

When Kentucky Had No Union Men

FOLKWAYS FA2343

George Davis

THE SINGING MINER OF HAZARD, KENTUCKY

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When Kentucky Had No Union Men

DESIGN AND PHOTO: JOHN COHEN

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FA 2343

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THE SINGING MINER OF HAZARD, KENTUCKY

Recorded, edited, produced, and annotated by John Cohen



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WHEN KENTUCKY HAD NO UNION MEN

George Davis, the Singing Miner of Hazard, Kentucky.

Recorded, edited, annotated, and produced by John Cohen

BIOGRAPHY

George Davis was born in La Follette, Tennessee, on August 19, 1906. This part of east Tennessee in Campbell County is rock quarry and coal mine country. George is the youngest in a family of nine brothers and sisters. Their father died when George was two years old. His earliest memories are of very poor surroundings. He recalls that his clothes had "patches on the patches," and that he was allowed one pair of shoes a year. It was a three-mile walk to school, and he did his lessons on a board. By the time he was 11 years old, he was "in charge of the house," for the others had left. This meant that the financial responsibility was his, and he worked at a cleaning and pressing job for three dollars a week, and every night, from six to 11, he worked as a motion-picture projectionist for a dollar a day. At that time the projector had to be worked by a hand crank.

When he was thirteen and one half years old, his older brother bought him a new pair of pants, and George left home and moved to east Kentucky to work in the coal mines. On January 1, 1920, he started to work for the Crawford Coal Company at First Creek, near Hazard. As soon as he got set up he was able to move his mother to Kentucky as well.

He was married at the age of 17 and raised three children; and he has six grandchildren, and one great granddaughter. He worked a total of 28 years in the mines doing all kinds of work — digging coal, loading it, working the cutting machine, etc. He was seven years with the Algoma Block Company, and 14 years in the mines at Glowmar.

Although music had been in his family, George didn't start playing guitar until 1933, when the mines were first being organized by the United Mine Workers Union. He recalls that he would practice on his front porch in the evening, and that miners would come around and stand on the railroad tracks to hear him. He played in the Labor Day celebration that year, but on October 13, 1933, his left arm was severely damaged in a mine accident. There were many months spent in casts, and eventually part of the bone in his arm had to be replaced. After six months, he tried to play guitar again and found that he couldn't get his fingers to hold down the chords, so he started training his hands to hold one chord at a time. He recalls that the same people who used to come around when he played, now shut their doors when he practiced.

At this point he knew that he could never be a good guitar picker, but he had been composing songs about the mines and about the problems confronting the Union and would sing these songs at the Labor Day celebrations. He won the contest, for his songs meant a lot to the miners.

In March, 1940, while working at Glowmar (just a few miles east of Hazard), he was visited by George Korson who was working on his book Coal Dust on the Fiddle, songs and stories of the bituminous industry (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1943). Three of George Davis's songs are in that book along with a brief biography.

In 1947, Fred Bullard of WKIC, the Hazard radio station, invited him to do one sustaining program. This eventually became eight 15-minute programs a day of George singing his songs and playing requests. In 1949 at WLSI in Pikesville, Ky., Zeke Smith of that station introduced him to Bill York of York Furniture, and George got a daily half-hour "in person" program along the lines of his Hazard shows. He had become the Singing Miner. Next he got a 15-minute program in Paintsville at WSIP; and eventually, at WCTW in Whitesburg, when that station started, he had seven one-half-hour shows a week.

This was before the days of tape recordings, and George found himself driving 300 miles a day over the mountain roads, five days a week, for 44 months steady, doing these radio shows. Finally he worked out some arrangement with disc transcriptions, whereby he would do two live shows at Hazard, and record the remainder for the day, then drive off to do the "in person" show at Pikesville. He would transcribe all the Paintsville shows on Sunday.

Besides this busy schedule, he was doing personal appearance concerts at night in different schools and halls throughout the mountains. Selling radio advertising and getting sponsors was also part of his job. The picture of a very complicated music and business life emerges even though it is limited to a small region of the mountains.

