

FOLKWAYS RECORDS STEREO FTS 33583



FOLKWAYS RECORDS STEREO FTS 33583

©1973 FOLKWAYS RECORDS AND SERVICE CORP.
17 W. 60th Street, N.Y.C., U.S.A.

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

SIDE 1

1. Rollin' to the Border
2. The Bold Desperado
3. The Lily of the West
4. The Katy

SIDE 2

1. Meet Me in the Roadhouse (Tonight)
2. Darlin' Billie
3. The Hills of Tennessee
4. Foggy Mountain Blues
5. Annie's Alley
6. The Ballad of Bill Guthrie

All songs © 1972, 1973 by Ron Turner

COVER PHOTO BY JOLLY ROBINSON

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

Library of Congress
Catalogue Card No. 73-750969

RON TURNER

FOLKWAYS RECORDS STEREO FTS 33583

RON TURNER



Photo by T. & P.
Cobbs

It was late morning when I went out on the front porch. The lady who lived in the wooden shack across the hay field was shouting to her neighbor down the road. A roadhouse out at the highway cross-roads had been set on fire the night before.

"They found young Jim Tuttle in the road last night down by the Split Rail. He was all doped up."

Her neighbor yelled back. "Henry says that whoever set fire to the place was probably the same bunch that blew it up with dynamite last week."

"Well, the sheriff ain't havin' too much luck findin' 'em."

"Don't care if he ever does, I never did like that place. Just as soon see the sheriff go too!"

The chickens in the coop next to the shack lady's yard started making alot of noise, clucking and beating their wings against the walls. A collie came tearing across the field, headed up the side of the road, cut across the tar, ran down the ditch and disappeared in the brush around the coop. She never barked once, but it wasn't too long before the noise died down. When it stopped, I heard someone yell, "Hey soupbean, come on down!" and there was Possum coming around the curve, soda bottle in his hand.

He walked past the chicken coop, came across the road, took a look at the pile of soda bottles stacked up around the front yard tree, and threw his on top. Then he came up the front steps and plunked down on the porch, all two-hundred and fifty pounds.

Possum wasn't very tall, and with his black greasy hair combed straight back on his high forehead, small black eyes set deep in his round face, and always wearing a black T-shirt, he did look like a big possum.

He was heaving and puffing so hard all he could do was smile. The teeth not missing were black with decay. Possum, y'understand, was a good old boy who loved that acid and speed. No one ever knew when he was tripping.

"You trippin'?" Willie would ask. Possum would smile and say, "Just thinkin' 'bout somethin'."

"Hey Possum, you goin' up to the Wagon Train today?"

"Yeah, waitin' for Chickenhawk to come back and drive me up. You too?"

"Sure. You gonna ride some horses with me when we get up there, right?"

"Not me, uh uh. Couldn't get me on one of those animals." He laughed. "Why don't you play somethin' on that gi'tar?"

Halfway through "Dear Old Dixie", Chickenhawk slammed into the front yard driving Trace's junk Ford. There was a big four barrel under the hood, and the clutch caught only half-way to the floor. Shifting gears was one slam after another. The trunk had been smashed in from some long forgotten accident. Trace had hooked the hood to the fender with a spring. Every time the car hit a bump, the trunk hood would flop up and down.

The day before, I'd driven the car out of town down to the banks of the Pigeon. Hauling down the river road, the gravel and stones kicked up against the floorboards and plinked against the chassis.

Chickenhawk and some of his buddies had been camping down on the river for a week now, sleeping inside a converted school bus. There were beer cans and trash all around their camp. An iron grill was set on two rocks over the remains of a fire. Everything looked like it had been rained on, including Bill, who was sitting by one of the trees lining the bank, beer can in one hand, a three day beard, and his left arm in a sling. The bandages were coming undone.

Otis ran up to the car window. "Man, you missed it, but he'll be back again tonight for sure."

"Who?"

"Climber, man!" "You should have seen it." He tucked his hair back underneath the bandana around his forehead. "See, we didn't even know he was comin', too drunk, and we hear this car comin' down the road, like, hell, we thought it was a plane or somethin', and Climber comes by, just missed old Bill's car, and he's doin' 'bout fifty with one arm locked up like this and the other on the wheel, cruisin' to beat all hell, and he goes down yonder, locks up that old drivin' arm, skids twenty feet sideways, revs her

up and drives straight for the river, but he done missed it! He missed it! Man!"

