Herring Croon 3:45
 Little River 3:40
 Astoria Bar 3:09
 The Boats of Peter's River 3:39
 O Vento 2:41

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3:45
6. El Pescador 3:14
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Gordon Bok

CD14

Herrings in the Bay

Gordon Bok

Gordon Bok

with Carol Rohl, the Quasimodal Chorus, and the January Men And Then Some

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January Men And Then Some: Gordon Bok, Tony Bok, Will Brown, David Dodson, Ken Gross, Jamie Huntsberger, Cindy Kallet, Bob Richardson, Carol Rohl, Forrest Sherman

Quasimodal Chorus:

Marie Weferling, Lynn Travis-Stancioff, Holly Torsey, Matt Szostak, Susan Shaw, Carol Rohl, Bob Richardson, John Pincince, Cindy Kallet, Jamie Huntsberger, Mary Ann Hensel, Ken Gross, Carney Doucette, Anne Dodson, Will Brown, Mimi Bornstein-Doble, Tony Bok, Mary Bok, Gordon Bok

Carol Rohl—harp

Somewhere out there I know they're rising *bring them to me* Somewhere out there I feel them gathering *bring them to me...O*

O give me one night's hauling out on the deep
O let me see them rising down in the cold dark sea
Out on the deep out on the deep Out on the wild old ocean

O give us one more morning Then will we lay this season down

Note:

My singing often diverges from the original versions; we have printed the original when we could.

—Gordon

Herrings in the Bay



HERRING CROON

©1965 Gordon Bok BMI

One of my early songs (that I didn't throw back). I forget what inspired it, but it's still fun to look at the world you think you know through others' eyes.

Gordon — laud

Where do you go, little herring, what do you see, tail and fin?

"Blue and green, cold and dark, seaweed growing high

Hills a hundred fathom deep where the dead men lie

Dogfish eyes and mackerels' eyes and they hunger after me

Net or weir, I don't care, catch me if you can."

Where do you go, little boat, tar and timber, plank and sail?

"I go to green bays, lift them under me

Cold, gray, combing seas come to bury me

Rocky jaws and stony claws and they hunger after me

Harbors cold, deep and bold, wish that I could see."

What do you see, fisherman, poor old sailor, blood and bone?

"Mackerel skies, mares' tails, reef and furl and steer

Poor haul and hungry days, rotten line and gear

hunger after me Net or weir, I don't care, catch you if I can." Where do you go, little herring, what do you see, tail and fin? "Blue and green, cold and dark, seaweed growing high Hills a hundred fathom deep where the fishermen lie Dogfish eyes and mackerels' eyes and oh, they hunger after me Net or weir, I don't care, catch me if you can."

Snow-wind and winter gales and oh, they

LITTLE RIVER

Lyrics ©1975 Ruth Moore Music ©1986 Gordon Bok Ruth has written the definitive novels of the Maine coast as it was when I was growing up here. One day she handed me this poem, claiming it wanted a tune. This young fellow, most likely a lobsterman, is listening to the buoy off Cutler Harbor, but now it is above him, and he has just figured out that he's drowning.

Gordon – 12-string guitar

Little River lighted whistle, cry no more Sleepy sound from the breakers calling me back to shore Whistle it soft to the silver river Whistle it loud to the drumming sea Whistle it low to the moon and morning Not to me, never to me

For I'm swinging high in another country, swinging low

Rolling it easy and the dolphins follow me where I go

Whistle it loud to the flood tide making Whistle it soft to the wheeling sun Whistle it wild to my girl's heart breaking She'll remember; she was the one

Spring comes warm over Little River, storm comes black

I was headed home when the Indian Giver took me back

Whistle it high to the graybeard breakers Where the secret over the great shoals ran Whistle the world that was in my pocket When I had pockets, when I was a man *repeat #1*

ASTORIA BAR

©1997 Mary Garvey Mary grew up on the Columbia River between Washington and Oregon and knew the (primarily salmon) fisheries along its lower reaches. A huge body of water comes down a broad estuary near Astoria, creating one of the most dangerous river-mouth bars in the world. She says "This is just a fisherman put-putting down the river in a small boat on a day when the weather is very beautiful and the river is very blue. I remember as a child in Astoria seeing these massive quantities of fish going up conveyor belts from the ships and almost being spat out. The bit about rowing all night from Willapa Bay is straight out of a comment in a newspaper story . . . some woman said her grandfather had done that. Sturdy people in these parts . . . still are; but the Finns were legendary."

