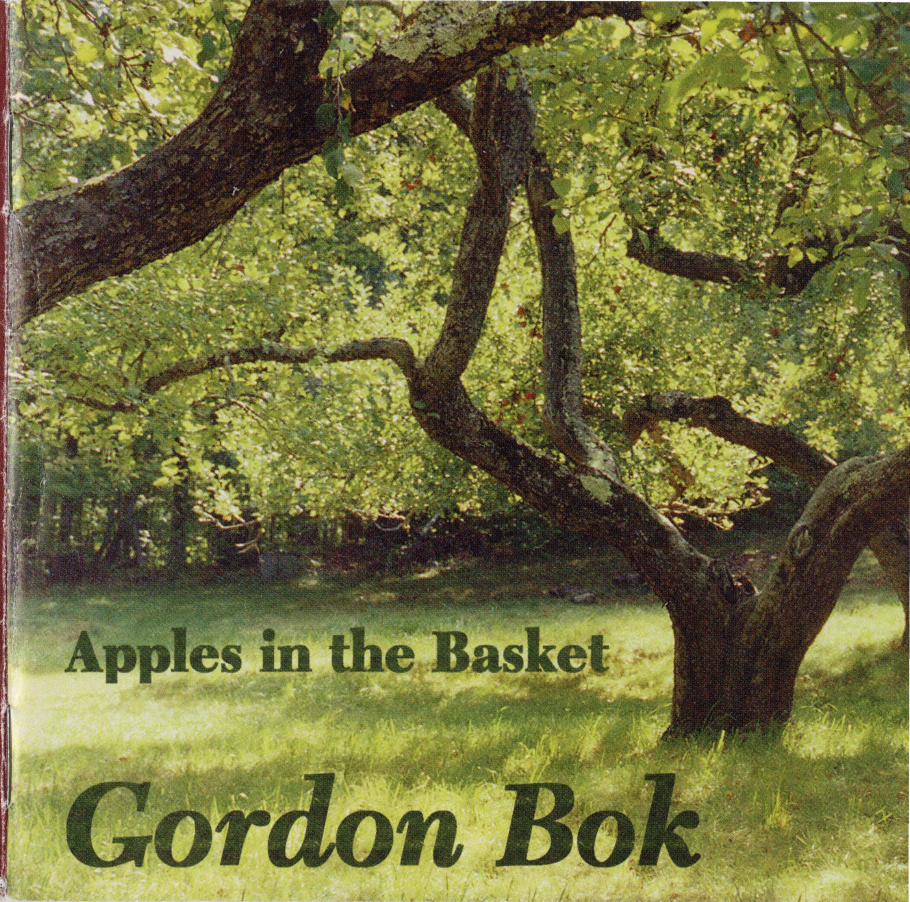


The reason I sing so many other people's songs (authors known or unknown) is that the songs teach me how other folks have met and coped with the world, and I am perhaps wiser and certainly more human for having lived with their music in my days and nights.

Here's a trawl through some of the songs that have engaged my life these last few years. You'll notice a lot of textures here: these songs bring us some interesting lives and beliefs and perspectives, and I am grateful that they've come to inform my own.

I am grateful, too, for all the musician friends who have given their time and spirit so generously to help me here: Doreen Conboy, Elmer Beal, Anne Dodson, Matt Szostak, Will Brown, Cindy Kallet, Bruce Boege, Ken Gross, and the light of my heart, Carol Rohl.

We're the ones you hear now, but there's a thousand more we've sung with and learned from, whose voices give strength to our own, and whose lives have nourished ours.



Apples in the Basket

Gordon Bok

Apples in the Basket

Where possible, I print the oldest sources I have of these songs, no matter how much they differ from the versions that came to me.

*Recorded, engineered and mastered by Bruce Boege,
Limin Music, Northport, Maine*

Mixed by Bruce Boege, Gordon Bok and Anne Dodson

Produced by Gordon Bok and Anne Dodson

Front cover and Tray card photograph by Gordon Bok

Opposite page photograph by Chris Pinchbeck

Back cover photograph by Carol Rohl

Programming by Carol Rohl

Graphic design by Ken Gross

The first two months of the year are my time for making albums; luckily, we recorded most of this music in January and February of 2003 and 2004. When it came time for the final production work, we were in the third month of Carol's recovery from a stroke.

Pulling the album together has been a welcome focus during these early weeks of 2005. We're reminded once again that if you really want to do something, don't put it off.



