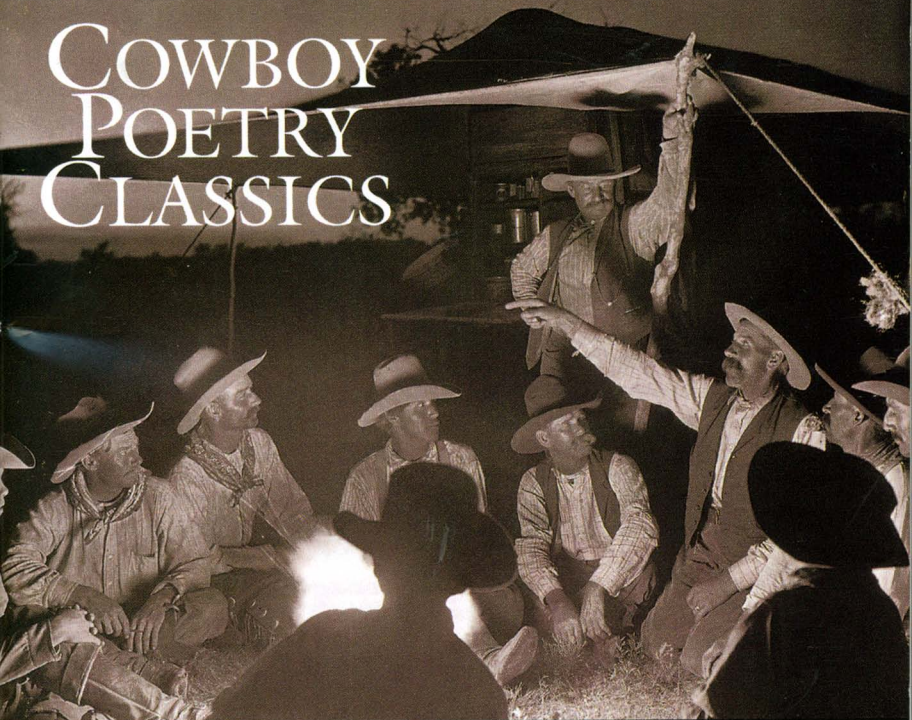


COWBOY POETRY CLASSICS



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings



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COWBOY POETRY CLASSICS

TRACKS

1. Baxter Black, "Epilogue"
by Carlos Ashley 0:12
2. Gail Steiger, "The Sierry Petes"
by Gail Gardner 2:44
3. Wallace McRae, "A Cowboy's
Soliloquy" by D. J. O'Malley 1:55
4. Virginia Bennett, "The Smell of
Rain" by Sharlot Hall 1:55
5. Anastacio Castillo, "El Corrido de
Kiansas," *anonymous* 3:22
6. Glenn Ohrlin, "A Cowboy's Dance
Song" by James Barton Adams 2:24
7. Sunny Hancock, "When You're
Thrown" by Bruce Kiskaddon 1:56
8. Echo Roy, "Our Last Ride"
by Rhoda Sivell 1:35
9. Ross Knox, "Forgotten"
by Bruce Kiskaddon 1:50
10. Tom Sharpe, "Where the Ponies
Come to Drink"
by Henry Herbert Knibbs 2:14
11. Peggy Godfrey, "'Purt Near!"
by S. Omar Barker 3:35
12. J. B. Allen, "The Old Night Hawk"
by Bruce Kiskaddon 5:21
13. John Dofflemeyer, "From Town"
by Charles Badger Clark 2:27
14. Georgie Sicking, "The Moonshine
Steer" by Gail Gardner 2:18
15. Bill Wood, "Rain on the Range"
by S. Omar Barker 2:19
16. Red Steagall, "Bob Sears'
Chili Joint" by Carlos Ashley 1:12
17. Doris Daley, "They Keep
A-Stealing on You in the Night"
by Rhoda Sivell 1:37
18. Ray Lashley, "The Strawberry Roan"
by Curley Fletcher 3:32
19. Waddie Mitchell, "When They've
Finished Shippin' Cattle in the Fall"
by Bruce Kiskaddon 5:31
20. Elizabeth Ebert, "The Smoke-Blue
Plains" by Charles Badger Clark 1:40
21. Randy Rieman, "Boomer Johnson"
by Henry Herbert Knibbs 2:34
22. Milton Taylor, "In the Droving Days"
by A. B. "Banjo" Paterson 4:58
23. Paul Zarzyski, "The Legend
of Boastful Bill"
by Charles Badger Clark 3:13
24. Joel Nelson, "Anthem"
by Buck Ramsey 5:47

IN BUNKHOUSES, BARS, and hotels and around campfires and corrals, cowboy poetry flourished during its golden age between 1905 and 1935. Impelled by the development of the cowboy hero in print and on film and the idea that a unique way of life was fast disappearing, writers — cowboys and non-cowboys alike — began memorializing life on the range. The widespread popularity of these poems captured the spirit and adventure of life in the American West. Produced in conjunction with the Western Folklife Center and featuring the recitations of many popular performers from the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering, this remarkable collection brings new vitality to the poetry and voices of these American icons.