He also performed the function of M. C. for many of the traveling "Grand Ol' Opry" shows in this region, and he did a show with Hank Williams and Sam McGee in Louisville. In 1949 he recorded two songs for Rich-R-Tone records — "Coal Miner's Boogie" and "When Kentucky Had No Union Men" (Rich-R-Tone 453) — but never received any of his royalties from that company.

When I first met him at the Hazard radio station in 1959, he was very hesitant about doing any recording because of his previous bad experience with the record business. He claims to have composed "Sixteen Tons" during the 1930's, and feels that Merle Travis and Tennessee Ernie capitalized on his song through changing the chords somewhat. George's original version is on this record. On Mountain Music of Kentucky (Folkways FA 2317) he sings the "Death of the Blue Eagle."

In 1959 George Davis was working as a disc jockey and supervising talent shows in Hazard. His name was a household word throughout the east Kentucky mountains. Today at the age of 60, he works for WKIC in Hazard and at the time of this recording had a half-hour radio program of his songs and requests on Saturday mornings.

With the exception of Bands 1 and 2 on Side II ("Coal Miner's Boogie" and "Miner's Dream Come True") all the recordings were made on November 15 and 16, 1966, at station WKIC, Hazard, Ky., where George Davis works as evening FM engineer. These recordings were made on a Nagra tape recorder on loan from the Friends of Old Time Music in New York. "Coal Miner's Boogie" is from the Rich-R-Tone recording, and "Miner's Dream" was done earlier in the studio.

Marion Sumner accompanies George on fiddle and second guitar in several of these songs. Marion has played fiddle with Johnnie and Jack in Nashville and can be heard on Mountain Music of Kentucky. John Cohen accompanies Marion Sumner on "Callahan."

A George Davis Discography:

Songs and Ballads of the Bituminous Miners -
Library of Congress "The Harlan County Blues"
Rich-R-Tone Record 453 - "Coal Miner's Boogie"
& "When Kentucky Had No Union Men"
Mountain Music of Kentucky - Folkways FA 2317
"Death of the Blue Eagle"
Songs from the Depression - The New Lost City
Ramblers-Folkways FH 5264 "Death of the
Blue Eagle"
Tipple, Loom and Rail - Mike Seeger - Folkways
FH 5273

For a Discography of American Coal Miners' Songs (as of 1961) see Archie Green article in Labor History, Vol. 2, No. 1.

Analysis by John Cohen

In the hills of eastern Kentucky, around Hazard, coal mining is still the main source of the economy despite the fact that national uses of coal have greatly declined. Consequently the relationship between worker and mine operator has deteriorated as well. The United Mine Workers Union (UMW) has closed its doors in this part of America, and while a few other unions maintain a slippery foothold, the general situation resembles the anarchy of pre-union days where mine operators pay what they care to pay, and the miners take whatever they can get. Machinery has replaced miners, and the small truck mines are marginal. Yet they provide what employment there is.

An atmosphere of intimidation exists today and most people are hesitant to take any kind of stand on local issues. Talk of unions invites the kind of threats of violence which were met during the early union organizing days. Sad to say, the situation in Hazard now is very similar to "When Kentucky Had No Union Men."

The songs on this record are purely local in character; their music reflects the traditional background of eastern Kentucky as well as the changes and innovations that have developed in country music over the past 30 years. Musically, "Jack Monroe" is in the oldest style along with the Irish-derived fiddle tunes. Besides the use of old-time Hillbilly tunes ("Poor Ellen Smith" for "Why Are You Leaving," "Old Age Pension Check" for "Miner's Dream Come True") we find

references to Boogie Woogie in "Coal Miner's Boogie," popular blues style in "The Three-Day Blues," and country Rock N' Roll in "Rocking Chair Money." One song, "Sixteen Tons," may be considered as a local topical song that became an accepted part of American popular music, which in its acceptance has affected local music taste.

The subject matter in George Davis's original songs covers the years from 1930 to 1955. As you listen to them, bear in mind that all are about local problems, composed by a local person, reflecting local sentiments, and directed at the local audience in terms they already understand. Contrast these with the songs written about the mines from the viewpoint of those who left there ("Which Side Are You On") or those who only visited ("High Sheriff of Hazard"). With the exception of "Sixteen Tons," none of these songs was ever very popular, yet each of them has functioned as part of the community when sung by George Davis on his radio shows and at his personal appearances.