January Men And Then Some Gordon – Spanish guitar Forrest Sherman – tin whistle

It's not very far to Astoria's bar But a very long journey it can be It can start at the mouth of the mighty blue river And end at the bottom of the sea

But the river still shines and shimmers in the light As it did in our grandfathers' day When they rowed all night and fished in the morning And lived in Willapa Bay

When the tide is rough so very, very rough So rough that you cannot stand It drives the little fish right into the nets And the boats right into the sand

In the wind and the rain, the labor and the pain

We know what the fishing here is worth It's worth more than gold when they suck 'em from the hold It's worth all the treasures of the earth



THE BOATS OF PETER'S RIVER

©1995 Mary Garvey

Mary said: "I wrote [this song] when I went back to Peter's River a few years ago. I had worked on a whale research study there some years ago through the University of Newfoundland, and wanted to see it again. This was after the collapse of the cod fishery in Newfoundland, and fishermen couldn't even go out and catch a few fish for their families."

She added, "The bit about shooting their boats is true. A really bad storm came up while I was there, and the men did go and shoot their boats to sink them so they would survive the storm." I dare you to try this at home . . . GB

Mary Garvey is a Pacific Northwest songwriter with more than 50 songs to her credit. She currently resides in Washington State.

Gordon – 12-string guitar

Not a boat in Peter's River or in all St. Mary's Bay The fishermen in rubber boots are staying home today Hanging out the laundry, hang out in the store And the Little Boats of Newfoundland are idle on the shore* The men of Peter's River are just barely getting by And the boats of Peter's River have their bottoms to the sky

The wives of Peter's River are taking up the slack Fisheries has ended and it's never coming back Sell a little knitting, set some broody hens No sooner does a hard day end, another one begins The wives of Peter's River are too strong to sit and cry And the boats of Peter's River have their bottoms to the sky

The boys of Peter's River are as bright as boys can be Their eyes are on the highway instead of on the sea Where their fathers went before them is not where they must go [†] And the fate of Peter's River is not for us to know

The boys of Peter's River are too young to wonder why And the boats of Peter's River have their bottoms to the sky

The storms of Peter's River have pounded us for years Crashing in the harbour and smashing up the piers We've ridden out these storms before by shooting at our boats But we know this storm is different,- and we cannot stay afloat

There's no nets in Peter's River laying out to dry And the boats of Peter's River have their bottoms to the sky

* "Little Boats of Newfoundland" is the name of a Newfoundland song

[†] Sir Cavendish Boyle, *Ode to Newfoundland:* As loved our fathers, so we love / Where once they stood we stand This prayer we raise to Heaven above: / God guard thee Newfoundland

O VENTO

©Doreval Caymmi

I first heard this song in the 1950's on the West Coast, but didn't learn it until Larry Holland introduced me to the music of Brazilian singer and composer Doreval Caymmi. Thanks to Prof. Holland for this translation from the Brazilian Portuguese (Northeast dialect).

Gordon – Spanish guitar

Let us go and call the wind Vamos, chamar o vento (2) Wind that fills the sail Vento que da na vela Sail that lifts the boat Vela que leva o barco Boat that carries the man Barco que leva a gente Man that hauls the fish Gente que leva o peixe Fish that brings money Peixe que da dinheiro Curriman ei, curriman lam bai (a sound of sorrow) Wind that fills the sail Vento que da na vela Sail that capsizes the boat Vento que vira o barco

EL PESCADOR (The Fisherman)

© Patrocinio Ortiz A Guabina from Colombia Gordon – 12-string guitar Carol – harp



JACK HINKS

Traditional Newfoundland: Quigley / Apollonio Many years back my old shipmate Geordie Jennings brought me a fine little pamphlet of songs. It was Gerald S. Doyle's "Old-time Songs of Newfoundland" (Third Edition 1955). Doyle says, "The author . . . was Johnny Quigley,' the bard from Erin, as he was wont to be styled by Newfoundlanders in the old days . . . "The first time I ever sang this for Nick Apollonio, his immediate comment was to sing the "O was ye drunk . . . " lines, to another traditional tune.

