

# pete seeger



headline notes A COLLECTION OF TOPICAL SONGS

F-40111



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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For nearly 60 years Pete Seeger has been using music to move people to improve their lives and world. Selected from hundreds Seeger recorded for Folkways Records between 1955 and 1999, these tracks include concert and studio recordings. Accompanying himself on banjo or 12-string guitar, he performs some of his best-known songs about prominent events and themes of the twentieth century—the Spanish Civil War, union organizing, the civil rights and antiwar movements, plus three new songs recorded in the 1990s. Includes 4 unreleased songs and 6 previously unreleased alternate takes from the studio. Extensive Annotation. 74 minutes.

- |  |                                     |
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| 2 THE TITANIC 3:40                     | 14 THE BELLS OF RHYMNEY 5:34        |
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| 7 a. COAL CREEK MARCH/ b. PAYDAY AT    | 18 WASN'T THAT A TIME 2:54          |
| COAL CREEK/ c. ROLL DOWN THE LINE 6:38 | 19 VIVA LA QUINCE BRIGADA 2:58      |
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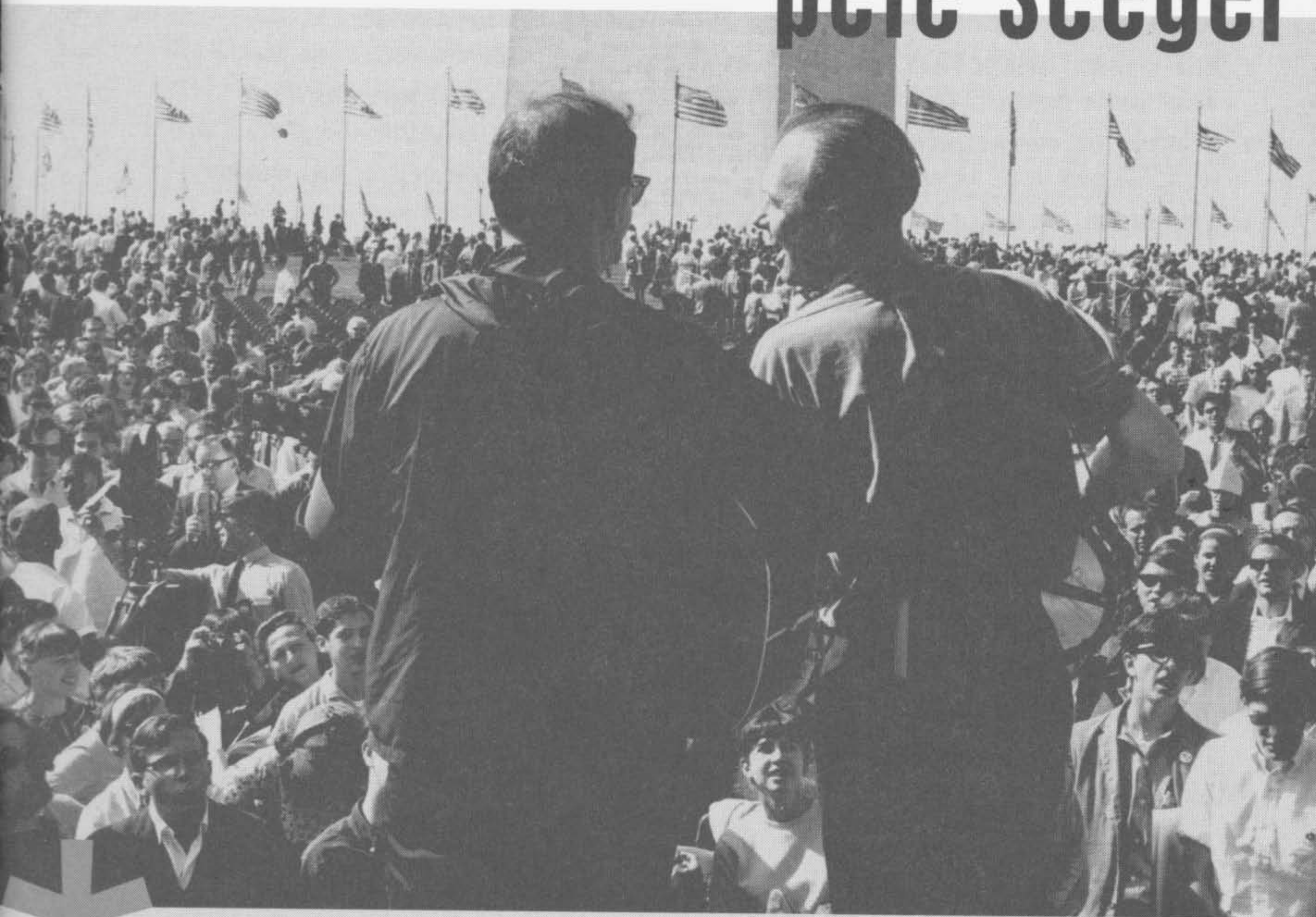
Smithsonian Folkways Recordings