George Davis has worked as a coal miner and as a radio disc jockey-entertainer. He has moved from a life of hard manual labor into the communications business. His music can be seen as a continuation of the ancient folk minstrel tradition, using the local means of communication to express regional concerns.

Many of the situations mentioned in these songs will not be immediately meaningful to city dwellers or to Kentuckians not involved in mining. Few of these songs attempt to reach out beyond their circumstances. Perhaps only "The Little Lump of Coal" does this effectively in depicting a miner's daily life and dangers. But all these songs must be considered as the most accurate type of document we can have — for they reveal local attitudes towards established facts.

There is a certain development traceable within this body of songs. "When Kentucky Had No Union Men" speaks autobiographically of how George Davis "wandered around, nearly lost my mind, I got me a job in the old coal mine," and how "a thug come along and took my job." Later he talks of "Praising John L. Lewis" (then President of the UMW) and of how his children now know him "since the seven-hour day." "The Harlan County Blues" is written from the viewpoint of someone who did not go over to Harlan (the next county from Hazard) in the union organizing campaigns of the early 1930's. The song becomes clear when one realizes that efforts by Harlan mine operators to keep out the unions went to the extent of setting up road blocks at points leading into the county in order to determine the purpose of any visit. Union men weren't allowed entry and if caught in the county, they were thrown in jail (which is the subject of this song). Incidentally, this same attitude about organizers had always existed in nearby Leslie County, and continues even today. George Davis tells of how the UMW once asked him to sing on their sound truck to draw a crowd for union recruiting in Leslie County. George declined, but they used recordings of him singing instead. Later that week when he did a "personal appearance" there, he found that only a few women and children were in the audience, but that there were many police and marshals with drawn guns standing about. Someone from the audience shouted up "George, why were you here singing in that union truck the other day?" George said that he hadn't been — that it must have been recordings. The voice shouted again, "Do you want an audience now?" and the doors opened while a full audience of men streamed in. Apparently they had been stationed all around the building, on rooftops and behind trees, with guns ready to take care of any union organizers they thought would be there.

"Death of the Blue Eagle" concerns the ending of the short-lived NRA (National Recovery Act 1933-1935). Apparently this U. S. Government act was vitally important to the mine workers although it was drawn up with all industries in mind. The NRA was based on the principle of industrial self-regulation under government supervision through a system of fair competition codes. It established guidelines for fair prices and wages, and invited employees and employers to sign up under the slogan "We do our part." When the NRA was declared unconstitutional due to monopolistic practices by unscrupulous members, the entire act was repealed. This song presents a popular interpretation: "the eagle (symbol of the NRA) went down shouting 'Hurray for one and all,' but most folks couldn't take it, they had to let it fall." The implication is strongly suggested that although the NRA benefited all, people couldn't accept that and took unfair advantage of the act.

"The Three-Day Blues" was written by George Davis right after the Taft-Hartley Act became law in 1948. The UMW contract expired on April first, and the miners had been off, without a contract, for a period of 60 days. Then the operators offered a three-day truce while they reached an agreement with the UMW, and during this waiting period the song was written. From labor's point of view, "Taft and Hartley put a club in your (mine owners) hand, so you could beat and knock on the mining man." Further, the song invites the operators to "Fall in line with our Welfare Plan." The Welfare Plan receives its full due in "Miner's Dream Come True" (1955). The melody and general scheme of the song is derived from an old Roy Acuff song of the 1930s, "The Old Age Pension Check." "I'll be home and stay with Daisy" is a reference to George's wife. The image of a life of retirement remains largely a dream today, because the unions have left the miners, and the main source of Welfare today comes from Federal and State agencies. As one resident, Roscoe Holcomb, put it, "if the Welfare were cut off today, the mountains would collapse - 'most all families depend on it to survive.'"

"Rocking Chair Money" is a story of coal miners laid off "through no fault of their own," according to George Davis. "In this case they were permitted to draw unemployment insurance ... which in their slang is the Rocking Chair Money." The reference to script is in regard to the way they were normally paid by the mine company - in company-coined money which could only be spent in the company store. Since the unemployment office was in Hazard, they had to go there to draw their weekly checks.