January Men And Then Some

Ye muses so kind who are guided by wind On the ocean as well as the shore Assist a poor bard how to handle his card Without ceasing where billows do roar Not of cupid he sings, nor of country nor kings

Nor of any such trifles he thinks But of seafaring, sail making, gambling,

capering Grog-drinking heroes like Hinks

When Jack comes ashore he's got money

galore

For he's seldom cut short of a job He can dress as well now as any can tell With a good silver watch to his fob For Jack in his life was ne'er plagued with a

wife

Though sometimes with the lassies he links

That seafaring . . .

When inclined for to spend he comes in with a friend

And with pleasure he sets himself down And he tips up his glass and he winks at the lass

And he smiles if she happens to frown Like some rattling true-blue when the reckoning is due On the table his money he clinks That seafaring . . .

One evening last fall we fell in with a squall On the northernmost head of Cape Freels We were cast away without further delay At the thought, how my spirit it chills When cast on the rocks like a hard hunted fox

Then on death and destruction he thinks That seafaring . . .

Now Jack without fail was out in that same gale

Having drove across Bonavist Bay Old Neptune did rail as they handed all sail And he had his two spars cut away But Providence kind who so eases the wind And on sailors so constantly thinks Saved that seafaring . . .

Ah, but death it will come like the sound of a drum

For to summon poor Jack to his grave There's naught he can do, for you all know

'tis true

'Tis the same for both hero and slave And his soul soars aloft, so doleful and soft While the bell for the funeral clinks Oh, peace to that seafaring . . .

Nick's comment:

Oh, was ye drunk or was ye blind When ye left your two fine spars behind? Or was it stivvering over the sea Took the two fine sticks from your decks away?

To me too rye a, fall the diddle da Toorye, oorye, oorye a

OH, NO MORE

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Bernie Houlahan of Moncton, N.B. taught me this poignant song about the death of the Newfoundland fisheries.

Over the years, ears and miles, my version has wandered quite a bit. After I had recorded the song my way, Kevin, whom I had met years ago in New England, sent us the original words which we print here for your confusion.

Gordon-viol

Years ago when I was young I cast my nets into the sun And with my father's hands upon my shoulders Hauled them home

The nets moved like a living thing All from the codfish held within And homeward bound we'd laugh and sing An honest man's work done We'd throw our fortunes to the wind But now we'll just remember when

(There were) lots of fish in Bonavist Harbour Oh, no more

Lots of fishing in around here Oh, no more We'd throw our fortunes to the wind Me boys we'll not do that again Oh, no more

The sea had turned my father's eyes A blue much deeper than the skies That granted us our daily prize King Cod, in all his glory And like my father I grew strong And proud I was to carry on For in his footsteps I belonged Ah, but that's another story For times change faster than the wind And now we just remember when

Jack was every inch a sailor Oh, no more Four and twenty years a whaler Oh, no more For times change faster than the wind Me boys we won't fish here again Oh, no more

My father's eyes are still as blue But his hands are softer than I knew There's nothing much for him to do But smoke and drink and remember And every day I sit and face The spectre of my father's face Dying at an icebound pace His heart and soul, December He'd give his life to ride the wind Instead we just remember when Lukey's boat was painted green Oh, no more Finest boat you've ever seen Oh, no more I was the boy who built the boats Oh, no more I was the boy who sailed them Oh, no more I'd give my life to ride the wind And to be fishing once again Oh, no more, Oh, no more, Oh, no more



HUSH SONG

Words ©1924 Elizabeth Shane Music ©1980 Gordon Bok Alouette Iselin sent me these words years ago: they seemed to beg to be sung, so I made this tune.

