

North Wind's Clearing

*Songs of the
Maine Coast* **GORDON BOK**



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GORDON BOK

1. McKEON'S COMING (*Gordon Bok, BM*)

The story goes that McKeon was a fisherman from Canada. Had a little schooner; ran it with his son, or another man. Back during Prohibition, the lucrative trade of smuggling booze into the States attracted many people, and McKeon was one. Unfortunately, he got caught, his schooner was impounded and sold at auction, and he was thrown in jail in Massachusetts. When he got out, years later, his health was ruined, and it took him almost two years to work his way back home.

Now when the wind is bright with the spring
And the snow has gone away,
The days grow long and the time has come
To hoist my sail and go.
And I'll hear no more your dungeon door,
Nor eat your bitter beans.
Surely it's a long and a hungry road
'Til McKeon's home again.

I'll go down by the Naskeag Sound
Where the tide runs fast and strong,
The water's deep and the hills are steep
And the nights are cold and long.
And through the rocks of Jericho
I'll wind my weary way,
And roll her off for Sable, aye,
And the grey seas of Fundy.

For the wind is fair and the tide's at the spring
And the time has come to go.
Heist my sail on a northern wind
And I'll be on my way.
Ah, but there's no one can go with me
And there's no one by my side;
Surely it's a long and a lonely road
For the Straits of Canso.

Oh, the wind is fair and the tide's at the spring
And the time has come to go.
Heist my sail on a northern wind
And I'll be on my way.
And I'll hear no more your dungeon door,
Nor eat your bitter beans.
Surely it's a long and a hungry road
'Til McKeon's home again.

2. WESTERN BOAT (*Otto Kelland*)

Written by Otto P. Kelland, warden of St. John's Penitentiary, but apparently adopted into the tradition of Newfoundland folk music. Peggy Day heard it there and taught it to me many years ago, but recently a friend named Geordie brought me back a little book by Mills and Peacock called *Favorite Songs of Newfoundland* which had a different version than the way Peggy heard it (or the way I heard it) and also some other good verses:

*Let me view that rugged shore
Where the beach is all a-glisten
With the Caplin spawn, where from dusk to dawn
You bait your trawl and listen
To the undertow a-hissin'.*

*When I reach that last big shoal
Where the ground swells break asunder,
Where the wild sands roll to the surge's toll;
Let me be a man and take it
When my dory fails to make it.*

*Take me back to that snug green cove
Where the seas roll up their thunder.
There let me rest in the earth's cool breast
Where the stars shine out their wonder
And the seas roll out their thunder.*

Take me back to my Western Boat;
Let me fish off Cape St. Mary's
Where the hagdowns (*) sail and the foghorns wail
With my friends, the Browns and the Clearys,
In the swells off old St. Mary's.

Let me feel my dory lift
To the broad Atlantic cumbers (**)
Where the tide-rips swirl and the wild ducks furl
And the ocean calls the numbers...
In the swells off old St. Mary's.

Let me sail up golden bays
With my oilskins all a-streaming
From the thunder squall where I hauled my trawl
And the old "Cape Ann" a-gleaming...
In the swells off old St. Mary's.

(Repeat first verse)

(*) *I sing this "hog-downs" — local reference)*

(**) *Can be sung "combers," of course. I heard it "cumbers."*

3. MRS. MacDONALD'S LAMENT (*Gordon Bok, BMI*)

For many reasons, among them overfishing, pollution, lack of local government control, and our general economic structure, the small-time fisherman, the jack of all coastal fishing trades, is in danger of extinction. His credit may be good, but his creditors are caught in the squeeze, too, so after awhile he can't maintain his boat or his gear, and then he can't pay the taxes on the suddenly valuable land that his family has owned for so many generations. And so he leaves the fishing and he goes. To Florida, to the West Coast, to the cities. But, in going, he takes with him a way of thinking, a way of living, the value of which can never be measured or replaced.

When the wind's away and the wave away,
That crazy old fool will go down on the bay,
Dodging the ledges and setting his gear,
And come back when the wind drives him in.

He knows full well the fishing is done;
His credit's all gone and the winter is come,
But as sure as the tide will rise and run
He'll go back on the bay again.

When the snow is down on the Western Bay,
That fool will go running the Fiddler's Ground,
Hauling his gear in the trough of the sea
As if he'd no mind of his own.

