

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FTS 37585

# **WILLIE SORDILL    SILENT HIGHWAYS**



PHOTO BY PETER SYLVESTER

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE



FOLKWAYS RECORDS FTS 37585

**SIDE 1**

Best of Friends  
More than Brothers  
(For Paul Desmond  
and Dave Brubeck)  
Primary Emotional  
Committment  
El Salvador  
My Love is Not an Island

**SIDE 2**

Gone, Gone, Gone  
Bobby  
No Easy Answers  
Attraversando il Tevere  
Share Your Load

All songs were written by Willie Sordill,  
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Produced by Willie Sordill

Engineered by Karen Kane  
Studio Assistance by Kathy Buchsbaum

Mixed by Willie Sordill and Karen Kane

Recorded March-June, 1983 at Downtown Recorders, Boston MA

All songs arranged by Willie Sordill

Vocal harmonies on *Gone, Gone, Gone* and *Share Your Load*  
arranged by Susan Abod

Photography by Peter Sylvester and Ellen Shub

The musicians who perform on this album composed their own  
parts in collaboration with the arranger.

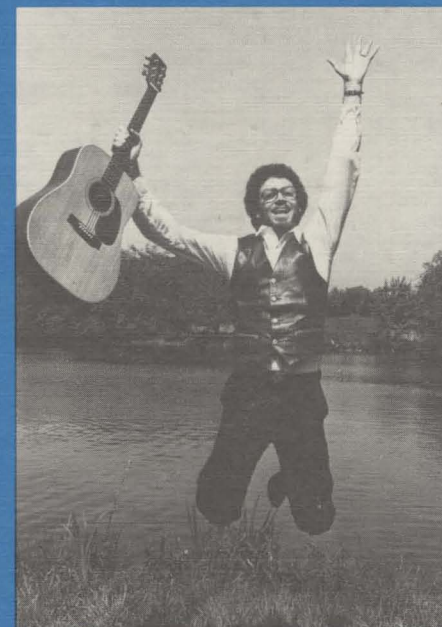


Photo by Ellen Shub

Supporting Musicians: Susan Abod, Sa Davis, Court Dorsey,  
George Fulginiti-Shakar, Matt Glaser, Eric Levenson, Dennis  
Pearne, Renee Purnell, Sue Robbins, Betsy Rose, Deborah  
Silverstein and Howie Tarnower

This album is dedicated to my parents, Pat and Mike Sordill,  
with love and appreciation for their unquestioning support of  
my music and my life.

Willie Sordill  
*Silent Highways*

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## **WILLIE SORDILL**

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## **SILENT HIGHWAYS**

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FTS 37585

**RETURN TO ARCHIVE**  
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FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FTS 37585

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# SILENT HIGHWAYS

## WILLIE SORDILL



Photo by Ellen Shub

To those of you who have been with me through Walls to Roses and Please Tip Your Waitress, thanks for your continued support; and to you whom I'm meeting for the first time, welcome, and thanks for tuning in. I hope this will be the start of a long friendship.

Music has given me the opportunity to do a lot of traveling over the past few years. I feel like I've gotten to know some of the nation's highways rather intimately. But the journeys that stay with me are those excursions into the lives of people who have touched my own, sharing their experiences- or something less tangible still- in a way that affects the course I follow.

Sometimes it's been a close friend; other times a brief encounter, but these glimpses of other people's personal roadmaps have helped me choose which path to take. Each of them is, in a sense, a road I was previously unaware of, but which I now travel regularly, whether or not I was conscious of the choice to do so. I know I'll be walking these silent highways for the rest of my life.

### SIDE ONE

#### Best of Friends

Willie Sordill- lead vocal, acoustic guitar  
Betsy Rose- piano  
Renee Purnell- fretless electric bass  
Sa Davis- percussion  
Matt Glaser- violin  
George Fulginiti-Shakar- harmony vocals

Written for one of my favorite musical duo's, Cathy Winter and Betsy Rose, on the occasion of a party celebrating their years together and their decision to work apart. The specifics of the song reflect my own experiences and feelings in the midst of relationships undergoing change rather than theirs. I hope I caught some of the spirit, if not the detail of what they might have been going through.