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by Carlos Ashley 0:12
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COWBOY POETRY: A BRIEF HISTORY

COWBOY POETRY OWES ITS ORIGINS TO A COMBINATION OF factors. British immigrants brought to the New World the practice of composing and reciting occupational poems and songs, particularly those of soldiers and sailors. Some were adapted to the landscape and working life of the American cowboy. The *corrido* (ballad) and *verso* (poem) traditions of the Mexican *vaquero* (cowboy), the work songs and spirituals of former slaves, the storytelling traditions and tall tales of the American South, the isolation of long trail drives, even the Victorian practice of recitation in schoolroom and parlor — all contributed to the development of cowboy poetry and song in the American West.

As soon as the Civil War ended, enterprising Texans started rounding up the great herds of wild cattle and horses that had multiplied during the war. Lacking railroads, they began driving cattle north through Texas to the railheads in Kansas. It was during these trail drives that cowboy poetry and song got their start.

The cattle trails quickly expanded across the West, stretching from Texas to the Dakotas, Montana, and western Canada. In those days, ranchers believed that cattle could be pastured in the open throughout the year, but the fierce winter of 1886-87 wiped out millions of animals and thousands of ranches. Low cattle prices, barbed wire, the Homestead Act, and the need for winter feeding effectively ended the cattle drives.

With the cowboy already identified as a dying breed, romance and nostalgia led to his development as an American icon. Inexpensively priced "dime novels" made the cowboy an action hero, and Hollywood made stars of Tom Mix, Lash LaRue, Tim McCoy (himself a fine cowboy poet), Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and ultimately John Wayne and Clint Eastwood.

Yet behind the fringed shirts and huge hats of the celluloid cowboys, the business of raising cattle continued in the West. Itinerant cowboys were hired for calving, branding, herding, doctoring, and rounding up and shipping the cattle to market. In bunkhouses, bars, and hotels and around campfires and corrals, cowboy poetry and song stayed vital, helped along by publication in newspapers, livestock journals, privately printed books, and anthologies. Many of the poems wound up being set to music — and sometimes song lyrics were in turn recited by people who couldn't carry a tune.

Beginning with anonymous poems published in newspapers in the 1870s and Lysius Gough's *Western Travels and Other Rhymes* (1886), amateur poets began publishing work, often at their own expense. Soon after, Jack Thorp and John Lomax began collecting from cowboys, both in person and by correspondence. Thorp's *Songs of the Cowboys* (1908) and Lomax's *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (1910) were the first of several dozen important collections.

The period between 1905 and 1935 was cowboy poetry's golden age. Impelled by the development of the popular cowboy hero, writers from throughout the country began memorializing the cowboy way of life. Some, like D. J. O'Malley, Gail Gardner, and Bruce Kiskaddon, had spent many years horseback and wrote from personal experience. Others, like Badger Clark and Rhoda Sivell, had come to ranching later in life but had observed it intently. Still others, James Barton Adams and Henry Herbert Knibbs among them, were visitors more than participants. Yet in newspapers, magazines, and books, they crafted poems that were savored, adopted, and exchanged among cowboys, often by word of mouth — the poems that cowboys now call "classics."

During the Great Depression and World War II, the volume of published cowboy poetry decreased markedly; after 1945, rapid urbanization reduced rural populations, and the working cowboy seemingly disappeared from public view just when his romanticized imitators dominated the newly popular medium, television.

A gathering of western folklorists in the early 1980s decided on a cowboy poetry festival as a regional project, and under the direction of Hal Cannon, the first Cowboy Poetry Gathering was held in Elko, Nevada, in late January 1985. Many journalists attended and publicized the gathering throughout the country. Cowboys in attendance were surprised to discover how many other poets and reciters there were and how much they had in common. Since then, the Elko gathering has attracted as many as 8,000 people each year and spawned hundreds of regional, state, and local gatherings. Cowboy poets have published hundreds of books, cassettes, CDs, and videotapes, and the popularity of the form shows no sign of diminishing. It seems that poetry that reflects personal experience and emotion, from the roughest "wrecks" (accidents) to the most absurd situations, from the death of a favorite horse to the camaraderie of the range, continues to have a universal appeal.

Note: In the notes that follow, book titles are abbreviated to save space and clutter.

The list of references at the end of the notes provides full information on each.

THE POETS

JAMES BARTON ADAMS (1843–1918) grew up in Ohio and Iowa. He served in the Civil War and worked as a telegrapher and scout for the Union Pacific Railroad and as caretaker on a New Mexico ranch. Joining the *Denver Post* in 1896, Adams wrote amusing columns and poems about cowboy life; his poems are notable for their extravagant descriptions and vernacular language. Book: *Breezy Western Verse* (1898). Poems in CLP, IHAS, SotCT.

CARLOS ASHLEY (1903–93) grew up on a ranch in the Texas Hill Country. He was a lawyer, rancher, real estate developer, and politician, serving in the Texas State Senate for ten years and as state poet laureate. Books: *These Texas Hills* (1941), *That Spotted Sow and Other Hill Country Ballads* (1949, reprinted 1975). Poem in CPaG.

A lifelong New Mexican, **S. OMAR BARKER** (1894–1985) worked as a teacher and school principal before becoming a rancher and freelance writer. In addition to poetry, he wrote a novel and at least 2,700 western-themed short stories and articles. Books: *Vientos de las Sierras* (1924), *Buckaroo Ballads* (1928), *Songs of the Saddlemen* (1954), *Sunlight through the Trees* (1954), *Rawhide Rhymes* (1968). Collection: *Cowboy Poetry: Classic Rhymes* (1998). Poems in B, CLP, CPaG, HCP, IHAS, TTGC.

