GLEN NEAVES & THE VIRGINIA MOUNTAIN BOYS
Country Blue-grass from Southwest Virginia

GLEN NEAVES - Fiddle | CULLEN GALYEAN - Banjo | BOBBY HARRISON - Guitar | IVOR MELTON - Mandolin

Recorded by Eric H. Davidson, Paul Newman, Lyn Davidson, Jane Rigg, Caleb E. Finch
Notes by Caleb E. Finch and Eric H. Davidson
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2. What a Friend We Have in Mother
3. Fortune
4. Careless Love
5. Poor Ellen Smith
6. Nigger Trader
7. Someday We’ll Meet Again Sweetheart
   (Platt & Scroggs)
8. Barbara Allen
   *with Herman Dalton-fiddle, Roger Dalton-bass

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8. Cripple Creek
   *with Herman Dalton-fiddle, Roger Dalton-bass

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INTRODUCTION

The music of Glen Neaves and the Virginia Mountain Boys has a sound which is familiar to listeners of old time country music throughout the USA. The Virginia Mountain Boys are a contemporary, rural bluegrass band from southwestern Virginia whose music is distinguished by its many ties to earlier musical traditions. Their repertoire and style is much more closely tied to past Appalachian mountain music than is the case for most present day bluegrass bands.

The principal musical instruments are the fiddle, banjo, guitar and mandolin. The fiddle, played by Glen Neaves, differs from older styles in the use of extensive slides and slurs. Sustained drones on two strings are used less by Glen than by traditional fiddlers of the same region such as Wade Ward, Glen Smith or kilby Reaves, whose playing may be heard on our previous field recordings (Folkways: Traditional Music from Grayson and Carroll Counties, FA2380; The Music of Reese Holcomb and Wade Ward, FA2363; Ballads and Songs of the Blue Ridge Mountains, AH3831; Band Music of Grayson and Carroll Counties, Va., FA3832; and Uncle Wade--A Memorial to an Old Time Virginia Banjo Picker, FA2350). The five string banjo, picked by Cullen Galyean, is played with three metal fingerpicks, rather than in the traditional claw-hammer style, as, for example, played by Wade Ward and Glen Smith. In addition to the fiddle and banjo, the band includes the guitar and mandolin, played by Bobby Harrison and Ivor Melton, respectively. Both the guitar and mandolin are relatively recent arrivals (circa 1900) in the remote mountains of southwestern Virginia as is the occasionally used plucked bass fiddle.

A notable absence from the band during the twelve years we have known it, is the dobro, or the Hawaiian guitar. This instrument is found in many commercial bluegrass bands. Its absence in the Neaves Band helps preserve the flavor of the surviving elements of traditional instrumental style and sound.

The Neaves Band draws heavily from the song, ballad and instrumental music of the earlier tradition. For instance, the ancient Barbara Allen, known to singers from earlier areas, is faithfully preserved in its verse sequence and archaic language. The terse singing style of Bobby Harrison in Barbara Allen and his choice of a droning, sparse instrumental accompaniment recall the performance of this ballad by Wade Ward and Granny Porter (AH3831). Both performances stand in marked contrast to the much more fully orchestrated accompaniment of the singer (two guitars, bass, mandolin, banjo and fiddle) in other, less ancient songs such as Don't Go Out Tonight or Barlin' or Someday We'll Meet Again, Sweetheart.

The contrast between Barbara Allen and Don't Go Out Tonight or Barlin' does not absolutely demarcate songs of traditional and more recent origin. For example, many older instrumental dance tunes or breakdowns are played by the Neaves Band in non-traditional style, as in the versions of the famous old-time dance tunes, Fortune and Cripple Creek, which feature one instrument at a time (fiddle, mandolin, guitar) in the "breaks." There is little of the almost contrapuntal interplay between instruments which was so characteristic of earlier traditions (e.g., as in Glen Smith's and Wade Ward's playing of Cripple Creek on the fiddle and banjo [Recorded FA3832]). The Neaves Band's performances of Cripple Creek and Fortune structurally resemble those of the large string bands found in the Appalachians and Ozarks in the 1920's and 1930's. These bands always included one or more guitars, sometimes employed finger-picked (pre-Scruggs) banjo styles, and not infrequently used instrumental "breaks" to feature one musician at a time. The early string bands, such as the Oregon County Bog Trotters and Charlie Poole's North Carolina Ramblers, represent an important stage in the development of Appalachian band music from its archaic origins of the fiddle-banjo duo to contemporary bluegrass music. The enlargement of the number of instruments from the fiddle-banjo combination to include the guitar in the early part of the 20th century facilitated new lines of evolution which are discussed at length in the notes to our previous field recordings (Folkways: FA3831, AH3831, FA3832, PA2380).

