

BANJO MANikin

Howie
Bursen

with
Jay Ungar
Molly Mason
Bob Pasquarello



Folk-Legacy Records CD-130



Sandy and Caroline called up to ask if I would like to do a recording for Folk Legacy. Of course I said "yes". That was in the snowy Winter of 1978, when I was trying, (without noticeable success), to be a telephone line-man. Folksinging sounded like a great idea. That's how Cider in the Kitchen (FSI 74) was hatched. Twenty-two years later, I called Sandy and Caroline to ask if they would like me to do another recording for Folk Legacy. So what was I doing during all that time? To be sure, I have been busy: singing and recording, planting a hundred acres of vineyard, courting (with some success) Sally Rogers, designing six wineries and building two of them, making, at last count, 950,000 bottles of wine, changing lots of diapers, trying to be a good dad to my two wonderful daughters (mixed results on that one - depends on which day you ask) and generally living off the fat of the land. I am deeply grateful to Sandy and Caroline for believing in my music. It's good to be home again.

Howie Bursen

March, 2001

Thanks to the musicians:

Jay Ungar, fiddle
Molly Mason, bass and guitar
Bob Pasquarello, piano

Thanks to neighbor Jeff Davis for his help in making these notes scholarly

Photos of two banjo guys by Sally Rogers

Banjo Manikin created by sculptor

Robin L. Mansfield. He can be reached at
P.O. Box 205, Ortonville, Michigan, 48462

Recorded and mixed by Robert Stanley

Produced by Howie Bursen and Robert Stanley

Mastering by Byron Smith, at Kairos Audio,

Nelson, New Hampshire

Post-Production by Front Porch CD, Keene, NH

Graphic design by Nancy McMerriman,

Meadow Marsh Design

1. **Jay & Molly's Wedding** ©1991
Howard Bursen/**Fisher's Hornpipe**
(trad.)/**Bay of Fundy Reel** (trad.)

Jay & Molly's Wedding: I arrived late at the wedding, put my two-year-old to sleep in our room, and raced back to the dance floor. Too late - the party was mostly over. So, in lieu of dancing on a tabletop with a lampshade over my head, I wrote this tune as my

contribution to the festivities. Fisher's: This old-chestnut turns out to have been written around 1780 by a dancemaster, one J. Fisher, in London, England. It's been played so many times that his ghost is probably a millionaire. Bay of Fundy: Is this a Maine tune or a New Brunswick tune? Not wishing to start an international incident, thereby giving our current Commander-In-Chief an excuse to invade Canada (which I know he's just ITCHING to do), I'll just say that this great tune straddles dance floors on both sides of the border.

2. **Pretty Saro** ©1940 Geordie Music Publishing, Inc.

A beautiful old song from the family of Jean Ritchie (see her Folk Songs of the Southern Appalachians, published by the University Press of Kentucky).

Down in some lone valley, in a lonesome place
Where the wild birds do whistle, and their notes do increase
Farewell pretty Saro, I must bid you adieu
And I'll dream of pretty Saro, wherever I go

My love she won't have me, and I understand
She wants a freeholder, and I have no land
I cannot maintain her, I've no silver and gold
Can't buy all the fine things, that a big house can hold

But if I were a merchant, and could write a fine hand
I'd write my love a letter, that she'd understand
Write it down by the river, where the waters o'erflow
And I'll dream of pretty Saro, wherever I go

repeat first verse

3. **Malana's Jig** ©1990 Howard Bursen/**Behind the Haystack** (trad.)

Daughter #1 wishes I would call this tune by another name, but it is for her. Behind the Haystack is an Irish tune (# 893 in O'Neill's Music of Ireland) which sometimes has the name Munster Buttermilk. I learned it from fiddler Joe Gerhardt.

4. **June Apple** (trad. tune)/ **Train on the Island** (trad. words)

J.P. Nestor recorded Train on the Island for Victor in the late 20s. It was reissued on volume III of the great Folkways Anthology of American Folk Music. Don't know where I learned to play the wrong tune with these words, but it's been at least 25 years since I learned it that way. I always thought they were just variants of the same original piece of music. In fact, I still think that. Check out a great website, Jane Keefer's folkindex.mse.jhu.edu.