Gordon – 12-string guitar Carol – harp

Och, hush ye then, och hush ye There's herrin's in the bay An' you'll be the wee fisherman Someday — someday

Och, rest ye then, och rest ye The herrin's do be small An' you're the boy when you'll be big Will catch them all

Och, hush ye then, och hush ye The night is dark an' wet An' you too wee, o heart o' mine For fishin' yet

Och, hush ye then, och hush ye 'Tis cowld upon the sea But this wee house is warm itself For you an' me

Och, sleep ye now, och sleep ye For sure a night will come When you'll be wakin' on the sea An' me at home

THE CANDLELIGHT FISHERMAN

Traditional English

I learned this from old Eric Ilot, "The Bristol Chanteyman" who graced our town for a few weeks some winters ago. It was also collected by Bob Roberts.

This old codger had a good dodge when he didn't want to go fishing; he's talking about a candle-lantern, a four-sided glass box with a candle in it, one side of which opens like a door. If you want the candle to keep burning, you keep the door (pane) closed.

Gordon – Spanish guitar

Now me Dad was a fisherman bold And he lived till he grew old 'Cause he'd open the pane and pop out the flame

Just to see how the winds do blow.

Now me Dad he says to me If you're ever going to go to sea Do you open the pane and pop out the flame

Just to see how the wind do blow.

Now when the cold North wind do blow Then it's we lie snug below 'Cause we open the pane . . .

When the wind comes up from the East It isn't fit for man nor beast Still I open the pane... When the wind comes up from the West She's going to blow up rough at best So I open the pane . . .

But when the South wind soft do blow Well there ain't enough wind to go Still I open the pane . . .

When me wife she says to me We'll starve if you don't go Well, I open the pane . . .

So if you'd be a fisherman bold And you'd live till you grow old Do you open the pane . . .

HELP ME TO RAISE 'EM

Traditional United States I heard this first from the Menhaden Chanteymen of Beaufort, N.C. with whom I once had the pleasure of singing in Norfolk, VA. This is a different version, from the Northern Neck Chantey Singers of VA.

The ship sends two motorized net-boats out, with crew, to surround the fish with the net, the captain running one, the mate running the other. When they've closed the purse, they haul the fish up to the surface by hand with some help from the donkey engine on the main boat. Slow, hard work, some days. January Men And Then Some Will you help me to raise 'em, boys, *O, honey*

Will you help me to raise 'em, boys, O, honey

Will you help me to raise 'em, boys, see her when the sun goes down

All the weight's on the mate boat I got a long tall yellow gal Her name is Evalina, boys All the weight's on the captain boat All the weight's on the donkey man

ROUND OUR SKIFF

Text: Traditional Hebrides Music: ©1984 Kathy Wonson Eddy Kathy kindly sent me this song among many others a few years ago: she is a great source of liturgical choral music. I have sung it with our chorus and another smaller group, but Carol and I wanted to keep it in our repertoire, so here's a third way to sing it. Kathy lives in Randolph, Vermont.

Gordon — viol Carol — harp

Round our skiff be God's aboutness Ere she try the deeps of sea

Sea-shell frail for all her stoutness Unless Thou her helmsman be

CANNERY SHED (STELLA)

©1992 Mary Garvey

Another of Mary's Columbia River songs. This is a good song to sing on the Maine coast where many of us still remember the sardine packing plants here. Quite a few of my school friends had summer jobs in those plants.

Mary says, "Stella is a beautiful little town on the lower Columbia. The whole town was on piers when I was growing up." Carol Rohl and January Men And Then Some—vocals

David Dodson – acoustic bass guitar

I've worked all my life in the cannery shed And if I am dying or you think I am dead Don't bury my bones but put me instead In a can in the cannery shed

The cannery shed perches over the river When the winter winds blow we freeze and we shiver When the boss comes around I just might have to give her My opinion of the cannery shed There's no time to rest and there's no time to linger And you'd better move sharp or you might lose a finger It'd make your stomach turn if you knew

everything here's

Been canned in the cannery shed

We chop off the heads and chop off the tails

Scoop out the guts and throw them in the pails

We won't get a rest till the next schooner sails

From the dock at the cannery sheds

LaFaye he went away and he wrote me a letter

I tucked it up high in the sleeve of my sweater

And it slipped and it fell and ended in the shredder

And got canned in the cannery shed

The cannery boy he's a very happy fella If he gets him a girl from the little town of Stella

