll tell you, let me see,  
I think it was in '50, from then till '58.*

*You've all heard tell of Bridger; I used to ride with him,  
And many a hard day scoutin' I did 'long side of Jim.  
And back near old Fort Reno, a trapper used to dwell.  
We called him Mad Jack Reynolds; the scouts all knew him  
well.*

*In the Spring of '50 we camped on Powder River.  
We killed a calf of buffalo and cooked a slice of liver.  
While eating quite contented, we heard three shots or four.  
Put out the fires and listened; we heard a dozen more.*



We all knew old Jack Reynolds had moved his traps up here,  
So picking up our rifles and hitching up our gear,  
We moved as quick as lightning; to save was our desire.  
Too late, the painted heathens had set the house on fire.

We turned our horses quickly and waded down the stream.  
And close beside the water, I heard a muffled scream;  
And there among the bushes a little girl did lie.  
I poked her up and whispered, "I'll save you or I'll die."

God, what a ride! Old Bridger had covered my retreat.  
Sometimes the child would whisper in a voice so low and  
sweet,  
"Dear Papa, God will take you to Mama up above;  
There's no one left to love me, there's no one left to  
love."

The little girl was thirteen, and I was twenty-two.  
Said I, "I'll be your papa and I'll love you just as true."  
She nestled at my bosom and her hazel eyes so bright  
Looked up and made me happy through the close pursuit  
that night.

One year had passed when Maggie, we called her "Hazel Eyes,"  
In truth, was going to leave me, had come to say goodbye.  
Her uncle, Mad Jack Reynolds, long since reported dead,  
Had come to claim my angel, his brother's child, he said.

What could I say? We parted. Mad Jack was growing old.  
I handed him a banknote and all I had in gold.  
They rode away at sunrise; I went a mile or two.  
In parting, said, "We'll meet again; may God watch over you."

---

While nestling by a babbling brook, a little cabin stood,  
And, weary from a long day's ride, I saw it in the wood.  
The pleasant valley stretched beyond; the mountains towered  
above  
Like some painted picture, or a well told tale of love.

Drinking in the sweetness and resting in the saddle,  
I heard a gentle rippling, like the dipping of a paddle.  
And turning to the water, a strange sight met my view:  
A pretty girl was seated in a little birch canoe.

She stood up in the center, her rifle to her eye.  
I thought, for just a moment, my time had come to die.  
I tipped my hat and told her, if it was all the same,  
To drop her little shooter, for I was not her game.



She dropped her deadly weapon and leaped from her canoe.  
She said, "I beg your pardon, I thought you were a Sioux.  
Your long hair and your buckskins looked warrior-like and  
rough.

My bead was spoiled by sunlight, or I'd a'killed you sure  
enough."

"Perhaps it would be better had you killed me here,"  
said I,

"For surely such an angel could bear me to the sky."  
She blushed and dropped her eyelids, her face was crimson  
red.

One shy glance she gave me and then hung down her head.

Then her arms flew around me, "I'll save you or I'll die!"

I held her to my bosom, my long lost Hazel Eyes.

The rapture of that moment was heaven unto me.

I kissed her then amid her tears, her merriment and glee.

Her heart 'gainst mine was beating, when sobbingly she  
said,

"My dear long lost preserver, they told me you were dead!  
The man who claimed me from you, my uncle good and true,  
Lies till in yonder cabin and he talks so much of you.

"If Joe were living, darling," he said to me last night,  
'He'd care for you, dear Maggie, when God puts out my light.'"  
We found the old man sleeping. "Hush, Maggie, let him rest."  
The sun was slowly sinking in the far off golden west.

Although we talked in whispers, he opened up his eyes.

"A dream, a dream," he murmured, "alas, a dream of lies."  
She drifted like a shadow to where the old man lay.

"You had a dream, dear Uncle, another dream today."

"Oh, yes, I saw an angel as pure as drifted snow,  
And standing close beside her was California Joe."  
She said, "I'm not an angel, dear Uncle, this you know.  
These little hands and this face were never white as snow.

"But listen while I tell you, for I have news to cheer;  
Your Hazel Eyes is happy, for, truly, Joe is here."

Then just a few days later, the old man said to me,  
"Joe, boy, she is an angel, or as good as angels be.

"For three long months she's hunted and, Joe, she's nursed  
me, too.

And I believe that she'll be safe, alone, my boy, with you."

Then, but a few days later, Maggie, my wife, and I  
Went riding from that valley with teardrops in our eyes.