CHARLES BADGER CLARK (1883–1957) grew up in South Dakota. After a year of college, he went to Cuba and found work on a plantation until he got tuberculosis, then went to Arizona Territory and found work as a ranch caretaker and sometime cowboy near Tombstone. Between 1906 and 1910, he wrote most of the poems that established his reputation as one of the greatest cowboy poets. Returning to South Dakota to care for his parents, he gave lectures and readings to adults and school groups; he was named the state's "Poet Lariat" in 1937. Books: *Sun and Saddle Leather* (1915), *Grass Grown Trails* (1917), combined edition (1920) is still in print. Poems in B, BR, CLP, CPaG, IHAS, SotCT, TTGC. Profile: GALD.

CURLEY W. FLETCHER (1892–1954) was christened Carmen William. His Italian grandfather and uncles were California farmers and ranchers, and Curley learned to ride young. By 1914 he was trying to make a living as a rodeo cowboy, primarily on bareback broncs. He later prospected for minerals, promoted rodeos, did some freelance writing, and worked as an advisor for Hollywood films. Pamphlet: *Rhymes of the Round-Up* (1917). Poems set to music: *Ballads of the Badlands* (1932). Book: *Songs of the Sage* (1931, reprinted 1986). Poems in B, BR, CPaG, TTGC. Profile: GALD.

GAIL I. GARDNER (1892–1988) lived all his life in Prescott, Arizona. His father kept a general store and had a small ranch. Young Gail went east for college, to Dartmouth, and after graduation worked in the store, eventually buying his own ranch. Book: *Orejana Bull, for Cowboys Only* (1935) — an "orejana" is a calf old enough to leave its mother, a maverick — still in print from Sharlot Hall Museum Press. Poems in BR, CPaG, CLP, TTGC. Profile: GALD.

SHARLOT HALL (1870–1943) came to Arizona Territory from Kansas at age 12. She managed her parents' and her own ranch, worked as an editor, and was appointed Arizona's first Territorial Historian. In 1927, she took over the dilapidated old governor's residence in Prescott as a pioneer museum. As a writer, she was experimental in form and subject matter, writing more than 500 articles, stories, and poems. Book: *Cactus and Pine* (1910), the first by a woman ranch poet; *Poems of a Ranch Woman* (1953). Biography by Margaret F. Maxwell, *A Passion for Freedom* (1982). Poems in CP, TTGC.

BRUCE KISKADDON (1878–1950), often called the premier cowboy poet of the United States, was born in Pennsylvania but grew up in Trinidad, Colorado. By age 20, he was a working cowhand in the Picket Wire District, later working in the American Southwest and Australia. In 1926, he and some cowboy friends went to Los Angeles and found jobs driving chariots in the silent film *Ben-Hur*. Soon after, Kiskaddon landed a job as a bellhop at the Mayflower Hotel downtown. For many years, he published a poem every month in the *Western Livestock Journal* and also contributed poems to calendars from the Los Angeles Union Stock Yards. Books: *Rhymes of the Ranges* (1924, enlarged edition 1947), *Just As Is* (1928), *Western Poems* (1935). Recent collections: *Rhymes of the Ranges* (1987), *Cowboy Poetry: Classic Rhymes* (1998). Poems in B, BR, CLP, CPaG.

HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS (1874–1945) was born to American parents near Niagara Falls, Canada. Between college stints, he was a salesman, railroad clerk, hobo, stenographer, and private secretary. In 1910, he moved to California, traveled around the Southwest, and began writing poems, novels, and short stories with western themes. Books: *Songs of the Outlands* (1914), *Riders of the Stars* (1916), *Songs of the Trail* (1920), *Saddle Songs and Other Verse* (1922), *Songs of the Lost Frontier* (1930). Biography by Ronna Lee Sharpe and Tom Sharpe in CP&CP. Collection: *Cowboy Poetry, Classic Rhymes* (1999). Poems in CLP, CPaG, IHAS, SotCT, TTGC.

D. J. O'MALLEY (1867–1943) was raised on military forts in the West; his stepfather was an infantryman. At the age of 15, O'Malley began working for a local cattle company, eventually working his way up to “rep,” meaning that he represented the interests of his employers over a wide area. He took part in three trail drives from Texas to Montana and later worked as a ranch hand, stock inspector, and prison guard. He published poems in the Miles City, Montana, *Stock Growers' Journal* under the name “Kid White” but spent most of the last 35 years of his life in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Pamphlet: *D. J. O'Malley, Cowboy Poet* (1934, republished 1986). Profiles: *Montana, the Magazine of Western History* (fall 1968), *Journal of American Folklore* (April–June 1967, republished in CP&CP). Collection: *Cowboy Poetry and Prose* (2000). Poems in CPaG, IHAS. Profile: GALD.