Train on the Island, headed for the west
Me and my girl we fell out, perhaps it's for the best
Show me the crow that flies so high, show me the one that falls
If I can't have the girl I love, don't want no girl at all
Train on the island, hear the whistle blow
Go and tell my own true love, I'm sick and I can't go
Built me a banjo from a gourd, strung it with the finest twine
Only tune that it would play was I wish that girl was mine
Train on the Island, headed for the west
Me and my girl we fell out, perhaps it's for the best

5. Vinaya ©1979, Will Welling / **Little Beggaman** (trad.)

Vinaya: Fiddling geologist buddy Will Welling wrote this tune for Marty Levinson, harmonica player for the legendary Busted Toe MudThumpers. *Little Beggaman*: (Child # 279) is an Irish song also found as the bluegrass tune *Little Red-haired Boy*.

6. Mysteries of a Hobo's Life (The Job I Left Behind Me)
T-Bone Slim / **Shenandoah Falls** (trad.)

The Job I left Behind Me: sung to the traditional tune "Girl I left Behind" words by T-Bone Slim (Matt Valentine Huhta), found in the

IWW Songbook, 17th edition. Huhta was a Wobbly and lived as a hobo. I learned it from Bill Thatcher's rendition on Traditional Music at Newport 1964, Part I, on Vanguard.

Shenandoah Falls: Like many other current musicians, I learned this tune from the fiddling of Pete Sutherland, who is high on my long list of musical heroes. He says it seems to be a "corrupted" version of a Kenny Baker tune, *Shenandoah Breakdown*.

I got me a job in a logging camp, way up on a mountain
I paid my fee and the sharks skinned me, and the ties I soon was counting
The boss he put me to swamping roads, and the sweat was enough to blind me
He didn't seem to like my face, so I left that job behind me

I jumped on board of an old freight train, and around this country traveled
The mysteries of a hobo's life were soon to me unraveled
I traveled east and I traveled west, and the cops could never find me
Next morning I was miles away from the job I left behind me

I soon fell in with a bunch of stiffs, who were known as industrial workers
They taught me how to love the cause, and how to fight the shirkers

So I jumped right in, I joined the gang, and now in the ranks you'll find me
Hurrah for the cause and to hell with the boss, and the job I left behind me

7. I Think My Brains Fell Out
©1998 Harry Bolick/ **Wimbush Rag** G.&T. Clark

I Think My Brains Fell Out: written by my friend Harry Bolick, who taught me this tune and the next on a summer afternoon.
Wimbush Rag: recorded in the late 20s or early 30s by Gus & Theo Clark, from Wimbush, Georgia. Reissued on Document Records. I'm sure Harry never thought anyone would play these two tunes together in a medley.

8. Tommy Thompson ©2000
Howard Bursen / **Tune of Mystery?**(trad.) / **Vandy, Vandy** (trad./Coltman)

Tommy Thompson is dedicated to one of our most brilliant and talented musicians, and a guiding light of the great Red Clay Ramblers. *Tune of Mystery?* Who knows what this tune is? Jerry Milnes says the B part comes from an unrecorded West Virginia traditional tune, *Sour Apple Pie*. Someone else suggested a tune called *Brushy Mountain*. I heard it somewhere... *Vandy*: In one of his spooky stories,

Manly Wade Wellman cites this traditional song from the time of the Revolutionary War. The melody is partly traditional, and partly fashioned by Bob Coltman, who recorded it on his brilliant LP *Lonesome Robin*, on *Minstrel Records*. There are many more verses than I sing here.

Vandy, Vandy, I've come to court you, be you rich or be you poor
If you give me your good attention, I'll be yours forever more
For I love you

Vandy, Vandy, here's gold and silver. Vandy, Vandy, there's a house and land
Vandy, Vandy, there's a world of pleasure, it'll be yours, at your command
For I love you

Wake up wake up, the dawn's a-breakin'. Wake up wake up, it's almost day
Open up your doors and your diverse windows, watch your true love march away
For I love you

9. For Pete's Sake ©1998 Howard Bursen.

A tune to honor Pete Seeger, the man who launched a thousand banjos (ten thousand). Always out in front, whether in the labor movement, women's rights, fighting racism or defending the environment, is he not the very Pete of Petes?