#### Best of Friends

Seven years is a long, long time, I don't care what they say  
Anyone who thinks going our own way is failure was not on the road all that way  
It's not that we no longer speak the same language or no longer sing in one key  
We speak without words and we've harmonized so long each part's got it's own melody

Best of friends  
We were the best of friends  
Best of friends  
You and me  
Best of friends  
We were the best of friends  
And though we're apart you're a song that my heart sings forever

All right I'm angry sometimes if you must know, but it's o.k., I forgive you  
Just because you sang flat on the songs I wrote doesn't mean that you meant to  
What do you mean that chord doesn't work here- I tell you it's all in your taste  
Damn you, then, I didn't say that you have none; I love you- please go away

Best of friends  
We were the best of friends  
Best of friends  
You and me  
Best of friends  
We were the best of friends  
And though we're apart you're a song that my heart sings forever



Nobody's saying that parting is easy, nobody said we wouldn't cry  
We've cried before and you can cry too, but remember that nobody died  
It's not that we no longer need your support- maybe now more than ever we do  
But don't mourn your loss, just think of your gain- now instead of two halves  
you've got two

Best of friends  
We were the best of friends  
Best of friends  
You and me  
Best of friends  
We were the best of friends  
And though we're apart you're a song that my heart sings forever

So you go your own way, I'll go mine alone and may we both go very far  
It feels so good now to stand at a distance, remember again who you are  
And now that we don't have to see eye to eye, I just stand here in awe of your glow  
I no longer have to feel hurt cause we're different, still part of me goes where you go

Best of friends  
We were the best of friends  
Best of friends  
You and me  
Best of friends  
We were the best of friends  
And though we're apart you're a song in my heart...  
Though we're apart you're a song in my heart...  
Though we're apart you're a song in my heart

#### More than Brothers

For more than thirty years in the curve of the piano  
Sending soaring tones of love, warming as they glistened  
His friend just breaths away, in complementing interplay  
Sometimes folding hands across the bell he stood and listened  
Each solo a duet  
Each note a christening

More than friends  
Lovers, yet not lovers  
In perfect counterpoint  
Even more than brothers

Sometimes as they played their eyes would meet, they'd smile  
The look of a young child; the audience was stunned, it left us gasping  
But that was long ago, for Paul is far away  
Faded like his melodies into the air, and like them lasting  
And when I hear Dave play  
I see Paul passing

More than friends  
Lovers, yet not lovers  
In perfect counterpoint  
Even more than brothers

Now sometimes as he plays, head bowed down to the keys  
Polyrhythms pouring out the colors of his vision  
Hearing what's to come from one he knows so well  
He raises up his head, looks to the curve, but Paul is missing  
Still he hears a horn  
But he's just wishing

More than friends  
Lovers, yet not lovers  
In perfect counterpoint  
Even more than brothers

More than friends  
Lovers, yet not lovers  
In perfect counterpoint  
Even more than brothers

#### More than Brothers

Willie Sordill- vocal, acoustic guitar, alto saxophone  
George Fulginiti-Shakar- piano  
Dennis Pearne- electric bass

For Paul Desmond and Dave Brubeck. I grew up as an alto saxophone player, and Paul was my first musical hero. He died in 1976, two months after the one time I witnessed his playing. The music of the Dave Brubeck Quartet still has a powerful emotional impact on me, and I think their music gained its depth of feeling in part because of the close bonds between the members of the group.

#### Primary Emotional Commitment

Willie Sordill- acoustic guitar  
George Fulginiti-Shakar- piano

Sometimes words can't come close to saying what you're feeling.