A.B. (BANJO) PATERSON (1864–1941), the best-known Australian bush poet, grew up on a “station” (a ranch) in New South Wales, eventually becoming an attorney in Sydney. Adopting the pen name of “The Banjo,” he began publishing poetry in the *Sydney Bulletin* in 1885. He later worked as a journalist, editor, and rancher. Books: *The Man from Snowy River and Other Verses* (1895), *Rio Grande's Last Race and Other Verses* (1902), *Saltbush Bill, J. P., and Other Verses* (1917). His most famous composition

is the song “Waltzing Matilda.” Several collections of his poetry have been published in Australia. Poem in BR.

BUCK RAMSEY (1938–98) spent his youth herding cattle and breaking broncs in the Texas Panhandle. A horseback accident in the early 1960s left him “riding a confounded wheelchair.” He subsequently worked as a newspaper reporter, freelance writer, and political speechwriter, all the while collecting cowboy songs and writing poems, stories, and essays. Ramsey received a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1995. Recordings: *Rolling Uphill from Texas* (1992), *My Home It Was in Texas* (1995). Book: *And As I Rode Out on the Morning* (1993). Essay, “Cowboy Libraries and Lingo,” in CP&CP. Poems in B, BE&S, CD, CLP, CPM, MWV, NCP.

RHODA SIVELL (1873–1962), the first Canadian cowboy poet, was born in Ireland and immigrated to Saskatchewan as a girl. About 1905, she and her husband bought a ranch near Medicine Hat, Alberta. During an illness suffered by her husband, she herded cattle and kept the ranch going, recording these experiences in verse. Book: *Voices from the Range* (1911, 1912, 1922, 1960). Poems in BR, CP.

THE RECITERS



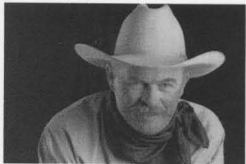
J. B. ALLEN



ANASTACIO CASTILLO



ELIZABETH EBERT



ROSS KNOX



VIRGINIA BENNETT



DORIS DALEY



PEGGY GODFREY



RAY LASHLEY



BAXTER BLACK



JOHN DOFFLEMYER



SUNNY HANCOCK



WALLACE McRAE



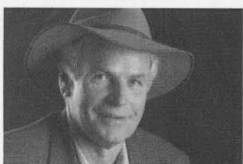
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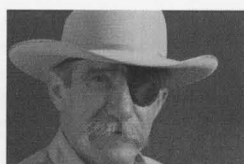
RANDY RIEMAN



GEORGIE SICKING



MILTON TAYLOR



JOEL NELSON



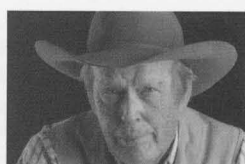
ECHO ROY



RED STEAGALL



BILL WOOD



GLENN OHLIN



TOM SHARPE



GAIL STEIGER



PAUL ZARZYSKI

THE RECITERS

J. B. ALLEN is from Whiteface, Texas; he has cowboied all his life. J. B.'s deep voice, distinctive Texas accent, and carefully crafted poems have made him one of the most respected of today's cowboy poets. Cassettes: *Treasures, Kindred Spirits*. Book and recording: *The Medicine Keepers*. Poems in B, CD, CLP, CPM.

VIRGINIA BENNETT, raised in New Hampshire, came west in 1970 to compete in rodeos. She has worked with her husband on ranches in seven western states; they currently manage a ranch in California. Virginia's warmhearted, honest poems and the deep enjoyment she gets from reciting them have made her a popular participant at many poetry gatherings. Book: *Canyon of the Forgotten*. Edited CP. Poems in BR, CP, CPM, GtM, HCP, LitW.

BAXTER BLACK, the best-known contemporary cowboy poet, is a former large-animal veterinarian who has appeared at poetry gatherings and stockmen's meetings all over the country, generally reducing his audiences to tears — of laughter. He has a syndicated newspaper column, a radio show, a website, and a place in southern Arizona. Books: *Coyote Cowboy Poetry; Croutons on a Cow Pie; Horseshoes, Cowsocks, and Duckfeet*; many others. Poems in CD, CPaG.

ANASTACIO CASTILLO, a native of South Texas, learned music from his parents and was playing guitar with them in restaurants at age ten. As a teenager, he moved to the Texas Panhandle and worked on farms and ranches. There he heard *corridos*, including "Kiansas," sung by migrant farm workers. Anastacio and his wife Elisa live in Salt Lake City; they perform at restaurants and celebrations, often in the *conjunto* style with accordion. Cassette: *Hecho en Utah: Tex-Mex and New Mexican Music* (Utah Arts Council).

DORIS DALEY, raised in the foothills of southern Alberta, grew up as the fourth generation on the family ranch. Versatile and creative, Doris has performed at gatherings throughout Canada and the United States with her spirited, energizing poetry. Books: *Daley Grind, No Bum Steer*. Poems in CP.

JOHN DOFFLEMYER was born and raised in the Sierra foothills of California, where he still lives on his ranch. A talented editor, John founded Dry Crik Press and the *Dry Crik Review* to give opportunities to contemporary poets. Books: *Sensin' Somethin', Muses of the Ranges, Hung Out to Dry, Shrewd Angles and Other Undertones*. Edited MWV. Poems in BE&S, CPM, NCP. Essay in CP&CP.