His father's gone and his brothers are gone,
And still he goes down on the dark of the moon,
Rowing the dory and setting the twine,
And it won't even pay for his time.

When the wind's away and the wave away,
His children go down on the morning sun;
They go rowing their little boats out on the tide,
And they'll follow their foolish old man.

Well, you blind old fool, your children are gone,
And you never would tell them the fishing was done.
Their days were numbered the day they were born,
The same as their foolish old man.

4. LIVERPOOL HANDY/I'S THE B'Y (*arr. Gordon Bok, BMI*)

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's the B'y" is the Newfoundland fisherman's national anthem.

I's the b'y that builds the boat;
I's the b'y that sails her;
I's 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, and also pour the salts on your potatoes. Good recipe.

5. MR. ENEOS (The Cold South Georgia Ground) (Gordon Bok, BMI)

A true story, taken from a smooth-log of the last sailing whaler to go out of New Bedford: the *Daisy*, brig. (R. C. Murphy, *A Logbook for Grace*.)

Practically verbatim, this is the ship's carpenter's account (as reported by Mr. Murphy) of the drowning of fourth mate Anton Eneos off South America, on a voyage to South Georgia, an island in the latitude of Cape Horn. The refrain here, the melody, and some of the phrasing, are mine.

(Murphy also wrote another fine book, with his own photographs, of a trip he took on the *Daisy* two years after this particular happening: *A Dead Whale or a Stove Boat*.)

Clew up your royals and topsails,
Haul your headsails down,
For you'll never see the whale no more,
Or the cold South Georgia Ground.

It was March twenty-ninth, nineteen and ten,
The little brig *Daisy* did sail;
The morning was clear and the sea was down,
And we raised a great pod of whale.

The captain had three of the boats lowered down,
And in them the mates they did go:
There was Mister Dalomba and Mister Alves,
And Mister Eneos also. (*)

Now, the whales did rise a mile from the ship,
And the other two mates made their kill,
But Mister Eneos was caught in the pod
Where the whales were lying still.

Mister Eneos stood still in the bow
And he had his lance in his hand,
But the whale he had harpooned would not break away (**)
And would neither sound or run.

It struck at the boat and it lifted her high
And the men fell out over the stern;
And we saw the flukes come crashing down
Where Mister Eneos had been.

The captain had the stern boat lowered away
And we searched where the whales did sound;
Five men we gathered from out the sea,
But Mister Eneos was gone.

(*) *The first mate, too, Mister Almeida, if I remember correctly. All mates of sailing vessels are traditionally called "Mister," usually only that, by the captain.*

(**) *The whale his boat-steerer had harpooned, actually.*

6. SABEN, THE WOODFITTER (*Gordon Bok, BMI*)

The important thing about Saben, the Woodfitter, is that he is such a good example of the fact that the more you put into a thing, the more you get out of it. The story pretty much tells itself, but here are the words to the song:

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, clouds 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.

7. CAPE ANN (*Gordon Bok, BMI*)

A long-standing contributor of vessels and men to the Grand Banks fisheries; also an awkward place to get around in a sailing vessel when the weather is bad.

This is a composite of two true stories: one happened to a friend of mine, one happened to me. Long after I wrote the song, I was introduced to some variants of the idea: "The Drunken Captain," for instance. Turns out I wasn't saying anything new after all.

You can pass your days in the dory, boys;
You can go with the worst and the best,
But don't ever go with old Engleman, boys:
Each trip you go could well be your last.

Don't you remember Cape Ann, boys?
Don't you remember Cape Ann?
Oh, that crazy old drunk was a loser, boys,
He never cared if we never made in.

Don't you remember Cape Ann, boys?
Don't you remember Cape Ann?
You'll never catch me on the trawl again,
For it's surely no life for a dog or a man.

Don't you remember the Shoals, boys?
Don't you remember the Shoals?
And the Old Man asleep at the wheel, boys,
By God, it was black and cold.

Well, the mate was the man with the gall, boys;
He got the Old Man away from the wheel.
He took him below and he locked up the hatch,
And he threw all the booze o'er the rail.

8. FRANKIE ON THE SHEEPSCOT (Gordon Bok, BMI)

This is about two friends of mine: Frank Wiley and his stepfather, Cleon Stuart, from Deer Island, New Brunswick. They run a sardine carrier out of Bath, Maine, and they're good fishermen.