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# **pete seeger**



**headlines & footnotes** A COLLECTION OF TOPICAL SONGS



# pete seeger

## headlines & footnotes A COLLECTION OF TOPICAL SONGS

- 1 **PEG AND AWL** 2:24
- 2 **THE TITANIC (WHEN THAT GREAT SHIP WENT DOWN)** 3:40
- 3 **SINKING OF THE REUBEN JAMES** 2:15  
(W. Guthrie/MCA Music, ASCAP)
- 4 **LISTEN MR. BILBO** 1:59  
(Robert & Adrienne Claiborne)
- 5 **HOLD THE LINE** 4:34  
(L. Hays-P. Seeger/Sanga Music, BMI)
- 6 **PASSING THROUGH** 2:48  
(Dick Blakeslee)
- 7 **a. COAL CREEK MARCH/ b. PAYDAY AT COAL CREEK/ c. ROLL DOWN THE LINE** 6:38  
a. (P. Steele/TRO-Ludlow Music, BMI); b. (P. Steele-J.A. & A. Lomax/TRO-Ludlow Music, BMI)
- 8 **I COME AND STAND AT EVERY DOOR** 2:24  
(N. Hikmet/Stormking Music, BMI & J. Waters/  
Folk Legacy Records, BMI)
- 9 **TIMES A-GETTING HARD** 2:20  
(L. Hays-P. Seeger/TRO-Folkways Music, BMI)
- 10 **LITTLE BOXES** 1:51  
(M. Reynolds/Schroder Music, ASCAP)
- 11 **FROM WAY UP HERE** 2:39  
(Words by M. Reynolds/Schroder Music, ASCAP;  
Music by P. Seeger/Sanga Music, BMI)
- 12 **THE BATTLE OF MAXTON FIELD** 2:26  
(M. Reynolds/Schroder Music, ASCAP)
- 13 **MY GET UP AND GO** 2:31  
(Pete Seeger/TRO-Melody Trails, BMI)
- 14 **THE BELLS OF RHYMNEY** 5:34  
(I. Davies-P. Seeger/TRO-Ludlow Music, BMI)
- 15 **WAIST DEEP IN THE BIG MUDDY** 2:56  
(P. Seeger/TRO-Folkways Music, BMI)
- 16 **GUANTANAMERA** 5:51  
(J. F. Diaz-P. Seeger-J. Orborn-J. Martí/  
Fall River Music, BMI)
- 17 **THERE ONCE WAS A WOMAN WHO SWALLOWED A LIE** 3:30  
(music by A. Mills; words by M. Tax)
- 18 **WASN'T THAT A TIME** 2:54  
(L. Hays-W. Lowenfels/Sanga Music, BMI)
- 19 **VIVA LA QUINCE BRIGADA** 2:58  
(B. Van der Schelling/Stormking Music, BMI)
- 20 **WIMOWEH (MBUBE)** 2:16  
(Gilbert-Hays-Hellerman-Seeger-Linda/TRO-  
Folkways Music, BMI)
- 21 **ENGLISH IS CUH-RAY-ZEE (ENGLISH IS CRAZY)** 3:39  
(Richard Lederer)
- 22 **ODDS ON FAVORITE (A LONG STORY TERSE)** 1:48  
(E.Y. Harburg/Harburg Foundation, ASCAP &  
P. Seeger/Sanga Music, BMI)
- 23 **A LITTLE OF THIS AND THAT** 2:28  
(P. Seeger/Sanga Music, BMI)

## \* introduction

Most songs that last the longest are the ballads that tell you a story about the news of the day... I can't invent the news every day. Nobody can. But I can do my little job which is to fix the day's news up to where you can sing it. You'll remember it lots plainer if I can make it easier for you to sing the daily news.

—Woody Guthrie, *Born to Win*, p.73

A pamphlet is never read more than once, but a song is learned by heart and repeated over and over.

—Joe Hill (quoted in notes to *That's Why We're Marching* SPW 40021)

Long before there were either headlines or footnotes, people used songs to tell the stories of real events. "Traditional folk song," as Irwin Silber wrote, "...has always served as the 'living newspaper' of history" (liner notes, *Gazette*, FW 2502). Some of these story-songs were about monumental occurrences and larger-than-life people. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, for example, may have been sung, or at least recited, to musical accompaniment. The same is true of other epics, including those Albert B. Lord collected as recently as the 1950s from Yugoslavian singers as he researched the ways in which the Homeric tales may have been composed, performed, and transmitted.

But a bard didn't need to compose an epic or sing about gods and heroes to tell the news of the day in song. A few well-chosen verses could do it. For songs can "get at the heart and sense of an...event in a few short lines" (Silber, *Gazette*). Often, in addition to reporting the news, these songs expressed editorial opinions, sometimes so strongly that "some cities enacted by-laws suppressing 'songs and cries in the streets'" (Gordon Friesen, liner notes, *Broadside*, FW 5301). Even such apparently innocuous ditties as nursery rhymes often began as thinly-veiled satirical commentaries on politics and politicians, while topical ballads, disseminated both orally and on inexpensive, printed sheets





Photo by Robert C. Malone, courtesy of Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

("broadsides"), helped keep people informed about current events and issues from around 1500 into the 20th century.

Today, of course, we're inundated with "news." But the rise of the electronic media in the 20th century has no more led to the death of topical songs than did the invention of the printing press five centuries ago. Topical songs have been part of American political-cultural life since the beginning—"Bennington Rifles" and "Yankee Doodle" from the Revolution, "John Brown's Body" and many others from the Civil War, election songs, train-wreck, flood and other disaster songs, outlaw songs, and on and on. Many of these were—and still are—set to the tunes of popular songs and hymns (themselves often derived from earlier ballads). The American labor movement has been an especially fertile source of topical and protest songs. More recently, the Civil Rights and Peace Movements have contributed to, and been contributed to by, a wealth of new topical songs (see the earlier collection in this series, *If I Had a Hammer: Songs of Hope and Struggle*, SFW CD 40096).

The 20th century has also seen a profusion of often outspoken topical song writers—including Hazel Dickens, Bob Dylan, Sarah Ogan Gunning, Woody Guthrie, Lee Hays, Joe Hill, Aunt Molly Jackson, Si Kahn, Tom Lehrer, Phil Ochs, Tom

Paxton, Malvina Reynolds, and, of course, Pete Seeger. But while some of his songs have become anthems ("Where Have All the Flowers Gone," "The Hammer Song," both on SFW CD 40096), Pete has been as much, perhaps even more, a champion of others' songs. These include an old hymn refashioned for labor and then for civil rights ("We Shall Overcome," SFW CD 40096), a symbolic South African choral chant ("Wimoweh"), an anonymous shoemaker's reflection on technological change ("Peg and Awl"), and a song adapted by Tennessee miners from the singing of Black convicts to tell the tale of the Coal Creek Rebellion ("Roll Down the Line").

Not all of Pete's topical songs are political (or, at least, not explicitly so). "The Titanic" is one of many chronicles of that famous ship's mishap. "My Get Up and Go" takes a light-hearted look at aging. "A Little of This and That" celebrates a remarkable woman. And "Times A-Getting Hard" and "The Bells of Rhymney" simply lament the burdens of economic deprivation. Even "Wimoweh" and "Guantanamo" only really become "topical songs" when Pete explains their origins and contexts.

Still, most of the topical songs for which Pete is best-known tend to deliver their messages directly. Some present a series of related events or



historical figures and a chorus that hammers home the point ("Passing Through," "Listen Mr. Bilbo," "Wasn't That a Time"). Some help rescue stories that the history books have overlooked ("Hold the Line," "The Battle of Maxton Field"), while others comment pointedly on major events ("I Come and Stand at Every Door," "The Sinking of the Reuben James"). Some ring with stirring militancy ("Viva La Quince Brigada"), while others use humor just as effectively ("Little Boxes").

Pete has long been a seminal figure in spreading these songs and in encouraging the writing of new ones. Once he aspired to being a journalist. He had even started a school newspaper at age 14 "just for the hell of it" (Seeger 1972). But music became a better way for Pete to spread his news and views. Songs, he has said, "can participate in the living, breathing issues which everybody's thinking and talking about" (Greenberg 1978).