*For there beside the cabin, within a new-made grave,  
We laid him 'neath the daisies, her uncle, good and brave.  
Hereafter, every gentle Spring will surely find us there  
At his graveside in the valley. We'll keep it fresh and  
fair.*

*Our love was newly kindled, while resting by the stream,  
And two hearts were united in love's sweet, happy dream.  
And now you've heard my story, and this you ought to know:  
That Hazel Eyes is happy with California Joe.*

Side 2; Band 1. DREARY BLACK HILLS

George Armstrong Custer led a party into the Black Hills looking for gold. The land belonged to a people who had been there for as long as the land itself had been there. The Indian nations had been torn apart and shifted and shuffled so much that they weren't about to be moved again. This land had been given them "for as long as the sun shall shine and as long as the grass shall grow."

These were the facts, and everyone recognizes now that a terrible wrong was done the Indians. The people who left their farms and their jobs to go looking for "Custer's Gold", however, knew little about all this, and by the time they found out what was happening, they were so struck with gold fever that they just didn't care much about it.

The man who gave up his job selling "Wright's Patent Pills" didn't care if Custer was politically motivated or not. His inclination was to hate what he feared, and after a few close calls with Crazy Horse and his "henchmen", the miners were left with common sense telling them to stay in Cheyenne until the army had made the hills safe.

What do you do to pass the long months waiting? You lay around Cheyenne's bustling saloons and you drink, gamble, and you write songs like "Dreary Black Hills."

I learned the song from Merritt Herring of Berkeley, California.

*Kind friends, listen here to my pitiful tale.  
I'm an object of pity and lookin' quite stale.  
I gave up my job sellin' Wright's Patent Pills  
To prospect for gold in these dreary Black Hills.*

*So, don't go away, stay to home, if you can;  
Stay away from that city, they call it Cheyenne,  
For old Sitting Bull and Chief Wallips Bill  
They'll lift off your hair in them dreary Black Hills.*



As I was out riding one morning in May,  
As I was out riding one morning 'fore day,  
I met Gen'ral Custer and Buffalo Bill;  
They claim they found gold in them dreary Black Hills.

So, don't go away, stay to home, if you can;  
Stay away from that city, they call it Cheyenne,  
For old Sitting Bull and Chief Wallipe Bill  
They'll lift off your hair in them dreary Black Hills.

Well, I got to Cheyenne, but no gold did I find.  
I thought of the lunch route that I'd left behind.  
Through rain, hail and snow, frozen plumb to the gills,  
They call me the orphan of the dreary Black Hills.

So, don't go away, stay to home, if you can;  
Stay away from that city, they call it Cheyenne,  
For old Sitting Bull and Chief Comanche Dan  
They're raisin' pure hell 'round the town of Cheyenne.

Well, I wish that the feller that started this sell  
Was a captive and Crazy Horse had him in hell.  
There's no use in grievin' or swearin' like pitch,  
But a man that would stay here's a son of a bitch.

So, don't go away, stay to home, if you can;  
Stay away from that city, they call it Cheyenne,  
For old Sitting Bull and Chief Wallipe Bill  
They'll lift off your hair in them dreary Black Hills.

The roundhouse at Cheyenne is filled every night  
With loafers and bummers of most every plight.  
On their backs is no clothes, in their pockets no bills,  
And each day they keep startin' for the dreary Black Hills.

So, don't go away, stay to home, if you can;  
Stay away from that city, they call it Cheyenne,  
For old Sitting Bull and Chief Wallipe Bill  
They'll lift off your hair in them dreary Black Hills.

No, don't go away, stay to home, if you can;  
Stay away from that city, they call it Cheyenne.  
I'd druther be home, layin' sick in my bed,  
Than a target for some of old Sitting Bull's lead.

Side 2; Band 2. GROUND SO POOR THAT GRASS WON'T GROW

I sing this song a lot simply because it's a beautiful,  
sentimental ballad, but also because it always reminds me of  
watching my dad plow away at our sixty acres in Arkansas. I  
can still remember walking barefoot through the field with



Daddy and our one horse, a silver-grey old mare named "Nell."  
I tried to help by carrying the rocks that he turned up to the  
outside of the field.

I seem to recall being there when Nell was born, but I'm  
not too sure about this. I remember riding her, though, bare-  
back. We never had a saddle, and Nell wasn't really a saddle  
horse, anyhow. She was more of an all-purpose horse, that  
plowed the field, pulled the wagon to town when we went, and  
took us kids for rides, sometimes three or four at a time.