Apples in the Basket

©1978 JB Goodenough

Judy sent me this a long time ago and I sang it for a couple of years, but I think I needed a lot more miles on my odometer to really appreciate it. When we sing it, it brings my brother Tony close, and it has become one of our most requested songs.

Gordon – Spanish guitar

Carol – vocal

Doreen – bass viol

The sun comes over the top of the hill
Shines on the fields I've yet to till
My bones are weary but I know I will
And not just because you ask it

Rake and hoe on twenty-penny nails
Milk lies sweet in a dozen pails
Hay piled up in a hundred bales
And apples in the basket

A house that's tight to the wind and snow
A barn that's full of the things we grow
Empty purse, but I don't owe
A thing to any man living

A woman warm, a woman kind
A woman that knows her own sweet mind
A woman that knows just what's behind
The things that she's forgiven

There's branches on the family tree
A boy, a girl and the baby's three
They look like her, they look like me
Like folk that's dead and gone now
But I don't care, we're all the same
There's none to bless and none to blame

We're doing in the family's name
The work we carry on now

The old grey goose is on the wing
But he'll be back again next spring
Each year we do the same old thing
And the same old wheel goes spinning
When the air is warm and the earth
is sweet
And the good clean dirt is on our feet
The circle comes around complete
And the end is the beginning

The Recruited Collier

Traditional England

I used to enjoy accompanying Louis Killen on this song on the rare occasions we managed to sing together. I finally asked him to teach it to me. "Paid the smart and run for the golden guinea" = a bribe for the recruiting officer to let her man go.

Gordon – viol

What's the matter with you me lass, and
where's your dashing Jimmy?
The soldier lads have picked him up, and
now he's gone far from me
Last pay day he went into town, and them
red-coated fellows
Enticed him in and made him drunk; he'd
have better gone to the gallows

The very sight of his cockade, it set us all
a-crying
And me, I nearly fainted twice: I thought
that I was dying

My father would have paid the smart and
run for the golden guinea
But the sergeant swore he'd kissed the book,
and now they've got young Jimmy

When Jimmy talks about the wars it's worse
than death to hear him
I have to go and hide my tears, for truth, I
cannot bear him
But aye, he jives and cracks his jokes, and
bids me not forsake him
For a Brigadier or a Grenadier he says
they're sure to make him

As I looked o'er the stubble fields—below it
runs the seam—°

I thought of Jimmy hewing there, but that
was just a dream
He hewed the very coals we burn, and when
the fire I'm lighting
To think the lumps was in his hands, it sets
my heart a beating

So break my heart and then it's o'er; aye,
break my heart, my dearie
And I'll lie in the cold, cold ground; of a
single life I'm weary

° the coal mine

Los Tres Panuelitos

Traditional Chile

When I was working winters in Philadelphia in my twenties, friends there would bring me back music from South America and help me figure it out. This one came from the group "Los de Ramon de Chile," and I only

sing the first of three verses: Whoever named you, Consuelo, was not aware of your destiny. He should have just made a cross, and on it, the word "pain." I am going to have a fiery handkerchief embroidered, that says on one corner: "Leave me!" And on the other: "Why are you going?"

I sang the song alone for years, and then with Carol on the harp, until it finally occurred to me that I wanted to hear my old friend Elmer Beal sing the lead vocal; his voice is much more suited for it, and his Spanish is much better than mine.

Gordon – 12-string guitar

Carol – harp

Elmer – lead vocal

Gordon – Second Elmer

The Maiden in Bird's Plumage (Nilus Erlandson)

Words Traditional Denmark / music © Gordon Bok
BMI

From A Book of Danish Ballads (Princeton University Press, 1939), translated by E.M. Smith-Dampier. A friend loaned me this book. In the introduction, it says that by the 15th century these ballads were often combined with dances. Quite often they had a burden which the dancers would sing with every verse (like "So the knight hath won his lady"). These ballads wandered back and forth between countries, so they might well have existed in many languages at once.

Gordon – Spanish guitar

It was Nilus Erlandson
Rode forth the deer to take
And there he saw the lily-white hind
That ran through bush and brake
(So the knight hath won his lady)

He chased her, Nilus Erlandson
That longed for her so sore
But swift was she, and still did flee
For three days' space and more

Now snares he set in every path
Where'er a beast might go
But all so wise was the lily-white hind
That he could not take her so

Sir Nilus all through the greenwood
Rode on, and rode in vain
His hounds loosed he by two, by three
To run her down amain

Now can she spy no way to fly
So hot the hounds pursue
Her shape she changed to a falcon fierce
And aloft in the air she flew

Her shape she changed to a falcon fleet
And perched on a linden green
All under the boughs Sir Nilus stood
And sighed for toil and tene

Sir Nilus hath ta'en his axe in hand
To fell the linden-tree
When forth there sprang a forester
That smote the shaft in three

"And wilt thou fell my father's wood
And all to do me wrong
I promise thee, Nilus Erlandson
That thou shalt rue it long!"