Exclusive of the songs of union problems, George Davis presents a vivid picture of life around the mines; "One bright sunshiny morning in the merry month of May" rapidly becomes "His life was crushed out by the wheels of Main Line Number Four." In "Sixteen Tons," "well they got what I made and they wanted some more, and now I owe my soul at the company store." The final image is "Put a nickel in the slot and the music rolls out, see them old coal miners jitterbugging about," in "Coal Miner's Boogie."

Perhaps the most indicting observation is found in the seemingly innocent song "Why Are You Leaving?" The waste slate material from the mines has caught fire and is burning for several days, while the smoke is killing trees and vegetables in the gardens, and burning the silverware black. The doctors arrive and ask, "where is the devil? Oh yonder's his lake." The simple parallel is drawn between the fire and brimstone of hell and the burning rocks of the earth... where the miners live.

SIDE I: Band 1

The Little Lump of Coal

(Another version of this song is found in Coal Dust on the Fiddle)

To those who know no better, and to those who do not care,
I'll try, my friends, to tell you what a miner has to bear.
When your servant fires the furnaces, smoke and blazes roll,
Won't you stop and think who suffers for that little lump of coal.

Well he gets up in the morning, while you're in the land of Nod,
And at the family altar he kneels and asks his God
To care for him and protect him while he's under the ground,
So he can come home in the evening to his family, safe and sound.

He eats a hearty breakfast and he fixes his carbide flask,
Picks up his lamp and bucket, then he's ready for his task,
And soon he's beneath the surface, with a car up in his place.
As he swings his pick and shovel the sweat pours down his face.

Then he lines up at the office with the others in a row,
His statement signed and ready for a little bit of dough,
And everything he's buying is away up in the air.
Do you think what he's asking is anything unfair?

You can tell your friends and neighbors, your servants and your wife,
The plaster on the office wall can't crush out your life,
For it is a dirty miner, a humble sort of mole,
That takes those dangerous chances for that little lump of coal.

SIDE I: Band 2

When Kentucky Had No Union Men

I'll tell you a story way back when
Kentucky didn't have any Union Men.

I wandered around, nearly lost my mind,
I got me a job in the old coal mine.

I met an old foreman that they all call "Pap,"
He give me a job and he let me trap.

And the hours I worked were from morning till night,
Got sixty cents an hour and thought that was all right.

I thought I'se gonna get all that pay,
But all I got was an eight-hour day.

Well I couldn't stand that, it was plainly seen,
So I took me a job on a cutting machine.

And I followed that and I done right well,
What went with the money, I never could tell.

I bought me a car that was fair to see,
A nineteen twenty-four model T.

We all should be down on our knees,
Praising John L. Lewis for giving us ease.

He lifted a load we could hardly pack,
Got a full dinner pail instead of a snack
(no more gravy),
Now my children know me since the seven-
hour day,
I got time for work and got time for play.

At cutting coal I was no snob,
A thug come along and he took my job.

But that was away back yonder when
Kentucky didn't have any Union men.

SIDE I: Band 3

The Harlan County Blues

Well a bunch of fellows, the other day,
When o'er to Harlan went.
They told me about the fun they had
All the time in jail they spent.

Well most of the fellows were like me,
Who didn't go along,
But if you want their story, boys,
Just listen to this song.

Well you didn't have to be drunk, they said,
To get thrown in the can,
The only thing you needed to be
Was just a Union Man.

None of the boys didn't like it much,
They said they was treated bad.
They took their knives, their pocketbooks,
Or anything they had.

They threwed Bill Wheeler in the can
With all his poison gases.
He had no money to pay a fine,
But they just took his glasses.

Then Kelly said, "You can't do this to me,"
When they come to get his name.
"Oh yes we can," the jailer said,
"You're in here just the same."

Well Delmos he went down the street,
To a restaurant was bent,
When two fellows picked him up
And to the jail he went.

Then our President he asked our Vice
"How did you get along so well?"
And Taylor Cornett laughed and said,
"Boy I'd hate to tell."

Lloyd Baker went over there
And to dodge the jail, he did.
He said, "You'd all stayed out of jail
If you kept your button hid."

Then Sam Ward went to the jailhouse,
And the jailer he twirled his keys,
And Sam said, "Mister Jailer,
Oh won't you listen please?"