#### El Salvador

Willie Sordill- vocal, bottleneck guitar



El Salvador

You hear a knock on your door, you know your time has come  
You hear a knock on your door, you know your time has come  
Feels like 1939, but this is 1981

Can't get no rest, cannot get any sleep  
I can't get no rest, I cannot get no sleep  
Cause even in the daytime, they make their midnight creep

I lost my sister, I lost my best friend, too  
I lost my sister, I lost my best friend, too  
But don't be caught crying or the next one will be you

And I can't call the police cause they're already here  
Can't call the army, they're the cause of my fear  
Can't call a lawyer even if I could pay  
Cause the generals don't care for the law anyway  
But they won't be here tomorrow, wouldn't be here today  
Without machine guns and money from the USA

I farm the land, I want to live in peace  
I work the land, just want to live my life in peace  
Don't mind dying long as I can die free

Trouble is brewing in El Salvador  
Trouble is brewing in my home El Salvador  
We've got some intervention and we've got some civil war

They call me suspicious, they're trying to steal my voice  
They call me seditious, they're trying to steal my voice  
They call me a rebel, but they never gave me a choice

And you can't call the police cause they're already here  
Can't call the army, they're the cause of my fear  
Can't call a lawyer even if I could pay  
Cause the generals don't care for the law anyway  
But they won't be here tomorrow, wouldn't be here today  
Without machine guns and money from the USA

My Love is Not an Island

Willie Sordill- vocal, acoustic guitar, African percussion box  
Betsy Rose- piano  
Renee Purnell- fretless electric bass  
Sa Davis- percussion  
Sue Robbins- hammered dulcimer

A love song to no one in particular- and to everyone I love.

My Love is not an Island

My love for you is not an Island  
Alone in the distance in the middle of an empty sea  
My love for you is not a summer breeze  
Passing through here on its way to somewhere else  
My love for you is an ocean wave  
And the ocean does not cease to pound when we're not there to see

My love for you is not a mountain  
Whose beauty from afar is matched by its dangers up close  
My love for you is not a winding cave  
That begs you to enter and swallows you up in the dark  
My love for you is a redwood tree  
And a tree has its roots in the earth but moves with the wind

I am a lake deep in the fold of a valley  
You are a spring and you overflow my banks  
I am the soil shaping a gentle hillside  
You are the grass and you keep me from washing away  
I am the sea, you are the moon  
And my tides must follow the changes that are you

And a tree has its roots in the earth but moves with the wind

And the ocean does not cease to pound when we're not there to see

SIDE TWO

Gone, Gone, Gone

Willie Sordill- lead vocal, acoustic guitar  
Eric Levenson- acoustic bass  
Howie Tarnower- mandolin, banjo  
Matt Glaser- violins  
Deborah Silverstein- harmony vocal  
Susan Abod- harmony vocal

Gone, Gone, Gone

I'm riding on a tank of gas and a tank of caffeine brew  
I grabbed in Capitola as I went flying through  
There's a bluegrass show on the radio, K-FAT San Jose  
The D.J. says "Howdy! Dallas Dobro is my name!"  
He says if I've got headphones on I'd better take 'em off  
"This signal's just a test but it'll sure sound real enough!"



I'm gone, gone gone, south on Highway 1  
Six cylinders, four doors on the run  
And it won't be long, keep driving on  
Till I reach the border or catch the setting sun

Don't know if it's the music or the sea or just the drive  
But I feel so good I know I'll burst if I keep it inside  
He's playing J.D. Crowe, Emmy Lou and Ricky Scaggs  
And just for spice, cause it feels nice, here's one by Johnny Cash  
And when I think he's hit his limit, just in time he finds  
A song about California, "where the palm trees meet the pines"

I'm gone, gone, gone, south on Highway 1  
Six cylinders, four doors on the run  
And it won't be long, keep driving on  
Till I reach the border or catch the setting sun

I'm cruising on those coastal cliffs, down by Monterey  
If I don't stop looking out the side it'll be my last hooray  
I finally stop by some big rock and climb down to the sea  
The sign says "No Trespassing" but I know they don't mean me  
It makes me want to hoot and hollar, think that I could fly  
Back on top, I'd better stop, before I up and try

I'm gone, gone, gone, south on Highway 1  
Six cylinders, four doors on the run  
And it won't be long, keep driving on  
Till I reach the border or catch the setting sun

#### Bobby

Willie Sordill- vocal, acoustic guitars  
Betsy Rose- piano  
Renee Purnell- fretless electric bass  
Sa Davis- percussion  
Court Dorsey- harmonica

Bobby is a fictional character composed of two real ones, with only a little of my own invention. Some things we'd like to forget just won't go away, a fact unchanged by attempts to refuse to take seriously people who remind us of our past failures.