In summary, the music of Glen Neaves and the Virginia Mountain Boys is definitively bluegrass in repertoire and in many elements of style, while still distinctively preserving the strong flavor of the local musical traditions. The Band is less influenced by contemporary musical fads from such Nashville programs as Grand Ole Opry than are many other country music groups. Our major reason for presenting yet another collection of bluegrass music is that the Neaves Band represents a current phase in a venerable tradition of fine music from southwest Virginia. The extraordinary vitality of this musical tradition has survived many cultural and historical changes in Grayson and Carroll counties during the last century and indeed shows many signs of persisting beyond the present day.

ABOUT THE BAND

Glen Neaves' Band, as we have recorded it over the past twelve years, has varied in membership. Present throughout this period has been Glen Neaves (fiddle and guitar), Bobby Harrison (guitar), Ivor Melton (mandolin), frequently Glen's wife, Mary (guitar) and Cullen Galyean (banjo). Additional musicians performing in this collection are Roger Dalton (bass) and Herman Dalton (fiddle). Many of the same musicians have also played under the names of the Blue Ridge Buddies and the voter's gap String Band.

The Virginia Mountain Boys are well known in southwest Virginia and nearby counties in north Carolina from local radio broadcasts (e.g., the Carroll-Greyson County Hoedown, a program on WBOB in Galax, Virginia), appearances at the Galax Fiddlers' Convention, and many performances at local dances and other social gatherings. The band is, however, little known outside of the Central Appalachians and has not traveled widely. Recordings made by members of the Band are included in previous field collections: Traditional Music...
of Grayson and Carroll Counties (P38311) and Band Music of Grayson and Carroll Counties (P38312).

The Musicians

Glen Neaves

Glen Neaves (fiddle, guitar, vocal) is an outstanding performer who has maintained an organized band for at least fifteen years. Born in Ashe County, North Carolina in 1910, Glen began to play the fiddle at the age of nine. Glen relates that his father played the banjo in the old clawhammer style, but that he never learned to. Glen was very much influenced by the great S. B. Grayson, a famous traditional mountain fiddler who lived nearby and who belonged to a now-extinct generation of musicians. (Grayson is referred to in the Ballad of Tom Dooley: "...if he hadn't been for Grayson, I'd have been in Tennessee...," recorded from the Neaves Band by us, P38311). Although most of the traditional songs, ballads, and breakdowns are familiar by ear, Glen, his repertoire is not centered around them; indeed, he does not play at least some famous old dance tunes, such as Old Jiggy Sutton. One of his favorite breakdowns, not recorded here, is a fancy piece of undetermined origin called Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. The older breakdowns which Glen does play are in a style markedly different from those of the traditional fiddlers of previous generations. Glen's individualistic style of fiddling, close to contemporary bluegrass fiddling, has remained unchanged for his recent musical developments such as folk rock. For example, the way he plays tunes presented on this record has remained unchanged during the thirteen years of our acquaintance.

Glen is also well known for his excellent singing. His style is considerably more emotional than that of more traditional male singers of this region such as Vester Jones (P38301) and Paul Jones (AH3831). Glen frequently accompanies himself on the guitar, which he plays with a fine touch, in accord with the older style. Glen and his wife, Mary, a fine singer, make their home in Fries, Virginia, a milltown on the New River. He has been employed in factories and mills all his life and never undertook to make his living by farming, as did most of the older traditional mountain musicians. Although Glen is less than twenty-five years younger than the last generation of completely traditional regional musicians, it is fair to say that his life-style represents a marked departure from that of the older mountainmen. In a way Glen is typical of the first generation break-away from the archaic rural ways of the Appalachians. Glen's style of fiddle playing can be said to reflect this transition.