I remember Nell as being on the skinny side (most of us  
were) and she had feet about the size of five-gallon buckets.  
To us kids, though, she was the prettiest horse ever.

When Nell finally got so old and broken-down that she wasn't  
able to do much work anymore, my dad kept right on feeding her  
a full working share and just sort of put her out to pasture.  
She was like one of the family by then.

Long live George Jones, and new songs that sound old!

*I was raised on a farm in the flatlands of Tennessee.  
We worked awful hard on that farm, my dad and me.  
We walked every inch of that wore out dirt  
Behind a mule we watched grow old, row after row,  
Trying to grow corn-cotton in ground so poor that grass  
won't grow.*

*There was one little store in the holler we all called  
town.  
It was run by a kind old man called Henry Brown.  
He gave us credit in the winter time  
To keep away the cold when the wind brought snow,  
Trying to grow corn-cotton in ground so poor that grass  
won't grow.*

*The one I loved walked through these fields with me.  
The sweetest girl ever raised up in Tennessee.  
And then one year the sickness came  
And quickly took its toll - struck Janie cold.  
Now she lies asleep under ground so poor that grass  
won't grow.*

*As I stand here looking over this part of Tennessee,  
The fields are bare for as far as the eye can see,  
But on the spot where Janie lies  
There's a beautiful sight to behold - nobody knows  
Why this flower's blooming in ground so poor that grass  
won't grow.*



Side 2; Band 3. OLD BILL PICKETT

One nice thing about recording for Sandy and Caroline is that you never know who will drop in to say hello. One evening, just before we started recording, a crowd of "Wildflowers" and friends from Saratoga Springs came barging in. It seems they'd heard I was here and drove over to visit. They were immediately recruited as a chorus for several songs.

After the recording, we drank some Jack Daniels and swapped stories and songs for a while. Mark Ross, whom I had met in California, sang "Old Bill Pickett", a song he's written.

It felt good right away. It was a very singable song. It was about a man I'd heard of and admired. It was a nice change from other things I had on the album. It was just a damn good song!

A little fearfully, I asked him what he would think of me recording it. He thought it was a great idea, so we sealed it by drinking the rest of the Daniels. The next night we recorded it.

Bill Pickett was one of the most famous cowboys, and I guess he was the most famous black cowboy. The thing about him wrestling steers with his teeth is factual. It hasn't been done since Bill, maybe because no one else has wanted to bite a bull's nose, but the fact remains that he was the only one to do it.

Bill Pickett was a mighty man, and if Mark's song makes him into a Paul Bunyan-ish character, I can't think of anyone who deserves this treatment more.

The first verse of the song, with a slight change in words, is Pickett's epitaph. It was written by Zack Miller, long-time friend and employer, on the night of Bill's death.

*Old Bill Pickett's gone away, over the Great Divide  
To the place where all the preachers say both saint and  
sinner abide.  
If they check his brand like I think they will,  
It's a runnin' hoss they'll give to Bill,  
Some good wild steers till he gets his fill  
And a great big crowd to watch him ride.*

*Old Bill Pickett's a long time gone;  
Left me here to sing this song.  
Old Bill Pickett's a long time gone;  
Left me here to sing this song.*



Old Bill Pickett was a mighty black man and he rode for  
the One-O-One  
Way down yonder in the Cherokee land around when the west  
was won.  
He'd jump a steer from a runnin' hoss  
And throw him down with a mighty toss.  
He worked for many, but he had no boss;  
He's the last of the great cowhands.

Way down south in Mexico he took a great big dare  
To try and hold a fightin' bull to see how he would fare.  
He grabbed old Toro by the horns;  
Grabbed the bull's nose in his jaws.  
That crowd never seen such a thing before;  
For an hour and a half they cheered.

With the great Will Rogers and Wild Tom Mix, he rode in  
the rodeo.  
For all who paid their fifty cents they gave a great big  
show.  
For all who paid to come and see,  
Bill wrestled steers with his teeth.  
We've never seen such a mighty feat,  
'Cause he left us long ago.

Way down on the Miller ranch, in the year of '32,  
Bill Pickett roped a sorrel stud to see what he could do.  
That sorrel stomped and jumped and bucked  
And tromped Bill's body in the dust.  
At seventy-three, Bill was out of luck;  
He took eleven days to die.

