



Smithsonian Folkways

OLA BELLE REED

rising sun melodies



*Ola Belle Reed playing in the back of
Campbell's Corner, early to mid-1960s*

SFW 40202

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PRODUCED & ANNOTATED BY JEFF PLACE

1. I've Endured 2:49

(Ola Belle Reed - David Reed / Midstream Music, BMI)

2. Ola Belle's Blues 2:18

(Ola Belle Reed / Happy Valley Music, BMI)

3. Springtime of Life 4:19

(Ola Belle Reed - David Reed / Midstream Music, BMI)

4. Bonaparte's Retreat 2:46

(Pee Wee King - Redd Stewart / Sony-ATV Acuff Rose Music, BMI)

5. Foggy Mountain Top 2:29

(A. P. Carter / Peer International Corp., BMI)

6. Fortunes 4:12

(Ola Belle Reed / Happy Valley Music, BMI)

7. High on the Mountain 3:02

(Ola Belle Reed / Midstream Music, BMI)

8. Sweet Evalina 2:43

9. Sing Me a Song 4:28

(Ola Belle Reed - David Reed / Happy Valley Music, BMI)

10. Tear Down the Fences 3:34

(Ola Belle Reed - David Reed / Happy Valley Music, BMI)

11. My Epitaph 3:13

(Ola Belle Reed / Happy Valley Music, BMI)

12. Look Down That Lonesome Road 2:40

13. Undone in Sorrow 3:16

(Ola Belle Reed / Happy Valley Music, BMI)

14. I Believe in the Old Time Way 2:56

(Charlie Moore - Bill Napier / Fort Knox Music, BMI)

15. Nine Pound Hammer 3:21

(Merle Travis / Merle's Girls Music, BMI)

16. I Am the Man, Thomas 3:26

(Ralph Stanley - Larry Sparks / Zap Publishing Co., BMI)

17. I've Endured 2:35

(Ola Belle Reed - David Reed / Midstream Music, BMI)

18. Ranger's Command 2:56

(Ola Belle Reed / Happy Valley Music, BMI)

19. I Saw the Light 4:57

(Hank Williams / Sony-ATV Acuff Rose Music, BMI)



*Alex Campbell,
Ola Belle, and
Dave Reed in
Rising Sun,
MD, 1970*

The Story

This album contains songs from the lovely singing of Ola Belle Reed of Rising Sun, Maryland. But there is also more to it—the story of mountain residents forced by bad times to relocate from their beloved homes, the story of a woman with a big heart and big voice and the wonderful new music community she and her family helped create in their new homes, and the story of her family still keeping it going today. It is told mainly in the words of Ola Belle herself, her husband Bud, and her son Dave.

Rhonda Strickland in *Bluegrass Unlimited* observed, "Ola Belle and her husband both possess the rare ability to practice what they preach. They have integrated music, business and idealistic values in such a way that they live out their beliefs through music instead of letting music as a profession get in the way of living according to their values" (1983, 40).

Although many people write about Ola Belle Reed's music and her influence on other musicians, the citation above refers to another important part of Ola Belle's life—her deeds fully lived up to her Christian faith. Within her community she was a person someone in need could turn to for a helping hand. In addition to her sons Ralph Jr. (1950–) and David (1953–), she raised many abandoned or needy children. The house was full, and the boarders were taught responsibility in the hope it would help them in life when it was time to go. Bud Reed explains:

There's something about Ola Belle that most people don't know. She was a great humanitarian. We used to take in kids; we took in all kinds of kids. They'd come and find us. We had a black lady one time, she came down to the store, and she told Ola Belle, she said, "I hear you're a good woman." She said, "I ain't got no place to stay." And Ola Belle took her in the back and talked to her. We kept her up until she had to go to the nursing home—she had a stroke. Then we had an old man. He didn't have no income, nothing, and we kept him till he died. And I don't know how many kids we took, and raised, Ola Belle and I. Got one boy now, his name is Dale Howell, and he's been comin' to see me. He's got cancer now. We kept him and sent him on through school. Had a little girl one time, we found out she had been thrown to the wolves more or less, twelve years old. And I went and asked her parents if I could have her, and we took her and raised her, too. I don't know how many kids we raised. I used to get up Saturday mornings and the house would be full. Boys and girls, and I'd start cookin' them hotcakes and set them down at the table...they'd have to take turns sitting. You know, that was a joy for me. That's your reward, is your joy you have in doing things like that. Yes it is.

Dave Reed adds about his mother:

That was the best part of her. The way she was as a person. I have been stressin' that. It seem like most people want to talk about the music part and that's good, but to me, that's secondary to the things she done for people. I know that's what's helped her. The things she had to say to people. I seen her take in kids, and their mother had these kids by different men, and what she would do was make the kids sleep under the mobile home while she was with her boyfriends. One of the young boys came over to the store in shorts, short-sleeved shirt, barefooted, the ground still frozen and some ice on the ground, and they'd walk over there like it didn't even bother them. She took 'em in. That's what the Bible says, and that's what she firmly believes.



la Wave Campbell was born in 1916 in the area of Grassy Creek, North Carolina, near the New River, and she grew up in what is now is Lansing, North Carolina. Lansing is located in the western part of the state in the Appalachian Mountains, in a region that is a hotbed of string band music. It is a short drive from the Virginia–North Carolina border, and just to the northeast are the musically rich Carroll and Grayson Counties of Virginia. Many important musicians such as the Ward Family and the Bogtrotters are from the Galax and Independence, Virginia, environs. To the south of Lansing are Boone, Blowing Rock, and Beech Mountain, which have a long tradition of ballad singing and the "Jack Tale," a well-known style of Appalachian storytelling. Lansing was also one of the rail stops on the Norfolk and Western Railroad.

In that region highways wind their way through valleys and hollows between mountain ridges. In the early days, traveling by road to a town on the other side of the mountain often would take a significant amount of time. In 1927, when The Carter Family traveled from their home in Maces Spring, Virginia, the

thirty miles to Bristol for their first recording session, it took all day on what is now U.S. 58. People were more isolated, and neighbors made their own entertainment for one another. Ola Belle (1976) reflected:

We didn't have a radio back where I came from, there was only one in the neighborhood, it was one you had to plug earphones in, one of those long kinds. Most all of my generation of people did play and sing. I had uncles who taught singing, you know they taught the Do-Re-Mi-Fa-So-La, that kind, singing schools. But I never got taught anything. This is one little short story. My grandfather lived in a house on the banks of the New River and they had fireplaces and stoves, and of course in back room that was the parlor. Fifty years ago, I think, I borrowed, there used to be an old man and I borrowed a banjo, and used to sit out on a stump and played the banjo.... I made my tunes up as I went along, and the first I remember doing I used to stand up in front of the looking glass back in the parlor.... I bet you couldn't guess in a million years what, but I said this is going to be my theme song. Imagine fifty years ago, we didn't have a radio, a theme song? What would I have a theme song for? I used to say I'm gonna play on the radio. I know you know the song... "Look Down That Lonesome Road" [see track 12].

