SID A  21:00
Band 1. New Year’s Eve (Elizabeth Cotten & Johnine Rankin) 3:15
Band 2. Praying Time Will Soon Be Over (Elizabeth Cotten & Johnine Rankin) 3:10
Band 3. Time to Stop Your Idling (Elizabeth Cotten & Johnine Rankin) 2:30
Band 4. Gaslight Blues (Elizabeth Cotten) 4:45
Band 5. Jenny (Elizabeth Cotten) 2:40
Band 6. Street Blues (Elizabeth Cotten) 2:10
Band 7. Home Sweet Home (trad. arr. by Elizabeth Cotten) 2:20

SIDE B  21:45
Band 1. Freight Train (Elizabeth Cotten) 3:10
Band 2. Casey Jones (trad. arr. by Elizabeth Cotten) 1:45
Band 3. Willie (Elizabeth Cotten) 5:05
Band 4. Boddie’s Song (trad. arr. by Elizabeth Cotten) 2:15
Band 5. Wilson Rag (Elizabeth Cotten) 4:50
Band 6. When I’m Gone (Elizabeth Cotten) 4:40

All original compositions are published by Sanga Music.

ELIZABETH COTTON VOL. 3
WHEN I’M GONE

“You’re gonna miss the songs I play..you’re gonna miss my playin’, you’re gonna miss my singing, you’re gonna miss me walking, you’re gonna miss my everyday talk, you’re gonna say, ‘Well, I wish Elizabeth was here’, and you’re gonna look and I won’t be there. That’s the reason I call it my song. It’s everything about me... So you can sing that song if you want to when the ashes to ashes, the dust to dust... It’s gonna be a long time off... We’re all gonna rise the Judgment Day. That’d be wonderful wouldn’t it? I’d come and gather all my little children in my arms. All of you all. Just gather you up and take you right on back with me. Oh, wouldn’t that be sweet. I wished I could.”

Extensive interview included inside with song notes.

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632 BROADWAY, N.Y.C., 10012 N.Y., U.S.A.

Elizabeth Cotten: When I’am Gone
RECORDED AND EDITED BY MIKE SEEGER
NOTES COMPILED BY ALICE GERRARD
DESCRIPTION NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET
FOLKWAYS RECORDS FA 3537
Mama called me "Babe," my daddy called me "Shout." His name was George Nevills. I don't remember him much... He was a tall man... He was the kind of a man that was taller than me... a beautiful brown, big rawboned, thin hands and feet. Sometimes he'd picture on television and it reminded me what I think he should look like...

"Shout!"

"Yes, pa."

"Come here and light your pa's pipe."

Get that old strong tobacco, put that tobacco in there and get a little hickory from the fireplace and put on a coal, or a little coal, lay it on top of it. And I'd smoke it to see if it was lit up. And when it did go to him. I can smoke that old strong tobacco, chew it too I got used to it. Then I'd sit on one leg and Lillie, my sister, on the other, and we'd comb and braid his hair. He had lovely hair. It was kind of long on the top and we'd get it all over his face. And if anybody knocked at the door they'd just scared everybody to death 'cause they just'd tear down everything. Mama said they'd just

...A little while a-pickin' this mornin'...

...a whole lot of lard, they'd just take half of that or leave you one lard coming up in a tub or something. And they'd bring it up and he wouldn't be up long before you'd hear it say—pay off! And they'd wait to hear all them sounds and then they'd throw the little bit of a little bit, a little bit. He was alright, or going to come in and say something. And then you'd hear him say...

"It'll be alright, you know."

...And he used to have a little old cap he used to wear. And right on top of it a little old hickory farmer's hat. And you'd see a spit you'd pull a little Wick through there, and you'd fill that little pot with oil and light this little Wick. He worked there until the iron give out, I guess.

My father was a man never was a easy job. Looked like he liked very hard work. I don't know why she used to
didn't take no easy jobs...