ELIZABETH EBERT was raised on a ranch near Thunder Hawk, South Dakota, where she and her husband still live. The gentle wisdom of her poems and her ability to understand the meaning of people's lives in the West make her a popular performer. Book: *Crazy Quilt*. Cassette: *My Name Is Elizabeth*. CD: *Live from Thunder Hawk*. Poems in CD, CP, GtM, HCP.

PEGGY GODFREY'S wicked sense of humor and sensitivity to the roles of women in ranching have endeared her to fans of cowboy poetry throughout the West. She runs cattle and sheep in the San Luis Valley of southern Colorado. Books: *Write 'Em Cowboy, Write 'Em Roughshod, Write Tough!, Extra 'n' Ordinary*. Profile by Elaine Thatcher in CP&CP. Poems in CP, GtM, HCP, LitW.

SUNNY HANCOCK has cowboied all over the West and worked in construction, farriery, horse trading, truck driving, and logging. Now retired, he has a small ranch near Lakeview, Oregon. Sunny has one of the finest memories of those who recite the classic poems, and he has also written logger poetry. Cassettes: *Old-Time Cowboy Poetry, Cowboy Poetry, New and Used; Doggerel Plain and Simple*. Recitation in B.

ROSS KNOX's distinctive recitation style has made him a standout among contemporary poets. Raised on a ranch in central Oregon, he worked at some of the oldest and most famous ranches in the West, eventually becoming a mule wrangler in Grand Canyon National Park. He collaborated with Ian Tyson in composing the song "I Outgrew the Wagon." Poems in CPaG.

RAY LASHLEY was raised in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri, where, at the age of eight, he drove a four-horse team pulling a log wagon. He has been a rancher, cowboy, teamster, truck driver, engineer, and inventor, and now raises Appaloosas near Grand Junction, Colorado. He is well known as one of the best reciters of classic poems. CD: *Western Poems*. Booklet: *Write Cowboy Poetry*. Interview by Carol Edison in CP&CP.

WALLACE McRAE operates the Rocker Six Cattle Company near Forsyth, Montana. Recipient of a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, Wally is often credited with taking cowboy poetry into new subject areas, exploring issues of race, ethnicity, and the environment. Books: *It's Just Grass and Water, Up North Is down the Crick, Things of Intrinsic Worth, Cowboy Curmudgeon*. Videotape: *Wally McRae Live*. Poems in B, BE&S, CD, CPaG, CPM, NCP.

WADDIE MITCHELL ("waddie" originally meant a temporary ranch hand; later it simply meant "cowboy") lives in northeastern Nevada, where he has worked as a buckaroo and ranch foreman. One of the most popular performers of cowboy poetry, Waddie spends much of his time on the road, often in partnership with singer Don Edwards. Recordings: *Buckaroo Poet, Lone Driftin' Rider, Waddie Mitchell LIVE, That No Quit Attitude*. Books: *Waddie's Whole Load, A Cowboy's Night before Christmas, Waddie Mitchell's Christmas Poems*. Video: *Buckaroo Bard*. Poems in B, CLP, CPaG, NCP.

JOEL NELSON grew up in the Davis Mountains of west Texas where he still lives. At age six, he helped out on a cattle drive to the railroad; he's been a cowboy ever since, specializing in breaking and training horses. A Vietnam veteran, he has also written thoughtful poems and essays about his military experiences. CD: *The Breaker in the Pen*. Poems in BE&S, CPM, NCP.

GLENN OHRLIN of Minnesota got intrigued early with rodeo and competed all over the West, all the while collecting cowboy songs and poems. He was a working cowboy for years before starting his own ranch in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas. His huge repertoire, droll sense of humor, and impeccable timing have made him a popular performer and singer since the early 1960s. In 1985, he received a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. CDs: *A Cowboy's Life, The Cowboy Tour*. Songbook: *The Hell-Bound Train* (1974). Memoir in CP&CP.

RANDY RIEMAN was born in the Midwest but moved to Montana at seventeen. He has started young horses in Montana, Nevada, California, Hawai'i, and New Mexico. Randy knows dozens of classic poems from Australia as well as the United States. Live recording: *Old Favorites*. CD: *Where the Ponies Come to Drink*. Instructional video: *Four Strands of Rawhide: The Making of a Riata*. Poem in NCP.

ECHO ROY lives on the 9-Mile Ranch in northeastern Wyoming, raising cattle in partnership with her brothers. She bases her fine original poetry on her real-life experiences. Book: *Echoes in the Wind; Echoes of a 4th Generation*. Poem in CP.

TOM SHARPE, an expert on the history of cowboy poetry, lives on the Western Slope of Colorado near Grand Junction. He has punched cows in eleven states, ridden for feedlots, and worked at his grandparents' packing plant. Today, he starts colts, rides

day labor, and sells real estate. Recording: *Just Tom*. Essay with Ronna Lee Sharpe in CP&CP.

GEORGIE SICKING has cowboied since she was three and is widely known for her tough, independent streak. She has owned ranches in Nevada and California and now lives in central Wyoming. Georgie is an honoree of the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame and received a citation for having ridden 100,000 miles horseback. Books: *Just Thinkin', More Thinkin', A Mare among the Geldings* (autobiography). Poems in CP, CPaG. Documentary film: *No Life for a Lady — Cowboy Poet Georgie Sicking*.

