

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FA 2493 STEREO

my epitaph Ola Belle Reed



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**ARTISTS:**

Ola Belle Reed – Guitar, Banjo, Vocal  
David Reed – Banjo, Guitar, Vocal  
Bud Reed – Harmonica  
All compositions are by Ola Belle Reed

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# My Epitaph

*A Documentary in Song and Lyric*

# Ola Belle Reed

PRODUCED BY KEVIN ROTH

RECORDED BY KING STREET RECORDING COMPANY

Based on a live interview during the summer of 1976

SPECIAL THANKS TO SANDY POMERANTZ

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# *High On A Mountain*

"I've been asked many times to describe my life in the mountains. There's one point I'd specifically like to make and want to make is that I don't believe there would be any way in the world that you could possibly describe it. There could be no fun made of it, because it was alive with the earth, your elements as the old people called it, the birds, the animals, the bees. You knew every season; you could tell when a storm was coming. You could always tell this because you could see the leaves turning in the summertime, particularly. In the winter you could tell when it was going to snow because of the color at the base of the trees. So many things you just grew up with that you get away from as you go through life if you're not careful. Now, I'm not saying that you go strictly back to the past, but I'm saying there's no way in the world that anybody could ever make fun or poke fun at the way people were raised in the mountains, because as far as the music is concerned, we did gospel, we did blues, we did everything. I did not play, I guess, what you would call professionally. The word just never quite suited me. Anyway there had to be every nationality in the mountains, at one time, for them to know each other's way of life. There was communication because I think people needed one another and they realized it so much. And I believe one of the reasons was because really and truly we were so close to the earth and the elements and the God's creation. I think that's the one thing that made them know. I think that the music and everything comes through communication with people. The people lived with the earth, they had to make their living. That's why I'm saying that you can not separate your music from your lifestyle. You cannot separate your lifestyle, your religion, your politics from your music. It's a part of life. And that's what our music was in the mountains. It was a part of our life."

1. High on a mountain  
Wind blowing free  
Thinking about the days  
That used to be  
Yes, high up on that mountain  
Standing all alone  
Wondering where the years  
Of my life had flown
2. As I looked  
At the valleys down below  
They were green  
Just as far as I could see  
My memories returned  
Oh how my heart did yearn  
For you and  
The days that used to be.
3. Oh, I wonder if  
You ever think of me  
Or if time  
Has blotted out your memory  
As I listen to the breeze  
Whisper gently through the trees  
I shall always cherish  
What you meant to me.
4. High on a mountain  
Wind blowing free  
Thinking about the days  
That used to be  
Yes, high up on that mountain  
Standing all alone  
Wondering where the years  
Of my life had flown

# *I've Endured*



"I've been lucky to have a chance to take a history of our life into places it's never been before. And I find wherever you go this is something that is very important. If you want a person to understand or learn about a subject such as I have talked about you don't run up and cram it in their mouth. You can show them a little love. No matter how contrary or how uppity they may seem, you can show them a little love and understanding. And you know, eventually if what you're doing is real, like Dr. Henry Glassey said, and he allows me to quote him, he said "They will know if you are phony". That is the most important part when you go in front of people. If you knew how hard that it is just to be yourself down through the years, I have tried to be myself yet I don't try to cut off the young people of today in our music. That's one of the things that's very easy. I try to be myself and just let myself be, but I don't turn around and cut down the other young people and their type. It's easier to learn it with one another. I have no prejudices toward any people. I have prejudice towards prejudice - let's put it that way. I have no jealousies. If people have things they can do better than I can, go farther, that's great. Sometimes those that have been lucky enough to go far, it sort of hurts me when I see them that they don't appreciate it. When I say that the average everyday person their representation may take them a lifetime, has taken me a lifetime to find it. I find more representation and more love and more equality in the young people today than I've ever had in my whole life. Through the young people, many of us older people are becoming let's say educated about life. I don't like to hear the word "hippie", it makes me mad. As people go through life and you live as long as I have and been through some of the things I have, I know there are things I'm finding out and learning every day I live. I don't think that I know everything, but I have a feeling about things, a strong feeling, and particularly pertaining to people, their lifestyles, their color no matter who they are or where they come from.

1. Born in the mountains  
Fifty years ago  
Trod the hills and valleys  
Through the rain and snow  
Seen the lightning flashing  
Heard the thunder roll  
I've endured. I've endured  
How long must a man endure?
2. Barefoot in the summer  
On into the fall  
Too many mouths to feed  
They couldn't clothe us all  
Sent to church on Sunday  
To learn the golden rule  
I've endured. I've endured  
How long must a man endure?
3. I've worked for the rich  
I've lived with the poor  
I've seen many-a-heartache  
I've seen many-a-more  
Lived, loved and sorrowed  
Been to success's door  
I've endured. I've endured.  
How long must a man endure?

# Sing Me A Song



(KEVIN) Do you have any one or two or three specific statements that you want to put down about your life or what happens to your material?