"Now let me fell this single tree
This tree alone of thine
For but I can take the falcon fell
I die of dule and pine!"

"Now hark and heed, thou fair young knight
The counsel that I bring
Ne'er shalt thou take her till she taste
The flesh of a tamed thing!"

A gobbet he cut from his bleeding breast
Right bitter pain he knew
She flapped her wings and down she dropped
And on the bait she flew

She flapped her wings and down she flew
And on the bait she fell
And she changed her shape to the fairest maid
That ever a tongue might tell

She stood in a sark of silk so red
Where the linden-tree did blow
And all in the arms of Sir Nilus
She told her weird of woe

"Oh, I sat and broidered lily and rose
My father's board beside
When in she came, my false stepdame
Whose wrath was ill to bide

"She shaped me all to a lily-white hind
To run in wild greenwood
And my seven maidens to seven grey wolves
And bade them drink my blood"

The damsel stood 'neath the linden-tree
And loosened her golden hair
And thither came they that erst were wolves
But now were maidens fair

"Now thanks to thee, Nilus Erlandson!
Hast saved me from hurt and harm
Never shalt thou seek slumber
But on my lily-white arm

"Now thanks to thee, Nilus Erlandson
Hast set my sorrow to rest!
Never shalt thou seek slumber
But on my lily-white breast"



A Shearer's Lament

Words: Matt O'Connor / music © 1997 Martyn
Wyndham-Read, Fellsongs Publishing

I learned A Shearer's Lament from Ed Trickett and we used to sing it and Waiting For the Rain together. Martyn Wyndham-Read says about the lyrics, "The words for A Shearer's Lament were written by Matt O'Connor who was an itinerant shearer (in Australia). Back in the '60s he used to send in poems and contributions to a Folk Magazine and A Shearer's Lament was one of his. The magazine wrote back to thank him to a P.O. Box address which he had given, but they never received a reply or any other contribution from him, and presumed that he had passed on."

Gordon – 12-string guitar

We finished shearing sheep out west of the
Paroo
And now it's rained three inches—we don't
know what to do

A week ago the sand was loose; the dust
blew every day
And now the mud is two feet deep and we
can't get away

I've just been talking to the boss—you all
know Hector Cope
He says the Bull is two miles wide—to
cross it there's no hope
You hear a lot of people swear about the
dough we make
But they forget the price of beer and all
the combs we break

Well, why I took this job on, I just can't
understand
If the bloody sheep ain't waterlogged, the
cows are full of sand
A man is doubled up all day, half-blinded
by his sweat
And when the darkness comes around,
cooped up in a mozzie net °

It might have been a good job once; those
old hands had their breaks
They pushed a cart from shed to shed and
lived on johnnycakes
They had more time to do the job—they
worked nine hours a day
And after paying for their grub, one
pound-a-hundred made

I think I'll give this job away; I'm tired of
being a greasy
I've heard about a fencing job—they tell
me it's dead easy

° Mosquito netting

Waiting for the Rain

Words: John Neilson / music: unknown

The words to Waiting for the Rain are based on a poem by John Neilson and the author of the melody is unknown. I learned it from Ray Wales, originally of New South Wales, Australia. He had a lot of unidentified recordings he'd made off folk radio in the '50s and '60s—many of the songs were recorded by Dave de Hugard, I learned many years later. Many of my Australian songs are probably from de Hugard's singing; he's a magnificent singer in whose footprints I've been honored to plod. This is pretty much as I heard it.