Otis ran over to a tree which had a piece of chrome trim stuck in the bark. "Right there, man!" Otis stomped in the mud with his cowboy boots. "He missed the river and hit the tree!" He ran back waving his beer can. "Charlie came down with the wrecker and towed him out. But Climber says he's gonna be back tonight." He took a pull off his beer, and wiped his moustache. "Climber was mad 'cause he couldn't find Charlette, and she was down here all the time with Chickenhawk. Just missed old Bill's car."

Bill grinned and went back to wrapping the bandages around his arm. Chickenhawk was asleep in the bus with his arm pressed against the window.

"Get on in. Trace is waitin' for his car up at the Wagon Train." Chickenhawk got out of Trace's car and picked up his bedroll from the front porch. Possum climbed in the back seat. "We gotta go pick up Willie before we leave."

Willie had spent three years in prison for counterfeiting. What he had to do with the printing of the bills he never made clear, but he was proud of the fact that it was over a year after the last bill was printed before the police were on to him. The day the sheriff pulled into the front yard, there were twenty-dollar bills blowing all over the neighborhood.

He had a one story house with a front porch swing and a stack of concrete blocks for steps. Next to the side window were three motorcycles, two of which didn't have any motors. Out in back were five rows of tomato plants six feet tall. At the far end of the rows was a weatherbeaten outhouse. With the plants so high, nobody bothered to walk that far.

Willie lived there with his Daddy, who came into the living room one night, and Willie said, "Here Daddy, play this here french harp," and his pa said, "I can't no more, I ain't got no teeth, these keep slippin'," and Willie said, "Ah, you can still play," and his Daddy hemmed and hawed, leaned against the doorjamb stroking his bald head, and said, "No!" but finally took the harp out of Willie's hand, tested it with a few yanks and pulls, took out his teeth, slapped the spit out of the harp with his hand, and started to wail on some old coon call. "Blow Daddy," and Willie grinned and started playing his guitar, and then they were both grinning and his Daddy started hopping around the room with the harp in his mouth.

If Willie wasn't out making money fixing up somebody's car, he was working on one of his guitars. He'd learned to play up in the pen. He had four guitars now, all made by the same company, all different models. He fixed the largest one up to be a dobro. "Ring like a bell." Whenever anyone got to talking about how good their guitar was, Willie would lean on in and say, "I play one of these here. Can't beat 'em for the money and they ring like a bell."

By a woodpile at the edge of the clearing, a man in a gas station monkey suit was talking to a group of boys gathered around him. He had a knife in one hand and a sharpening stone in the other.

"Now a knife's got to be sharp, ain't no good if it ain't." He pulled his cap down over his eyes and spit onto the stone. The boys spit onto their own stones and made the same up and down movement with their knives as he was making with his.

"Shave up, shave down, just like you was cuttin' a piece of paper."

He started to tell a story through the tobacco chaw in his cheek.

"When I was down in Odessa, Texas durin' the war, I walked into this bar in town. These people walked up to me, said, 'Hey, John, when did you get back?'" He spit out some juice. "Seems like everybody mistook me for this feller John, and I never did have no problem makin' friends in that town."

All the boys nodded their heads, spit on their stones and kept sharpening their knives, watching every move he made.

I started to roll my jacket out on the ground when someone behind me said, "Why don't you move over closer to my camper, it's alot cooler in the shade."

I turned around to see a man sitting in the shade beneath the trees. He was wearing blue overhauls, T-shirt, and a white straw fedora hat. He rose out of his chair and walked over.

"It's alot cooler there, huh?" He smiled underneath the shade of his hat and wiped his chin with a handkerchief.

"Havin' a good time up here?" I said I was.

He smiled. "Now me, I wouldn't have it any other way. Retired just this year. Plan to have a good time till the day I die."

He lit another cigarette. "Now, my mother, she was 93 when she was on her death bed. She could hardly talk, but when I'd come into the room and lean my head over to her head, she'd whisper, 'Frank, fix me up a pinch,' and I'd take a little bit of snuff, put it on the end of a piece of paper, and let the tobacco slide right down between her lip and gum. Give her a can to spit in, and she'd be as happy as could be. Tobacco didn't kill her, no sir, and it won't get me."

He paused and took a drink from his cup. "Me, I already had one heart attack, stroke that is, and I ain't never gonna stay in a hospital, no sir, couldn't get me in there again. Rather be up here on the Wagon Train."