RED STEAGALL is best known as a country-western recording star, but he's also the official cowboy poet of Texas. Raised in north and west Texas, he started his recording career in 1969. Red and his wife live on a ranch outside Fort Worth, where he records, writes, produces recordings, and manages his website. Dozens of recordings, most recently *Wagon Tracks*. Books: *Ride for the Brand* and *The Fence That Me and Shorty Built*. Poems in BR, CD, HCP, NCP.

GAIL STEIGER, grandson of Gail Gardner, was born and raised in Prescott, Arizona. He has been a working cowboy, a ranch manager, and an independent producer of outstanding films, videos, and multimedia. Film: *Ranch Album*. CD of cowboy songs: *The Romance of Western Life*. Instructional video: *There's Roping to Do*.

MILTON TAYLOR is one of the best reciters of classic Australian bush poetry. Hailing from west-central Queensland, he works as a sheep shearer and performs bush verse frequently in school programs. He has published a book of bush poetry and two audiotapes. More information on Milton and other Aussie poets can be found at www.bushpoetry.com.

BILL WOOD lives with his wife Jan — another talented cowboy poet — on a ranch near Newell, South Dakota. He was raised in the California bridle-horse tradition, which is reflected in much of his original poetry. He has been cowboying since he was a youngster and performs both his own poetry and the classics. He's also a musician and a songwriter. Poem in MWV.

PAUL ZARZYSKI, who refers to himself as a rodeo poet, was raised in Hurley, Wisconsin, a working-class mining town. He moved west in his early twenties and earned a master's degree in creative writing at the University of Montana. He took up a second "lucrative" career riding bareback broncs on both the amateur and professional circuits. Paul writes, performs, and conducts workshops on poetry writing. Books: *All This Way for the Short Ride*, *Blue Collar Light*, *I Am Not a Cowboy*. CD: *Words Growing Wild*. Poems in B, BE&S, CD, MWV, NCP.

THE POEMS

Although the authors of all but one of these poems are known, most originally circulated anonymously, sometimes as songs. They were transmitted by both oral and written means and were preserved through memorization, handwritten copies, and printed materials. Like other kinds of folklore, cowboy poems occur in different versions which vary according to local landscape, occasion, and circumstance. Versions can be found in the works abbreviated; see the list of references for the full citation.

1. Baxter Black, "EPILOGUE" BY CARLOS ASHLEY

It may seem strange to begin a recording with an epilogue, but this little stanza is in fact the conclusion to Ashley's poem "Jim Watkins' Barber Shop." It makes a nice statement of Ashley's poetic credo, one that many cowboy poets share. In *That Spotted Sow*.

2. Gail Steiger, "THE SIERRY PETES" BY GAIL GARDNER

Often called "Tyin' Knots in the Devil's Tail," especially when sung, "The Sierry Petes" was written on a train headed for Washington, D.C., in 1917. The title — pronounced SIGH-ree — is the local nickname for the Sierra Prieta Mountains in Arizona. Different versions are in BR, CPaG, GALD, and many songbooks. Essay by Warren Miller in CP&CP.

3. Wallace McRae, "A COWBOY'S SOLILOQUY" BY D. J. O'MALLEY

Written in the autumn of 1891 near the end of a long trail drive from the Texas Panhandle to southeastern Montana, this poem commemorates the cowboy life's mixture of drudgery and danger. First printing: *Miles City (Montana) Stock Growers' Journal*, 28 November 1891, under the name "D. J. White." Version: GALD.

4. Virginia Bennett, "THE SMELL OF RAIN" BY SHARLOT HALL

Published in *Poems of a Ranch Woman* (1953), "The Smell of Rain" vividly evokes the summer droughts of the Southwest. Also in CP.

5. Anastacio Castillo, "EL CORRIDO DE KANSAS" (ANONYMOUS)

Probably dating from the late 1860s, this *corrido* (ballad) describes a group of *vaqueros* (cowboys) and the hardships of the cattle trail to Kansas. Although usually sung with guitar accompaniment, *corridos* were sometimes recited aloud as poems. It is probably the oldest surviving poem/song in the United States about the cowboy life. The English translation is by Américo Paredes and Anastacio. Two versions are in Américo Paredes, *A Texas-Mexican Cancionero* (1976); one is in Brownie McNeil, "Corridos of the Mexican Border," in Mody C. Boatright, ed., *Mexican Border Ballads* (1946); all three versions are discussed in María Herrera-Sobek, *Northward Bound* (1993). Recording by Los Palomares de Ojinaga on *The Devil's Swing* (Arhoolie).

6. Glenn Ohrlin, "A COWBOY'S DANCE SONG" BY JAMES BARTON ADAMS

This wildly inflated description of a clumsy cowboy at a "high-toned dance" has amused listeners since it appeared in 1898, though it was probably published earlier in the *Denver Post*. Versions: CPaG, SotCT. Recording: *The Cowboy Tour* CD.

7. Sunny Hancock, "WHEN YOU'RE THROWN" BY BRUCE KISKADDON

With its rueful commentary on cowboy riding skills, this poem appeared in collections of Kiskaddon's poetry in 1924, 1947, and 1998. Version in SotCT.

8. Echo Roy, "OUR LAST RIDE" BY RHODA SIVELL

This understated, nostalgic poem remembers the parting of two lovers, although the reader is never sure why the male character has to hit a "trail new-cut and strange." In Sivell's 1911 collection, republished in CP.