I would if I could but I'm not going to tell ya

What goes on behind the cannery shed

TROCHUS BOATS

Lyrics: Bill Scott / Music: Roger Ilott ©1999 Restless Music APRA/AMCOS

Bill lives in Warwick, Queensland, Australia, these days. This is from one of his other eight lives. He says, "When working aboard the Commonwealth lighthouse vessel, Cape Leeuwin, in the early fifties, we often saw some of the pearling fleet anchored among the reefs of the Barrier where they harvested trochus shell. The sound of the crews' voices in song drifting across the twilit still waters haunts me still with its beauty."

Gordon — 12-string guitar Quasimodal Chorus — vocals

I am living dry and placid now among encircling mountains,

An old man still remembering the days that used to be,

But I close my eyes and live again those days of sweat and laughter,

When we worked the trochus luggers* in the western Coral Sea.

Sailing in a black hulled lugger with a lookout at the masthead,

You may drift along the coral cays and anchor where you please,

In the glassy leeside waters of some rocky offshore island,

Though the outer reef be trembling under pounding whitened seas.

Chorus:

Laddie oh . . . Laddie ay, Laddie oh . . . Laddie ay. *(2x)*

You may anchor calm and safely in the shallows over coral,

Where the waters glimmer peacock in a hundred shifting shades,

You can hear the rippling wavelets tinkle gently on the beaches,

And the stays and braces strumming in the southeast trades.

Chorus . . .

To the north of Lizard Island and to the

south of Iron Range, In my dreams I am returning to the place where I would be.

To the laughing Torres Straitsmen singing softly in the twilight,

To the trochus lugger's anchorage in

Princess Charlotte Bay.

Chorus . . .

* Trochus is a large mollusk. Perhaps the boats were once lug rigged, but I've seen pictures of ketches, and Bill says he's seen motor boats called luggers.

WHERE IS THE LIGHT / MEMORY FOR SEAL ISLAND

©1986 Elmer Beal / ©1980 Gordon Bok Seal is a long, narrow island on the outskirts of Penobscot Bay. We anchored there one day in the sardine carrier Ida Mae, waiting for dark when the herring would rise again. Cleon took a nap and Frank and I went ashore and wandered around the island, ducking seabirds, cooking up a mess of periwinkles over a driftwood fire on the beach and dozing in the sun. It was a grand, high, blue day, and the sea very quiet.

A couple of years later (1978) the whole island was burned, destroying hundreds of seabirds and their habitat. A while later Elmer and I were on tour together, and he taught me his tune, "Where is the Light" and I always associated it with that feeling of loss about the island. But it was the memory of that day that gave me my tune.

Gordon – Spanish guitar



ONE MORE MORNING (Memoir / Oratorio)

©1996 Gordon Bok

This piece is my attempt to remember or picture a single night of purse-seining for herring off the Maine Coast around (say) 1970.

It begins in the afternoon when the fisherman has finished his 'day job' and is looking at a full night of chasing herring, through to the daylight, when the sardine-carriers are hauling the catch off to the cannery, and he can sort out his gear and go home.

It is mostly conversations. Some I've heard on fishing boats, some on marine radio, some over beers ashore and some imaginary, trying to get into the heads of those whose skill at finding and catching these spooky fish is truly uncanny.

January Men And Then Some

I

Now give me strength at the end of the day *out on the deep*

O give me strength to go back on the water *down in the dark of the moon* Out on the deep, *out on the deep Out on the wild old ocean*

- O give me fishes to soothe my sorrows *out on the deep*
- O give me darkness to soothe my herring *down in the dark of the moon*

Out on the deep, *out on the deep Out on the wild old ocean*

For there's snow, lord, there's snow on the wind *out on the deep*

Snow on the wind before morning *down in the haul of the tide*

Out on the deep, *out on the deep Out on the wild old ocean*

And there's wind, lord, there's wind before morning *out on the deep* Wind on the cold tide coming *down in the haul of the tide*