(OLA) Well, I have lots of material, and I sincerely hope before I leave this world that I can have a building, not to show people what we have collected, but a place to put it. If it was the last word that I ever spoke, I am hoping that you, any of the people I've known down through the years, and particularly, my son Dave. I am hoping that he will carry on. The things that are worthy of going into the archives to be kept for somebody else to learn about. I hope that the people that get ahold of them, if it's him he will know and understand know what it's all about, and that he will be able, that you people will be able to see that what I have collected and kept together over a period of years will be for people to study and go on and sue for a solid purpose. It it was my last wishes. I've raised a lot of children, we have, Bud and I, with David and my older son Ralph. I had hoped that maybe through some of them that there would be one place where if there was somebody needed to go, maybe a child that was on dope, way out, that somebody would see the sight of him. I'm not saying, it's not me, it's a thing that's hard to explain, but some of them would see them enough to give them a chance, at least a part, a place where they could go, feel that somebody cares. I am hoping that through some of you younger people, and particularly Dave, that what I have can be not filed in a filing cabinet but in a place. I'd like to have a big room with shelves all over it, nothing but big shelves, and label everything and put it there. I have letters that I would like for people to be able to read from people even in penitentiaries. I've been lucky to be with some of the younger people that have brought me along in this and helped a lot to expand some of the knowledge that they left for us. I love the young people. That's why I love the folk festivals. I'm hoping that the seeds will be planted in your minds, and that you can go on, because as a letter the other day said to me, people are crying out for unity and they don't always know how to get it.

1. Sing Me A Song, sing me a song  
When I come to the end of my journey  
And I know it won't be long  
Till I cross death's silent river  
Don't cry - just sing me a song.
2. As I travel through this life  
Midst the trouble and the strife  
Tho the days may be weary and long  
As I search for happiness, I find peace and rest  
When I sit down and sing me a song.
3. Tho our burdens are not light  
We're always fighting for the right  
Everything seems to always go wrong  
As we search for happiness  
We could find peace and rest  
When we sit down and sing just one song.
4. When we reach the other shore  
And we meet loved ones once more  
And join in the happy angel throng  
If I could forever sing, let the hallelujahs ring  
We'd be singing a hallelujah song.

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MyEpsilon



# My Epitaph

My epitaph was written just a few years back for a very special reason. It's not meant to make you feel bad or to make you not to know that when some of your folks pass on, that you don't take care in putting them away like they should be. But it is positively to make you think of today while they're living, while they can know about it. There was a young boy that came into my life just a few years back, a very young boy. He used to work for me. His mother had a family. She was a young woman. They divorced, and of course being a young woman, I mean naturally she was lonely, couldn't live alone she got herself a boyfriend. It so happened in the family that later on there was a little new baby born in the family. Well, this boy was always a happy-go-lucky jolly thing, but he was more serious than people thought. He wanted to tell me about the baby so bad, but he was a little afraid. He said one day, "Did You know that I had a new baby at my house?" I said, "Sure, why don't you bring it up and let me see it sometime?" Boy, he didn't live far from where he worked, and he went down and brought his baby up. He loved it to death. Just to show you the meaning of things, we're not always supposed to judge everybody. People do things sometime because they are afraid or because they're lonely. He brought his baby up and when he'd do his work, I'd always give him things to take home for his mother to cook and to use. His mother had asked me if I would take him, or the welfare people had asked me if I would take him, and I told them that I would but that I thought that they should tell him about it, because he didn't know. So, one evening he came to the store running and he stuck a note under my nose and he said "Read this". and I read it and the note had told him that the mother had gone and taken the baby, and let the other kids, and he was saying that she wouldn't have gone away if it weren't for him, and I'm going to stay in that house. He was really bitter, and I told him "that you can't do that." I said "Go to your grandmothers' so he went to his grandmothers and they still wanted him to come and live with me. Now, I told them that if he needs to come he can, you should tell him and not me. So, I asked him one day if he would like to come and live with me. He said "Sure, but you know my grandmother needs me very badly, and if I need to come I'll be there. I know that I have a place." He was sent away to a school and everything happened to him over a year or so, and he got out, and about a year or so before the accident happened he was by and I loaned him five dollars, and he'd come back and pay it back. He was staying with a friend. So, they had gone to get something for a party and they wrecked and he got killed. And of course everyone was saying that this happened and that had happened, they looked for it to happen, all that kind of stuff. When they had the viewing, they had the flowers, they had the silk, the satin, and everything. Of course, they putting on the dog really good. A friend of mine came from out of town. I had tried to get ahold of him to tell him when the viewing was, and he came and he went to the viewing. He came back and he was a big tough character, and he didn't show any emotion whatsoever. He was really disturbed, because he liked the boy, and he marched back and forth and he said "Well I've seen every movie that's ever been made, of every kind", and he said "That beats anything I've ever seen in my whole life. That was the best show I've ever seen." So I went home and for about, I don't know, it must have been for about a month that I went along thinking about it, and when somebody would say "I knew it was coming and this or that", I would say "I liked the boy." That was all I'd ever say. "I like the boy." and I really did, and I really did not feel too bad about it because, I said "No body can bother him anymore it's over, why don't they just hush and leave him alone." So, I got up one morning in my house about four o'clock and I wrote "My Epitaph."