9. Ross Knox, "FORGOTTEN" BY BRUCE KISKADDON

Probably first published in the *Western Livestock Journal* in the 1940s, this poem is one of hundreds about aging horses which have outlived their working lives but not their owners' memories. In Kiskaddon collections of 1947 and 1998.

10. Tom Sharpe, "WHERE THE PONIES COME TO DRINK" BY HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

First published in Knibbs's *Songs of the Outlands* in 1914, this is one of his oldest poems. Also in the 1999 Knibbs collection.

11. Peggy Godfrey, "PURT NEAR!" BY S. OMAR BARKER

This poem demonstrates Barker's fondness for cowboy wisdom coupled with a surprise ending. In *Songs of the Saddlemen* (1954), *Cowboy Poetry*, *Classic Rhymes* (1998), HCP.

12. J. B. Allen, "THE OLD NIGHT HAWK" BY BRUCE KISKADDON

The night hawk is the night guard who watches over the remuda, the herd of horses, to keep them from stampeding or grazing too far away from camp. It was a job often assigned to one of the older cowboys. In Kiskaddon collections of 1924 and 1998, CPaG.

13. John Dofflemeyer, "FROM TOWN" BY CHARLES BADGER CLARK

Clark's romanticized tale of cowboys on a Saturday-night binge shows his love of extravagant language and cowboy vernacular. In *Sun and Saddle Leather* (1915), SotCT as "Ridin' Up the Rocky Trail from Town."

14. Georgie Sicking, "THE MOONSHINE STEER" BY GAIL GARDNER

This tall tale about a cowboy feeding moonshine whiskey to a wild steer is one of Gardner's best-loved poems and was probably written sometime in the 1920s. Gardner himself often sang it to the tune of "Roving Gambler." In *Orejana Bull*, GALD.

15. Bill Wood, "RAIN ON THE RANGE" BY S. OMAR BARKER

One of Barker's most beloved poems, "Rain on the Range" combines exact description with a typical unexpected ending. In *Rawhide Rhymes* (1968), *Cowboy Poetry, Classic Rhymes* (1998), CPaG.

16. Red Steagall, "BOB SEARS' CHILI JOINT" BY CARLOS ASHLEY

This childhood remembrance of a down-home eatery has been a favorite, especially for Texas poets, for whom chili is not just a delectable but a necessity. In *That Spotted Sow*.

17. Doris Daley, "THEY KEEP A-STEALING ON YOU IN THE NIGHT"

BY RHODA SIVELL

Sivell's dramatic poem imagines a cowboy working in town while his "honey" rides her horse near a river, and the memories of ranch life "keep a-stealing on you." In *Voices from the Range* (1911), CP.

18. Ray Lashley, "THE STRAWBERRY ROAN" BY CURLEY FLETCHER

One of the most famous cowboy poems and songs of all time, "The Strawberry Roan" first appeared in the *Arizona Record* in 1915. In Fletcher's books of 1917 and 1931, BR, CPaG. A parody is in TTGC. As a song, in Fletcher's *Ballads of the Badlands* (1932), GALD, many songbooks. Discussed by Austin E. Fife in *John Edwards Memorial Foundation Quarterly*, vol. 8 (1972), pages 149-65.

19. Waddie Mitchell, "WHEN THEY'VE FINISHED SHIPPIN' CATTLE IN THE FALL"

BY BRUCE KISKADDON

Kiskaddon captures perfectly the weariness at the end of the cowboy's year after shipping the cattle to market. In Kiskaddon collections of 1924, 1947, 1998; also in B, CPaG.

20. Elizabeth Ebert, "THE SMOKE-BLUE PLAINS" BY CHARLES BADGER CLARK

Originally titled "Drafted Man," this poem reflects Clark's isolationism during World War I and his pacifist views. It first appeared in *Century* magazine in March 1918. After the war ended, Clark retitled it and placed it in the 1920 edition of *Sun and Saddle Leather*.

21. Randy Rieman, "BOOMER JOHNSON" BY HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

Here's another wild foray into the character of the always irascible "coosie," or cook. In *Songs of the Lost Frontier* (1930), CPaG, TTGC.

22. Milton Taylor, "IN THE DROVING DAYS" BY A. B. "BANJO" PATERSON

Published in the *Sydney Bulletin* in 1891 and included in *The Man from Snowy River* (1895), this poem helped assure Paterson's fame. By matching the fate of the drover with the fate of the horse, the poem makes an eloquent plea for sympathy and for remembering.

23. Paul Zarzyski, "THE LEGEND OF BOASTFUL BILL" BY CHARLES BADGER CLARK

Clark exceeded even his usual extravagance with this poem, which he first published in the *Pacific Monthly* in February 1908. Paul first learned the poem from the recitation of the legendary Montana poet Tom Eaton (1916-2002). In *Sun and Sadde Leather* (1915), SotCT.

24. Joel Nelson, "ANTHEM" BY BUCK RAMSEY

"Anthem" is the prologue to Ramsey's *And As I Rode Out on the Morning*, a wonderful evocation of the cowboy life of the old days. The stanza and line form of the poem are borrowed from the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin. In B, CPM, NCP.