10. Maya's Bounce ©1998 Howard Bursen / **Slow Down!** © 1998 Howard Bursen

A bouncy tune for my bouncing younger daughter. The second tune is for my beloved bride of eighteen years.

11. Wild Bill Jones (trad.)

Many people have sung this song, including Doc Boggs and Frank Profitt. This version comes from Wade Mainer and his Smiling Rangers, via the New Lost City Ramblers. See Old Time String Band Songbook from Oak Publications. Also found in Vance Randolph's four-volume Ozark Folk Songs, and Ethel Park Richardson's American Mountain Songs, and Cecil Sharp's English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians.

As I went out to take a little walk, I chanced upon that Wild Bill Jones
He was walkin' and talkin' by my true lover's side,
I bid him for to leave her alone

He said "My age, it is 21, too old for to be controlled."
I drew my revolver from off of my side, destroyed that poor boy's soul

He fell and he kicked and he scabbled in the dust,
and he gave one dying moan

I turned to my true lover standing by my side, I said
"Honey you will be left alone."

My momma, she done told me, and Papa he told me too
"Bad whiskey and bad company, son, be the death of you."

So it's pass around them long-necked bottles, and we'll all go out on a spree
Today was the end of Wild Bill Jones, tomorrow be the end of me

12. Bursen's Fancy ©1980 Jay Ungar/
Dusty Miller (trad.)

*In 1979 and 1980, I played a lot of dances with Jay and Molly and a bunch of other fine musicians. Jay wrote me this tune, and I tried to learn it. It is not a banjo tune. 20 years later, when I had finally learned it, I asked him if he'd record it with me. He said "What tune?" So I had to teach it back to him. **Dusty Miller** I learned from fiddler Judy Hough, now Professor Hough, entomologist of note. It has been recorded by many, including J.P. Fraley and Eck Robertson (on County). You can find it in the Phillips Collection of Traditional American Fiddle Tunes.*

13. Sally's Upstairs with the Hogeyed Man (trad.) / **Forky Deer** (trad.)

*Sally's Upstairs: You can find this wild American tune in Cecil Sharp's English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians. Henry Reed played it on Alan Jabbour's Library of Congress set, Fiddle Tunes of the Old Frontier: The Henry Reed Collection. **Forky Deer:** Henry Reed played this one in the same set. It is found on both sides of the Atlantic going back to 1801, but it sure sounds like it started here. I learned both of these tunes from the Highwood String Band.*

Chicken in the bread pan kickin' up the dough,
"Sally will the dog bite?" "No Sir, no"
Sally's in the garden, siftin' sand, Sally's upstairs with the hogeyed man

Sally's in the garden, siftin' siftin', Sally's in the garden siftin' sand
Sally's in the garden siftin' sand, Sally's upstairs with the hogeyed man

"Sally will the dog bite?" "No Sir, no. Daddy cut his biter off a long time ago"
Sally's in the garden, siftin' sand, Sally's upstairs with the hogeyed man
Sally's in the garden, siftin' siftin', Sally's in the garden siftin' sand
Sally's in the garden siftin' sand, Sally's upstairs with the hogeyed man

14. Beat the Reaper ©1973 Howard Bursen / **Don't Go Yet** ©1996 Howard Bursen

These tunes were written 16 years apart for two different friends, Mark and Eileen, each faced with a mortal illness. Their absence leaves two holes in my heart.

15. Hull's Victory (trad.)/
Bonaparte Crossing the Rhine (trad.)/ **The Dying Ranger** (trad.)

*Hull's Victory: Admiral Isaac Hull, commanding the frigate USS Constitution, defeated the HMS Guerriere in 1812. And now we play this tune at dances, to celebrate his victory. **Bonaparte Crossing the Rhine:** Old friend Leo Kretzner recorded this one on Pigtown Fling. The Fuzzy Mountain String Band did too, on a Rounder release. It can be found in a "modal" version in O'Neill's Music of Ireland, # 1824. **The Dying Ranger:** Dave Howard heard Alan Block sing this version. Dave later found the words (with a different melody) in a book from the 30s, titled Favorite Cowboy Tunes. During the Civil War, it was sung by both sides, with appropriate geographic alterations.*