I heard him tell a tale once. They used to have chopping blocks or something—they'd see who could cut the wood or chop the most wood... and they'd always ask "Uncle" George "Uncle" George was a fast cutting man... he had a certain kind of ax, and you'd see him sharpen up his ax just before he'd go... I used to hear my mother say that she always felt uneasy when they'd go to these chopping blocks because sometimes the men got a lot of whiskey and they drink and would get drunk and she didn't approve of that much 'cause she was afraid that they might get to fighting... But anyway, he'd go... and when they split wood you have an iron wedge you put in the split. Alright, then you cut in front of that. When the wedge gets loose you pull it out and put it in another right place... and he kept telling the man to take the iron wedge out and put it in another place. But anyway, his hands, his beautiful hands and he had a toothache and he

My mother was a midwife. Mama was a midwife.

Hannah was a midwife. She was just about made a boy out of her... He was a man who loved to

She was a man who loved to

My mother was a second child. Louisa Nevels. I think there was

She was a long time dyin'... He died in Chapel Hill. Chapel Hill, North Carolina. That's a good hill down there...

We was all scared of him...

...My mama was the second child. Louisa Nevels. I think there was

She

It's a good hill down there... And they'd bring him up and he wouldn't

She

"Babe." Mama was a midwife. Mama was a midwife.

In South Carolina, there was a man burn in 'on a log...

That man is burning...

I'm just about made a boy out of her... He was a man who loved to

My mother told me—maybe it was just a picture, I don't know... He was always strong—he was Samson, I guess...

"I can imagine I see her sometimes."

"I didn't."

"I didn't."

...When I wake up in the night a song like that comes to me, looks like I can just imagine I see her sometimes. She had a big rockin' chair she rocked in all the time—one for the front room and another for the back room. And after she died, we carried her bed out and her trunk... and that rockin' chair and a straight chair, I put the chair straight at the edge of the door and put the rockin' chair kind of in front of the fireplace. I used to pray to God to let me wake up and let me see her sitting in one of those chairs at night. Never did see her.

I thought id' say, I used to be comin' from work and all at once I knew anything I'd be screamin' and cryin'. I'd go through the window and I'd try to be quiet, then when I get home and she wasn't there, there was the empty rockin' chair, there was the empty seat. Mama said I had to tow their grins and reape'em. There was no other way to make a living. They had cows, horses, plenty of butter, chickens, eggs, everything that Farming people had. She was raised up on plenty to eat but she worked very, very hard for that.

My mother's a hard worker; he worked the children very hard—he just about made a boy out of her... He was a man who loved to have plenty of everything... And she had a sister that didn't like (she loved her but she didn't like her) because she could stay home with "Mama"—they called their mother "Mama"—and her didn't have a job to do... Mama said it was a good day in her life in the field... her place was at the house with the children and to do the housework and to cook. Not that she didn't want to work... But anyway, he'd go... and when they split wood you have an iron wedge you put in the split. Alright, then you cut in front of that. When the wedge gets loose you pull it out and put it in another right place... and he kept telling the man to take the iron wedge out and put it in another place. And finally he took it out but he didn't know what to do with it. My daddy kept saying, "Stick it back in there in a right place," and he said the man couldn't understand him and he said just pull the ax out and let the wood go... Mama always was a fast cutting man...

When my father got his leg broken and when they set it they set it crooked, and he used to

My mother was the second child. Louisa Nevels. I think there was

"Shout!"

"Yes, pa."

"Come here and light your pa's pipe."

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dead." I'd done all I could for her. Money didn't mean nothing if I had it to spend on her. "If she needed it to be I'd wait on her, I'd even take her clothes to get better."

"I'd go to get better."

"I'd cut down and it's all gone."

"She'd been so worried over mama so much."

"I'd go to play on the piano, I was so full of music if somebody had of just took a little time to show me, I'd have been good. I know I would 'cause I knew how to play it. The way I do, I play it according to my sound... you just get a sound. You just put the sounds you heard me playing, that's the way I do."

"I didn't want you to grieve and go back to sleep and I'd get up thirty minutes or longer than that. Sometime I'd near play all night if she didn't wake up and tell me to go to bed."