They laid him down in a six-by-three beneath the land he  
knew  
And they left a cross for the world to see, said, "Of his  
kind we've seen few."  
That night for Bill they drank some wine  
And old Zack Miller wrote these lines  
And left 'em here for me to find  
To put to music and sing to you.

#### Side 2; Band 4. GOING AWAY

Just about anything you could say about Bruce Phillips, both  
good and bad, has already been said more eloquently than I can  
say it, so I'll just say that he's a friend of mine and he writes  
damn good songs, then I'll talk about the song.

"Going Away" is, somehow, my personal Phillips song, and I  
would like to see it become everybody's personal song by him.



The first time I heard him sing it, I felt like no one but me and him knew that the trestle mentioned in the song had nothing whatever to do with railroads and such. It's the trap we all have to look out for. And the train that brushes him off... Well, Bruce sometimes introduces the song with a rap about a famous composer whose name escapes me. Anyhow...

The composer was dying and all his friends were astounded that he didn't want a priest. Finally, a priest was sent for anyway, against his will. When the priest arrived, he was told by the composer to leave.

"I don't understand," said the priest, "don't you fear God? Don't you want to enter the Kingdom of Heaven?"

The old man answered him: "I'm like an ant walking down a railroad track. A train comes along and crushes me. Do you think that I have any idea as to what a train is? It's just something that crushes me, too big for me to even comprehend its existence, much less that it has people inside or that they are travelling places and have things of their own to do. All I understand is that my existence ceases, and I don't understand anything I see or hear."

*Is that the moon I see, over there in the west,  
Or just the headlight's gleam - C & O express?  
I know she's gone, whatever I say,  
And it won't be long till I make up my mind  
And go away.*

*Is that the sun coming up on the eastern shore,  
Or just the coal-bed's glow behind the firebox door?  
I know she's gone, whatever I say,  
And it won't be long till I make up my mind  
And go away.*

*See that man, he can't hear the whistle;  
The blind old fool's caught out on the trestle.  
He can't go up and he can't go back.  
Train kept a-coming, brushed him off the track.*

*Other storms may blow and the wind may rise,  
Still I long to go where the fast mail flies.  
I know she's gone, whatever I say,  
And it won't be long till I make up my mind  
And go away.*

Side 2; Band 5. THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND

This song has probably been sung and heard about as often as "Barbara Allen", and in about as many different versions.



I have never been strong on doing what I considered to be an inferior song just because I know a different version from someone else. Loving the "Maggie Walker Blues" of Clarence Ashley and others as I do, I was hesitant about putting this out on the album.

However, after some consideration and some opinions that I value highly, I decided that the song can stand on its own merits.

The words may be so close to other versions as to be almost identical with some, but a pretty, singable melody and the ballad styling set it apart.

I learned "The Girl I Left Behind" from an uncle of mine who picked a good guitar and had a great repertoire of cowboy songs. Uncle Jess is another of the many family members to whom I owe thanks for helping form my musical style and material.

*I 'as brought up with loving care on a farm in Tennessee.  
My parents raised me tenderly; they had no child but me.  
My mind bein' set on rambling, with them I couldn't agree,  
So I leave my aged parents and them no more to see.*

*There was a wealthy gentleman, lived on a farm nearby.  
He had a beautiful daughter; on her I cast my eye.  
She was so tall and slender, so pretty and so fair,  
There never was another to her I could compare.*

*I started out in this wide world strange faces for to see.  
I met Miss Maggie Walker and she fell in love with me.  
Her pockets all lined with greenbacks, and on the Book I  
swore  
If she'd be mine and only mine that I would roam no more.*

*I asked her if it mattered if I crossed over the plains.  
She said, "It makes no difference if you never return again."  
I knew by how she said it, she'd never change her mind,  
So we shook hands and parted and I left my girl behind.*

*I started out on leavin', to the saltworks I were bound.  
And when I reached the saltworks, I viewed the city all  
'round.  
The work and money were plentiful and the girls were kind  
to me,  
But the only object to my heart was a girl in Tennessee.*

*I started out one morning down on the market square.  
The mail train were arriving; I met the carrier there.  
He handed me a letter, so's I could understand  
That the girl I left behind me had married to another man.*



*I turned my horse all around and 'round, not knowing what  
to do.  
I handed back the letter, although I'd read it through.  
I turned all 'round and backed up, and the company I resigned,  
Then I drove all around from town to town for the girl I  
left behind.*

Side 2; Band 6.    BLACK WATERS

Let a long-haired hippie climb on stage and sing about what man is doing to his environment, and no matter how well he does it, and no matter how many people say, "Right on, brother!", a few people are going to sit there nodding their heads, but not really seeing what he's talking about...not really understanding.