The music of the Appalachians is a wonderful mix of music from the immigrants who settled there. There are the string band tunes of both black and white traditions, old banjo and fiddle tunes; and the spirituals and hymns known by generations of families and passed on by the local singing schools, which taught religious songs and shape-note hymns. There are parlor ballads from the late 19th century, minstrel tunes, and old ballads from the British Isles, all of which make up a wonderful body of music.

Ola Belle learned her style of clawhammer banjo from her uncle Dockery Campbell in the early 1920s (Marti 1992/1993, 17). Her parents were Arthur Campbell and Ella Mae Osborne, both of whose families had lived in the mountains for generations. Her grandfather, Alexander Campbell, was a

Primitive Baptist minister and fiddler. Neighbors would come to his house on Sunday morning to hear his sermon, and in the afternoon the music would begin (18). Her uncle, Bob Ingraham, ran singing schools in the mountains (Whisnant 1977). Starting in 1910 and continuing into the 1920s, her father Arthur played with his siblings Dockery and Ellen and a neighbor, Rebecca Jones, in a local string band, the New River Boys and Girls (Marti 1992/1993, 17). Arthur worked as a schoolteacher and later opened up a number of stores in Ashe County to support his large family of thirteen children. The Campbells also owned a farm near the New River where they lived in the summer. Music was always around Ola Belle as she was growing up.

The Campbells' bucolic existence in the mountains was shattered by the Great Depression, a time when many mountain residents relocated to the more urban northeast United States looking for work. Many came to work in industrial and defense jobs in the Baltimore-Washington area. In order to survive economically, in 1934 the Campbells moved to the area near the Mason-Dixon Line in Chester County in southeast Pennsylvania. The whole family traveled north except for Arthur, who stayed in Carolina to settle his businesses. When the Campbells first arrived, they rented a dairy farm for \$65 a month. Ola Belle found work as a housekeeper. The mountain people faced condescension from the local residents, and that drew them closer together. Ola Belle's employer derisively joked over dinner, "This is my little housekeeper from North Carolina, she says she's going to sing on the radio some day" (Whisnant 1977). Ola Belle and her brother Alex Campbell began what became a long musical relationship playing in the community of transplants, which became close-knit.

In 1936, local musician Shorty Woods was looking for a singer for his band, the North Carolina Ridge Runners, and asked Ola Belle to join. They played on local radio as well as at music parks, carnivals, and dances throughout the Maryland-Delaware-Pennsylvania area (Whisnant 1977). Ola Belle played with the group until 1948. In 1939, the group played their first radio program over

WILM in Wilmington, Delaware. Ola Belle started her first number, "St. Louis Blues," with such intensity that she overloaded the system and briefly knocked the station off the air. She had gotten her wish to be on radio! The other female singer in the group was Hazel Waltzman. Hazel's family owned Sunset Park, a country music park in southern Pennsylvania. In the ensuing years, the band would play at the park frequently.

During Alex Campbell's time in Germany during World War II, the U.S. forces captured a 100,000-watt radio station, and Alex and Grandpa Jones were able to perform over the air as the Munich Mountaineers every Saturday night (Marti 1992/1993, 20). Alex, who had been wounded at Normandy Beach, returned home after the war and joined the North Carolina Ridge Runners. He remained with them until 1948, when he and Ola Belle started the New River Boys and Girls, named in homage to the family band back in North Carolina. The band also included Ted Lundy on banjo, Deacon Brumfield on dobro, and Sonny and John Miller on fiddle.

In 1945, on one occasion, the Ridge Runners shared the bill with Roy Acuff, one of the stars of the Grand Ole Opry, on a WLAN concert. Acuff was so impressed with Ola Belle's singing that in 1947 he called from Nashville and offered her \$100 a week to join his band. She declined. Also in 1945, Ola Belle met Bud Reed. He had grown up in the area, was from a musical family, and had played dances locally in the 1930s. The couple married in 1949. Ola Belle (1976) recalled:

There was one particular girl named Helen, and one night she took me over and introduced me to her brother. He just got home from the service. I went on and spoke to him, and paid no attention, we went on with our dance, and we'd get out and lead them when they'd get to playing, and if they didn't know how to start it, we'd start them off. He went home that night and was lying on the couch, he was laying there singing, singing away, and all he was saying was "Oh, my hula girl," he



Ola Belle at Sunset Park, West Grove, PA, early 1960s

must have been over in Honolulu, I guess. He was singing "My hula girl, my hula girl" and was laughing and said, "That's my Ola Belle."... So I got a letter, I don't know how long it was after that, I got a letter from him. He wanted to know if he could come and take me out, but the mail had been on strike, and the day we were at Sunset Park, and the time he was supposed to come and see me, the letter didn't get there on time. He came to Sunset Park, and that was the first time I went out with him. He came to Sunset Park and he took me home. We started going together, no big deal. First thing I knew we were married.

According to Bud himself, "And it was the second day I come out of the WWII, and I had seven sisters and they wanted me to go to this birthday party, and I thought, my goodness, I hadn't seen no action for over three years, that's too tame for me, but I decided to go. So, that's when I met Ola Belle. First time."

Bud Reed had grown up in a family of ten children; Ola Belle, thirteen. The Campbell-Reed family gatherings must have made for a large affair.

Bud was born in the old toll house located where U.S. Route 1 crosses the Susquehanna River, right above where it opens out into the Chesapeake Bay, in the town of Old Conowingo, Maryland (Marti 1992/1993, 20). Of his youth, he remarks:

My grandmother used to watch a crossing, what you call old Conowingo before they built the dam. And she was a railroad woman and my grandfather was a trackman, he worked on the railroad. They had a lot of Jimmie Rodgers records, and I used to get them records and sing with 'em and dream, you know how boys do, with big crowds, and my dreams came true sure enough. I was six years old when I started playin' the harmonica, and I was fifteen years old before I got my first guitar. I rigged up out of coat hangers, that was in the Depression days, coat hangers and rubber bands, rigged me up a holder for my harmonica so I could play the two together. In the '30s I used to play with Deacon Brumfield, he used to play the fiddle, and we played five and six nights a week. I used to play the mouth organ and Herb used to play the guitar, and we used to go around schools. They give us a quarter or maybe fifty cents—Well, we played different songs, like "Red Wing" and Stephen Foster songs and that type of music. Course I played with Deacon, played with him close to three years, and that was in the Depression. Those Depression days were terrible days, but fortunately my dad had a pretty good job. He worked for the electric company. He worked all through the Depression. There were ten of us. There's still five of us still living. I had seven sisters and two brothers, and I just lost one brother. I was born in a town called Old Conowingo. They covered it with water when they built the dam. Yeah, I remember the old town well. I was ten years old when they finished it. In 1928 they finished it. February 1928, and I remember looking at the old town and knowing it was something of the past, you know. That's where I was born. It's all under water. It's been under water since 1928.