Cullen Galyean

Cullen Galyean (banjo), was raised in Low Gap, North Carolina near the Virginia state line. Cullen is a master of three-finger picking banjo styles. Although less flashy than some contemporary banjo players, his banjo music is outstanding and provides a steady-driving force in the band. For a short time, he played with the Stanley Brothers, a well known bluegrass band. Cullen learned the banjo as a boy, as do most country musicians. His parents had an old style band; both played the five-string banjo in the older, down-picked style, but Cullen says that he never was able to. His father also played the fiddle. Cullen relates that his mother taught him many old-time songs, which he sings in the classic nasal and high-pitched style of these mountains. Cullen now lives in the country near Low Gap and works in a knitting mill in Galax.

Ivor Melton

Ivor Melton (mandolin) is of the same generation as Glen. A superb musician, he is known throughout Grayson and Carroll Counties. He is also a mill worker and lives in Galax.

Bobby Harrison

Bobby Harrison (guitar), is a highly experienced and skilled musician and singer. His steady rhythm and effortless runs are a key factor in the smoothness of the band's music. Bobby works in a factor and lives near Fisher's Gap.

band 1: Don't Go Out Tonight My Darlin'

Song by Cullen Galyean and Bobby Harrison. Accompanied by Ivor Melton (mandolin), Cullen Galyean (banjo), Roger Dalton (guitar), Glen Neaves and Herman Dalton (fiddle). This popular song, probably of 19th-century American origin, was recorded from Grayson and Whitter in 1927 (County 513).

Chorus

Now don't go out tonight my darlin',
Don't leave me here alone.
I'm so lonesome while you're gone.

1. I hear a knockin' at my door,
And the footstep on the floor.
Now they're bringing home my darlin',
Here he lies drunk upon the floor.

2. Now he's dyin', yes he's dyin',
Soon I'll be left all alone.
I pray that God's own tender mercy,
Will save him from the drunkard's doom.

3. Repeat 1

Chorus

band 2: What a Friend We Have in Mother

Song by Glen Neaves, Cullen Galyean, and Bobby Harrison and accompanied by Bobby Harrison (guitar), Cullen Galyean (banjo), and Ivor Melton (mandolin). A widely popular song of religious tone, also known in a slightly different version as What a Friend We Have in Jesus.

1. What a friend we have in mother,
Who will all our secrets share.
We should never keep things from her,
Tell her all and she'll be there.

2. Day by day as she grows older,
She's the nation's guiding sun.
Don't forget the golden chain she taught you,
You will need them where you are.

Though her hair has turned to silver,
Send her flowers sweet and fine.
Drop a card, or send a letter,
She'll be waiting, she'll be there.

3. When her eyes are closed to slumber,
Gently kiss her icy brow.
Told her hands upon her bosom,
She will rest in heaven now.

When your days are dark and dreary,
And your cross is hard to bear.
Do not let your memory fail you,
Think of mother, she'll be there.

band 3: Fortunes

Glen Neaves (fiddle): Cullen Galyean (banjo).

This is a lively rendition of an old dance tune which preserves much of its traditional qualities. Note, however, that the traditional musical interplay between fiddle and banjo is absent.

band 4: Careless Love

Glen Neaves (vocal and fiddle), Cullen Galyean (banjo), Bobby Harrison (guitar). A bluegrass version, displaying the virtuosity of Cullen's and Glen's musicianship.

1. Love, oh love, oh careless love.
Love, oh love, how can it be?
Love, oh love, how can it be?
Love, oh love, how can it be?
To love someone who don't love me.

2. Now take me back to Caroline.
Now take me back to Caroline.
Now take me back to Caroline.
To see that girl I left behind.

3. Now take this ring and put it on.
Now take this ring and put it on.
Remember me when I am gone.

4. Well, I love my papa and mamma too.
Well, I love my papa and mamma too.
Well, I love my papa and mamma too.
I'll leave them both to go with you.