The song is just a series of pictures of one particular day I was with them towing for shrimp out of Boothbay on a smaller boat, the *Elisa Glenn*.

It had been a hard winter, especially for the smaller boats. They hadn't been able to go "outside" all winter because of severe icing, and had been forced to work up the rivers. The shrimp were scarce up there, and the bottom was foul, and they were continually tearing up their gear, so on many days they would be out of the harbor at 4:30 in the morning and back in by daylight with the net to repair and only a couple of hundred pounds of fish to show for a day's work.

Frankie braids the purse-string and Cleon sets the tow. (*)
Frankie goes to pick them over in the well;
He's never got a hat on, and the snow is all around him,
And it packs around his head like his own skin.

"Don't I hate this foolish river!" Frankie cries,
"Up and down her like a yo-yo on a string;
You go out in the morning and tear up, mend all your afternoon,
And all this dirty river staving by."

Ah, but boys, you should have seen him,
Wearing the snow as you would wear your hair,
Singing, "It's a hard life for a boy on the Gut..." (**)
(He's got the words wrong, but he doesn't seem to care.)
And the seagulls working easy out behind him.

Cleon slides the hatch back, and he shouts down, "Boys, we're anchored." (***)
And you set your coffee down and go on deck,
But the river's humping by so fast, the snow's so flying thick,
You can't tell if she's moving or lying still.

Don't I hate this foolish river!" Frankie cries,
"Up and down her like a yo-yo on a string;
Go out in the morning and tear up, mend all your afternoon,
And all this poor old river going by."

Cleon winds the wheel, and he cracks the power to her,
And she pokes her head around, but she doesn't turn,
And he takes her out of gear while Frankie goes to try to haul back; (****)
He says, "I guess we've hooked the dear old State of Maine."

Ah, but boys, you should have seen him,
Hour after hour, Cleon on that old wheel.
There's nothing out there but hard times, and time and the flying snow,
And all that pretty river rolling by.

Oh, my boys, it made me wonder,
Hour after hour, Cleon on that old wheel.
There's nothing to see but hard times, time and the flying snow,
But Cleon watches, day and night and day

(* *From the winch on the boat, a cable runs to a bridle on two huge iron-bound "doors" that hold the mouth of the net open as it drags along the*

bottom. The back end of the net, the "cod end," is kept closed during towing by a couple of pucker-strings, which have to be loosely braided while in use: a regular knot would never come undone when you wanted to dump the shrimp.

(**) Frank's "song of the week" that trip was the British tune "It's a Hard Life for a Girl on the Cut" (the 12-string hums a bit of it after that verse), which he, disremembering, modified to apply to Thompson's Gut, where he and Cleon used to keep the boat.

(***) Anchored – hung up. What he actually said was "tanker." He had started to turn to starboard and almost ran broadside into a huge tanker coming silently up the river, a great grey wall in the snow. He cut back on the power, the net swallowed a boulder, and it was all over.

(****) Haul back – bring the tow aboard. Whatever it was that hung us up, we had to back and fill for awhile to get free, and, when we did get the gear up, there was nothing to do but head back in and repair it.

9. MISTER, I DON'T MIND (Gordon Bok, BMI)

Some people take the various winds personally; to Threeboot Philbrick, the northwest wind was a personal affront. Where he got all those shutters and sheds on a little old sloop anchored up the creek is probably where I got all that wind (as the story goes), but he did have a bona-fide chimney staggering up all crooked through the deck, and he split his wood on the pawlpost of her and set his heels up on the hob on a cold and raving night. And if he wasn't always sober and rarely employed beyond his needs (and he wasn't exactly *one* person, but perhaps a compendium of three or four people whose names you don't need to

know), he was a happy man. And he had the edge on most of us, because he knew why he was happy.

He used to say, "You got to know what's yours, and why it's good."

Mister, I don't mind your calling me a fool;
Better men than you have called me more.
But the man that's lumping fish out on this crying northern wind
Hasn't got the brains to stay ashore.

Lord, I think of all them boats lying down the bay,
Riding back and stretching out their chain,
And I thank my cozy toes that I ain't on 'em, Mister Man;
I thank the Flying Pete that they ain't mine.