Everything grew quiet, boys,
You couldn't hear a sound.
"Turn 'em out," Sam Ward said,
"Or we'll tear this jailhouse down."

When they all was free again,
You could hear them all take on.
Just think of the fun that we'd a missed
If we hadn't come along.

Now my song is ended,
And I hope no one is sore.
If there is, then please speak up,
And I won't sing no more.

SIDE I: Band 4

Sixteen Tons

According to George Davis, this song was first called "Nine-to-Ten-Tons," and he wrote it in reference to "this particular mine (which) had what is known as a Clean-Up System. This was before the days of the UMW. In a clean-up system you either cleaned up your place every day, or brought your tools out (quit?). An old expression the operator used then was, 'We've got a barefooted man waiting for your job.' Here's the catch — each place would make nine or 10 tons, but where you loaded this coal was very low; most of them had water in them — as much as three or four inches — and they had no pumps. On top of this you might have a cut of draw rock from 8 to 12 inches thick, 14 feet wide, and up to 9 feet long. All the coal, rock, and anything like wrecks, tore up track. All that was 'dead work' and it always had to be cleaned up, even if it took you 18 or 19 hours to do it."

Chorus:

I loaded sixteen tons and what do I get
Another day older and deeper in debt.
Saint Peter don't call me cause I can't go
I owe my soul to the company store.

I was born one morning, was a drizzling rain
A fussing and fighting ain't my middle name.
Well they raised me in a corner by a Mammy hound
I'm as mean as a dog but I'm as gentle as a lamb.

Chorus

Well I got up one morning, the sun didn't shine,
I picked up my shovel and I went to the mine,
I loaded sixteen ton of that number four coal
The face boss said, "Well bless my soul!"

Chorus

I loaded sixteen tons, I tried to get ahead,
Got deeper and deeper in debt instead.
Well they got what I made, and they wanted some
more,
And now I owe my soul at the company store.

Chorus

Well I went to the office to draw some script
The man, he told me — was a wreck in the dip.
To clear the tracks would be a week or more
But your credit's still good at our company store.

Chorus

If you see me coming, step aside.
A lot of men didn't and a lot of men died,
I got a fist of iron, I got a fist of steel,
The left one don't get you then the right one will.

Chorus

SIDE I: Band 5

Callahan

Played on fiddle by Marion Sumner. For a related performance of this tune from this part of Kentucky, hear "The Last of Callahan" played by Luther Strong at Dalesburg, Ky. Recorded for the Library of Congress in 1937 by Alan & Elizabeth Lomax (AAFS 2).

SIDE I: Band 6

Love of Polly and Jack Monroe

Oh come all you good people, here's a story you should know,
Of a girl named Polly, and a boy named Jack Monroe.
Oh, and a boy named Jack Monroe.

They fell in love so madly, and had named their wedding day,
And swore that nothing, darling, could tear our love away.
Oh, could tear our love away.

Her parents they got angry, and said she must obey.
They spent ten thousand dollars, to carry Jack away.
Oh, to carry Jack away.

Polly she went down in town, all dressed in crimson and gray,
Bargained with a captain, to carry her away,
Oh for to carry her away.

She stepped up to the captain, her money all in her hand,
Saying, "Please kind captain, send me to the far off land,
Oh, send me to the far off land."

"Your body is too slender, your fingers are too small,
Your cheeks too red and rosy, to face a cannonball.
Oh, to face a cannonball.

Since this is your intention, your name I'd like to know."
She answered very politely, "My name is Jack Monroe.
Yes, my name is Jack Monroe.

I know my body's slender, my fingers they are small,
But it wouldn't change my countenance, to see ten thousand fall.
Oh, for to see ten thousand fall."

Then Polly she set sailin', and soon did come to land.
Among the dead and dying, she found her darling man.
Oh, she found her darling man.

She picked him up all in her arms, and carried him to a town,
And hired a wealthy surgeon, to heal his deathly wound.
Oh, to heal his deathly wound.

This couple they got married, in the land of Germany.
This couple they got married, and why not you and me?

SIDE I: Band 7

Rocking Chair Money

Now we got the rocking chair money,
Got it the hard, hard way,
Working in the mines at Harvey,
Every doggone day,
And now we rock, yea rock,
Rock on down the line.