One of the most significant things the Campbell and Reed families did was to open a country music park called the New River Ranch between Conowingo and Rising Sun, Maryland, in 1951. The park featured major Nashville stars such as Hank Williams, The Carter Family, Grandpa Jones, Conway Twitty, and Loretta Lynn and star bluegrass acts such as Flatt and Scruggs, Bill Monroe, and the Stanley Brothers. Every year the opening show of the season was a blockbuster act, starting the first year with Flatt and Scruggs. The park had a bandstand located by a creek, and shows were held every Sunday in season. It was a great way for local audiences to see quality entertainment at an inexpensive price. Bud describes the setup of the park:

Well, I was the one who built New River Ranch. I got it started, I borrowed the money. Got enough money to buy all the lumber, and I was the one who built most of it—I had a carpenter come in and he showed me how to do it—I didn't even know how to square a building. I learned, and I put all the buildings up at New River Ranch. I was the one who got it started.... It was located right by Octoraro Creek. I built the stage down at the bottom and the hill went up like this and lined all the seats up the hill so everybody could see. I hung the speakers up in the trees so they wouldn't blast right up at the people, and they had one mike and they'd all gather around the mike—it was wonderful, just wonderful. I ran all the concessions, I used to buy all the concessions, yeah, and I was the one who got that started. Well, Alex was my partner and of course he did the advertising, and we had Ray Davis as emcee and he brought a lot of people from Baltimore, and Alex was on WASA in Havre de Grace, MD, he advertised there, and that's how New River Ranch got started. We had all the Nashville acts, some good acts. We had a lot of people from Wheeling, too, come in there. Our booking agent was Cooke & Rose from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and they used to tell us what shows we could book and that's what we would go by, we'd go by that. And we had all the Nashville acts, just about all of 'em.

Some of the leaders of the late 1950s “folk revival” were influenced by their visits to the New River Ranch. Newport Folk Festival talent scout, musician, and co-founder of the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, Ralph Rinzler, was profoundly affected by traveling down from Swarthmore College in the mid-1950s to the park. Another frequent visitor was music scholar Mike Seeger. Mandolin virtuoso David Grisman was taken to the New River Ranch by Rinzler, and that is where he first heard Bill Monroe. Sunset Park in Pennsylvania was another park that saw visits from young city musicians, including the Grateful Dead’s Jerry Garcia. During this time many rural traditional performers were brought north by the urban folk movement to play such locations as the Newport Folk Festival, University of Chicago, and the Friends of Old Time Music concerts in New York City. There they were out of their element. With these visits to the country music parks, though, the tables were turned, and the “Citybillies” got to experience this music on the county musicians’ own home turf.

During the mid-1960s Alex Campbell and the group also performed on radio broadcast over lines from Oxford, Pennsylvania, to West Virginia. Bud Reed says, “Alex happened to work out a deal with WWVA in Wheeling, WV. So he worked out to get an hour set on there, and if I’m not mistaken, I believe that Deacon Brumfield was in on that. Deacon Brumfield, who played the dobro with the band in a very significant time in the band’s life. They had a show from 12:00 at night to 1:00 in the morning. So that would have been from 12:00 endin’ up Saturday, into Sunday morning 1:00.”

Alex Campbell, Ola Belle and the New River Boys and Girls were the park’s house band opening for the headliners who passed through. The park stayed open well into the 1960s, but Bud Reed got out of the business in 1955. “Yeah, they were the house band. Yeah, they were the house band, they were. We generally had the main shows two to three times daily. There’d come one and then we had shows in between, small shows, sometime bands, sometime dog shows, and shows like that. Maybe a comedian or something like that. Well,



Ola Belle at New River Ranch near Spready Oak, MD, early 1950s

I sold out to Alex about 1955. I had a dry cleaning business and I just got wore out and I had to give one or the other up, so I decided to give New River Ranch up...because the dry cleaning was my business. Well, in 1958 we had four feet of snow and that collapsed most of the buildings they had in there that we built, so I don’t know if anybody run—seem to me they run a little after that—but I never went back. I never went back. Too many memories, I guess you’d call it that.”

Another family, the Paisleys, who also moved from Ashe County, North Carolina, to Landenburg, Pennsylvania, became involved in mushroom farming and music. Bob Paisley, Ted Lundy, and the Southern Grass became an important bluegrass group in the Pennsylvania-Maryland-Delaware region. Bob’s uncle, Wiley Paisley, and a cousin had at one time been members of the North Carolina Ridge Runners. Southern Grass banjoist Ted Lundy, who also grew up in Appalachia, was a member of Alex Campbell, Ola Belle and the New River Boys and Girls. The group often rehearsed in the Paisley home. Bob Paisley remembers getting a musical education at New River Ranch and Sunset Park. He recalled that the parks were designed around the schedules of the farming families. Day passes were available, and there were long breaks in the program,



left: *The Reed family home, Rising Sun, MD.* right: *Campbell's Corner, Oxford, PA, 2010*

allowing farming families to go home in the afternoon, do their chores, and then return for the second half of the show (Smith 2004). The Southern Grass still are a powerhouse group today and include sons Danny and Michael Paisley, and T. J. and Bobby Lundy. Another local performing group with Appalachian roots were Clarence and Eva Girvin from the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, area.