He nodded towards his camper.

"Now, we got some nice fresh spring water over there, you just go on and help yourself to anything you want. Ain't nobody gonna chase after you. That's my wife, Mrs. Stokes, standin' over there. She'll find you a cup."

By a woodpile at the edge of the clearing, a man in a gas station monkey suit was talking to a group of boys gathered around him. He had a knife in one hand and a sharpening stone in the other.

"Now a knife's got to be sharp, ain't no good if it ain't." He pulled his cap down over his eyes and spit onto the stone. The boys spit onto their own stones and made the same up and down movement with their knives as he was making with his.

"Shave up, shave down, just like you was cuttin' a piece of paper."

He started to tell a story through the tobacco chaw in his cheek.

"When I was down in Odessa, Texas durin' the war, I walked into this bar in town. These people walked up to me, said, 'Hey, John, when did you get back?'" He spit out some juice. "Seems like everybody mistook me for this feller John, and I never did have no problem makin' friends in that town."

All the boys nodded their heads, spit on their stones and kept sharpening their knives, watching every move he made.

I started to roll my jacket out on the ground when someone behind me said, "Why don't you move over closer to my camper, it's alot cooler in the shade."

I turned around to see a man sitting in the shade beneath the trees. He was wearing blue overhauls, T-shirt, and a white straw fedora hat. He rose out of his chair and walked over.

"It's alot cooler there, huh?" He smiled underneath the shade of his hat and wiped his chin with a handkerchief.

"Havin' a good time up here?" I said I was.

He smiled. "Now me, I wouldn't have it any other way. Retired just this year. Plan to have a good time till the day I die."

He lit another cigarette. "Now, my mother, she was 93 when she was on her death bed. She could hardly talk, but when I'd come into the room and lean my head over to her head, she'd whisper, 'Frank, fix me up a pinch,' and I'd take a little bit of snuff, put it on the end of a piece of paper, and let the tobacco slide right down between her lip and gum. Give her a can to spit in, and she'd be as happy as could be. Tobacco didn't kill her, no sir, and it won't get me."

He paused and took a drink from his cup. "Me, I already had one heart attack, stroke that is, and I ain't never gonna stay in a hospital, no sir, couldn't get me in there again. Rather be up here on the Wagon Train."

He nodded towards his camper.

"Now, we got some nice fresh spring water over there, you just go on and help yourself to anything you want. Ain't nobody gonna chase after you. That's my wife, Mrs. Stokes, standin' over there. She'll find you a cup."

As she drew me a glass of water, Mrs. Stokes told me that she too had just retired. "I worked as a matron in the county jail for twenty years. Made sure the cells got cleaned up. There was one bucket and mop, they'd get passed from cell to cell. Any girl that didn't clean up her mess didn't get no supper."

"Sometimes I had to use my rubber hose on a couple of 'em, to straighten 'em out. Just marched 'em on down to the closet, lock us both in there for a few minutes or so. Never did have one that wouldn't clean up after a session or two. Always seems that the hardest girls to handle were the ones in for drugs."

She pushed her hair back from her eyes and asked me if I'd been with the crowd that had been by her camper the night before.

I told her that I hadn't, but I'd heard that some fiddle players from Tennessee had been playing for awhile.

"Well, I want you to know that they wasn't the only ones playin' music here last night. There were some other young'uns 'round here playin' that rock and roll. Now that ain't for folks like us. We're not used to that sorta thing, us older people like to listen to the fiddles and banjos. Now if they want to play that other stuff, they ought to take it somewheres else where it won't bother nobody." She tightened her lips and looked around to see if anybody was listening.

"I want to show you somethin'."

She walked over to the camper and reached inside the door.

"Come here and look at this."

She opened up her hand and showed me a pack of rolling papers.

"Now this here wasn't for no tobacco, them kids here last night were smokin' that marijuana. I could smell it right through the window of my camper. They were settin' right outside my window till four o'clock in the mornin', playin' that music, and smokin' marijuana. Now that's just somethin' I won't tolerate.

This Wagon Train is for good folks, and I got a good mind to call the police up here."

Frank came by the camper wearing a wig of curly blond hair that fell to his shoulders. As he walked past, he smiled and put his finger to his lips. Then he sneaked up behind one of his friends, poked him in the ribs and yelled, "White lightnin'!" His friend jumped a couple of feet forward and turned around. When he saw Frank in the wig, he slapped his knees and started to laugh.