#### Bobby

Friday night's the fish fry at the Legion  
Bobby doesn't come inside for that  
Plates piled high, glasses full, there's laughter and there's lines  
Bobby's hiding outside in the back  
Eight o'clock the serving stops, the place begins to clear  
Men come from the kitchen, take their aprons off and grab a beer  
A secluded spot in the parking lot, Bobby's wild eyes strain  
His mind's a jungle battlefield a million miles away

And anyone who thinks we left that war in seventy-three  
Is just an armchair quarterback who watched it on TV  
You don't have to condemn me for what you think I've done  
I've already condemned myself; the war has just begun

His body leans against a pick-up truck  
The smell of burning grass; clothes are wet  
The sound of rain on matted roof; the sudden move; the blast  
The pregnant woman bleeds, but she's not dead  
He knows that he can't carry her, she'd only slow him down  
He fires his M-16 into her skull and looks around  
Then he sees her daughter, now alone, without a chance  
He fires one more time and walks away without a glance

Anyone who thinks we left that war in seventy-three  
Is just an armchair quarterback who watched it on TV  
You don't have to condemn me for what you think I've done  
I've already condemned myself; the war has just begun

Inside the boys are huddled in their corner  
They tell the same old stories every week  
About the time in the Last Great War or over in Korea  
Bobby walks past them but doesn't speak  
His back's to them he leans into the juke box lights and stares  
He knows they'll talk about him but he acts like he don't care  
They say he's all burned out on drugs; some say it's orange gas  
Bobby knows it's just the price you pay for coming back

And anyone who thinks we left that war in seventy-three  
Is just an armchair quarterback who watched it on TV  
You don't have to condemn me for what you think I've done  
I've already condemned myself; the war has just begun

It's time to lock the Legion up- the boys are headed home  
Bobby's frozen to the blank machine  
They try to pull him out; his beer glass falls and then explodes  
As he steps into the night he wants to scream  
The boys walk to their cars and leave him standing there alone  
Funny how the place he thought was hell feels more like home  
At least he knew his job there and he learned to do it well  
He wonders if tonight he'll kill one more, maybe himself

Anyone who thinks we left that war in seventy-three  
Is just an armchair quarterback who watched it on TV  
You don't have to condemn me for what you think I've done  
I've already condemned myself; the war has just begun

#### No Easy Answers

Willie Sordill- vocal, acoustic guitar, cowbell, alto saxophones  
Betsy Rose- piano  
Renee Purnell- fretless electric bass  
Sa Davis- percussion



### No Easy Answers

I try to read the New York Times, wind up face down in my Cheerios bowl  
The only good news, it seems to me, don't have to worry 'bout growing old  
What's that you say- I exaggerate?  
Maybe so, but we'll see  
I read about crimes that fight for headlines  
Come on, encourage me

And there's no, no easy answers, when we feel no hope  
When our dreams are scarred and battered and our spirit's nearly broke  
No words of comfort to carry us through  
All we've got left is me and you

In the early evening, turn on my radio  
To find how we have fared today on this spinning planet home  
Hard times for the ERA, the defense budget grows  
All things considered, I'd rather hear the Prairie Home show

And there's no, no easy answers, when we feel no hope  
When our dreams are scarred and battered and our spirit's nearly broke  
No words of comfort to carry us through  
All we've got left is me and you