Well, you know that I don't mind her beating on my door,
I don't mind her howling 'round my head,
But she drives me and she grieves me all the weary winter day
And then she wants to share my lonely bed.

Piled the foolish snow four feet up my door,
Scaled my pretty shutters down the bay,
Took the poor old shed apart and shingled half the hill;
Now she laughs to see a grown man cry.

You know, I'm pretty sure where I'm going when I'm done,
But I'd like to send a message on ahead:
Put the coal right to her, keep her jumping up and down,
'Cause that's the way I'll want her when I come.

10. CLEAR AWAY IN THE MORNING (*Gordon Bok, BMI*)

From the years I worked on the Camden schooners. Come fall, time to lay the vessel up, I never wanted to quit. It was my home, and the only place I felt I was really needed was on the deck of that schooner.

Take me back on the bay, boys,
Clear away in the morning,
I don't want to go ashore, boys,
Oh, bring her 'round.

Take me back on the bay, boys,
I don't want to spend my pay, boys.

Captain, don't you leave me,
There's no one here that needs me.

Nancy, oh my Nancy,
She never played it fancy.

Bring me wine and brandy,
I'd only ask for Nancy.

Captain, don't let the main down,
Captain, don't let the chain run.

Captain, don't you need me?
"There's nothing I can do, boy."

Nancy, oh my Nancy,
Nancy, oh my Nancy.

Take me back on the bay, boys,
I don't want to go ashore, boys.

11. THREEBOOT PHILBRICK'S LAMENT (*Gordon Bok, BMI*)

Philbrick isn't his name, though it might as well be; this is a composite of attitudes and opinions and hummings of more than one person. I've just changed the name to indulge the guilty. It doesn't really matter who says it, anyway, as long as it gets said.

(Note on the first verse: The real Threeboot had a habit of talking to the rotten old sloop he lived on; he'd even sing to her when he thought she was listening.)

You're a dirty, hungry, scaly bag of timbers,
And you've seen the last of your deep-water days,
And I have, too,
But I'd like to cut us free, and we'd go astray together,
And we'd try that last long voyage,
Me and you.

The young men make you wonder more and more.
They'd have you think a man that liked his home
Was nothing but a fool.
So they dress up and they go and leave the only thing they ever had,
And, if I ever could believe that it was worth it,
I'd go, too.

But I'd just as soon be here as someplace there.
I don't need many things:
Little coffee, little rum.
And I can lie here in the cove with those little stars above me,
And hear that wind running easy
Down the bay.

Go away, go away.
They tell me that it's time to go away.

But you're a dirty, hungry, scaly bag of timbers,
And you've seen the last of your deep-water days,
And I have, too,
But, by God, I'll cut us free and we'll go astray together,
And we'll try that last long voyage,
Me and you.

But there's snow on my shoes and on my head,
And there's snow on that hungry northern wind.
And you take a look around you,
All your rambling friends are dead,
And I guess it won't be long before the day comes
We go, too.

12. GULLS IN THE MORNING (*Gordon Bok, BMI*)

I made the majority of this tune sitting in the forecandle hatch of the dear old schooner *Steven Taber* on many bright winter mornings, watching the gulls.

A gull is one of the best fliers of all birds, and the song is primarily an imitation of that, rather than their speech. (You never hear a gull say anything really important, anyway.)

I made the song for my friend Peter Platenius, whose guitar playing (learned as a boy in South America) has made a strong impression on me.

13. BAY OF FUNDY (*Gordon Bok, BMI*)

This is about a long and weary, windless trip from Maine around to Halifax on a little black schooner that seemed to move only by the slatting of her gear. We had a coal stove in her, and the foresail used to downdraft onto the charlienoble, turn the stack into an intake and the cabin into a chimney. So, with the coalgas and the wet, the offwatch was not much more comfortable than the deadwatch...

I think the one who worked the hardest was Ed's wife, Lainie, and you could hear her, working below or at the wheel, singing a little tune of her own, over and over. It was a private comfort tune that probably became as much of a comfort to the rest of us as to her.

When we got down to Cape Breton Island, I asked her if I could borrow the tune and put words to it, as a memento of the trip, and she said yes. And I tried, all the next fall, to make that tune say what I remembered, but after all, 'twas

Lainie's tune, and private, and I had to make my own. I tried to keep the lonely sounds, and a few notes from Sable and the Sambro horn, but what she gave us then I have no way to give.