Gordon – 12-string guitar

Well, the weather had been sultry for a
fortnight's time or more
The shearers had been battling might and
main
And some had got the century as never did
before
And now all hands are waiting for the rain
The boss is getting rusty and the ringer's
caving in
His bandaged wrist is aching with the pain
And the second man, I fear, is going to
make it hot for him
Unless we get another fall of rain
Well, the sky is clouding over and the
thunder's muttering loud
The clouds are driving eastward o'er the
plain

And I see the lightning flashing followed by
an awful crash
And I hear the gentle patter of the rain
So lads put on your stoppers and let us to
the hut
We'll gather 'round and have a friendly game
And some are playing music and some play
ante-up
And some are gazing outward at the rain
Well, now the rain is over, let the pressers
spin their screws
Let the teamsters drive the wagons in again
And we'll block the classer's table by the way
we push them through
Since now all hands are merry since the rain
And the boss won't be so rusty when the
sheep have all been shorn
And the ringer's wrist won't ache so with the
pain
Of pocketing a season's check for fifty
pounds or more
And the second man will drive him hard
again
So boss, bring out the bottle and we'll wet
the final flock
For the shearers here may never meet again
And some may meet next season and some
not even then
And some they will just vanish like the rain



Joropos

© Alfredo Rolando Ortiz

Alfredo was born in Cuba, and emigrated to Venezuela as a young boy where he began studying the Venezuelan Arpa Llanera. He has become one of the greatest proponents of Latin American music in the harp-world. He now lives in California. Carol learned these two tunes from his book From Harp to Harp with Love. He wrote these tunes to illustrate the Joropo rhythm.

Gordon – Spanish guitar

Carol – harp

The Black Furrow

Words ©1973 George MacKay Brown / music

©1966 Gordon Bok

A poem by one of Orkney's greatest folklorists and poets. Here, a fiddler takes a dare and ends up in a place he should have stayed well away from.

Gordon – 12-string guitar

“Darst thou gang b' the black furrow
This night, thee and thy song?”
“Wet me mooth wi' the Lenten ale,
I'll go along.”

They spied him near the black furrow
B' the glim o' the wolf star.
Slow the dance was in his feet
Dark the fiddle he bore.

There stood three men at the black furrow
And one was clad in grey.

No mortal hand had woven that claiith
B' the sweet light o' day.

There stood three men at the black furrow
And one was clad in green.
They've taen the fiddler b' the hand
Where he was no more seen.

There stood three men at the black furrow
And one was clad in yellow.
They've led the fiddler through the door
Where never a bird could follow.

They've put the gowd cup in his hand,
Elfin bread on his tongue.
And there he bade a hunder years,
Him and his lawless song.

“Darst thou gang through the black furrow
On a mirk night, alone?”
“I'd rather sleep wit' Christian folk,
Under a kirkyard stone.”

The Old Figurehead Carver

Poem © 1925 H.A. Cody / music and chorus lyrics

©1996 Dick Swain

Dick Swain found this wonderful poem in an old book Songs of a Bluenose by H.A. Cody. Dick gave this to Carol and me as a wedding present having made a handsome tune and a chorus for it and, of course I had to learn it, woodcarver that I am. Cody was a preacher and a poet in Saint John, N.B. where the Marco Polo was built.

Gordon – Spanish guitar

Anne, Carol, Cindy, Matt & Will – vocals

I have done my bit of carving
Figureheads of quaint design
For the Olives and the Ruddocks
And the famous Black Ball Line
Brigantines and barques and clippers
Brigs and schooners, lithe and tall
But the bounding Marco Polo
Was the proudest of them all

And while my hand is steady, while my eyes
are good
I will carve the music of the wind into the
wood

I can see that white-winged clipper
Reeling under scudding clouds
Tramping down a hazy skyline
With a Norther in her shrouds
I can feel her lines of beauty
See her flecked with spume and brine
As she drives her scuppers under
And that figurehead of mine

'Twas of seasoned pine I made it
Clear from outer bark to core
And the finest piece of timber
From the mast-pond on Straight Shore
Every bite of axe or chisel
Every ringing mallet welt
Brought from out that block of timber
All the spirit that I felt

I had read of Marco Polo
Till his daring deeds were mine
And I saw them all a-glowing
In that balsam-scented pine
Saw his eyes alight with purpose

Facing every vagrant breeze
Saw him lifting, free and careless
Over all the Seven Seas

That was how I did my carving
Beat of heart and stroke of hand
Blended into life and action
All the purpose that I planned
Flowing robes and wind-tossed tresses
Forms of beauty, strength, design
Saw them all, and strove to carve them
In those figureheads of mine

I am old, my hands are feeble
And my outward eyes are dim
But I see again those clippers
Lifting o'er the ocean's rim
Great white fleet of reeling rovers
Wind above, the surf beneath
And the Marco Polo leading
With my carving in her teeth



Heading for Home

Words and music ©1999 Peggy Seeger, administered by Bucks Music

I learned this from Peggy Seeger when we taught at a music camp together in New Hampshire. This is what she said about the song: "This is my thank you song to friends, family, those who have taught me and whom I have taught—and to all the good people with whom I have shared time on earth."