The Campbell family had long been involved in running country stores. Ola Belle's sister Mary with her husband Earl opened a store in Rising Sun, a half mile out of town on Route 273. Later, during the 1950s, Mary and Earl Owen went into business down the road with a gentleman named Frank Adams, called Owens' store. Then in 1960, Ola Belle and Alex Campbell opened another store called Campbell's Corner on the western edge of Oxford, Pennsylvania, naming it after the family store in North Carolina. It is still standing today, although closed down. The store became a meeting ground for the Appalachian transplants. Ola Belle and her brother purposely brought in southern products that you could not get anywhere else locally, like Martha White flour. Bud Reed notes, "They used to go down south and get vegetables from a lot of southern people and bring them up here. And they carried products that none of the other stores carried. And

they had quite a bit they were selling, quite a bit." Mary and Earl later took over Campbell's Corner. Dave Reed remembers:

It was a little grocery store, and I vaguely remember that. Then they moved, I'd say about a mile, maybe mile and a half outside of Rising Sun, Route 273 goin' toward Newark, Delaware, on the left. Then my aunt Mary, of course Mary is Mom's sister. So Mary and her husband was working with a store there with a man by the name of Frank Adams, in the '50s, and I don't know what store they started that. I remember being there, but that's about it. Then, you're talking about the store in Oxford. The store according to what Mary said. Mary, you know, Mom's sister. I'm just trying to make sure to keep the story straight. They moved up there, she helped to get the store started in Oxford, Campbell's Corner.... So they helped Mom and Alex get that store started, and I do remember being in there before it was opened up, ah, so I was, well, I'm giving away my age now. But I think it was late 1959 when they began making preparations to open the store [Campbell's Corner]. So here I was about six, seven years old. Then they opened it up and I was there from the get-go in that place, then Mom and Alex ran that store till 1969, they got out of the business, and then Mary and her husband Earl took the store over, and it was moved from Rising Sun totally up to Campbell's Corner.

The store in Oxford, Campbell's Corner, became legendary. In front it carried lots of products—food, supplies, musical instruments, and records. Alex brought in music on regional southern record labels that could not be found in other local stores. They also dealt with mail order sales. Alex even started his own regional label, Cabin Creek, named for an area nearby their home in North Carolina. Dave adds, "He had the Cabin Creek label, and the Essgee label, and he produced an album for Don Reno and Benny Martin on Cabin Creek, his label. And he also produced one on the Stanley Brothers." The store

also went on to sell cars and even mobile homes, which presumably were kept in the parking lot. "Alex contributed so much to bluegrass and country music, so I want to give credit where credit's due, OK. Alex doesn't really get near the credit he deserves; I want to see the story told about what Alex contributed to the music, with him and Mom."

Unique among the stores, Campbell's Corner had an area in the back where musicians were recorded and later broadcast over the radio. Alex was the main emcee and performed with Ola Belle. The station hosted some of the top names in Nashville country music and bluegrass. Customers who were shopping in the store when the show was being taped got to witness some of the best in the business. People from all over the world would make the store a destination (Marti 1992/1993, 21). The radio program "Campbell's Corner" lasted 24 years until 1984 (20). Dave Reed elaborates:

But in the '60s was the most interesting part, because that's where they had the groups in the back. I remember seeing them. Alex, Mom's brother, had the radio broadcast. It was a local, just a regular, local broadcast, it was broadcast out of Coatesville, PA, and that's probably, what, about an hour approximately from Oxford, maybe 45 minutes, somewhere around in there, and Alex could get on there and start advertising things, and I could remember just about what he'd say. He'd say: "Here we are in Campbell's Corner here in Oxford, PA." Alex would announce, "We got Beaver Creek beans here, we got Martha White flour, cornmeal and flour, and we got g-ui-tars." They used to sell used instruments, anything, Alex and my uncle Herb—Herbert is a brother. He used to sell guitars and used to work back of the meat case. Alex would also sell new instruments. They began to get into the Ventura line, and they used to sell real well.

[The store] wasn't very big. Sometimes it would not be filled, even though well-known groups were performing. I remember when they had Bill Monroe there, and I

believe it was right around 1967. This is another story. I remember we were stocking groceries. There was a section where there used to be like a partition, and there was an add-on or something. But anyway, there was a little hang down like this, where you walk through straight way into the back. So that part back there was the part where they had the benches, old benches, settin' on milk crates, old milk crates. We didn't care, we had fun. But anyhow I remember seein' Bill—we were out in the store part and I remember there used to be a heater back there, it hung down real low. And as short as I am, 5'5", I'd have to watch and be careful not to bang my head on it, and we were in that section stocking groceries. We could see Bill Monroe back there playing. And there was this guy, about a year or two older than me, and he was looking at Bill Monroe and he goes, hee-haw, hee-haw, you know, kind of poking fun a little bit. But when Bill Monroe took off on a fast song playing about 500 mph, that guy couldn't help but look in amazement. He goes, wow, man. look at that guy play. Well, he was just a-flyin'. And I remember seeing Hylo Brown there, too.

I know the WWVA show was goin' on in '65, I can't remember how long it went on for, but I do remember in the back, and they would have their show, and there were people up front, and God only knows on how much merchandise got stolen. Of course Mom and Alex trusted too many people and were sort of naïve in that way, and I, of course, I was so young, I never thought anything about it, but there would be teenagers up front there, all the time. They used to mail order records from the back area, and I remember I used to help to put stamps on them. They sold so many records—it was mindboggling. I remember Mom being in Alex's office which used to be in the middle area of the store, if you walked back it would be off to the right, but it was in the middle part. I remember Mom sittin' back there by the telephone, and she was taking phone calls one day. I believe it was from record sales, and that phone rang, and rang, and rang. I never heard so many calls come in my life.

Lots of musicians stayed with the Reeds while passing through. Bud Reed recalls:

Well, Grandpa Jones stayed at my house one night. We got up the next morning and I said, "What do you want for breakfast, Grandpa?" Said, "You want some bacon and eggs? You want hotcakes?" He said, "Well," you know how he talks, "well Bud, I'll take some hotcakes." So I set him down at the table, and somebody given Ola Belle a jar of corncob jelly. You ever hear of it? It's corncob made in the Smoky Mountains. So I sit him down at the table and whipped him up some hotcakes and he said, "Have you got any Ola Belle jelly?" So I started setting it out, and he started reading the labels. He said, "Apple jelly, grape jelly, corncob jelly—corncob jelly?" He says, "You mean they found another use for them things?" But I loved Grandpa; he was really a nice man.

After the family was no longer involved in New River Ranch, the New River Boys and Girls resumed playing at Sunset Park in West Grove, Pennsylvania. The park continued operating until 1995, and the group was there for a large part of that time. "It kept up and running," Dave relates, "and Mom and Alex was the home band right on up to I believe '79. So, but I played with the band, I played bass, a very insignificant part, but I played bass with the band from '71 to '76."