All you Maine men, proud and young,
When you run your Easting down,
Don't go down to Fundy Bay,
She'll wear your time away.

Fundy's long and Fundy's wide,
Fundy's fog and rain and tide;
Never see the sun or sky,
Just the green wave going by.

Cape Sable's horn blows all day long;
Wonder why,
Wonder why.

Oh, you know, I'd rather ride
The Grenfell Strait or the Breton tide,
Spend my days on the Labrador,
And never see old Fundy's shore.

All my days on the Labrador,
And never see old Fundy's shore.

Cape Sable's horn blows all day long;
Wonder why,
Wonder why.

Give her staysail, give her main,
In the darkness and the rain;
I don't mind the wet and cold,
I just don't like the growing old.

I don't mind the wet and cold,
I just don't like the growing old.

Cape Sable's horn blows all day long;
Wonder why,
Wonder why.

East-by-North or East-North-East,
Give her what she steers the best;
I don't want this foggy wave
To be my far and lonely grave.

I don't want this foggy wave
To be my far and lonely grave.

Cape Sable's horn blows all day long;
Wonder why,
Wonder why.

Cape Breton's bells ring in the swells,
Ring for me,
Ring for me.

14. OLD FAT BOAT [MATTAPOISETT HARBOR INVENTORY]

(Gordon Bok, BMI)

I always felt a little cheated by life that I had never been in a situation where I felt sorry enough for myself that I had to write what Pete Seeger calls a "navel" or "belly-button" song. (As Kendall Morse would say: "what did all those other folksingers have that I couldn't get pounded into shape?")

Well, it finally struck. A few years ago I was bringing an old wooden boat from Connecticut to Maine. Ran out of crew about the time the weather started going crook. Threw my back out trying to get an anchor out of the mud. Crippled around Newport for three days in the cold June rain, looking for *any* unfeathered biped who would help me get the old slab a little farther along the coast. No luck. Got blisters on my butt rowing in wet dungarees. Got wet, too.

Got a raving Northwest wind one day and decided to have a go without any help. (Had to use the jib-sheet winch to get the anchor off the bottom... always wondered what those noisy round things were for...) Slammed out of there with half a bag of sail on and headed her East.

Ended up off Mattapoisett harbor with the weather getting gloomy again; decided to get off my feet for the night, so I worked her in there and anchored, got the sails off her. Brownell workboat came out and told me, since it was going to blow Northeast, why didn't I take their mooring... over there. Got the anchor up and went over to pick up their mooring. Realized that, with the wind Northeast, I was a mile downwind of the town wharf... again.

Piled into that ridiculous plastic dog-dish they call a rowboat and pulled ashore, in the rain. Called home, went back down to the "rowboat" and, as I was shipping the oars, got a humongous great splinter in the crotch of my hand. Blew downwind back out to the ketch.

Went below, started the leaky stove to get the damp out, got out the hydrogen peroxide, the knife and the oilstone. Looked at the splinter, got out the rum. Properly anesthetized, I was working on the splinter and it occurred to me to wonder what was for supper. Realized it was Saturday night, raining, town was a mile's row upwind and a mile's walk after that...

A couple of days later, I found most of this song, along with a list of groceries (existent and non-existent) in the logbook. Even sailors have a right to sing the blues.

P.S. My thanks to Ken Hicks, that outrageous gentle-man from Virginia, who allowed me to rip off a bit of his fine song, "Half the Fun of Going is Getting There."

So, here I am, man, all alone again,
Anchored away the hell and gone again.
Another mile from another town,
The wind Northeast n'the rain coming down.
Home is the sailor, home from the sea;
He's a home for the mildew, a friend to the flea.
I don't care, man, I'm happy.

I got an old fat boat, she's slow but handsome,
Hard in the chine and soft in the transom.
I love her well; she must love me,
But I think it's only for my money.

And I don't mind staying and I don't mind going,
But I some damned tired of rowing.

No more tobacco, no more cheese;
I'm sprung in the back and lame in the knees.
It's a damned good thing I'm easy to please;
There ain't nothing in town on a Sunday.
I don't care, man, I'm happy.

I got an old fat boat... etc.