"If I'm playing a song and if I don't quite know it, you could finish it off with some kind of sound. I just do it according to my sound. I'd just put the sound together and what sounds right you just go on with it. And all of those little things you heard me play, that's the way I got it. I don't know nothing about notes. Just you play a song and just keep fooling around with it 'til you get it to sound like you want it to sound. And whether it's right or wrong I just played it and went on with it. If you're singin' something you don't know how to do, you're doing something else."

"She wants me to learn more about the Bible than the other one... that's when I think it brings in a spiritual thing."
friend... You know, if you get hurt you know how you feel heavy? And then words just busts out of you, you got to make a song or talk about it or do something. They got to do something instead of maybe fussin' or marrin'... Sometimes you can't talk about it but you can sing it. Did you, "Well, what you feelin' bad for?" "The girl I love have turned her back on me... That song's comin' from the inside... Yes, indeed. All the songs come from your heart. Good ones and bad ones. I reckon the worst songs that ever was come from a person's heart.

The first time I went out with a boy... you would get an invitation to go some place. And at that time I wasn't goin' with boys... They were having a lawn party and they were sitting ice cream for the church, and I'd get an invitation.

Well, I wasn't having a lawn party with them, and Mr. So and so will call for you and try and kick him at such and such a time.

And I remember the first time I walked outside with a boy... and I didn't know what to do... I was ashamed. And finally I got myself together and I walked out on... You think we had something or other between us... railroad track or something. I was walking across the street, was standing in the street talking kind of in front of the street, was talking loud. And I'll tell you how silly I was... I do like ice cream and the boys were supposed to buy for the girls. That was the money for the church... so like have kids... "Wouldn't you like some ice cream?" I say, "Oh, no thank you... I was ashamed. I wanted it so bad... I was kind of bashful at first. But now lately I can talk right smart.

I think the first time Frank asked me to go with him to church—we'd just been playing ball together, just school children. And I went with him to church and that was it. And every time I'd get an invitation, "Mr. Frank Cotten will call..."

I remember before I got married, Frankie and I was sitting down talking about it one night. And I said, "Oh, I can't leave mama." And he said, "Well, would you go if I asked you?" And they said, "Alright, go ahead..." And I heard mama say, "No, Frank. You're both of you too young. Baby's only 15..."

But Aunt Lou, we love one another...

"No you don't. You can't just love one another, you don't love one another. So she didn't agree, so we decided we'd go ahead and get married anyhow. And we run away.

That morning when I left home I got a bath. Mama thought I was getting a bath to go to work and I was getting a bath to go get married... And I just left and went on out to Carrboro Frank and come and we got on a train and went to Hillsborough... Was a place that would have was my name was Miss Payne. I'll never forget it... And he says to her, "Could we get a room?" And she said, "For what?" and he laughed and said, "For me and my wife." And he gave you both a room," she said, "but that's not our wife." And he laughed and he said, "Miss Payne, we're gonna get married," and she said, "Well, sure, it's all right..." And Frank had some cousins lived there somewhere... he got in touch with these cousins and told them that he come to get married and sent them to get the license and put our age up. We were about the same ages... I was 16 and he was 18. So they told the girl pastor come in it happened to be Reverend Crowell what we all knew was the pastor at (Frank's) church. He looked at Frank, he looked at me, he says, You're Deacon Cotten's son... You're Deacon Cotten's son.

Yes, sir.

Is this the lady you gonna marry?"

Yes, sir.

I see this lady before.

Yes, sir... I've seen to your church many times.

Well, either one of you all don't look like you're old enough to get married... So Frank gave him the license. He said, "You all done put your name up?"

"Yes, sir." He says, "When you marry a man it means you're going to live from till death set you apart.

I'm there twice, and the last time I was there, that's when I stayed about three years. Lillie grown up there. Frank always had top jobs. He was a chauffeur, good automatic mechanic. He'd said he don't go to school for that. Just like I play guitar, he took it up himself... that's the way he did his mechanic work. 'D he take all them little screws on, as the inside of that car and just throw 'em down there. 'D he take that one on a place where he was light too, real fair—and he'd come out with his face all dirty black and his hair, a little piece of dust... And I can't leave mama. He asked me, "Oh, ma'am... I'd made of a good magazine picture... he looked like he enjoyed that... He was the first colored man that operated his own garage shop on South Broadway in New York.