Now some of us work on motors,
Some of us load the coal,
Some work on the cutting machine,
And other jobs I'm told,
But now we rock, yea rock,
Rock on down the line.

Well, some of us pump the water,
Some of us lay the track,
And some of us load and gob all day
And oh our aching back,
But now we rock, yea rock,
Rock on down the line.

Tried to draw script this morning,
Script writer he said, by heck,
"Go on over to Hazard and draw your weekly check,
Come home and rock, yea rock,
Rock on down the line."

Now soon we'll be back working,
So, buddy, don't you fear,
I'll take my redhead shovel,
You can have my rocking chair,
If you like to rock, yea rock,
Rock on down the line.

SIDE I: Band 8

The Wreck of Main Line Motor Number 4

One bright sunshiny morning in the merry month of May,
To an east Kentucky coal mine came a young man one day.
His face was gay and smiling, had winning coal-blue eyes.
His soul is now a-resting in that home beyond the sky.

This young man he was a motorman, but he won't be any more,
His life was crushed out by the wheels of the Main Line Number Four.
He pulled out of the side track with a train of forty-two.
He had five miles to haul them and soon he would be through.

The switchman at the telephone rang the trapper at the door
Saying, "Line up all your switches for this Main Line Number Four."
And the trapper took his orders and he cleared the main line rail,
And then his train flew past him with the speed of U. S. mail.

He was going down the mountain, well known as Dead Man's Hill,
When a rock he saw upon the track made his brave heart stand still,
Was direct in the roadway, just thirty feet ahead,
And when at first he saw it, he knew he'd soon be dead.

The motor jammed against it, at forty miles an hour,
And all was plunged in darkness when the headlights lost their power.
The brakeman on the rear end car knew something had occurred,
He started for his partner with the swiftness of a bird.

"Say, old Pal, where are you? I cannot see your light."
And the brakeman scanned the wreckage with his heartstrings growing tight,
'Til a groan drew his attention to a pile of broken wood.
His buddy lay there on his back and the motor on him stood.

"What can I do to help you, Pal?" "There's no use,
Old Top,
There was a rock upon the track, I saw it and
couldn't stop.
Tell mother that I love her and kiss her for me,
Joe,
I'm going on to Heaven, I'm sure she'll want to
know.

I see my Saviour waiting to take me to his breast.
Goodbye, old Pal, good luck to you, I'm going
home to rest."

SIDE I: Band 9

The Three-Day Blues

Work three days and then no more,
That's just enough to keep a good man sore.

Chorus:

What's the matter, operator,
That you don't sign?
Put your name or your number
Down on the dotted line.

Woke up this morning 'bout a half past four,
The old work whistle don't blow no more.

Chorus

Now the operators think John L. is a fool,
But he's just a teacher in their Sunday school.

Chorus

Guess you've had your gravy so doggone long,
Now you're crying just because its gone.

Chorus

Well you've got what we make, and you still
want more,
Put us in debt at the company store.

Chorus

We've done everything that we think is right,
Still you won't sign, you just growl and fight.

Chorus

Now Taft and Hartley put a club in your hand,
So you could beat and knock on the mining man.

Chorus

Well you think everybody's on your side.
But we coal miners still have our pride.

Chorus

Well, you called on Truman to ease your pain,
You've got everything to lose, you've got
nothing to gain.

Chorus

Why don't you buck up and be a man,
Fall in line with our Welfare Plan.

Chorus

Well you've got me now 'til I can't speak
There's no Santa Claus on three days a week.

Chorus

Well you want everything and leave us none.
You don't want us to have any Welfare Fund.

Chorus

SIDE II: Band 1

Coal Miner's Boogie (Rich-R-Tone #453)

Well you work inside all day long,
When you come out you hear that song.

Chorus:

It's the Coal Miner's Boogie; Coal Miner's Boogie;
It's the Coal Miner's Boogie; Coal Miner's Boogie.
It's the Coal Miner's Boogie and you Boogie-
Woogie all night long.

When the old Number Four got you wore down,
Blisters on your hands from digging around.

Chorus

Now the motormen, truckmen begin to shout,
Caught the Coal Miner's Boogie 'cause we're
coming out.