Out on the deep, *out on the deep Out on the wild old ocean*

O give us one more morning Then will we lay this season down

II

Somewhere out there I know they're traveling *bring them to me* Somewhere out there I know they're rising

bring them to me

Somewhere out there I feel them gathering *bring them to me*

Oh, boys-easy! easy

Haul out your rings now *easy* Roll them out easy *easy* Come on around them *easy* Circle all round them *easy*

III

Come on your purseline bring them to me Bring them along now bring them to me Tuck 'em in tight now bring them to me Bring 'em all of 'em home bring them to me Ah—come on a rising fire below boys Coming on silver fire below Come on a moving fire below Come on a heaving light up the deep (hold 'em) O set out the light now set out the light

Fire up the ocean *light up the deep!*

IV

Now, call on the carriers *come on the twine* All you little ones, big ones *come on the twine*

Tell them follow the light now *come on the twine*

O but come on her easy come on the twine

O come on, Amanda *come on the twine* Come on her, Edward *come on the twine* Come on her, Grayling *come on the twine* Come on her, Ida *come on the twine* Come on her, Jacob *come on the twine* Come on her, Maryanne *come on the twine* Come on her, Muriel *come on the twine*

O come on, Amanda *call on the boats now / come on the twine*

Come on her, Edward *come 'round the islands / come on the twine* Come on her, Grayling O mind all the hardware | come on the twine Come on her, Ida come take up your corkline | come on the twine Come on her, Jacob O come on her easy | come on her, Maryanne come lay out your hoses | come on the twine Come on her, Muriel I got a thousand hogshead! | come on the twine

V

Now their salt is all down and their hoses are in And their baskets are full and their hatches are on So they let go the twine and they kick themselves clear And they slide up the bay and they're headed for home So we clear up the gear and we sort out the twine And we string out the boats and we head for the barn And it's home, home . . .

VI O hev she's ma

O hey, she's making day!

VII

Somewhere out there I know they're traveling *bring them to me*

Herringsin the Bay

Gordon Bok

THD CD14

ishing was all around us here; we had a richness of it. Many of my friends (including my brother) have spent some part of their lives in a local fishery. I've seen some friends walk out of one fishery at forty looking for saner work and some grow old in another, saying that, over the years, they've "done pretty good." So many stories.

I've seen one fishery after another on two oceans go under, mostly in the name of greed, and there's no need of that. When we lose a fishery, we lose an independent way of life, of living. There's shame in that, for all of us.

And the boats go then, of course. The low, kindly handhaulers with their quiet, converted Chevy engines go first, then the double-ended seineboats and the dories, then the rugged little seiners that would find other work in other seasons. And now the long, graceful sardine-carriers with their schooner lines are leaving us, one by one. You'll hear some of their names in one of these pieces. Each name is a book of people, of stories.

So these songs, from Ireland, England, Newfoundland, New England, the Carolinas, Brazil, Colombia and the Pacific Northwest should give you some different perspectives of a way of life.



To Jack and Belvea MacDonald, Isle au Haut, who gave more than the world could ever haul away. Thank you.

1. Herring Croon (Gordon Bok) 2. Little River (Words, Ruth Moore / music, Gordon Bok) 3. Astoria Bar (Mary Garvey) 4. The Boats of Peter's River (Mary Garvey) 5. O Vento (Doreval Cavmmi) 6. El Pescador (Patrocinio Ortiz) 7. Jack Hinks (Traditional Newfoundland: Quigley / Apollonio) 8. Oh, No More (*Kevin Barry Evans*) 9. Hush Song (Words, Elizabeth Shane / music, Gordon Bok) 10. Candlelight Fisherman (Traditional English) 11. Help Me To Raise 'Em (*Traditional United States*) 12. Round Our Skiff (Traditional Hebrides / music Kathy Wonson Eddy) 13. Cannery Shed (Stella) (Mary Garvey) 14. Trochus Boats (Words, Bill Scott / music, Roger Ilott) 15. Where is the Light / Memory for Seal Island (*Elmer Beal / Gordon Bok*) 16. One More Morning (Gordon Bok)

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