American Northwest Ballads Sung by Walt Robertson, with Guitar Folkways Records FA 2046

PORTLAND, OREGON, 1891

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

WANDERING PUGET SOUND LIFE IS A TOIL THE FROZEN LOGGER I HAVE LED A GOOD LIFE THE PORTLAND COUNTY JAIL MOONSHINER HOOROO, JOHNNY THE SOW TOOK THE MEASLES BILE THEM CABBAGE DOWN SUGAR HILL

American Northwest Ballads

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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I was born in Omaha in 1928 and have been moving around ever since. My mother tells me that I learned how to open the front gate when I was eighteen months old and one time I got a mile and a half down the road before she found me. Since then I've lived on the West Coast, the East Coast, in the Midwest, and rambled through every state in the Union, and most of Canada and Europe.

I've sung in just about every sort of a place you can imagine; in a "greasyspoon" in Illinois. the sidewalk cafes in Paris, a dusty road in West Virginia, society parties on Philadelphia's "main line" in mountain lodges and dude ranches and fancy supper clubs, at revival meetings and on radio and TV. (I had my own weekly show on KING-TV in Seattle for a year) and been on nation-wide radio and TV shows in New York and Hollywood, taken part in "hootenannies" in every part of our country in famous places and in places you couldn't find on any map. And I've been learning songs and finding out how to play the guitar all along the way; from a foreman I had once when I was fighting forest fires (he only had three fingers on one hand and tuned his guitar a special way), a ship's doctor on a Dutch ship who showed me that the guitar could be a classical instrument, and from a young woman singing to her unborn baby and who didn't know I was listening. I've worked at a lot of jobs: followed the harvests (wheat from Texas to North Dakota, apples and peaches and beans and hops on the West Coast), lumberjack, grocerv clerk, bank teller, draftsman, carpenter, cab driver fire fighter (U.S. Forest Service), painter, truck driver, ranch hand, and counselor in a camp for delinquent boys. I've done work in surgical research, and I've sold everything from women's shoes to bibles to fireworks. And all along the way I've been finding out about people, and they all like to sing or to listen to a song. Folk music is alive everywhere in the world today and its about the best medicine the world has got to ease its aches and pains.

While it is true that many of the songs is cluded in this album are not localized in origin in the American Northwest, it is equally true that they have taken root there. Of "Wandering" Walt Robertson writes: "I learned it from an old hand I worked with in a meat-packing plant in Omaha, unloading freight-cars."

SIDE I

WANDERING

I've been a-wandering early and late, New York City to the Golden Gate, And it looks like ain't never going to cease my wandering.

Been working in the army, working on a farm, All I got to show for it's just this muscle in my arm, And it looks like ain't never going to cease my wandering.

There's stakes on the mountain, there's eels in the sea, Red-headed woman made this wreck out of me, And it looks like ain't never going to cease my wandering.

My daddy is an engineer, my brother drives a hack, Sister takes in washing and the baby balls the jack, And it looks like ain't never going to cease my wandering.

PUGET SOUND

I've traveled all over this country, Prospecting and digging for gold, Tunneled, hydrauliced, and cradled And I have been frequently sold. For one who makes riches at mining, Perceiving that hundreds grow poor, I made up my mind to try farming The only pursuit that is sure.

So I packed all my grub in a blanket, And I left all my tools on the ground, Started right off for to shank it To the country they call Puget Sound.

Arriving dead broke in mid-winter, I found it enveloped in fog, And covered all over with timber, Thick as hair on the back of a dog.

I tried to get out of that country, Till poverty forced me to stay, Then I became an old settler Now nothing could drive me away.

So I staked out a claim in the forest, And settled right down to hard toil, For two years I chopped and I labored But I never got close to the soil.

But now that I'm used to the climate, I think that if man ever found, A place to be peaceful and quiet Then that place is on Puget Sound.

No longer a slave of ambition, I laugh at the world and its shams, As I think of my happy condition Surrounded by acres of clams.