Gordon – 12-string guitar

My face to the sky, my back to the wind
Winter is entering my bones
The day has been long, night's drawing in
And I'm thinking of heading for home
And I'm thinking of heading for home

The cradle and grave, the fruit and the seed
The seasons mirror my own
The geese flying south are calling to me
And I'm thinking of heading for home
And I'm thinking of heading for home

Always on the move with banner unfurled,
Yet gathering moss on the stone
I sing for the children and cry for the world
And I'm thinking of heading for home
And I'm thinking of heading for home

As Time's my old friend and Death's my new kin
I'm not taking the journey alone
I am old, I am young, I am all that I've been
And I'm thinking of heading for home
And I'm thinking of heading for home

The memory of love will burn in my heart
Till embers and ashes are gone
The light in your window is my northern star
And I'm thinking of heading for home
And it's time I was heading for home

Mussels in the Corner

Traditional Newfoundland

Can't remember where or when I learned this song, but the "ghosts" verse was given to me by Greg Brown, a fine Newfoundland fiddler, when we were performing in Texas a few years ago.

The tune on the end is Ragtime Annie (or Raggedy Ann) that I used to play with the likes of Havilah Hawkins Sr. and Adrian Beal (of Stonington and Beals Island). We played for a lot of dances out in the island towns when I was in my roaring twenties.

Gordon – 12-string guitar
Anne, Cindy, Matt & Will – vocals

'Deed I am in love with you
Out all day in the foggy dew
'Deed I am in love with you
Mussels in the corner

I took Jenny to a ball
Jenny could not dance at all
Sailed her up 'longside the wall
Left her there till Sunday

All the people from Belle Isle
Don't get up till half past nine
Wash their face in kerosene oil
Polly, you're a corker

Here they come as thick as flies
Dirty shirts and dirty ties
Dirty rings around their eyes
Dirty old Tor Bay men

Here they come as white as ghosts
Bay men in their little boats
It's a wonder that they floats
Dirty old Tor Bay men

Ask a Bay man for a smoke
He will say his pipe is broke
Ask a Bay man for a chew
He will bite it off for you

Bay St. Mary / In the Cove

Music ©1977 Gordon Bok, BMI / words ©1981 Bill Leavenworth

I made (or captured) this tune coming down the French Shore of Nova Scotia. Nick Apollonio helped me remember it, all the way home across the Bay.

Bill was working as skipper on the crew boats for the oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, and he made this poem while driving home one winter.
Gordon – *laud*, 12-string guitar
Carol – *harp*

On my last trip long ago
I rolled in the swells off Isle Au Haut
And sang to myself with every seam
The song that sleeping whales dream.
From the whale path 'round Isle Au Haut
A sleeping whale answered, singing so.
Each to the other we gave the song
Till morning fetched a chance along
And they swung me off and headed home,
Whalesong trailing back in foam.
They passed my berth, nor brought me 'round
But up the cove and hard aground
They drove me; here I'll lie
While time and whales pass me by.
But summer evenings through my sides
Phosphorescent sluicing tides
Bring singing of a far off whale
Along the roads I used to sail.
When nothing's left but mud and frame
And all are gone who knew my name
May my simple boat's soul go
To a whale, singing off Isle Au Haut.

Tie Her Up

©2000 Mary Garvey

Mary says about this song: "I was taking this little ferry from Westport, Oregon to Puget Island, Washington (near Cathlamet). It is a big island in the middle of the Columbia River, lots of dairy farms, heavily Scandinavian. We used to go there every Christmas day for some reason and drive past the Sons of Denmark Lodge and the Sons of Norway and Sons of Sweden and probably Sons of Finland as well. Anyway, I saw this little boat tied up on another little island and the words more or less just popped into my head.

The Larson family name came from when I was working at the School of Fisheries in the U.S. and I met a young man by that name who talked about his family heritage of fishing for many generations.

I also think of little John Aronson, a first-grader whose family all fished, and he saw no need to go to school as he already knew all about fishing. Likewise little Melvin Charles, a Native American boy from "all three tribes," who could diagram where everything fit in his father's boat. And the boys of Labrador who met me on the ice one day and had to show me their boat, which they had actual shares in . . . All of these boys are men now and it would be interesting to see if they are fishing . . ."