Chorus

Now the old trackman keeps a-driving spikes,
Swinging his hammer with all his might.

Chorus

Now I can't eat and I can't sleep,
I can't do nothing, just wiggle my feet.

Chorus

Put a nickel in the slot and the music rolls out,
See them old coal miners Jitterbugging about.

Chorus

SIDE II: Band 2

Miner's Dream Come True

When the miner's welfare check comes to my door,
I won't never have to go to work anymore.
Every night I'll have a date,
Every morning I'll sleep late,
When the miner's welfare check comes to my door.

Now the UMW has got the forty cents,
And I can have enough to pay all my expense,
I can hunt and fish and play,
And eat three meals every day,
When the miner's welfare check comes to my door.

When I don't have to go to work, won't that be great,
And the mailman brings that check right to my gate.
I'll still be young and frisky,
When I reach the age of sixty,
And the miner's welfare check comes to my door.

I won't have to get up early and pack my lunch,
When my welfare check comes in every month.
With them widows I'll be handy,
Tell 'em lies and feed 'em candy,
When the miner's welfare check comes to my door.

I won't have to go to work anymore,
A-cuttin' coal and shoveling dust like before.
And at the age of eighty
I'll be home and stay with Daisy,
When the miner's welfare check comes to my door.

I can eat chicken and dumplings and apple pie,
Drive a car and wear good clothes and that's no lie,
And if I'm still alive at the age of sixty-five
I'll get the old age pension check until I die.

SIDE II: Band 3

Why Are You Leaving?

Not too long ago, why, they had a big slate fire,
'round in the eastern part of Kentucky, here, at
Fourseam, and the smoke turned everything black
and killed all the vegetables and the trees, and here's
what come out of it.

You're my employee, oh why did you leave?
Your smoke that is raging, you knew we couldn't
breathe,

When the doctors came to Fourseam, they found it
not a fake.
Where is the Devil? Oh yonder's his lake.

On a hill there lived a widow, not very far away
It killed all her garden stuff, she had to move away.

I'll tell you about her neighbors, it did to them the
same,
The smoke is what got them, they didn't mind the
flame.

And when they were sleeping, it slipped in through
the cracks,
The silverware in the cabinet drawers, also turned
black.

They say that it won't hurt you, a thing I don't
believe.
The smoke that's ascending, it's killing the trees.

SIDE II: Band 4

Jesus Appeared in a Barroom

One Saturday night, in a barroom,
A gospel singer walked in,
And bravely she read from her Bible,
And begged them to turn from their sin.

"Oh come unto Jesus," she pleaded,
"He'll be your staff and your rod."
When one of the drinkers said to her,
"I don't believe in your God.

I don't rightfully know how you prove them,
The pack of lies that you said,
If there be a God up in heaven
I dare him to strike me down dead."

Oh the silence that followed was awful,
The others stood there in fear,
But the drunkard he laughed and continued,
"Why doesn't your Jesus appear?"

Then one of the others who stood there
Said, "That's enough of that now.
What leads you to think that Lord Jesus
Would bother with you anyhow?"

You're only a bum and a drunkard,
And nothin' that you could say
Could reach up to God in his heaven
And make him go out of his way."

And then came the voice of a stranger
Who stood outside at the door,
A stranger who simply was passing
For no one had seen him before.

He raised his right hand above them,
His face lit up as he smiled,
"Our Lord marks the fall of a sparrow,
And every man is his child.

There's none so great or so lowly
That God's sweet mercy denies,
And even the ones who denounce him
Will never be lost in his eyes."

He raised his right hand above him,
And smiled upon everyone,
And the last words he spoke were like music.
I know because I am his son.

And each who were there will remember
The words to the very last day,
When Jesus appeared in a barroom
And told of God's wonderful way.

SIDE II: Band 5

Death of the Blue Eagle

The other day my paper came,
I set and scratched my head,
While turning through its pages, boys,
Here is what I read.
"The blue eagle he is ailing,"
The little writer said,
But when he finished writing
That eagle he was dead.

Now there's a man in Washington,
Roosevelt is his name
And how he's a-mourning o'er that bird,
It is an awful shame.
He told Hugh S. Johnson,
And Johnson said, "Mine God"
What can the miners ever do
Without their blue mascot?