I woke up to find the sun gone and Trace haning over me. "Come on, the music's gonna start pretty soon."

There were a couple of hundred people standing on the other side of the road. Most of them were underneath the trees next to the campers and trucks. The clearing stayed empty except for

a few children hanging on to the side of the hay wagon. Riders on horseback gathered in two's and three's behind the wagon, one leg swung up over their saddles. Young boys and girls rode shetland ponies in and out of the crowd.

Some kids were drinking beer out of paper cups and yelling, "Hey soupbean, come on down!" When the banjo player laid into "Cripple Creek", they were the first to start buck dancing, jumping up and down, and yelling even louder than before.

Junior Holcomb was leading the band. He'd come in from Waynesville with his guitar player. Willie was up playing his guitar behind Junior's banjo. When everything sounded good to Willie, he started to grin and lean in close to the fiddle player.

After an hour of playing, they would be getting ready to warm up, in three hours, they would be getting close to hot, and by the time they quit the stage, they would be ready to play till four or five o'clock in the morning. Sometimes they would start to playing for ten or twelve hours straight, for two, three, even four days in a row.

Everybody looked straight ahead when Deputy Sheriff Collins climbed out of the police car and walked through the clearing. The group of kids by the car were still making their hoots and hollers. One boy laying on top of the car saw the deputy, and let out with a big rebel yell. The deputy walked straight over to him and pointed his finger at him.

"Come here, boy."

The boy sat up and said, "Yes sir, Deputy, what do you want with me, Sir?"

The deputy reached up, grabbed the boy's arm, and pulled him off the car.

"Son, you got no respect for the law. I've come up here to take you in."

Before the deputy knew it, the crowd had surrounded him. Some of the men had run off to their camps when they'd seen the deputy coming and had returned with their guns. Mr. Jackson, who needed a cane to get around, was trying to make it up the hill to his camper. His wife was trying to calm him down, saying "Stanley, you'll get sick! Stanley, let the other men take care of it!" He just kept on walking as fast as he could. "They can't come up here and try and boss us around. I'm gonna get my gun."

Frank Stokes made his way to the deputy.

"What you doin' with this here boy, Hank?"

"Gonna take him in."

"What for, he ain't done nothin'."

"He's creatin' a public nuisance."

Frank leaned into the deputy's face. "This here ain't no public place, this is the Wagon Train, and you ain't got no business up here. We take care of our own troubles, and the only trouble up here is you! Why don't you clear out?"

The deputy looked around and saw the rifle in Trace's hand. Trace smiled back. The deputy let go of the boy's arm and put his hand on his holster.

Sheriff Collins, the deputy's brother, came through the crowd.

"Howdy Sheriff, glad you came over to take the deputy home."

"Stokes, I came up here to take in John Williams. We got a call from one of the ladies up here that he's been selling drugs."

Frank's nostrils flared. "Sheriff, I told the deputy and I'm tellin' you, if there's any problems up here, we take care of 'em. I think you'd better leave now, and take your brother with you."

The sheriff looked around at the faces in the crowd, then back at John Williams and Frank Stokes. He took the deputy's hand off of his gun. The crowd opened up to let them pass through. The band had never stopped playing, and as the sheriff and the deputy drove away, the music got louder and faster.

I walked away from the clearing and started towards the mountains. In the darkness I could hear two horses coming down the road. I stepped to the side as a rider yelled "Whoa." David Stinson leaned out of the saddle. "I been lookin' all over for you. I'm gonna ride all night and you can take this horse if you want him?"

I told him what had happened down at the clearing.

"Man, they sure got alot of nerve thinkin' they can come up here like that!"

The wail of a siren came through the woods and a red flasher spun around on the top of a car pulling into the clearing. I took the reins of the second horse and we rode towards the light. The attendants were lifting Frank Stokes' body into the back of the ambulance.

Possum was sitting on top of the woodpile. He looked up at us and said, "Heart attack."

The next day, everyone came down to the hay wagon and talked about whether or not they should leave. One man in a small visor cap and green army trousers said, "I think Frank would have wanted us to stay. He was up here to have a good time, and he wouldn't want us to leave on his account." The crowd agreed.

By three o'clock, everyone had broke camp, all except Mr. Sutton, who had more horses there than anybody else.