That has been his active belief since the mid-1930s, when he dropped out of Harvard University to pursue, ultimately, the traditional American music that he had first heard on a song-collecting trip to North Carolina with his musicologist father, Charles Seeger. Soon he was assisting folk song collector Alan Lomax in the Archives of American Folk Music at the Library of Congress, enlarging his awareness

of the people's music that he has been learning and passing around to his brothers and sisters ever since. In the process, Pete became, in his own phrase, a "Johnny Appleseed Jr.," using folk music instead of apples to "plant the seeds of a better tomorrow in the homes across our land" (Seeger 1972).

Through Lomax and others, Pete met grassroots singers who, in addition to preserving the traditional songs and styles of their regions, were making up new songs to address social conditions that they had directly experienced—Huddie "Lead Belly" Ledbetter, Aunt Molly Jackson, and especially Woody Guthrie. From Woody, Pete learned "a standard technique of putting new words to old tunes" (Seeger 1993)—of using what is musically familiar to help deliver a new message. (Pete has also reversed this process, setting old words to new tunes, as with "Turn, Turn, Turn," SFW CD 40096). He also began singing with Woody and, in 1941, with Lee Hays, Millard Lampell, and others as the Almanac Singers at labor rallies and on picket lines, attempting to revive the singing labor movement tradition of Joe Hill and the Wobblies (I.W.W.). In the early 1940s, the Almanacs turned their attention to World War II (see *That's Why We're Marching*, SFW CD 40021). Later in that decade, Pete used his voice and banjo to sing for peace and to rally support for Henry Wallace and the

Progressive Party ("Passing Through") and to sing out against the rising tide of anti-communist witch-hunting that would soon place him before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and on the entertainment industry's notorious blacklist ("Wasn't That a Time"). Finally given the opportunity in 1967 to appear on network TV, Pete sang his new anti-war song "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy" only to see the network censors disappear it from the broadcast. Almost 30 years later, in 1994, Pete received the Kennedy Center Honors award for lifetime achievement in the arts. President Clinton presented the award at the White House, and there was a celebratory concert at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. This recognition of his virtues as a musician and of his consistent championing and exemplifying of the fundamental values of peace, justice, and freedom was long overdue.

Pete's association with Moses Asch, founder of Folkways Records, began in the 1940s, and Asch was always supportive of Pete's use of songs to teach history and to express opinions. Although Peter Goldsmith writes that it was only with Pete's first *Gazette* album in 1958 that Asch "began to venture gingerly into the area of topical songs" (Goldsmith 1998), Pete, Woody Guthrie, and the Almanac Singers had recorded labor and news-related songs for Asch in the

1940s, while Pete's 1956 Folkways album, *Love Songs of Friends and Foes*, contained such strong statements as "Listen Mr. Bilbo," "Passing Through," and his first solo recording of "The Hammer Song" (see SF CD 40096). Similarly, *American Industrial Ballads*, also from 1956, contained clearly topical songs, although none of the topics was as current as those addressed on *Gazette*. The *Rainbow Quest* (1960), *Gazette, Vol. 2* (1961), and *Songs of Struggle and Protest* (1964) continued Pete's series of topical Folkways albums. Folkways also began distributing the Cambridge-based *Broadside Magazine* associated with a series of *Broadside* albums beginning in 1962. Edited by former Almanac singer Agnes "Sis" Cunningham, the mimeographed publication was devoted entirely to topical songs. *Broadside* also recorded many of its songwriters, including Phil Ochs, Bob Dylan, and Pete.

*Broadside Magazine* followed in the tradition of *The People's Songs Bulletin*, published by People's Artists, founded after the break-up of the Almanacs by Pete, Lee Hays, Woody Guthrie and others who remained dedicated to using songs as instruments of social change. The *Bulletin*, in which several of the songs in this collection first appeared, was succeeded by the somewhat broader *Sing Out! Magazine*. Still alive as it approaches its 50th anniversary in May,



2000, *Sing Out!* has been another venue for many of these songs as well as for topical songs that continue to be written.

Today, years of singing out (Pete refers to it as “shouting”) have taken their toll on Pete’s voice. But while Pete sings more softly, his audiences sing as loudly as ever, led by Pete, who has never needed a bouncing ball to get an audience singing (although he did for a short time experiment with a computerized electronic display and sometimes uses banners for non-English songs). For Pete still has “the power to arouse the need to speak” (Cantwell 1996) through singing—the ability to unify an audience through the wholehearted sharing of simple, honest music about critical issues that affect us all.

*Mark Greenberg, January, 1999*

#### **NOTE**

This is the second Smithsonian Folkways CD collection of topical songs that Pete recorded from the 1940s into the 1970s for Folkways Records. The first collection, *If I Had a Hammer: Songs of Hope and Struggle* (SFWCD 40096), focused on the general topics of labor, peace, civil rights, and hope. For this collection we’ve mainly chosen songs that chronicle specific events, even as they continue to speak of hope and struggle. Future releases will highlight other aspects of Pete’s vast and varied repertoire. In addition to

the more than 50 Pete Seeger albums that Folkways released, the Smithsonian Folkways archive contains thousands of hours of Pete’s unreleased studio and live performances, more than of any other Folkways artist. Smithsonian Folkways Archivist Jeff Place has now completed the painstaking work of copying and logging all of those recordings, many of which are on extremely fragile and deteriorating audiotape and discs. In assembling this collection, we have therefore been able to draw upon all of Pete’s recordings in the Smithsonian Folkways archive, which also includes some more recently recorded material. This has enabled us to compare released and unreleased versions of many songs in order to choose those with the best performances and best sound quality. It also made it possible for us to include three songs (“A Little of This and That,” “English is Crazy,” “A Long Story Terse”) that, to our knowledge, have never before appeared on a Pete Seeger recording. MG



Photo by Diane Davies



## 1 PEG AND AWL

In the computer age, many occupations are undergoing changes similar to those wrought by the Industrial Revolution in the last century. For some workers, this has meant seeing their skills become obsolete and their jobs disappear. For others, including the anonymous shoemaker who wrote "Peg and Awl" at the beginning of the 19th century, the changes have meant release from tedious manual tasks. Shoemaking was (and continues to be) affected by the double-edged sword of "progress." Essex, MA alone boasted 200 shoemakers in 1810 (Seeger and Reiser 1983). With probably unintended but nevertheless poignant irony, the Carolina Tar Heels recorded this celebration of industrialization—the oldest song on this collection—as America teetered on the brink of the Great Depression. For the Tar Heels' recording see *The Anthology of American Music, Vol. 1* (SFW CD 40090).