LIFE IS A TOIL

One day as I wandered I heard a-complainin And saw an old woman the picture of gloom. She gazed at the mud on her doorstep, 'twas rainin And this was her song as she wielded her broom.

O, life is a toil and love is a trouble And beauty will fade, riches will flee. And pleasures they dwindle and prices they double

Nothing is what I could wish it to be.

In March it is mud, it is snow in December The mid-summer breezes are loaded with dust. In fall the leaves litter, in rainy September The wallpaper rots and the candlesticks rust.

O, life etc.

There's too much of worriment goes into a bonnet There's too much of ironing goes into a shirt. There's nothing that pays for the time you waste on it Nothing that lasts us but trouble and dirt.

O, life etc.

Last night in my dreams I was stationed forever On a far little isle in the midst of the sea. My one chance for life was a ceaseless endeavor To sweep off the waves as they swept over me.

O, life etc.

Alas 'twas no dream for ahead I behold it I know I am helpless my fate to avert. She put down her broom and her apron she folded She laid down and died and was buried in dirt.

THE FROZEN LOGGER

As I sat down one evening, 'twas in a small cafe, A forty-year old waitress to me these words did say: "I see year are a logger and not just a common bum, For no one but a logger stirs his coffee with his thumb."

"I had a logger lover, there's none like him today, If you poured whiskey on it, he'd eat a bale of hay." "He never would shave a whisker from off of his horny hide,

But he'd hammer in the bristles and bite them off inside."

"My logger came to see me, 'twas on a winter's day, He held me in a fond embrace that broke three vertebrae." "He kissed me when we parted so hard it broke my jaw, I could not speak to tell him he'd forgot his mackinaw."

"I saw my logger lover go striding off through the snow, Going gayly homewards at forty-eight below. "Well, the weather it tried to freeze him, tried its level best,

At a hundred degrees below zero, he buttoned up his vest."

"It froze clear down to China, it froze to the stars above, At a thousand degrees below zero, it froze my logger love." "They tried in vain to thaw him and would you believe it, sir, They made him into axe blades to chop the Douglas fir."

"And so I lost my lover, and to this cafe I come, Where I sit and wait for someone to stir his coffee with his thumb."

I HAVE LED A GOOD LIFE

I have led a good life, full of peace and quiet. I shall have an old age, full of rum and riot.

I have been a good boy wedded to peace and study. I shall have an old age ribald, course and bloody.

I have never cut throats even when I yearned to. Never sang a dirty song that my fancy turned to.

I have been a good boy and done what was expected. I shall be an old burn, loved but unrespected.

SIDE II

THE PORTLAND COUNTY JAIL

I'm a stranger to your city My name is Paddy Flynn; I got drunk the other night And the coppers run me in.

I had no money to pay my fine No one to go my bail; So I got stuck for ninety days In the Portland County Jail.

O, such a bunch of devils As no one ever saw; Robbers, thieves and highwaymen Breakers of the law.

They sang a song the whole night long The curses fell like hail; I'll bless the day that takes me away From the Portland County Jail.

The only friend that I had left Was Happy Sailor Jack; He told me all the lies he knew And all the safes he cracked. He cracked them in Seattle And he'd robbed the western mail; Would freeze the blood of an honest man In the Portland County Jail.

The finest friend I have ever had Was Officer McGirck; He said I was a lazy bum A no-good and a shirk.

One Saturday night when I got tight He run me in the can; And now you see he's made of me A honest working man - Hah!

THE MULE IN THE MINES

My sweetheart's the mule in the mines, I drive her without reins or lines, On the bunker I sit and I chew and I spit All over my sweetheart's behind.

MOONSHINER

I've been a moonshiner for seventeen long years. I made alk my money on whiskeys and beers. I'll go to some holler and set up my still And I'll make you a gallon for a two-dollar bill.