The sun was sinking in the west, and cast its dying rays

Through the branches of the forest, where the wounded ranger lay

In the shade of a palmetto, as the sunset filled the sky
Far away from his home in Texas, they laid him down to die

A crowd had gathered 'round him, his comrades in the fight

A tear was on each manly cheek as they bid a last goodnight

One tried and true companion was kneeling by his side

To stop his life's blood flowing, alas in vain he tried

"Now comrades gather 'round me, and listen to what I say

I'm going to tell a story, as the spirit fades away
Way back in northwest Texas, that good old Lone Star state

There's one who for my coming, with a weary heart does wait"

"That fair young maid my sister, my only joy my pride

She was my friend from boyhood, I'd no one left beside

I've loved her as a brother, and with a father's care
I strove from grief and sorrow, her gentle heart to spare"

"You know I love my country, for her I gave my all
If it was not for my sister, I would be content to fall
I am dying comrades dying, my face she'll see no more

In vain she'll wait my coming, by our little cabin door"

"Now comrades gather closer, and hear my dying prayer

Who'll be to her as brother, treat her with a brother's care?"

Up spoke the noble rangers, and answered one and all

"We'll be to her as brothers, 'til the last man does fall."

Then one last smile of pleasure o'er the ranger's face did spread

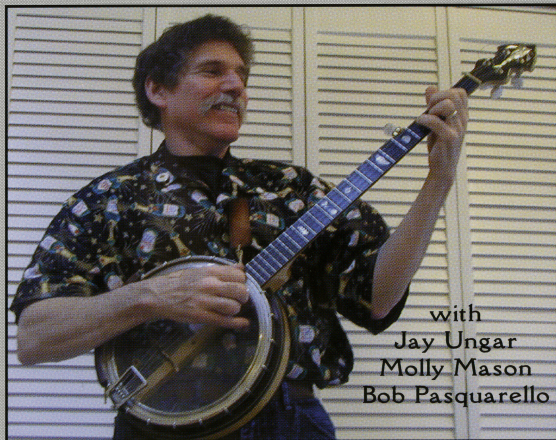
One dark impulsive shadow, and the ranger he was dead

far from his darlin' sister, they laid him down to rest

His saddle for a pillow, and his gun across his breast

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COMPACT
disc
DIGITAL AUDIO



1. Jay & Molly's Wedding ©1991 Howard Bursen/
Fisher's Hornpipe (trad.)/Bay of Fundy Reel (trad.) 4:34
 2. Pretty Saro ©1940 Geordie Music Publishing 3:00
 3. Malana's Jig ©1990 Howard Bursen/Behind the
Haystack (trad.) 3:01
 4. June Apple (trad. tune) - Train on the Island
(trad. words) 3:00
 5. Vinaya ©1979, Will Welling/Little Beggarman
(trad.) 2:40
 6. Mysteries of a Hobo's Life (Job I Left Behind Me)
T-Bone Slim/Shenandoah Falls (trad.) 3:42
 7. I Think My Brains Fell Out ©1998 Harry Bolick/
Wimbush Rag G.&T. Clark 2:35
 8. Tommy Thompson ©2000 Howard Bursen/
Tune of Mystery? (trad.)/Vandy, Vandy
(trad./Coltman) 4:16
 9. For Pete's Sake ©1998 Howard Bursen 1:50
 10. Maya's Bounce © 1998 Howard Bursen/
Slow Down! © 1998 Howard Bursen 3:12
 11. Wild Bill Jones (trad.) 3:03
 12. Bursen's Fancy ©1980 Jay Ungar/
Dusty Miller (trad.) 3:44
 13. Sally's Upstairs with the Hoge-eyed Man (trad.)/
Forky Deer (trad.) 2:40
 14. Beat the Reaper ©1973 Howard Bursen/
Don't Go Yet ©1996 Howard Bursen 3:13
 15. Hull's Victory (trad.)/Bonaparte Crossing the
Rhine (trad.)/The Dying Ranger (trad.) 5:21
- TOTAL TIME: 52 min.