Source: *American Industrial Ballads*, FW 5251, 1956; reissued as SFW 40058, 1992

## 2 THE TITANIC

### (WHEN THAT GREAT SHIP WENT DOWN)

The sinking of the "unsinkable" Titanic on April 14-15, 1912, in which 1,513 people died, was (and still is) widely chronicled in song as well as other media. Titanic songs appear in both Black and White tradition. Lead Belly said it was the

first song on which he played the 12-string guitar (*Sing Out!* Summer 1960, 10-2). Lead Belly's very different "Titanic" focused on the captain's refusal of passage to Black world boxing champion Jack Johnson and the fighter's subsequent jubilation (see Leadbelly's *Last Sessions* SFW CD 40068/71; for another version of Pete's "Titanic," by William and Versey Smith, see *The Anthology of American Music* SFW CD 40090). In some versions, as in this one, the song draws attention to the confining of the lower class passengers below decks, thus assuring their certain death. Many versions also mention, perhaps sardonically, the band's playing of the well-known hymn "Nearer My God To Thee." According to Norman Studer, "The Titanic" had also become by the 1950s a light-hearted singalong for camp children (original liner notes FW2319). Pete's banjo accompaniment here is an excellent example of his up-picking ("basic strum") with double-thumbing style.

Source: *American Ballads*, FW2319, 1957

## 3 THE SINKING OF THE REUBEN JAMES

On October 30, 1941, the destroyer Reuben James became the first U.S. naval casualty of World War II when it was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine. Ninety-five men perished, and Woody Guthrie, after reading about the event in the newspaper, responded by writing this song

with input from the Almanac Singers. Originally, Guthrie tried to include verses with the names of all the drowned men, but Pete and others argued that this would lessen the singability of the song. Instead, Pete suggested Woody write a chorus.

Guthrie borrowed yet again from the well-known traditional country music trio, the Carter Family, for the tune of the verses ("Wildwood Flower"). But the chorus is his. Pete says it's "worthy of any good composer. He fiddled around with the melody of the verse until he compounded and developed elements of it into a singable refrain" (Seeger 1972). For Guthrie's version, see *That's Why We're Marching* (SFW CD 40021).

Source: *Pete Seeger Sings Woody Guthrie*, FW 31002, 1967.

## 4 LISTEN MR. BILBO

"...if the blood of our White race should become corrupted and mingled with the blood of Africa, then the present greatness of the United States of America would be destroyed and all hope for civilization would be...impossible." —Sen.

Theodore G. Bilbo (Dem., Mississippi), 1947

In the 1940s, under the guise of patriotism, several right-wing U.S. politicians began preaching extreme hatred of all non-white, non-Christian, and non-native-born Americans. Mississippi Senators John Rankin and Theodore Bilbo were perhaps the worst, and the terms "Bilboism" and

"Rankinism" came to represent all bigotry and chauvinism. Rankin's specialty was anti-Semitism; Bilbo's, as the above quote makes perfectly clear, was racism.

New Yorkers Bob and Adrienne Claiborne wrote this song to a traditional tune in 1945, pointing out that we're *all* immigrants to this continent. Of course, in making their valid point, the Claibornes didn't address how some of the European arrivals treated those whose ancestors had come here many centuries before. Still, this easily singable song serves as a warning against demagogues and a reminder that "American" must always be a term of inclusion, a principle that has always been at the heart of Pete's work.

Source: *Love Songs of Friends and Foes*, FW 2453, 1956

## 5 HOLD THE LINE

In 1949 in Peekskill, NY, local vigilantes broke up an outdoor concert by singer-actor-activist Paul Robeson that was produced by People's Artists. People's Artists rescheduled the concert for a week later on Labor Day. The concert took place without incident, but a mob organized by the KKK and recruited from veterans' groups stoned the departing cars and buses. The police did nothing to stop the mob, and 150 people were injured. "No one was hurt in our car, but every window was smashed," says Pete. "Two rocks came



through and I cemented them into a chimney I was building" (Greenberg 1998).

Lee Hays and Pete's "Hold the Line" is both a musical account of the "Peekskill riots" and—like "Wasn't That a Time" and "Tomorrow is a Highway" (see SFW 40096)—a rallying call for resistance to intolerance and injustice. It was one of the newly formed Weavers' first 78 rpm recordings.

Source: *Gazette* 2, FW 2502, 1961.

## 6 **PASSING THROUGH**

Written by University of Chicago graduate student Dick Blakeslee, with new verses still being added by others, this "plea for peace and human dignity" (Silber 1957) is both a tribute to great historical figures and a reminder of life's precariousness. Blakeslee set his words to the melody of a traditional gospel song.

"Passing Through" was originally submitted to the *People's Songs Bulletin*, where the song-screening committee was unenthusiastic. But after audiences responded well to its performance by the group Folksay, People's Songs printed it in their songbook, *Songs for Wallace*, and it became, according to Robbie Lieberman, "one of the more popular songs" of the 1948 Progressive Party presidential candidate's campaign (Lieberman 1995).

Source: *America's Favorite Ballads*, Out Takes, n.d., from archive reel 1450

## 7 **COAL CREEK MARCH/PAY DAY AT COAL CREEK/ROLL DOWN THE LINE**

Possibly no other type of labor has generated more songs in America than coal mining. Many of the best known union songs, such as "Which Side Are You On?" (see SFW 40096), originated with the labor movement in the Kentucky and West Virginia coal fields in the 1930s.

Here, Pete joins together a banjo tune and two songs that chronicle labor strife at the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company of Coal Creek, Tennessee.

Pete based his version of "Coal Creek March" on a Library of Congress recording by banjo player Pete Steele. Originally, a coal miner from Harlan County, Kentucky, Steele later moved to Ohio and became a carpenter. The tune was a well-known banjo piece around the turn of the century, a time that saw a proliferation of banjo orchestras and "classical" banjo compositions. It took Pete Seeger 20 years to learn that Pete Steele played the march in D tuning (f#, D, F# , A, D—fifth string to first), using mostly double thumbing. The southern string band Dock Hopkins and the Bucklebusters recorded a more complete version of the tune in the 1920s, with imitations of bugle calls, barking dogs, rifle shots, and train sounds.

Although the original recording was in D, Pete recommends capoing the banjo at the 4th fret, raising the key to F#. "The higher key," he says, "gives it the feeling of an icy mountain brook" (original liner notes FW2412).