Dave Reed had grown up in an incredibly rich musical environment. When he was a teenager, he was admittedly all about rock 'n' roll and not his parents' music. Dave had a rock band, and while he initially did not play "Mom's" music, Ola Belle had no problem with getting up and singing with the rock band. "I could easily sing songs like 'Put Your Hand in the Hand' with them" (1972). Dave remembers first giving her music a try when he was sixteen:

There was a young boy in the back of the store playin' a guitar and he was a banjo player too—and I remember this kid, he was twelve years old, it could've been around '65, '66, when I first heard this young kid, it blew me away. I thought, I loved

banjo and this kid, boy I loved to hear that kid. I was fascinated by a kid playin'. Then, later years he picked up this guitar. I don't know if he was playin' with Mom and Alex or playin' with some other band, I can't even remember that, but I watched him, and boy, I was playing rock at the time, Jimi Hendrix, and my best buddy of all time, Snap, we had a rock band at the time. Anyhow, I watched this young boy play his guitar, doin' these runs, and I looked at him and I picked up a guitar and I thought, hey, let me just see if I can do this, for fun. He inspired me, you know. So I picked it up and started playin' around with it, and thought I could do this, too. So Mom and I don't know how in tarnation we got pickin' together. But I remember where it was, it was the back of the meat case, right back there where they slice the meat. Mom was sittin' back there, somehow or other we got pickin' together. And I noticed I could play the same notes she was playing, and I'd never done it before. I fell into it. I didn't really know what I was doing at the time, but I just fell into it. Mom, oh she was so excited. John Miller was in the back of the meat case, and she says, "John, come listen to this, come listen to this." That's when Mom invited me to go to the Festival of American Folklife, 1969. I went with her and Alex and John and of course Dad, he got a chance to play on the stage with Mom, for the first time I ever remember.

Dave's brother Ralph played bass and finger-picking guitar and was partial at the time to Simon and Garfunkel. He also played music in church with Kenny Miller, a former member of Alex and Ola Belle's band. Ralph is a minister in Wyoming and has played gospel music throughout his life. He has also played with the family band, including at the Brandywine Friends of Old Time Music festival and recent events in Owensboro, Kentucky, and Wilkesboro, North Carolina. In 1993, Ralph was part of the family band when they opened for Marty Stuart at Sunset Park. Ralph also recorded a self-produced cassette tape of his mother's songs.



ne of the people who came to visit Campbell's Corner was the well-known folklorist Henry Glassie. He and other folklorists began to take an interest in Ola Belle's life and music. The arrival of these new visitors would change the direction of Ola Belle's life. As Dave experienced it:

What blew my mind was when Gei Zantzing and Henry Glassie, Christopher Bamford, and John Mutsy, those four guys, when they come down to the store, I remember seein' them for the first time, I was twelve years old, it was 1965, I remember this as vivid as me sittin' here talking to you right now. I remember taking one look at these guys, and I knew there was something different about them—very distinguished-looking, and when Mom started talking to these people, I noticed particularly, Henry Glassie and Gei Zantzing lookin' at Mom with this look of interest, and I knew there's something different here, somethin' different's going on. They began to bring their recorders, their reel-to-reel decks and recorded Mom along with John Miller and Burl Kilby.

In the years during and following the great “folk revival” going on in the late 1950s—early 1960s, folklorists and musicologists began to actively look for many of the rural traditional musicians who had made records in the earlier part of the century. They also began to look for active musicians who played old-time string band, blues, Cajun, and many other traditional music genres. Individuals like Ralph Rinzler, John Cohen, Mike Seeger, Ed Kahn, Mack McCormick, and others brought these musicians to be part of the large folk festivals in the north and northeast and to record for urban record labels. Peter Siegel, who was involved in the process, has described this as the “folk arrival” verses the folk revival (2006). In 1967, Ralph Rinzler was hired as the artistic director for the new Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife on the National Mall. Each year the Festival chose one U.S. state to feature, and in 1969 it was Pennsylvania. Rinzler worked with a group of folklorists from Pennsylvania including Don Yoder and Glassie to identify possible participants to come down to Washington for the



The Campbell-Reed family performing on the Mall with Mike Seeger, 1969

event. One of those recommended was the Campbell-Reed Family.

The group at this time included Alex, Ola Belle, Bud, sixteen-year-old Dave, and John Miller. Playing in the folk festival environment was very different from what they were accustomed to. Bud had only recently started playing again himself. “1969, I started playin’ a little bit. We were up at the Philadelphia Folk Festival and rest of the band had to go back down to Sunset Park and Ola Belle and David stayed there, and she said—she always called me Daddy—she said, ‘Come on, Daddy, come and play one with us,’ and I thought if I’m ever gonna play, got to do it now. Then we were up in New York, and she said, ‘Daddy, sing a song,’ so I thought, if I’m ever gonna sing a song, I got to do it now, so I started singing.”

After many years of always being the warm-up act for the stars, now finally Alex and Ola Belle got to be the center of attention, and people began to really appreciate them. Dave comments:

But then, she started getting national recognition among folk music fans. You know how it is, once you get a name, it changes everything. And that's what I watched happen with my mom. I've got to give Ralph Rinzler credit, Josh Dunson, too. I remember when we went to the Festival of American Folklife in 1969, I watched Josh Dunson. I was sixteen years old; now you know when you're a teenager, things that early in your life do affect you all the way down through the years, and I remember Josh Dunson talking to Mom, and he helped Mom a lot, too. He really did. And so did Ralph Rinzler. Ralph Rinzler had that look of interest. And there's others—Mike Seeger's another one, Alice Gerrard—I watched these people—Hazel Dickens. I watched the look on their faces and they were interested, more than anybody I had ever seen interested in Mom's—in Mom. I'd never seen it, from around Rising Sun, Oxford. There's people who like 'em, but they did not take the same interest. In other words, those people done more for Mom and her music, and us, than anybody I've ever seen, ever.

Her records sold internationally, but the group generally stuck close to home. Bud remembers them as more of a regional act.

Dave notes the striking difference between the audiences at the country music parks and the folk audience once when they were playing at Sunset Park.

I could remember when we would be playing on a stage, and you know from being on that stage, to me it makes a difference if you're there, not only do you see but you feel what's goin' on. And say, like some big Nashville act come, I'll never forget this, it was a little narrow road, very narrow, you could imagine a big bus, full size, at the day and the time, still was a good size, OK, coming down, I could see 'em—I'll never forget seein' that—and these people—say if you had a crowd, a Nashville act that was really big and hot for the day and the time, and the place would, all throughout the pavilion would be full, looks like it could be, I don't know, 600 people, maybe 1,000, whatever they had plus people standin' all about. We could be playin' on that stage, and so help me, right in the middle of a song, kah-boom, the place would

practically empty out, and it made me feel so small—like we ain't nothin', you know, nothing, nobodies, we ain't anybodies 'round here. But I sensed that the people took Mom, Alex, and the band for granted, and I guess that's to be expected.