I liked New York pretty good. I worked in a furniture store... worked everyday. Baby used to do the cooking for her daddy before I'd get home—washing, ironing. She was smart—iron's and socks and towels and sink and I ironed all the clothes. He worked at a shoe factory for white families and helped to raise her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Elizabeth.

Yes ma'am.

Do you like tomato sandwich?

Yes, ma'am.

Well, I'll tell you what I'm gonna do. I'm makin' a tomato sandwich for myself. And I'm gonna eat it half in two and I'll leave half for you.

Thank you ma'am.

I think, mm, him, I get a good lunch today—I'd be hungry, you know. There's that little half a sandwich layin' on the plate. Nothin' else. I just ate around and I didn't see nothin' nowher... I said shucks, this ain't nothin' for me to eat, me down there washin' and ironin', hadn't had no breakfast. I never get up in time to have breakfast 'cause you've got to have so far for your work. If I'd stoped to eat you wouldn't get there til about 9, 10 o'clock. Usually they'd have coffee and you'd go down a slice of toast. I never had a chance to talk to people. If you had a chance to go on a long time on it you can go from there to lunch anyway... But some of them didn't offer you anything... I'd go there in the rain, go there in the cold, it was wet and I'd get there'd be "Oh, bad rain this morning, certainly rains". They'd be upstairs eating and I'd say well sure she'll call me after a while and give me a cup of coffee or a slice of toast or bread and milk... But I left them curties for her.

Elizabeth, do you see curties?

Yes, ma'am.

Elizabeth, now you see these curties? If I wash them and starch them and dampoline 'em down, would you iron them?

Yes, ma'am.

Well now, how long does it take you to iron a curtain?

I don't know. I never time myself.

Well, I know. It's about an hour.

I didn't say anything. Looked like there was about three windows. She had these ruffled curtains and on the top the curtain was joined... there wasn't no way in the world I could do... "Yes, ma'am, I iron it.

Well now, I'm going to 'em down and I'll 'em all ready for you next week.

Yes, ma'am. I was thinking—you goin' to fix 'em, you goin' to iron, 'cause I ain't goin' to iron 'em. Won't even offer me a cup of coffee... So she took 'em down and washed 'em and I didn't see her no more. No more.

Elizabeth. Would you mind wipin' the front door window and cleanin' the front door? I said, "No," and it started to rain and she came and said, "Elizabeth, when you get ready to do the door don't take your
and rinse my cloth in
That makes me kind of watch them where you wouldn't, see? It makes you
put that in stairs and went on home. Mm, hm. I worked awfully hard there because she
was sweating... and I was hurrying. You have to get a certain bus and then you
did exactly what she said.

Sometimes the act might not be toward you, but watch people and know what they say and see if you think they mean it or
while people
I'm not saying anything. And listening to what they say. And you can near
study, tune the guitar two,

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gonna finger around, you're just gonna... go to sleep. " That's been a long time ago.

I'm in pretty good health, honey for my age. I'm satisfied. And I feel good and my limbs don't hurt--the only thing is this--I get that sins every once in a while, but other than that I'm alright. So I don't want to go to sleep like that. "I'd rather die sitting up and I want to call all the shots. "Come here child, I'm gonna now. " I would like somebody to be around, to tell 'em I'm gonna die now. I don't know whether I'll get that or not but I sure would like it. I'd like to be heard call my friends and tell 'em I'm gonna die. And I'm going now... and just close their eyes and go. Right straight up. I'm gonna fly like a little bird. Whenever it is it'll be satisfied. Gonna just as straight up as I can fly.