"Pay Day at Coal Creek" is a mountain lament, driven by Pete's banjo. Except for the first verse, with its specific reference to Coal Creek, the song consists of verses found in many country blues and mountain songs. Pete says it refers to a time when the mine was closed by an explosion, but it may also stem from the labor battles at the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company. In 1892, the miners walked off their jobs rather than accept a contract that prevented them from ever forming a union (Seeger and Reiser 1985). The coal company retaliated by using state convicts as scab labor. Pete recounts the miners' reaction in this performance: when their protests were ignored, they burned down the stockade and freed the prisoners. Eventually, however, the owners starved the miners into submission, defeated them in battle, and had their leaders imprisoned. But, Pete writes, "[the miners'] struggle *did* succeed" by making the convict-labor system less profitable and by gaining public sympathy that helped elect "a new state administration, which abolished the system and pardoned the union leaders" (Seeger 1972).

Pete's source for "Roll Down the Line" was the

recording by Uncle Dave Macon, the "Dixie Dewdrop" (see *The Anthology of American Music* SFW 40090). Macon was a teamster (horses, not trucks!), medicine and tent show performer, banjo player/showman extraordinaire, and the first star of the "Grand Ol' Opry," in Nashville, Tennessee. The miners adapted "Roll Down the Line" from a song created by Black convicts working near the mines. Pete surmises that Uncle Dave "probably heard the song first hand" from the miners (Seeger 1972).

Source: Carnegie Hall Concert with Pete Seeger and Sonny Terry 12/27/57 from archive reel 3359

## 8 **I COME AND STAND AT EVERY DOOR**

Nazim Hikmet, the great Turkish national poet, wrote this poem in memory of Hiroshima, destroyed by the first atomic bomb on August 6, 1945. The Supreme Allied Headquarters reported that 129,558 persons were killed, injured, or missing and that 176,987 were made homeless by the blast, which destroyed more than 4 square miles, about 60% of the city. In 1949 the Japanese dedicated Hiroshima as an international shrine of peace, and an annual interfaith service draws thousands to the Peace Memorial Park built on the bomb site.

New York peace worker Jeanette Turner sent Hikmet's poem to Pete Seeger in the late 1950s.



Pete set it to a haunting melody written by James Waters, an MIT student, for the mystical Scottish ballad, "The Great Silkie."

Source: *Gazette* 2, FW 2502, 1961.

### 9 **TIMES A-GETTING HARD**

This hard-times song captures the poignancy of contemplating the need to leave a beloved, albeit basic, homestead and move on, a situation faced by many sharecroppers in the South and Midwest in the 1930s. According to Pete, Lee Hays adapted the song from Carl Sandburg's folksong collection, *The American Songbag*, by adding a new last line. Pete describes this as "the genius of simplicity" (notes, *Pete Seeger at the Village Gate with Memphis Slim and Willie Dixon*, FW 2450). Pete plays the song on guitar in dropped-D tuning.

Source: *Goofing Off Suite*, FW 2045, 1955; SFW 40018, 1993

### 10 **LITTLE BOXES**

Pete has described Malvina Reynolds, writer of this simple yet powerful song about conformity, as "one of the great songwriters of this century" (Seeger 1993). "Little Boxes" came to her as she was driving past Daly City, California on her way from San Francisco to Palo Alto to sing for

the P.T.A. Former Almanac Singer Agnes "Sis" Cunningham first published it in *Broadside* magazine in 1963 and brought it to Pete's attention. He immediately started singing it, although it had been rejected by several well-known commercial folk groups. It obviously touched a public nerve, and Pete's Columbia recording of the song became his one foray into the Top 40. According to the original Folkways liner notes (FW5302), a Boston city planner, upset with multiplying, box-like housing developments, ordered his daughter to learn the song, and a Philadelphia disc jockey called it "the Song of the Century."

Source: *Broadsides*, Out Takes 4/26/63, from archive reel 1350

### 11 **FROM WAY UP HERE**

Pete collaborated with Malvina Reynolds ("Little Boxes") on this song that foreshadows the famous photograph of the earth taken from the moon. Pete wrote the music and borrowed the melody of the whistling part from a Tchaikovsky ballet. He recorded this version for Folkways *Broadside* series. Later, Columbia Records released the song on *God Bless the Grass*, Pete says, "in the scintillating sixties, when some good folks ...thought I might be able to make some records that 'sell.' But some others (the sales department) thought otherwise, and they were right" (original liner notes FW5302).

Folkways re-released the album in the 1980s, when, hopefully, more people were ready for its environmental message.

Source: *Broadside*, Out Takes 4/26/63 archive reel 3479

### 12 **THE BATTLE OF MAXTON FIELD**

In January 1957, Ku Klux Klansmen in Robeson County, North Carolina burned crosses in front of the homes of two Native American families. One family had recently moved into a home previously occupied by whites. A Native woman rumored to have a white boyfriend lived in the other house. Next, about 100 local Klansmen held a rally in a field just outside the little town of Maxton, despite warnings from the Lumbee tribe. Five hundred Lumbees, many of them toting squirrel guns and hunting knives, also showed up. After a four-minute skirmish, the local Klansmen retreated in haste and disarray.

Malvina Reynolds treated this serious incident with a light touch, easily lampooning the Klansmen. Pete maintains this attitude in his gleeful performance.

Source: *Gazette* 1, FW 2501, 1958.

### 13 **MY GET UP AND GO**

Aging, of course, has always been with us but has perhaps received more serious public atten-

tion in the U.S. in recent years (we have a long way to go, though). Many songs, however, such as this one, have tended to take a humorous approach to this serious subject. This song also demonstrates that folk songs are where you find them. Pete found the verses in Wisconsin, "on the back of the menu of a roadside diner. I had never seen them before except for the first two lines, which I had once seen scrawled on the door of a public toilet" (Seeger 1993). Pete has since found other printed versions of the poem. He added the tune and a couple of lines and turned the first verse into a repeating chorus. There have been various claims for the authorship of the original poem, which probably predates World War I, from places as far apart as Kansas, Nova Scotia, and Texas.

Source: *Broadsides*, FW 2456, 1964

### 14 **THE BELLS OF RHYMNEY**

Pete wrote the melody for this musical catalog of coal mining towns in south Wales based on a poem by Idris Davies, itself a direct paraphrasing of the well-known Mother Goose rhyme, "Oranges and Lemons, Say the Bells of St. Clemens." After composing the melody, he realized that "the opening phrase is nothing more than another variation on the ancient theme better known as 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.' Every country of Europe has versions of it." Pete also writes that,



"after this record was made, I learned that the correct pronunciation of Rhymney is more like 'Rummney', the Welsh 'u' being a sort of cross between the German 'o' and the French 'e' (as in the article 'le'). Rhondda should also be pronounced 'Rundtha', and Caerphilly should be 'Cahrphilly', not 'Cay-erphilly'" (original liner notes FW2412). Rhymney is a town in south Wales in a tiny valley of the same name. Pete's 12-string guitar arrangement helped popularize the "dropped-D" tuning (6th string lowered from E to D), which he had picked up from Bahamian guitarist Joseph Spence. Pete first plays the song with a free rhythm on the guitar, then breaks into a regular, double-time rhythm. His use of discords helps to create dramatic tension.