The family band would play the Festival of American Folklife again in 1972 when Maryland was the featured state. They came back for the great 1976 Festival on the National Mall to celebrate the Bicentennial of the United States. The group that year included husband and wife John Coffey and Betsy Rutherford from southwest Virginia. Many of the recordings on this collection come from these two Festivals, from tapes of the event which have been stored in the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections and never before released commercially.

Henry Glassie made some recordings of the Campbell-Reed Family. Some came out on cassette tape, and others are now owned by the Maryland Arts Council. Gei Zantzing made recordings of the group which yielded two albums for Boston-based Rounder Records, the first two widely distributed Reed Family records.

According to Dave Reed, "And the very first Ola Belle Reed album we recorded was done by Gei Zantzing, thanks to Gei Zantzing, we all got on Rounder Records. He took us and recorded us in his living room. Oh, it was just so much fun. I loved it. He produced it, got it, and paid for it, for everything you could think of, and got it on Rounder Records. Thank the Lord for Gei Zantzing. That's where the first Ola Belle Reed album came from." Alex Campbell, who had been a crucial part of the band for many years, decided he did not want to be involved and declined to come to the recording session. "Here's the thing that I remember," Dave says. "Gei Zantzing begged—he kept asking, where's Alex, where's Alex, where's Alex? every day we went up there. We went up there and recorded for three days that I can remember, about the fall 1972. I'll never forget it. And Mom begged Alex to come, begged him. He just didn't want to come, why,

I don't know, I can't tell you why, because I don't know the answer, to this day I don't know the answer as to why Alex backed out. Therefore it was an Ola Belle Reed album, not Ola Belle Reed and Alex Campbell or Alex Campbell and Ola Belle Reed, because those two were a team. Alex was there before me and Dad, before I was even born, and those two were close in their relationship with each other as brother and sister. You couldn't separate them, you couldn't separate them in business and you couldn't separate them in their music. They were that tight. If Alex would've come to the session in the folk field, his name would've been there right alongside of Mom's, but he just did not want to go."

Folk musician Kevin Roth, who had been recording for Folkways as an artist, also took an interest in Ola Belle's music. Roth grew up in Pennsylvania and is a virtuoso on the mountain dulcimer. He had a cableTV program on WCOJ in the 1970s and met Ola Belle through his show. He and Ola Belle began a close relationship. "She was people oriented. She did not like prejudice of any sort. She had a great keen heart, taking in the stray and wounded into her life" (1991). He arranged with Moses Asch to release an audio-documentary on Ola Belle and her music and beliefs called *My Epitaph* in 1976. The record was a combination of spoken word and a sampling of her music. She was accompanied by Kevin and her family, Bud and David. A second Folkways album, *All in One Evening*, followed in 1978.

"Thanks to Kevin Roth," Dave adds. "He is someone else I want to begin to give credit to for paying attention to what she had to say. And how she felt about people and about things is more important to me than her music, even though her music is important. Well, Kevin Roth was the main one for us to go through as the mediator with Folkways Records because he would bring these contracts down and as you know, this is what I remember, Moe Asch would send down a copy for Mom and whoever was making the record to sign, but it was through Kevin Roth. He was the main mediator. And I remember he would sign the copy and the other person would sign. As a matter of fact, Kevin Roth had it

worked out for me to do my own album and I did not do it, and I still have a copy of that in my papers. I don't know why I didn't, but I've still got a copy of the contract. I wish I would've now, but I didn't."

In a letter to Asch dated August 13, 1979, Ola Belle pitched the idea of doing a gospel album, but it never happened. Bud Reed made an album of his own for Folkways recorded at Dave Reed's studio. In 1968, Dave had started learning recording techniques and started experimenting with overdubbing. He produced his own music and albums by his father and Kevin Roth in his studio in the 1980s. He also recorded other local musicians.

Bud's recording was a collection of his beloved Jimmie Rodgers' songs called *Way Out on the Mountain* and released in 1982. "We sent it up to Folkways, and I said I don't know if they'll do it or not, so Moses Asch, and I called him and I said, 'Did you do anything with that?' 'Oh yes,' he says, that's the way he talks, he says, 'your copy's in the mail.' I thought, well, my goodness. He says, 'We gettin' ready to go to the World's Fair in Knoxville.' Anyhow, he says, 'Your copy's in the mail.' I say, 'Well, how'd it turn out?' He said, 'Beautiful, beautiful.' I thought, coming from him it must be alright. So that's when I got copies of it. David recorded that one." A group of the Reeds' neighbors, the DeBusk-Weaver family, recorded two albums, and one of them called *Meeting in the Air* was released by Folkways in 1979.

In the last twenty years, Ola Belle's songwriting has begun to be appreciated by other musicians. Many have covered her songs, some to great acclaim. Dave remembers Hylo Brown and Bill Monroe both being interested in performing her songs early on but nothing coming of it. Another Pennsylvania act, Del McCoury, recorded her song "High on the Mountain," followed by a version by nationally known bluegrass act Hot Rize. Both McCoury and Hot Rize member Tim O'Brien returned to the well and recorded her "I've Endured." Now both are bluegrass standards. Her biggest success so far as a songwriter came when

country music star Marty Stuart took “High on the Mountain” and rearranged it into a country-rock song, and it was a huge hit on the country music charts in 1992. Stuart himself had started by playing bluegrass music as a teenager. Dave remembers Bud coming home from Sunset Park and telling him Marty Stuart had recorded the song.

He was getting top ten hits. So Dad got a copy of the “This One’s Gonna Hurt You.” I’ll never forget it, so I played it. I remember right where I was at. I had my little recording studio going at the time and I was recording people, recording my own songs, recording for other people. It floored me. It floored me because I’m the type of person who likes different sounds and all different fields of music. I’m sure a lot of people don’t care for that, but it’s how I am and I ain’t ashamed of it. But, I flipped my lid over it. I said, this guy has taken this song and turned it into something else here, in another field of music. The next thing you know, my Mom’s song was being played across the whole world in the mainstream country music.

By the time of Stuart’s success with her song, Ola Belle’s health was too poor for her to really appreciate it.



Dave, Ola Belle, and Bud Reed, 1978

In 1978, the University of Maryland honored Ola Belle with an honorary doctorate of letters. In 1986, she was awarded a National Heritage Fellowship by the National Endowment for the Arts, the highest honor an American folk artist can receive. Bud recalled, “It’s the only time I ever really seen her get excited is when they told her that she won that award. Other awards, she got all kinds of awards. They have a museum in Rising Sun now, and I put a lot of her

stuff up there, her awards and all.” In 1987, Ola Belle suffered a debilitating stroke and for the next fifteen years was confined to bed and a wheelchair. She lived in Rising Sun, was attended to by her loving family, and was visited by many. She passed away one day before her 86th birthday in 2002.