You know, I got milk and I got ice;
I got home-made bread, a little old, but nice.
Everybody puts their cooking hat on
When you tell 'em you're leaving in the morning.

And I don't mind staying... etc.

Oh, hey, you know I got coffee, I got tea,
I got the beans and the beans got me.
I got tuna fish, I got rum,
I got a two-pound splinter in my thumb.
So, I'll take my toddy and my vitamin C
And the radio for my company.
Oh, me. I got the hydrogen peroxide blues.
I don't care, man, I'm happy.

I got an old fat boat... etc.

Well, mercy, mercy, I do declare,
If half the fun of going is getting there,
Mercy, Percy, you better start rowing,
'Cause the other half of getting there is going.

15. PETER KAGAN AND THE WIND (*Gordon Bok, BMI*)

Peter Kagan was a lonely man,
in the summer of his years.
But then, one day, he got tired of being lonely,
so he went away off to the eastward
and, when he came again,
he had a wife with him.

She was strange, you know, but she was kind,
and people liked her.

And she was good for Kagan;
she kept him company,
and, winter come to summer,
they were happy.

Kagan had a dory then, had a lug sail on her mast.
He'd go offshore for three, four days, setting for the fish.

But, oh, his wife was sad then;
she never liked to see him go.
She'd go down and call to him:

*Kagan, Kagan, Kagan,
Bring the dory home.
The wind and sea do follow thee,
And all the ledges calling thee.*

He said that he could hear her singing twenty miles to sea,
and when he heard her, he'd come home,
if he had fish or none.

She was a seal, you know.
Everyone knew that; even Kagan,
he knew that,
But nobody would say it to him.

Then one day in that year's autumn,
Kagan says: *I got to go now.
Go offshore and get some fish.*

But she says: *No, don't go away.*
She starts crying: *Please don't go,
the wind is coming, and the snow.*

*Kagan, Kagan, Kagan,
Don't go out to sea.
The stormy wind and snow do come,
And, oh, but I do fear for thee.*

But Kagan's not afraid of snow;
it's early in the year.
He puts his oars in, and he goes to sea.

Kagan sails out on the Middle Ground.
The wind is west all day, and going down;
the fish are coming to him.

Kagan reads the writing on the water and the sky.
He sees the haze, up very high, above the clouds.
He says: *That's all right for autumn,*
only a change of wind.
I'm not afraid of wind.

But Kagan reads it wrong this time.
The wind goes away, and then comes back southeast.
The fog comes 'round him.

Kagan says: *I better go now.*
Find that gong-buoy off the Sunken Ledges.
Then I'll know the best way home.

He puts the sail up,
And he bears away to the northward for the gong.

But, oh, the wind is watching.
The wind backs 'round to the eastward and breezes on.
They sail a long time,
and the sail is pulling very hard.

Finally the wind's so strong the sail tears out.
Kagan takes it in, and the dory goes drifting.

But then he hears the gong-buoy;
It isn't very far away.

Kagan, Kagan, Kagan,
Bring the dory home.
The wind and sea do follow thee,
And all the ledges calling thee.

But the dory goes drifting;
By and by the buoy goes away.

Kagan says: *Okay.*
He puts the oars in;
Starts to row back up for the gong.

But, oh, the wind is watching.
The wind backs 'round northeast,
and makes the sea confused.

The wind says: *Listen, I got something to tell you.*
Kagan, rowing: *I don't want to hear it.*

But the wind humps up — makes the seas short;
 makes it hard for him to row.

Finally the seas are so steep
Kagan knows he isn't getting anywhere.

He takes the oars in,
 and the dory goes drifting now.

Kagan says: *Okay, now I got something to show you.*
He takes a slip of wood to make a needle,
 waxes up the handline for a thread —
 sews the sail up smaller, sews a reef in it.

Wind says: *What you doing?*
Kagan says: *You keep watching.*

Kagan puts the sail up now,
Bears away to the northward for the gong.

But, oh, the wind is watching now.
The wind backs north-northeast.
Kagan can't hold his course now.

Kagan says: *Okay, then.*
He brings the boat about;
 now he's steering east.

The wind says: *You're heading out to sea.*
Kagan says: *I'm not afraid of water.*
I'll come about, by and by,
 when I can fetch that gong.