Source: The Village Gate Concerts with Memphis Slim and Willie Dixon, 1969, archive reel 1903

### 15 **WAIST DEEP IN THE BIG MUDDY**

Pete has called this story of war's horror a "love song" (Dunaway 1981). He has also said that it's "not one of my best.... [Its'] an editorial in rhyme. I always caution beginning songwriters, 'Beware of editorials in rhyme. Better: Tell a story'" (Seeger 1972). Nevertheless, "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy" made quite an impact.

Although it is set in World War II, "Big Muddy" clearly suggests the Vietnam War. "I purposely

decided," Pete says, "[that] I would just let it be an allegory on its own" (Dunaway 1981).

Pete wrote "Big Muddy" in 1967: "I saw a newspaper photo of troops in the Mekong Delta and the last line came to me all at once—words, tune, rhythm. I wrote it down in my pocket notebook: then, as usual, I was unable to finish it. But it kept coming back to haunt me. Had to do something about it. In two weeks of tussling, I got it finished" (Seeger 1993).

Pete began singing the song immediately to rousing responses. Columbia Records even agreed to release it as a single. Pete first recorded it with electric back-up, hoping to break his message through to the folk-rock and pop music audiences. That didn't happen.

But another opportunity soon presented itself when the Smothers Brothers invited Pete to appear on their popular TV show. He accepted and sang "Big Muddy." The song didn't make it past the CBS censors. The Smothers Brothers protested publicly, CBS relented, and seven million people soon watched Pete singing this song on national television.

"A month after the TV program," Pete writes, "[President Lyndon Johnson] ...said he would not run for re-election. Did this song help? Who knows?" (Seeger 1993)

The performance heard here comes from Pete's appearance in 1967 as the speaker at the Ford Hall Forum, in Boston. His topic was music and social justice.

Source: Ford Hall Forum lecture, 11/21/67 from archive reel 4459, released on FW5702.

### 16 **GUANTANAMERA**

"Guantanamo" comes from a poem by Cuban lawyer-journalist-diplomat-professor-poet José Martí. Pete calls it a "song of exiles" (Seeger 1972). Born in 1853, the prolific Martí wrote 70 volumes of prose and poetry. He was banished from Cuba at age 17 for advocating independence from Spain and spent the next 25 years in exile including 12 years in New York. He returned to Cuba in 1895, helped found the Cuban Revolutionary Party, and was killed at age 42 during a failed uprising. Today he is revered throughout Latin America

In 1949, Julian Orboson, a Cuban classical pianist and composer, put Martí's verses to a popular 1920s melody, originally used to satirize women in the town of Guantanamo who went out with American sailors. In the true spirit of topical songs, the popular song's creator, José Fernandez Dias ("Joseito"), improvised new verses from the newspaper on his daily Havana radio broadcast.

Pete learned the Martí version in 1961 from a former student of Orboson's, Hector Angulo, who was working as a counselor at Camp Woodland in the Catskills, where Pete often sang. Pete taught it to the Weavers, but a more commercial group, the Sandpipers, had a hit with it. Today, largely due to Pete's championing of the song, "Guantanamo" is popular throughout the world. Pete says that "Martí's verses have ennobled the old melody." He urges Americans to sing "Guantanamo" in Spanish and not in translation in order to "hasten the day" that "the U.S.A. ...is some sort of bilingual country" (Seeger 1993).

In 1983, in Cuba, Pete learned two more of Martí's verses:

*Rojo, como en el desierto*  
*Red, as in the desert,*

*Salió el sol al horizonte*  
*Rose the sun on the horizon.*

*Rojo, como en el desierto*  
*Red, as in the desert,*

*Salió el sol al horizonte*  
*Rose the sun on the horizon*

*Y alumbra un esclavo muerto*  
*And shone on a dead slave*

*Colgado a un ceibo del monte.*  
*Hanging from a tree on the mountain.*

*Un niño la vio, tembló*  
*A child saw it, trembled*



*De pasión por los que gimen  
With passion for those who wept*

*Un niño la vio, tembló  
A child saw it, trembled*

*De pasión por los que gimen  
With passion for those who wept.*

*Y al pie del muerto juró  
And swore that with his blood*

*Lavar con su sangre del crimen.  
He would wash away that crime.*

(Seeger 1993)

This version is from an un-issued recording made at the 1963 Newport Folk Festival. Sound and applause from other stages can be heard in the background.

Source: The Non-English Workshop, Newport Folk Festival, 7/27/63, archive reel 3233.

## **17 THERE ONCE WAS A WOMAN WHO SWALLOWED A LIE**

This is one of several songs adapted by writer and political activist Meredith Tax for the Women's Movement. "We need songs—all political movements do," Tax wrote in 1971 in *Sing Out! Magazine*, echoing one of Pete's long-held beliefs. "Songs catch our political understanding of our everyday experiences and make it memorable.... They provide images that we can use as we continue to struggle" (*Sing Out*, 20-3). Here, Tax uses the familiar children's song, "There Was

an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly" as a model. Canadian folksinger Alan Mills based this song on a poem he found in a magazine, giving it a melody and two new verses. Pete began singing it and got two more verses from people he sang for. For "I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly" see *Pete Seeger at Carnegie Hall with Sonny Terry* (FW 02412) and *Pete Seeger—Birds, Beasts, Bugs and Fishes* (Little and Big) SFW 45039.

Source: *Banks of Marble*, FW31040, 1974

## **18 WASN'T THAT A TIME**

Freedom, this song reminds us, has always been a constant struggle. First published in the November 1948 *People's Songs Bulletin*, "Wasn't That a Time" uses significant historical moments to deliver its forceful message. In the last verse and chorus it emphatically states that the recent defeat of fascism makes the late 1940s a particularly critical and hopeful time.

Lee Hays, the song's writer, echoed this historically rather ironic sentiment the following year in "Tomorrow is a Highway" (see SFW CD 40096).