Her family continues to make music. Dave has played in various gospel groups but went solo in 1976, resuming his songwriting and recording. He has had a singing ministry for 33 years. He and his wife Kathy live in Port Deposit, Maryland, and play Christian music at churches, nursing homes, concerts, and special events (Vashell 2009, 58). “Anyplace they’ll have us,” says Dave. He recorded a CD called *Sing Me a Song* in 2003. Bud Reed, although 91 at this writing, still plays the occasional show at special events along with his two sons. Every year, Ola Belle’s hometown of Lansing, North Carolina, puts on the Ola Belle Reed Homecoming Festival, and the Reed Family is there. In October 2008, Bud, Ralph Jr., and Dave traveled to Owensboro, Kentucky, where they performed at the International Bluegrass Music Museum. Ola Belle, Bud, Dave, and Ralph Jr. were inducted as “bluegrass pioneers.” Dave recalls the thrill of playing the event and being surrounded by many famous bluegrass stars. At a post-ceremony jam session, the assembled group was looking for something to sing together, and Dave started playing “Will the Circle Be Unbroken.” He remembers Curly Seckler hearing him and walking over towards him, singing along. It was an amazing experience. Ola Belle was also inducted into the Blue Ridge Music Hall of Fame in 2009, and the family assembled to play at the ceremony.

Ola Belle’s nephews Hugh and Zane Campbell also perform music locally in Maryland and have made recordings. Both are singer-songwriters. Zane was involved in writing the script for an independent film, *New River: A Family Musical History Tour*, which was released in 2007. It dealt with the Campbell Family and included a soundtrack of songs about them. Hugh lived in Austin, Texas, before moving back to Maryland. At one point in 2004, Ola Belle’s “I’ve

Endured" and Hugh's "Shape of a Tear" were numbers 17 and 18 back to back on the Bluegrass music charts.

Zane lived in New York City for years and was in various rock bands. He spent time in a crowd that hung out at CBGB's and was associated with the Ramones.

In recent years, Ola Belle's influence has been large. She is considered a role model for younger women in bluegrass and old-time music as someone who paved the way for women fronting a band and being the main songwriter. Her outspokenness in her music has been influential. "That's what I am saying that you cannot separate your music from your lifestyle. You cannot separate your lifestyle, your religion, and your politics from your music, it's part of life" (1976). For younger musicians like Hazel Dickens working in the 1950s in the Baltimore area, Ola Belle was an inspiration. Dave remembers, "When we went to the International Bluegrass Museum in 2008, Roni Stoneman was there. She was either talkin' to my dad or my brother about how Mom influenced her, and encouraged her just to be herself, to be who she is, and she said it really helped, and I know that was a long, long time ago." Singers Cathy Fink and Marcy Marxer look to Ola Belle as a role model and have helped to celebrate her music. Cathy Fink recorded Ola Belle's song "Only the Leading Role Will Do."

Even musicians too young to remember her from her active playing days have been paying musical homage to her. The alternative country band Olabelle owes her for its name. The Demolition String Band recorded an entire project of Ola Belle's music. They and others will keep her music alive. For those who want to hear the music from the master herself, we present these songs.

— Jeff Place, October 2009

opposite: Dave, Ola Belle, and Bud Reed, 1977



The Songs

1. I've Endured

OLA BELLE REED, banjo, guitar, and vocal; DAVID REED, guitar; BUD REED, guitar (*from Folkways 2493, 1976*)

"I've Endured" comes from Ola Belle's autobiographical album, *My Epitaph*. One of her best-known songs and known to many bluegrass fans, it has been recorded by Tim O'Brien, Del McCoury, Cathy Fink, and the Konnarock Critters, among others. She wrote it on her 50th birthday.

2. Ola Belle's Blues

OLA BELLE REED, banjo; KEVIN ROTH, dulcimer (*from Folkways 2329, 1978*)

3. Springtime of Life

OLA BELLE REED, banjo and vocal; DAVID REED, guitar; BUD REED, guitar (*from Folkways 2493, 1976*)

4. Bonaparte's Retreat

OLA BELLE REED, guitar and vocal; KEVIN ROTH, dulcimer; BUD REED, guitar (*from Folkways 2329, 1978*)

"Bonaparte's Retreat" is an old fiddle tune with roots in the British Isles. Not until the 1940s did Pee Wee King and Red Stewart create the lyrics to the song, but it is still primarily performed as an instrumental.

5. Foggy Mountain Top

OLA BELLE REED, banjo and vocal; BUD REED, guitar; KEVIN ROTH, dulcimer (*from Folkways 2329, 1978*)

"Foggy Mountain Top" is an old song from the Appalachian region. Cecil Sharp collected a version in 1916 in Carmen, North Carolina, and it was first recorded by Samantha Bumgarner and Eva Davis in 1924 (Meade, Spottswood, and Meade 2002, 532). The Carter Family of Maces Springs, Virginia, had the first popular version of the song in 1929. It has also become a bluegrass standard and been recorded by such luminaries as Bill Monroe and Flatt and Scruggs. Ola Belle sings the Carters' lyrics.

6. Fortunes

OLA BELLE REED, guitar and vocal; DAVID REED, dobro; BUD REED, harmonica and vocal (*from Folkways 2493, 1976*)

7. High on the Mountain

OLA BELLE REED, banjo, guitar and vocal; DAVID REED, guitar (*from Folkways 2493, 1976*)

Arguably Ola Belle Reed's best-known song, this one has become a bluegrass standard. It has been recorded by Hot Rize, Del McCoury, the Northern Irish group Four Men and a Dog, and, not surprisingly, the modern group Olabelle.

Bud Reed remembered when she wrote it: "I was with Ola Belle when she wrote that 'High on the Mountain.' You know where she wrote that at? At her mother's graveyard. That was about her people. A lot of people thought it was a love song, but it was about her people."

8. Sweet Evalina

OLA BELLE REED, guitar and vocal; KEVIN ROTH, dulcimer and vocal; BUD REED, harmonica (*from Folkways 2329, 1978*)

"Sweet Evalina" was first published in the 1860s and appeared in a number of "dime" songsters (Meade et al. 2002, 224). Phil Reeve and Ernest Moody first recorded it as a duet in 1929. Dave Reed remembers that his mother did not play it much; it was something she just worked up with Kevin Roth for the album.