I'll go to some still-house and drink with my friends. No woman to foller and see what I spend. God bless those pretty women, I wish they were mine Their breath smells as sweet as the dew on the vine.

I'll eat when I'm hungry and drink when I'm dry. If drinking don't kill me, I'll live till I die. I'll make my own whiskey, I'll make my own stew And if I get drunk, madam, it's nothing to you.

I'll make my own whiskey, I'll make my own wine. Some ten thousand bottles I've killed in my time. Meat when I'm hungry, red likker when I'm dry Greenbacks when I'm hard up and religion when I die.

I've been a moonshiner for seventeen long years. I made all my money on whiskeys and beers. I'll go to some holler and set up my still And I'll make you a gallon for a two-dollar bill.

HOOROO, JOHNNY

With your drums and guns, and guns and drums, hooroo, hooroo (2)

With your drums and guns, and guns and drums the enemy nearly's through -

Darling dear, you look so queer Johnny I hardly knew.

Where are your eyes that used to smile hooroo, hooroo (2)

Where are your eyes that used to smile when my heart was so beguiled -How could you run from me and the child Johnny I hardly knew.

Where are your legs that used to run, hooroo, hooroo (2)

Where are your legs that used to run when you went off to carry a gun -I fear your dancing days are done Johnny I hardly knew. I'm happy for to see you home, hooroo, hooroo (2) I'm happy for to see you home

but darling, dear, you look so wan -So lean in flesh and high in bone Johnny I hardly knew.

THE SOW TOOK THE MEASELS

How do you think I begun in the world? I got me a sow and several other things. Pig or hog or some such thing The sow took the measels and she died in the spring.

What do you think I made of her nose? The ve y best thimble that ever sewed clothes. Thimble or thread or any such thing The sow took the measels and she died in the spring.

What do you think I made of her hide? The very best saddle that you ever did ride. Saddle or bridle or any such thing The sow took the measels and she died in the spring.

What do you think I made of her tail? A very fine whup and also a flail. Whup or whup-socket any such thing The sow took the measels and she died in the spring.

What do you think I made of her hair? The very best silk that you ever did wear. Silk or satin or some such thing The sow took the measels and she died in the spring.

What do you think I made of her feet? The very best pickles that you ever did eat. Pickles or glue or some such thing The sow took the measels and she died in the spring.

BILE THEM CABBAGE DOWN

Funniest thing I ever did see was two old women fighting,

One of em says no fair fight, the other one's a-biting.

Refrain: Bile them cabbage down, bake them hoecakes brown, Only song I ever did learn was Bile Them Cabbage Down.

If you see that gal of mine, tell her once for me If she loves another man, yes, I will set her free.

Refrain

I wish I was a numblebee flying through the air Take my honey by my side, touch her if you dare.

Refrain

Took my gal to the blacksmith shop to have her mouth made small

She opened up that mouth of hers, swallowed shop and all.

Refrain

SUGAR HILL

Wanna get your eye knocked out Wanna get your fill, Come get your eye knocked out Come to Sugar Hill. ((tooah tooah too.....))

Possum sitting on a log Soaking up the sun, Hound dog comingdown the road Possum better run. (tooah tooah too.....)

Possum in a 'simmon tree Raccoon on the ground, Raccoon says you son of a gun Shake some 'simmons down, (tooah tooah too..)

Wish I was in Arkansas Settin on a rail, Sweet 'tater in my hand Possum by the tail. (tooah tooah too.....)

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FOLKWAYS Records AND SERVICE CORP., 117 W. 46 ST., N. Y. C.

Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 331/3 RPM © 1955 & 1960 Folkways Records & Service Corp., NYC, USA

FOLKSONGS OF THE AMERICAN NORTHWEST Sung by Walt Robertson with Guitar

SIDE I

Band 1: WANDERING Band 2: PUGET SOUND Band 3: LIFE IS A TOIL Band 4: FROZEN LOGGER Bond 5: I HAVE LED A GOOD LIFE