The eagle went down shouting
Hurray for one and all,
But most folks couldn't take it,
They had to let it fall.
They took him to the graveyard,
In the merry month of May,
Said, "Who will solve our problems now,
There's no NRA?"

But we have an order boys,
The UMW of A,
And we must all stick to it
Until the judgment day.
But if you're undecided, boys,
And don't know what to do,
Just think how much a ton you got
In nineteen thirty-two.

SIDE II: Band 6

Glory in the Meeting House

Fiddle tune played by Marion Sumner. See also "Glory
in Meetinghouse," played by Luther Strong, at Dalesburg,
Ky. Recorded for the Library of Congress in 1937 by
Alan and Elizabeth Lomax (AAFS 2).

SIDE II: Band 7

Buggerman in the Bushes

Well there was an old man at the foot of the hill
If he h'ain't moved away he's a-living there still

Chorus:

Singing pie- diddle -i-diddle-i pie
diddle a diddle a day.

Well he hitched up his horse and he went out
to plow,
How he got around he never knew how.

Chorus

Well the devil come to him in the field one day,
Say one of your family I'm going to take away.

Chorus

Spoken:

Well the old man he looked up at the devil and said,
"Well, the old lady done cleared up the new ground,
fur me and she got the corn crib full of corn and,
well she got the wood shed chopped full of wood and
everything," so he looked up at the devil and smiled
and said:

"Take her on, take her on with the joy of my heart.
I hope by golly, you don't never part."

Chorus

Well the devil took her down to the forks of the road,
Said "Get down woman you're a devil of a load."

Chorus

Well the devil got her all up on his back,
He looked like a peddler with a pack on his back.

Chorus

Devil got her up to the gate farwell,
"Stir the fire up gonna scorch her well."

Chorus

"Boy you know she was tough old sister I'm
telling you,
She weighed about 95 lb. if she'd been soaking wet."

Chorus

Along come a little devil dragging a chain,
She picked up a hatchet and split out his brain.

Chorus

Then ten little devils came running down the walls,
Said "take her back daddy she's gonna kill us all."

Chorus

Old man said peeping out the crack,
And see the old devil come wagging her back.

Chorus

Old man got sick so she put him in the bed,
He picked up a butter stick and paddled his head.

Chorus

Well you can see what a woman can do,
She outdo the devil and her old man too.

Chorus

SIDE II: Band 8

A Child of Desertion

This is a story of a child whose parents — one went
one way, and one had gone the other. They met me on
the street one day, and asked me if I could help her
some way, to try to get her parents back together,
where she could have a home. Well, I did all I could
do, and this song is true.

A child of desertion, I wander in fear,
No Papa that owns me, no Mama that cares.
Cast out and forsaken, while stars shine above,
I'm worse than an orphan, without mother's love.

My Uncle acts Papa, and furnish me bread,
My Aunt acts as Mama and gives me a bed,
But still I am lonely, God help from above,
And quieten my wanderings without mother's love.

Some folks treat me kindly, encouragement to give,
To attract my attention, make me happy to live,
But if they could love me like angels above,
I'd still be an outcast without mother's love.

I hope in the future, if time still goes on,
That I shall be happy, and not be alone,
My smiles be as sunshine, and humble like dove,
No longer an outcast, without mother's love.

SIDE II: Band 9

White Shotgun

Now the day that I got married was in the month
of May,
And we had a celebration was such a happy day,
Her pappy was the best man, and I could plainly see,
That he had a twelve-gauge shotgun, and pointed
right at me.

Chorus:

But we had a formal wedding, Big White Shotgun,
And the old man he was so happy that he had me for
a son,
And all the local bachelors were glad when I got stung,
And we had a formal wedding, Big White Shotgun.

And the wedding march was playing, served old
mountain dew,
Her pappy was a-settin' there, to see that things
went through,
And about that time the lights went out and I said
here's my chance,
And I had the door knob in my hand, when his
buckshot hit my pants.

Chorus

And now that we are married, and everyone is so glad,
They say all the children should look just like their Dad,
But when I look 'em over, what a mystery!
For out of eighteen children, got one that looks like me.

Chorus