REFERENCES

Following are the collections of cowboy poetry abbreviated in the liner notes. Some poems, particularly those on tracks 2, 5, 6, 14, 18, and 21 were set to music and are now better known as songs. Variants of these may be found in songbooks compiled by N. Howard "Jack" Thorp, John Lomax, Austin and Alta Fife, Margaret Larkin, Richard E. Lingenfelter and Richard A. Dwyer, Glenn Ohrlin, Jim Bob Tinsley, John I. White, and Guy Logsdon. Many of the works referred to are available from the Western Folklife Center at www.westfolk.org or at (775) 738-7508.

B: Hal Cannon and Thomas West, eds., *Buckaroo: Visions and Voices of the American Cowboy* (book and CD). New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.

BE&S: Anne Heath Widmark, *Between Earth and Sky: Poets of the Cowboy West*. New York: Norton, 1996.

BR: Margo Meteegrano, ed., *The Big Roundup*. San Francisco: New West Library, 2002.

- CD: Phil Martin, ed., *Coolin' Down: An Anthology of Contemporary Cowboy Poetry*. Tulsa: Guy Logsdon Books, 1992.
- CLP: Paddy Calistro, Jack Lamb, and Jean Penn, eds., *Cowboy Love Poetry*. Santa Monica: Angel City Press, 1994.
- CP: Virginia Bennett, ed., *Cowgirl Poetry*. Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2001.
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- CP&CP: David Stanley and Elaine Thatcher, eds., *Cowboy Poets & Cowboy Poetry*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
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- GALD: John I. White, *Git Along, Little Dogies: Songs and Songmakers of the American West*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975.
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- HCP: Dawn Valentine Hadlock and Madge Baird, eds., *Humorous Cowboy Poetry: A Knee-Slappin' Gathering*. Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1995.
- IHAS: Ruth A. Barnes, ed., *I Hear America Singing: An Anthology of Folk Poetry*. New York: John C. Winston, 1937.
- LitW: Linda Hasselstrom, Gaydell Collier, and Nancy Curtis, eds., *Leaning into the Wind: Women Write from the Heart of the West*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.
- MWW: John C. Dofflemyer, ed., *Maverick Western Verse*. Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1994.
- NCP: Hal Cannon, ed., *New Cowboy Poetry: A Contemporary Gathering*. Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1990.
- SotCT: John A. Lomax, ed., *Songs of the Cattle Trail and Cow Camp*. New York: Macmillan, 1919.
- TTGC: Katie Lee, *Ten Thousand Goddam Cattle: A History of the American Cowboy in Song, Story, and Verse*. Flagstaff: Northland Press, 1976.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

Compiled, produced, and annotated by David Stanley

Recorded by Pete Reiniger except for tracks 1, 2, 5, 14, 16, 17, and 20; TRACK 1 recorded by Baxter Black in his home studio; TRACK 2 recorded by Gail Steiger in his home studio; TRACK 5 recorded by Craig Miller at the Chase Home Museum of Utah Folk Art, Salt Lake City; TRACK 14 recorded by Greg Snider at the studios of radio station KLGT, Buffalo, Wyoming; TRACK 16 recorded by Red Steagall in his home studio; TRACK 17 recorded by Rob Smith at Rocky Mountain Recording Studio, Calgary, Alberta; TRACK 20 recorded by David Swenson at Makoché Recording Co., Bismarck, North Dakota

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Cover photo: The Erwin E. Smith Collection of the Library of Congress on deposit at the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas. L.C.S59110 - Erwin E. Smith. The Boys of the LS near Tascosa lingering at the chuck wagon after the day's work is done, listening to range boss telling stories, LS Ranch, Texas, 1907, nitrate negative.

Reciter portraits by Kevin Martini-Fuller

Smithsonian Folkways Production supervised by Daniel Sheehy and Atesh Sonneborn

Production coordinated by Mary Monseur

Editorial assistance by Carla Borden

Design and layout by Caroline Brownell

Thanks to Hal Cannon, Debbie Fant, Meg Glaser, Steve Green, Cleo Hansen, Charlie Seemann, and the other fine folks at the Western Folklife Center in Elko, Nevada. Thanks for advice and resources from Virginia Bennett, John Dofflemyer, Carol Edison, Andrea Graham, Jim Griffith, Guy Logsdon, Nan McEntire, Craig Miller, Warren Miller, Greg Scott, Jessie Sundstrom, and Elaine Thatcher. We had lots of help from Westminster College librarians David Hales and Eric Ikenouye, from Dawn Smallman, from Faye Harmer and Maggie Johnston at KENV in Elko, from Tim Evans, from Randy Williams and Tricia Harrison at the Utah State University Fife Folklore Archive, and from Judy and Smokey Wildeman at KLGT in Buffalo, Wyoming.

Special thanks are due to the great poets and reciters who contributed to this recording. All of them donated their fees or royalties to benefit the Western Folklife Center. So, too, did the fine photographer, Kevin Martini-Fuller (kmi@mlc.net), who has been documenting cowboy poets for over a decade.

David Stanley teaches folklore and American literature at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, Utah. A former employee of the Folk Arts Program of the Utah Arts Council, he has served as a volunteer at the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada, for nearly twenty years. He is the co-editor with Elaine Thatcher of a collection of essays, Cowboy Poets & Cowboy Poetry, and author/compiler of other recordings, books, and articles.

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