Despite its democratic sentiments, "Wasn't That a Time," became a critical piece of Pete's 1955 appearance before the Committee on Un-American Activities of the U.S. House of Representatives (HUAC). Asked about the song

and where he had sung it, Pete answered: "I have sung before all kinds of people, of all religions, of all political faiths." He reiterated this during his subsequent trial for contempt of Congress. In his pre-sentencing statement, Pete offered to sing "Wasn't That a Time" for the court. But the court refused, and Pete responded: "Well, perhaps you will hear it some other time. A good song can only do good, and I am proud of the songs I have sung . . . . Do I have a right to sing these songs?" (Seeger 1972) A year later, Pete's conviction was overturned by the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Filmmaker Jim Brown used the title "Wasn't That a Time" for his 1980 Weavers documentary.

Source: *With Voices Together We Sing*, FW 2452, 1956 with Jim McDonald.

## **19 VIVA LA QUINCE BRIGADA (LONG LIVE THE 15TH BRIGADE)**

On July 18, 1936, the Spanish Civil War began with a Nationalist military uprising against the country's democratically elected Republican government. Soon Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany came to the aid of the Nationalists, led by Generalissimo Francisco Franco. The Soviet Union sent military equipment and advisers to the Republican Loyalists, who also received support from the International Brigades, consisting

of volunteers from the Americas and other parts of Europe. Thirty-two hundred Americans joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade; about 1,600 returned home alive. The war ended in March 1939 with the defeat of the Loyalist forces in Madrid. Many consider the Spanish Civil War the opening battle of World War II (original liner notes *Songs of The Spanish Civil War* FW5436, 1961).

In 1940, Keynote records released *Six Songs for Democracy*, recorded in Spain in 1936 and featuring German tenor Ernst Busch. *Songs of the Lincoln Battalion* was released in 1942 on Folkways' predecessor, Asch Records, and featured Pete backed by Bess Lomax [Hawes], Baldwin "Butch" Hawes, Tom Glazer, and a chorus of Lincoln Brigade veterans. Folkways later reissued both collections on *Songs of the Spanish Civil War, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2*, FW 5436 and FW 5437. Pete sometimes identified this as his favorite of all his recordings (Greenberg interview 1978). The live, 1960 version heard here features Pete's masterful adaption of flamenco guitar technique to the 5-string banjo.

Sometimes known as "Ay Manuela," "Viva la Quince Brigada" ("Long Live the Fifteenth Brigade") derives from an old Spanish folk song and was most frequently sung by the soldiers while marching. The Fifteenth was the International Brigade of the Spanish Republican Army and



included the Lincoln Brigade (the 57th battalion).

For an excellent documentary about the Lincoln Brigade, see *The Good Fight* (King Video, 1990).

*Viva la quince brigada*

*Long live our 15th Brigade, boys*

*Rumbala, rumbala, rumbala (repeat)*

*Rumbala, rumbala, rumbala (repeat)*

*Que se ha cubierta de gloria*

*For her name is grand and glorious*

*Ay, Mañuela. Ay, Mañuela (repeat)*

*Ay, Mañuela. Ay, Mañuela (repeat)*

*Luchamos contra los moros*

*'Gainst the Moors we aim our rifles*

*Rumbala, rumbala, rumbala (repeat)*

*Rumbala, rumbala, rumbala (repeat)*

*Mercaneros y fascistas*

*Death to hirelings of the fascists*

*Ay, Mañuela. Ay, Mañuela (repeat)*

*Ay, Mañuela. Ay, Mañuela (repeat)*

*Solo es nuestro deseo*

*We have only one desire*

*Rumbala, rumbala, rumbala (repeat)*

*Rumbala, rumbala, rumbala (repeat)*

*Acaber con el fascismo*

*Forever end the fascist terror*

*Ay, Mañuela. Ay, Mañuela (repeat)*

*Ay, Mañuela. Ay, Mañuela (repeat)*

*En los frentes de Jarama*

*At Jarama we are standing*

*Rumbala, rumbala, rumbala (repeat)*

*Rumbala, rumbala, rumbala (repeat)*

*No tenemos aviones*

*And we have no planes above us*

*Ni tanques, ni cañones*

*Not a tank, nor any canons*

*Ay, Mañuela (repeat)*

*Ay, Mañuela (repeat)*

*Ya salimos de España*

*We have left the Spanish trenches*

*Rumbala, rumbala, rumbala (repeat)*

*Rumbala, rumbala, rumbala (repeat)*

*Para luchar en otros frentes*

*To fight the fascists where we find them*

*Ay, Mañuela. Ay, Mañuela (repeat)*

*Ay, Mañuela. Ay, Mañuela (repeat)*

(liner notes to *Song of the Spanish Civil War*

FW 5436, 1961)

Source: concert at Bowdoin College, 3/13/60, archive reel 4982.

## 20 WIMOWEH (MBUBE)

Like "We Shall Overcome" (SFW 40096), this song of hope fits many situations. It was composed by South African singer Solomon Linda, leader of The Evening Birds, a popular quintet. Linda based his song on an old South African chant, and Pete and the Weavers learned it from The Evening Birds' recording. The Zulu title, "Mbube," means "the lion is sleeping" and refers to Chaka, the great Zulu king, who will return one day to liberate his people. This allegory is found in many cultures and was certainly appropriate

for those struggling against the oppression of the white South African apartheid regime. The Weavers' 1955 Vanguard recording of "Wimoweh" (*The Weavers at Carnegie Hall*) became quite popular in Johannesburg. The song was also later bastardized and trivialized, unknown to Pete, by the Safaris, a pop group, into "The Lion Sleeps Tonight." "Wimoweh" has long been a staple of Pete's live performances and a wonderful vehicle for his song-leading abilities. "Sometimes," Pete writes, "the most eloquent song I can sing is 'Wimoweh,'" with no words at all. Just melody, rhythm, and great bass harmony" (Seeger 1972).

In 1980, Pete learned from a group of South African exiles that in Linda's slow introduction to the song he tells the listener, "You are the lion." Pete has also corrected his mis-hearing of the bass part from "hey yup boy" to the Zulu "M-bu-be wo" (Seeger 1993).

Source: concert at Bowdoin College, 3/13/60, archive reel 4982.

## 21 ENGLISH IS CUH-RAY-ZEE (ENGLISH IS CRAZY)

Pete heard folksinger Josh White, Jr. do this "rap" a few years ago and added the musical refrain. White's version is based on material from *Crazy English* by Richard Lederer. Pete points out that this live recording doesn't have the full text. He asked us to print it all "so you

can try it yourself." Have fun.