9. Sing Me a Song

OLA BELLE REED, banjo, guitar and vocal; DAVID REED, banjo, guitar, and vocal; BUD REED, harmonica (*from Folkways 2493, 1976*)

10. Tear Down the Fences

OLA BELLE REED, guitar and vocal; KEVIN ROTH, dulcimer and vocal; BUD REED, harmonica (*from Folkways 2329, 1978*)

11. My Epitaph

OLA BELLE REED, banjo, guitar, and vocal; DAVID REED, banjo, guitar, and vocal; BUD REED, harmonica (*from Folkways 2493, 1976*)

12. Look Down That Lonesome Road

OLA BELLE REED, guitar and vocal; SARAH CLEVELAND, vocal (*from archive reel FP-1972-RR-009 (72.101.09); recorded July 3, 1972*)

This is another old mountain song recorded by many in the Appalachian region. Ola Belle undoubtedly heard it growing up in North Carolina.

13. Undone in Sorrow

OLA BELLE REED, banjo and vocal; BUD REED, guitar; JOHN COFFEY, fiddle (*from archive reel FP-1976-RR-006 (77.101.06); recorded June 17, 1976*)

“Undone in Sorrow” is one of Ola Belle’s songs that has become better known in recent years. It appears on the Ola Belle Reed tribute album by the Demolition String Band and also has been performed by Crooked Still, Del McCoury, and Ginny Hawker.

14. I Believe in the Old Time Way

OLA BELLE REED, banjo and vocal; DAVID REED, guitar and vocal; BUD REED, harmonica and vocal; JOHN COFFEY, fiddle; BETSY RUTHERFORD, vocal (*from archive reel FP-1976-RR-015 (77.101.15); recorded June 18, 1976*)

The group heard this one on a Charlie Moore bluegrass LP.

15. Nine Pound Hammer

OLA BELLE REED, guitar and vocal; DAVID REED, guitar; BUD REED, harmonica; JOHN COFFEY, fiddle (*from archive reel FP-1976-RR-015 (77.101.15); recorded June 18, 1976*)

Kentucky guitarist and singer Merle Travis was asked to compose an album’s worth of songs about his home state of Kentucky. Among those he composed were “Dark as a Dungeon,” “Sixteen Tons,” and his arrangement of the old country song “Nine Pound Hammer.” The song was recorded by many groups in the 1920s and 1930s. Ola Belle and family sing the set of lyrics from the Travis recording.

16. I Am the Man, Thomas

OLA BELLE REED, guitar and vocal; DAVID REED, banjo and vocal; BUD REED, harmonica and vocal; JOHN COFFEY, fiddle; BETSY RUTHERFORD, vocal (*from archive reel FP-1976-RR-055 (77.102.19); recorded June 18, 1976*)

Bluegrass patriarch Ralph Stanley (along with Larry Sparks) composed

this gospel song with lyrics spoken in the first person by the dying Jesus. It appears on his important album *Cry from the Cross*. According to Dave Reed, that’s where the Reeds learned it. Apparently the enigmatic Bob Dylan has begun to include the song in his live performances.

17. I’ve Endured

OLA BELLE REED, banjo and vocal; DAVID REED, guitar; BUD REED, guitar; JOHN COFFEY, fiddle (*from archive reel FP-1972-RR-002 (72.101.02); recorded July 3, 1972*)

See notes for track 1.

18. Ranger’s Command

OLA BELLE REED, guitar and vocal; DAVID REED, guitar; JOHN COFFEY, fiddle (*from archive reel FP-1972-RR-002 (72.101.02); recorded July 3, 1972, Laws B8*)

Ola Belle mentions this as being an old song, and it is, an old cowboy song. Ozark Mountain folklorist Vance Randolph found a version in Missouri in 1929 called “Fair Lady of the Plains.” The important cowboy songbook by Margaret Larkin includes it by that name. Another version was

collected under the name “Death of a Fair Maiden.”

Woody Guthrie adapted the melody and many of the lines of “Fair Lady of the Plains” into his own recording, “Ranger’s Command.” One of the rare movies of Guthrie is of him performing this song. Ola Belle Reed copyrighted her version under the “Ranger’s Command” title, but the lyrics she sings are almost identical to the earlier “Fair Lady of the Plains” song.

Ola Belle was hesitant to sing this song in later years because of the unflattering light it puts the Indians in.

19. I Saw the Light

OLA BELLE REED, banjo and vocal; DAVID REED, vocal and guitar; BUD REED, guitar and vocal; JOHN COFFEY, fiddle; ALEX CAMPBELL, vocal (*from archive reel FP-1972-RR-002 (72.101.02); recorded July 3, 1972*)

“I Saw the Light” is a popular southern gospel song written by country singer Hank Williams.

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Old Hat 1001 (includes the North Carolina Ridge Runners).

In the Library of Congress collection:

AFS 14,104–14,105: Two tapes containing forty-five songs and tunes performed by the North Carolina Ridge Runners of northeastern Maryland and southeastern Pennsylvania, recorded circa late 1940s, possibly at WDEL, Wilmington, Delaware; also Ola Belle Reed, Alex Campbell and the New River Boys of the same region, recorded in 1968.

Other Ola Belle Reed materials:

Ola Belle Reed Collection #20010, Southern Folklife Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

New River: A Family Musical History Tour. 2007. Directed by Tom Sims and Zane Campbell; a film about the Campbell and Brooks families.

Sources and Suggested Reading

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Credits

Produced and annotated by Jeff Place

Production assistance by Erin Durant and Nina Rao

Tracks 1–11 recorded 1976–78 and produced by Kevin Roth, released on Folkways Records

Tracks 12–19 recorded at the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife 1972 and 1976

Audio restoration and mastering by Pete Reiniger

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About Smithsonian Folkways

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings is the nonprofit record label of the Smithsonian Institution, the national museum of the United States. Our mission is the legacy of Moses Asch, who founded Folkways Records in 1948 to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. The Smithsonian acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has continued the Folkways tradition by supporting the work of traditional artists and expressing a commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding. Smithsonian Folkways recordings are available at record stores. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, Folkways, Collector, Cook, Dyer-Bennet, Fast Folk, Monitor, MORE, and Paredon recordings are all available through:

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*Ola Belle and Bud Reed
playing in the back of
Campbell's Corner, 1982*

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

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

*God gives life freely | Then he takes away
What we do for each other | Let's do it today
For we have no promise | And that tomorrow will come
And don't sing my praises | After I'm gone*

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

—Ola Belle Reed, “My Epitaph”



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