The wind says: *I'll veer on you;*
 I'll go east again.
Kagan says: *You go ahead.*
 Then I can hold my course again.

The wind says: *I'll back.*
Kagan says: *You back too far and you'll have to clear.*
 You know that.
 I can keep ahead of you.

Wind says: *You may be smarter,*
 but I'm stronger.
 You watch.
Wind gets bigger, blows harder.

Finally there's too much wind.
Sail says: *I can't do it.*
Kagan says: *I know that.*
 Thank you.

He takes the sail in,
 and the dory goes — drifting.

Kagan takes the sail off the yard.

He pulls it 'round him:

Now you keep me warm.

The wind says: *He can't keep you warm.*

Wind snatches off north-by-east:

I'll freeze you.

Kagan says: *I'm not afraid of cold.*

But Kagan is afraid.

He doesn't know what to do.

But, oh, the wind is working now;

the wind brings ice and snow;

the wind blows long and long and black.

Kagan says: *I'm dying.*

Sail, keep me warm.

Sail says: *I can't do it, Peter.*

Kagan dying, and the wind blows.

Kagan, Kagan, Kagan,

Turn thee now to me.

Turn thy back unto the wind

And all the weary, windy sea.

Kagan, Kagan, Kagan,

Lay thee down to sleep,

For I do come to comfort thee,

All and thy dear body keep.

So Kagan lies down in the bottom of the boat,
and tries not to be afraid of the dying.

And he dreamed of her then,
of his wife.

He dreamed she was coming to him.

He heard a great calling down the wind,

and he lifted his head,

and he saw her coming to him;

As down the smoking seas she came,

and over the rail of the dory she came,

and laughing, to his arms.

And all in the night and the storm they did lay,
And the wind and the sea went away.

And in the morning they found him,
asleep, with the sail wrapped 'round him.

And there was a seal lying with him there,

curled over him like a blanket –

and the snow was upon the seal.

Lug rig — single yard crossing the mast fore-and-aft, the sail usually loose-footed and always sets on one side of the mast. The “standing lug” or “North Sea lug” was traditional for many small boats on this coast.

Gong-buoy — as opposed to a bell-buoy, which has only one bell and tone, the gong-buoy has four discs, hung upside down, one above the other, and clappers for each. Gives a very distinctive ring and can therefore be set in the same area as a bell-buoy.

Backing — wind shifting against the sun, or counter-clockwise, as opposed to “veering” clockwise. Kagan’s wind was backing all day; he should have gotten worried long before he did.

Brings the boat about — he was downwind of the buoy; he had to tack, or beat up to it, zig-zag.

Fetch — reach the objective in one tack.

For their help on the various choruses, our thanks to Ann Muir, Allyn Fenn, Chris Fenn, Noel Stookey, Caroline Paton, and Sandy Paton.

Some of the sung or spoken words may differ from the written words here. What I have written is the *proper* way it should go.

Gordon Bok

Thanks to Captain John Blodgett and First Mate Gabriel for making possible the photo opportunity, Rockland Harbor, July, 1994.

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1. McKEON'S COMING	2:52
2. WESTERN BOAT (<i>Kelland</i>)	2:26
3. MRS. MacDONALD'S LAMENT	3:02
4. LIVERPOOL HANDY/I'S THE B'Y (<i>arr: Bok</i>)	2:25
5. MR. ENEOS	3:38
6. SABEN, THE WOODFITTER	5:11
7. CAPE ANN	3:40
8. FRANKIE ON THE SHEEPSHOT	5:21
9. MISTER, I DON'T MIND	2:39
10. CLEAR AWAY IN THE MORNING	2:53
11. THREEBOOT PHILBRICK'S LAMENT	3:16
12. GULLS IN THE MORNING	3:18
13. BAY OF FUNDY	4:10
14. OLD FAT BOAT	3:07
15. PETER KAGAN AND THE WIND	15:07

Total Time: 63:05

All songs except "Western Boat" and "Liverpool Handy/I's the B'y" are © Gordon Bok, BMI and published by Folk-Legacy Records, Inc., BMI

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Digitally remastered by Bob Katz, Digital Domain, NYC.

Photographs by Sandy Paton.

Graphics by Walter Schwarz, Figaro, Inc., Sharon, CT.

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North Wind's Clearing

GORDON BOK



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