(To be spoken freely with some rhythm accompaniment [tapping on a box will do])

*English is the most widely used language in the history of the planet.*

*One out of seven human beings can speak or read it.*

*Half the world's books, 3/4 of the international mail are in English.*

*It has the largest vocabulary, perhaps two million words And a noble body of literature. But face it:*

*English is cuh-ray-zee!*

*Just a few examples: There's no egg in eggplant, no pine or apple in pineapple.*

*Quicksand works slowly; boxing rings are square.*

*A writer writes, but do fingers fing?*

*Hammers don't ham, grocers don't groce. Haberdashers don't haberdash. English is cuh-ray-zee!*

*If the plural of tooth is teeth, shouldn't the plural of booth be beeth?*

*It's one goose, two geese. Why not one moose, two meese?*

*If it's one index, two indices; why not one Kleenex, two Kleenices? English is cuh-ray-zee!*

*You can comb through the annals of history, but not just one annal.*

*You can make amends but not just one amend.*

*If you have a bunch of odds and ends and get rid of all but one, is it an odd or an end?*

*If the teacher taught, why isn't it true that a preacher praught?*

*If you wrote a letter did you also bote your tongue?*

*And if a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat? English is cuh-ray-zee!*



*Why is it night falls but never breaks and day breaks  
but never falls?*

*In what other language do people drive on the parkway  
and park on the driveway?*

*Ship by truck, but send cargo by ship? Recite at a play  
but play at a recital?*

*Have noses that run and feet that smell? English  
is cuh-ray-zee!*

*How can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same  
When a wise man and a wise guy are very different?  
To overlook something and to oversee something are  
very different,*

*But quite a lot and quite a few are the same.*

*How can the weather be hot as hell one day and cold  
as hell the next? English is cuh-ray-zee!*

*You have to marvel at the lunacy of a language in which  
your house can burn down*

*While it is burning up. You fill out a form by filling it in.  
In which your alarm clock goes off by going on.*

*If pro is the opposite of con, what is the opposite  
of progress?*

*Well English was invented by people, not computers  
And reflects the creativity of the human race.*

*So that's why when the stars are out they're visible,  
but when the lights are out, they're invisible.*

*When I wind up my watch I start it, but when we wind  
up this rap we end it. English is cuh-ray-zee!*

by Josh White Jr., 16041 Arnold, Gregory MI  
48137. (Based on a book by Richard Lederer,  
"Crazy English) 1996 adaptation with refrain by  
Pete Seeger for reciting by 2 or more people.

Do not record or perform on air without permis-  
sion. © 1998 by Richard Lederer (fax [USA]  
619-549-2276)

Source: Baird Auditorium concert (Smithsonian  
Institution) 11/11/96, recorded and mixed by  
Pete Reiniger.

## 22 ODDS ON FAVORITE (A LONG STORY TERSE)

The most recent song on this collection reminds  
us again that we are only "passing through." The  
words are by the celebrated American lyricist E.Y.  
"Yip" Harburg ("Somewhere Over the Rainbow,"  
"Brother, Can You Spare a Dime"). Pete and  
Harburg were good friends for 50 years. Harburg  
had given Pete these lyrics many years ago, but  
Pete couldn't come up with a melody. In 1996,  
Harburg's son, Ernie, asked Pete to provide a  
song for the commemoration of his late father's  
100th birthday and reminded Pete about these  
lyrics (set to music here). Pete says that,  
although he still has hopes for our survival, he  
shares Yip Harburg's fear that human interven-  
tion may unnaturally shorten the life of this plan-  
et. The song's abrupt ending reflects this situa-  
tion, while Pete's light, Caribbean-inflected guitar  
accompaniment provides a subtle counterpoint to  
the sobering message.

Source: unreleased session, Beacon, NY 1/99,  
recorded by David Bernz.

## 23 A LITTLE OF THIS AND THAT

The final song on this collection represents a  
more positive vision for our future, one based in  
Pete's enduring belief in "ordinary people." In  
introducing this 1993 performance, he says: "I  
got the idea from a New York newspaper. It had a  
picture of a Black woman in Harlem who ran a  
soup kitchen. And the reporter said, 'Where did  
you get the funding for this?' 'Oh,' she says,  
'money's tight. But we get by with a little of this  
and that.' And at age 74, I'm convinced that if  
we the people of this world make it, it will be not  
just because thousands or millions but hundreds  
of millions of ordinary people say: 'I can't do  
everything, but I've gotta do something with what  
there is.'" Pete wrote "A Little of This and That"  
for his wife Toshi's birthday. Toshi (which means  
"beginning of a new era" [Dunaway 1981]) has  
been a major force in Pete's life since they met  
in 1939.

Source: recorded at Community Church, New York  
City 1/25/94 by Randy Ezratty, mixed by Pete  
Reiniger.

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# \* about smithsonian folkways

Folkways Records was founded by Moses Asch in  
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tion, and sounds from around the world. In the  
ensuing decades, New York City-based Folkways  
became one of the largest independent record  
labels in the world, reaching a total of nearly  
2,200 albums that were always kept in print.

The Smithsonian Institution acquired Folkways  
from the Moses Asch estate in 1987 to ensure  
that the sounds and genius of the artists would  
be preserved for future generations. All Folkways  
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settes or by special order on CD. Each recording  
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tation. It produces new titles, reissues of historic  
recordings from Folkways and other record  
labels, and in collaboration with other companies  
also produces instructional videotapes and  
recordings to accompany published books, and  
other educational projects.

The Smithsonian Folkways, Folkways, Cook,  
Monitor, Fast Folk, Paredon, and Dyer-Bennet  
record labels are administered by the  
Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and  
Cultural Heritage. They are one of the means

through which the Center supports the work of  
traditional artists and expresses its commitment  
to cultural diversity, education, and increased  
understanding.

You can find Smithsonian Folkways Recordings at  
your local record store. Smithsonian Folkways,  
Folkways, Cook, Paredon, and Dyer-Bennet  
recordings are all available through:

Smithsonian Folkways Mail Order  
955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 7300,  
Washington, DC 20560-0953  
phone (202) 287-7298  
fax (202) 287-7299  
orders only 1 (800) 410-9815  
(Discover, MasterCard, Visa, and  
American Express accepted)

For further information about all the labels dis-  
tributed through the Center, please consult our  
Internet site ([www.si.edu/folkways](http://www.si.edu/folkways)), which  
includes information about recent releases, our  
catalogue, and a database of the approximately  
35,000 tracks from the more than 2,300 avail-  
able recordings (click on "database search").

Or request a printed catalogue by writing to:  
Catalogue, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings,  
955 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, Suite 7300,  
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560-  
0953, USA. Or use our catalogue request phone:  
(202) 287-3262, or e-mail [folkways@aol.com](mailto:folkways@aol.com)