Six minutes to midnight, I couldn't feel much worse  
Wondering if atoms for peace or nuclear war is gonna get us first  
Power companies and the Pentagon have their reasons-  
I have fear  
But a million faces at the United Nations gonna tell me what I need to hear

Still there's no, no easy answers, when we feel no hope  
When our dreams are scarred and battered and our spirit's nearly broke  
No words of comfort to carry us through  
All I've got left is all of you

Sometimes I feel like this guitar is the only friend I know  
It doesn't always stay in tune but it'll get me through this show  
And if I treat it right  
It'll do the same for me  
But to my surprise, when I watch the sunrise, still want to share it with  
some human company

And there's no, no easy answers, when we feel no hope  
When our dreams are scarred and battered and our spirit's nearly broke  
No words of comfort to carry us through  
All we've got left is all of you

### Attraversando il Tevere

Willie Sordill- acoustic guitar, finger cymbals  
Sue Robbins- hammered dulcimer

...which means, "Crossing the Tiber" in Italian, is the  
story of my first hour in the land of my father's family,  
shared by my father, mother, sister and brother.

### Share Your Load

Willie Sordill- lead vocal, acoustic guitar  
Betsy Rose- piano  
Renee Purnell- fretless electric bass  
Howie Tarnower- mandolin  
Deborah Silverstein- harmony vocal  
Susan Abod- harmony vocal

### Share Your Load

You walk down the road, back bent in pain  
Your shoulders are aching but you never complain  
The weight that you carry seems yours alone  
But the journey is shorter if you'll share your load

Please share your load  
Share your load  
You needn't bear it alone  
Share your load  
Share your load  
Together we'll carry it home

Grief strikes deep like a knife in your heart  
Part of you dies when a loved one must part  
The wound that is opened won't soon be healed  
But the space is less empty when you let me come near

And share your load  
Share your load  
You needn't bear it alone  
Share your load  
Share your load  
Together we'll carry it home

You're changing the world, changing yourself  
You learn what to keep and what to leave on the shelf  
The task has no end; it takes time to root  
But sharing this work becomes its own fruit

Please share your load  
Share your load  
You needn't bear it alone  
Share your load  
Share your load  
Together we'll carry it home



The most difficult part of these notes to write is the thank you's. It's not that I have a hard time saying "Thank you"- to the contrary, I inevitably get caught up in finding it hard to eliminate anyone from the list. Last time around, I tried to keep it short. To hell with that. To those of you who find yourself left off this list, I apologize; it is only due to my inability to see my hand in front of my face. To those who may feel that your appreciation is slighted by its appearance on such a long list, it ain't so; I know what each of you has given me, and I love each of you for it as I can love only you. Be it economic support, inspiration or long-time friendship and encouragement, I needed what you had to offer me, and I thank you deeply for giving it to me:

Moses Asch, Pat, Mike, Patti and Mike Jr. Sordill, Anne Wilson, Peter Sylvester, Bee Jouett, Fred Small, Sox Sperry, Jim Koplin, Ric Johnson, Ellen Shub, John and Beth Beams, Kithy Johnson, Judy Betterton, Nancy Kennedy, Paula Domino and Richard DeHaas, Peter and Melanie Rosalsky, Mark Horowitz and Eve Geissinger, John and Ruth Glick, Christopher Condit, Daphne and Karen Ruby, Janet White, Ruth Pelham, Allen Thurman, Larry Rosenberg, Tennis and Mary Mahoney, Chris MacElveen, Pat Swanson, Deborah Silverstein, Garth Matthes, Mark Hartman, Rich Heyniger, Deb Axness, John Hunckler, Larry Blum, Dee Marquart, Ben Schwartz, Linda Falstein, Joe Glazer, Sabid, John Desmond, Esther Hanchett, Tom and Carrie Domino, Tom Jr., Chuck, Ted, Mary Kay and Hannah Domino, Pat Magee, Oakes Plimpton, Dick and Roberta Adams, Glenn Rothfeld, Paul Stein, Judy Hinds, Sally Koplin, Jane Mildred, Sherry Todd, John Rodecker, Tova Green, Rita Toll, David Jaggar, Geof Morgan, Steve Wells, Charlie Murphy and Good Fairy Productions, John Paul, Gary Lapow, David Steinberg, Jeanne Mackey, Sally Platek, Patty Parker, Lynn Tibbets, Maida Tilchen, Kim Harvie, Brian and Betsy Rickenbacker, Jake, Martha Leader, Landon Rose, Bob and Rae Ann Donlin and the Passim Coffee-shop, John Edgerton, Jana Talley, Ray Makeever, Gay Community News, Maxine Feldman, Rich Seckel, Eric Kilburn, Johanna Halbeison, Elizabeth Lee, Cathy Maier, WERS, John Gardner and Julie Kerkick, Joanna Cazden, Colin Jones, Karen Kane, Marcia Taylor, Marcia Diehl, Katie Tolles, Pat Ouellette, Richard and Sherry Porter, Nick Kiern, Bernie Lougee, Lindsey Beane, Sara Freedman, Mike Biernbaum, Kristen Lems, Polly Laurelchild, Steve McLauchlin, Joe Martin, Nick Plakias, Leslie Taylor, Kathy Moore, Eric Gordon, People's Voice Cafe, Len Rothenberg, Mario Porporino, Leslie Judd, Charlie King, Dave Weidenfeld, Lynn Rayburn, David Giveans, Susan Madden, Eric Rofes, Lou Cantor, Louis DeVeyra, Rick DeBolt, Bernie Lohmuller, Lynn Rosalsky, Hal Muskat, Rieger Family, Donni Richman, Mary McCaffery, Diane Martin, Dorie Krauss, John Messinger, Susan Levene, Chris Sperry, Linc Sperry, Gale Simon-Bierenbaum, Steve, Paige and Michael Whitten and the Whitten Family, Paula Parsky, Eleanor Williams, Everett Goodwin, Robert Smyth, Davis Bates, Frank Bove, Meg Christian, Leonard and Kim Festa, Demian, John Carter, Kathleen Frantz, Linda Allen, Dennis Buckland, Shepherd Bliss, Karen Branan, Bill Turnley, Mulugetta, Laura Burns, Roger Rosen, Michael Hussin, Anabel Graetz, Dick and Diane Freiburger, Cathy Winter, Sandy Sachs, Lowell Thompson, Steve DeLapp, Debbie Tedesco, Stan Shoemaker, Penny Rosenwasser, Geoff Wilkinson, Womansong, Bobby McGee, all of the musicians on this album- and all of you whose names I don't know or have forgotten, but who have given me more than one person deserves through your support at concerts, through letters, and in other ways...

If you would like to contact me for any reason, please write to me at:

38 Jay Street  
Cambridge, MA 02139

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
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**FOLKWAYS Records**  
AND SERVICE CORP., 43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C. 10023  
Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 1/3 RPM

**SILENT HIGHWAYS**

Willie Sordill with Susan Abod, Sa Davis, Court Dorsey, George Fulginiti-Shakar,  
Matt Glaser, Eric Levenson, Dennis Pearne, Renee Purnell, Sue Robbins,  
Betsy Rose, Deborah Silverstein and Howie Tarnower

**SIDE 1**

**FTS 37585 A**  
**STEREO**

**BEST OF FRIENDS**  
**MORE THAN BROTHERS** (For Paul Desmond  
and Dave Brubeck)

**PRIMARY EMOTIONAL COMMITMENT**

**EL SALVADOR**

**MY LOVE IS NOT AN ISLAND**

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AND SERVICE CORP., 43 W. 61st ST., N.Y.C. 10023  
Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 1/3 RPM

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Betsy Rose, Deborah Silverstein and Howie Tarnower

SIDE 2

FTS 37585 B  
STEREO

GONE, GONE, GONE

BOBBY

NO EASY ANSWERS

ATTRAVERSANDO IL TEVERE

SHARE YOUR LOAD

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