I can't remember nothin' now. My mind's not sharp like it used to be. I forget quick. I think of some things and then I think of others--I can't carry a tune. I don't know stringed instruments. I can't carry a tune. I can't tell strings. I don't know anything of that sort. I just imagined I picked up my guitar and as I was singing the song within, I knew exactly the strings I wanted to note. And I could play that song all the way through. Then I'd go to sleep, get up the next day, and I could play the song. There was a tendency that I started--never did finish--and this [one] is beautiful--if I could just find a beautiful tune for it it would be 'Freight Train'... all the pieces. I got two, and the other I'll be satisfied. That's all I want to do--now I'm gonna learn church songs. It won't be all I'm gonna sing, but from now on I just gonna try to learn church songs--not try to play no more blue. It's cause I love church songs.

I like soft music. Nice soft and clear. I just love it. But I play loud now a little bit 'cause sometimes they can't hear you if you don't play loud. Me, and I could remember 'em when I was a little younger, but now when anything comes to me, if you don't mind, I'll turn over and go to sleep and what I get up to I don't know anything of that sort. I just imagined I picked up my guitar and as I was singing the song within, I knew exactly the strings I wanted to note. And I could play that song all the way through. Then I'd go to sleep, get up the next day, and I could play the song. There was a tendency that I started--never did finish--and this [one] is beautiful--if I could just find a beautiful tune for it it would be 'Freight Train'... all the pieces. I got two, and the other I'll be satisfied. That's all I want to do--now I'm gonna learn church songs. It won't be all I'm gonna sing, but from now on I just gonna try to learn church songs--not try to play no more blue. It's cause I love church songs.

I'm trying to do what they want to hear. Lord knows I hate to sometimes set up there and tell the same story. If I could just set up there and just play and not have to tell the story of that. I feel like that. I just imagined I picked up my guitar and as I was singing the song within, I knew exactly the strings I wanted to note. And I could play that song all the way through. Then I'd go to sleep, get up the next day, and I could play the song. There was a tendency that I started--never did finish--and this [one] is beautiful--if I could just find a beautiful tune for it it would be 'Freight Train'... all the pieces. I got two, and the other I'll be satisfied. That's all I want to do--now I'm gonna learn church songs. It won't be all I'm gonna sing, but from now on I just gonna try to learn church songs--not try to play no more blue. It's cause I love church songs.

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Boddie's Song (trad.)

what

6. You're gonna wish that I was near

Friends I know you're gonna miss me when I'm gone.

Chorus:

When I am dead and in my grave
No more good times here I crave
Place the stones at my head and feet
Tell them all that I've gone to sleep.

When I die, Lord, bury me deep
Way down on old Chestnut Street
Then I can hear old Number 9
As she comes rolling by.

TIME STOP YOUR IDLING
© 1979 by Elizabeth Cotten & Johnine Rankin. Sanga Music
Side A, Band 3.

Chorus:

Time to stop your idling
Get on your knees and pray
Time to stop your idling
Get on your knees and pray,
Get on your knees and pray.

If you don't like your brother
Don't scandalize his name
Put it in your bosom and take it on to God
And tell it all to God.

Used to have some friends
To come along with me
But when I got converted they turned their backs on me
Oh yes, they turned their backs on me.

When I was a sinner
I knew my way so well
But when I came to find out
I was on my way to hell
I was on my way to hell.

O Lord oh me, oh Lord, oh my
I shot little Willie Lord, he's bound to die
Ain't it hard... etc.

Oh Lord, oh me
Trouble I can see
I shot little Willie, Lord
Police after me.
Ain't it hard... etc.

Oh Lord, oh me
Oh Lord, oh me
I shot little Willie, Lord
He's bound to die
Ain't it hard... etc.

Ain't no band... etc.

When I'm gone to come no more
Friends I know you're gonna miss me when I'm gone.

Chorus:

Oh, when I'm gone
Oh when I'm gone to come no more
Friends I know you're gonna miss me when I'm gone.

You're gonna miss me when I shout
You're gonna miss me all about
Friends I know you're gonna miss me when I'm gone.

You're gonna miss me all about
Friends I know you're gonna miss me when I'm gone.

One of these mornings bright and fair
Angels coming, gonna sail over there
Friends I know you're gonna miss me when I'm gone.

LITHO IN U.S.A.