Let Jean Ritchie come on after him and tell her pretty little stories about how things were, and paint her pictures showing how things looked then, and these people say, "Oh, yeah, I remember."

Follow this with "Black Waters", and the guy who doesn't give a damn about ecology leaves the room madder than hell at the coal company, determined to write his congressman.

Maybe it takes a number of exposures to something like this before he actually writes that letter, but, sooner or later, he will.

I fell in love with Jean Ritchie several years ago, and last summer I spent the best part of a week visiting her and her family while I was travelling with the "Portable Folk Festival". I determined then, that if I ever did a record, I would include one of her songs. What better song than the one that says it all, "Black Waters?"

Special thanks to Ed Hamlett, of Nashville, Tennessee, who stopped by just in time to add a beautiful bass line to the chorus.

*I come from the mountains, Kentucky's my home,  
Where the wild deer and black bear so lately did roam.  
By the cool, rushing waterfall the wildflowers dream,  
And through every green valley there runs a clear stream.  
Now there's scenes of destruction on every hand  
And only black waters run down through my land.*

*Sad scenes of destruction on every hand;  
Black waters, black waters run down through my land.*

*Well, the quail she's a pretty bird and she sings a sweet  
tongue;  
In the roots of tall timber she nests with her young.*



*Then the hillside explodes with the dynamite's roar  
And the voices of the small birds is heard there no more.  
And the mountain comes a-sliding so awful and grand  
And the flooding black waters rise over my land.*

*In the coming of Springtime we planted our corn;  
In the ending of Springtime we buried a son.  
In the summer come a nice man saying, "Everything's fine.  
My employer just requires a way to his mine."  
Then they tore down my mountain and covered my corn.  
Now the grave on the hillside's a mile deeper down  
And the man stands a-talking with his hat in his hand  
While the poison black waters rise over my land.*

*Well, I ain't got no money, not much of a home.  
I own my own land, but my land's not my own.  
But, if I had ten million, somewhere thereabouts,  
Well, I'd buy Perry County and I'd run 'em all out,  
And just sit down on the banks with my bait and my can  
And watch the clear waters run down through my land.*

*Well, wouldn't that be just like the old promised land?  
Black waters, black waters no more in my land.  
Black waters, black waters no more in my land.*

Side 2; Band 7. I BELIEVE IF I LIVED MY LIFE AGAIN

Bruce ("U. Utah") Phillips and I jumped a freight in Richmond, California, last summer, and rode it over to Stockton. We had intended to go all the way to Fresno, but the California yards are really hard to get out of, sometimes.

Anyway, we finally gave up and hitch-hiked. Now, stop and think... who in their right mind is going to pick up a couple of guys that look like me and Phillips?

We spent two days trying to get to Fresno. Finally, a motorcycle freak with a belly full of wine, a skinned arm, and two bikes in a trailer behind, picked us up. He was going all the way to L.A., and we were so glad to get a ride we decided to go all the way with him.

In L.A. we latched on to Al McKinney, all-around nice guy and sort of coordinator for "Wildflowers". Well, Al may be a nice guy, but he's about as big and ugly as me and Phillips.

We tried getting on a freight out of the L.A. yard and almost got busted, so... yep, we had to hitch-hike.

Can you imagine yourself picking up three guys that look like



two refugees from a freight train wreck and a two-hundred and twenty pound hippie? Most other people couldn't either...

We were over three days without sleep or rest trying to make the eight hour drive to Berkeley.

A trip like that lets you see what kind of person you're travelling with and, if you make it together, it builds a comradeship that's nice to remember.

At a concert shortly after this trip, Bruce sang "I Believe if I Lived My Life Again" and it really meant what it said that time.

*I believe, if I lived my life again,  
I'd still be here with you.  
I believe, if I lived my life again,  
I'd still be here with you.*

*You know, I think if Lady Luck was blind  
This old sun would never shine.  
You know, I think if death really held a knife  
We'd all be beggars of life.*

*Sometimes I think I'd like to close my eyes  
To some things I don't want to see.  
Still, I believe, if you lived your life again,  
You'd still be here with me.*

*I'll never see the ending of my mind;  
Everything will have its time.  
Why should I ask for things that I don't need,  
Or pretty lies to hide my greed.*

*Jim Ringer  
Sharon, Connecticut  
November, 1972*