Gordon – 12-string guitar
Carol – *vocal*

Tie her up and let her rot, for it soon will be
forgot
That we ever built the boats to match the
men
Puget Island born and bred to the grey skies
overhead
And we'll never see the likes of her again
Tie her up and let her rot, for the last fish
that I caught
Never brought enough to buy the gas that
day
When you're going after salmon it is feast or
it is famine
And it looks like Mr. Famine's here to stay
Tie her up and let her rot, for I think it mat-
ters not
Where my father's father's father fished
before
From the river to the sea – now it ends right
here with me
There will be no Larsons fish here anymore
Tie her up and let her rot, for the sons that I
begot
Have earned their fame and fortune on the
land
And they laugh when they explain they don't
miss the wind and rain
But it's just not in my blood to understand
Tie her up and let her rot, for I've found a
pretty spot
And I can't afford to lose another dime
And if the floods wash her away, well, who
am I to say
And she'll run this mighty river one last time

Stone on Stone

©1991 Dave Goulder, Harbourtown Music

A fast year-in-the-life of a master drystone dyker (dry stone wall builder), written by himself. On this song I play a big old Casals Spanish guitar that a shipmate rescued in Mexico City and brought back to me when I was living on a boat in Connecticut. I've strung it to play six frets low: it is very happy there.

Gordon – *Spanish guitar*

Now that autumn is returning and the gar-
den fires are burning
And the summer beasts are learning how to
cope with shorter days
There I labor all alone piling stone upon the
stone
Feeling just a touch of sadness as the sum-
mer slips away
As I roll the stone upon the stone
Working in the frosty weather when the
stones are stuck together
Lifting divots, soil and heather as I pries
them from the ground
And a little work is done till the weak and
wintry sun
Loosens up their icy grip and I can lay me
hammer down
As I roll the stone upon the stone
The barometer is falling and the forecast is
appalling
And the working folk are crawling through
the January storm

Gales 8 to 10° all day almost blow the
stones away
And my brain has turned to porridge by the
time I head for home
As I roll the stone upon the stone
Now the winter storms are ending and the
days are soon extending
And an early lark ascending has me looking
round for spring
Stones taken from the land are warm under
the hand
And my cup is running over with the plea-
sure of the thing
As I roll the stone upon the stone
Soon the wall is moving over belts of wil-
low, herb and clover
And the weasel and the plover watch me
slowly pass them by
And the air is full of wings as a million
stinging things
Set me yearning for October in the middle
of July
As I roll the stone upon the stone
°On the Beaufort scale Force 10 is a whole gale


The Hills of Isle Au Haut

©1970 Gordon Bok, BMI

*I made this after a trip as mate in the old
Brixham Trawler Provident in 1964 (I believe).
The Plymouth here is in England, Pedro Martir
is a mountain on the coast of Spain where we
made land, Cascais is a town down the river
from Lisbon, and Isle au Haut is a mythical
island off the coast of Maine.*

Gordon – *12-string guitar*
Anne, Carol, Cindy, Matt & Will –
vocals
Doreen – *bass viol*
It's away and to the westward
Is the place a man should go
Where the fishing's always easy
They've got no ice or snow
But I'll haul down the sail
Where the bays come together
Bide away the days
By the hills of Isle Au Haut
Now, the Plymouth girls are fine
They put their hearts in your hand
And the Plymouth boys are able
First-class sailors, every man
Now, the trouble with old Martir
You don't try her in a trawler
For those Bay of Biscay swells
Will roll the head from off your shoulder
And the girls of Cascais
They are strong across the shoulder
They don't give a man advice
And they don't want to cook his supper
Now the winters drive you crazy
And the fishing's hard and slow
You're a damn fool if you stay
But there's no better place to go





Gordon Bok

Apples in the Basket

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1. Apples in the Basket 3:52
2. The Recruited Collier 3:15
3. Los Tres Panuelitos 4:16
4. The Maiden in Bird's
Plumage 5:07
5. A Shearer's
Lament / Waiting for the Rain 6:22
6. Joropos 2:43
7. The Black Furrow 3:38
8. The Old Figurehead
Carver 4:23
9. Heading for Home 3:29
10. Mussels in the Corner 2:43
11. Bay Saint Mary / In the Cove 3:44
12. Tie Her Up 3:02
13. Stone On Stone 2:52
14. The Hills of Isle Au Haut 3:06

Total time: 53:24

Gordon Bok

Apples in the Basket

*With Carol Rohl,
Elmer Beal, Will Brown,
Doreen Conboy, Anne Dodson,
Cindy Kallet and Matt Szostak*



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www.gordonbok.com



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