1. When I go from this life  
Let me go in peace  
I Don't want your marble  
At my head and feet  
Don't gather around me  
Just to weep and to moan  
For where that I'm going  
I won't be alone.

2. The flowers you'd give me  
Please give them today  
Don't waste their beauty  
On cold lifeless clay  
One rose with love  
Could do so much good  
And I think all would give it  
If they just understood

3. God gives life freely  
Then he takes away  
What we do for each other  
Let us do it today  
For we have no promise

4. That tomorrow will come  
And don't sing my praises  
After I'm gone.

5. When life has departed  
It's not me anymore  
Just a form that has suffered  
And a still heart that was sore  
For the soul that has blossomed  
It don't need you anymore  
So let it go freely  
To God's evermore.



# Springtime Of Life

(KEVIN) How did you meet Bud?

(OLA) Well, there was one particular girl named Helen, and one night she took me over and introduced me to her brother. He just got home from the service. I went on and I spoke to him, and payed no attention, we went on with our dance, and we'd get out and lead them when they'd get to playing, and if they didn't know how to start it, we'd start them off. She laughs too today about how he got a little more than he should have had. And said he went home that night and layed down on the couch, he was laying there singing, singing away, and all he was saying was "Oh my Hulla girl" he must have been over in Honolulu I guess, he was singing "My Hulla girl my Hulla girl", and she was laughing and she told him that's Ola Belle. "Ola Belle, Ola Bella" and after a while, oh "My Hulla girl, my Hulla girl". So I got a letter, I don't know how long ago it was after that, I got a letter from him. He wanted to know if he could come and take me out but the mail had been on a strike, and the day we were at Sunset Park, and the time he was supposed to come and see me the letter didn't get there on time. He came to Sunset Park and that was the first time I ever went out with him. He came to Sunset park and took me home. We started going together, no big deal. First thing I knew we were married. So I guess it was time, I was getting old enough to be married. I was in my thirties.

1. We fell in love  
On a green grassy hillside  
In the springtime of life  
Did we chance to meet  
The flowers a-blooming  
The birds were a-singing  
The world and its riches  
Lay there at our feet
2. So sacred and tender  
Was young love a-blooming  
Once in a lifetime  
It happens that way  
We made our plans  
For the day we would marry  
We'd keep it a secret  
'til our wedding day.
3. Springtime it passed  
Then summer then fall  
And cold winter winds  
Brought fleecy white snow  
No longer we sat  
On the green grassy hillside  
The love we had shared  
Was lost evermore.
4. Both of us knew  
Our love was forbidden  
Not good enough  
Was the word they did say  
But I wanted to marry  
That boy from the mountains  
Still happily we planned  
for our wedding day.
5. For I moved away  
Not knowing the reason  
I waited so long  
For him to come  
But he did not come  
Then there came the message  
That he'd wed another  
And left me alone.
6. Young love in springtime  
On a green grassy hillside  
Could not endure  
The heat and the cold  
It was so strong  
While we were together  
Separated it was lost  
Like a rich man and his gold.

# Fortunes

(KEVIN) I know you have strong feelings about politics, and people, and how the government is, and how the world is just in general themselves People among people.

(OLA) That is right. I positively do. It's a terrible thing to say but I've been in business, I have played music, I have been in with people in and around people continuously for forty years. It is a terrible thing to say, but really and truly, the average everyday person like me. I'm not being pitiful, and I don't want any sympathy from anybody. I'm not saying it for that reason. But I'm saying that we have such a small bit of representation, and I have papers and letters to prove it, because, you are told to get in touch with your local authorities if you want to find out something. Then you get in touch with your state authorities, your state government, and in with your federal government. My letters always come back from the secretary's or somebody saying, "We were glad to get your letter, and I know you realize that the governor is a very busy man, and if there's anyway in which we can assist you," you know, you don't get there. I think that's exactly why we have had problems of people that have gone too far. They can't be heard so therefore you throw a rock!

There are fortunes in a lifetime  
That all our money cannot buy  
Like a tiny little snowflake  
Slowly floating from the sky  
There are wonders never ceasing  
Created by our masters hand  
But the greatest of all our fortunes  
Is in God's promised land.

#### Chorus:

Oh the rich man with all of his money  
All of his silver and all his gold  
He can't buy one breath of life  
Or a home for his weary soul  
For it is bought and it is paid for  
By the blood of the blessed lamb  
But the greatest of all our fortunes  
Is in god's promised land,

There are fortunes in a teardrop  
There are fortunes in a smile  
In the face of a weary pilgrim  
Or the face of a little child  
There are fortunes in your bible  
If you'll read it, you'll understand  
But the greatest of all our fortunes  
Is in God's promised land.