5. Now it'stake me back to Tennessee.
Take me back to Tennessee.
For there's where I want to be.

6. O' its love, oh love, oh careless love.
Love, oh love how can it be.
Love, oh love how can it be.
To love someone who don't love me.

band 5: Poor Ellen Smith

A favorite traditional American "murder" ballad of 19th-century origin. Song by Glen Neaves and accompanied by Neaves (fiddle), Bobby Harrison (guitar), Ivor Melton (mandolin) and Cullen Galyean (banjo). The murder of Ellen Smith occurred in Forsyth County, N. C. on July 20, 1892. The protestation of innocence about her murder by the singer allegedly refers to Ellen's swain, Peter DeDraff. DeDraff fled after the murder and was later arrested in Winston-Salem, N. C. / Cullen says he was convicted and hung the following year. According to local legend, the ballad itself was composed by DeDraff, who is said to have played the tune on his banjo while seated on his own
Among the early recordings are those of Henry Whitter (OKeh H0237). A previous recording of this song from the Grayson–Carroll County region is by Yester Jones on Folkways (FS3811).

1. Poor Ellen Smith, she was she found, Shot thru the heart, lyin' cold on the ground.
2. Her clothes were ragged, her curls on the ground, Blood marked the spot Where poor Ellen was found.
3. They picked up her body, And away she did go, To the lonesome old graveyard, I'll see her no more.
4. I got a letter yesterday I read it today, Said the flowers on her grave Had all faded away.
5. They took up them rifles, They hunted me down, They found me a losin' Around in through town.
6. Repeat verses 4
7. I been in this prison, For twenty long years, Each night I see Ellen Through my bitter tears.
8. The murder just told me That soon I'll be free, To go to her Neath that old willow tree.
9. Repeat verses 4
10. I'm goin' back home, I'll stay when I go, On poor Ellen's grave, Pretty flowers I'll sow.
11. Poor Ellen Smith, Now, she's found - Shot thru the heart, lyin' cold on the ground.

band 6: Nigger Trader

Sung and accompanied on the guitar by Glen Neaves. Glen learned this unusual song in Ashe County, North Carolina. The events described apparently relate to antebellum days in the old South.

1. Lord, a nigger trader has bought me. Hey, Oh, Ho! Lord, a nigger trader has bought me. Mn, mn, mn.
2. Well, they gonna take me a way down yonder. Hey, Oh, Oh, Ho! They gonna take me a way down yonder. Hey, Hey, Mn.
3. Well, I have to leave my wife and little children. Hey, Oh, Ho! Well, I have to leave my wife and little children. Mn, mn, mn.
4. Well, Ole marse, he is a gonna leave with me in the morning. Hey, Or, Ho! Marse, he is a gonna leave with me in the morning. Mn, mn, mn.
5. Well, I have to leave my wife and little children. Hey, Oh, Ho! I have to leave my wife and little children. Mn, mn, mn.
6. Now, they got me chained to the wagon. Hey, Oh, Ho! They got me chained to the wagon. Mn, mn, mn.

band 7a: Someday We'll Meet Again Sweetheart!

Vocal by Glen Neaves and accompanied by Glen Neaves (fiddle), Bobby Harrison (guitar), and Ivor Melton (mandolin). This popular song was written (and copyrighted) by the highly influential bluegrass musicians, Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs.

1. Well, the time has come to say goodbye, I'll never forget you, now please don't cry. The time to me won't be so long To know you're happy back at home.
2. Oh, sweetheart, I'm leavin' now, I will soon be on my way, But please remember what I say, Sweetheart, we'll meet again some day.
3. One day, we'll meet again sweetheart, We'll meet and nevermore to part. Someday, we'll meet again sweetheart, Don't cry, now please don't break my heart.

band 8: Barbara Allen

Sung by Bobby Harrison and accompanied by Bobby Harrison (guitar) and Ivor Melton (mandolin). Child #63; Sharp #24. This ancient ballad of British Isles origin has been widely popular for hundreds of years in America and the British Isles. The verses sung by Bobby Harrison are authentic, and the language has not been altered to fit present day vernacular. Although the tune is simplified, their presentation preserves the drumming sound of the older traditions. It is interesting to compare this version with the strictly traditional performance of Grammy Porter accompanied on the fiddle by Wade Ward (Ach Records All3831).

1. Was in the sunny month of May, When flowers were a bloomin', Sweet William on his deathbed lay, For the love of Barbara Allen.
2. He sent his servant to the town, The town where she was dwellin', Someday Master dear has sent me here, If your name be Barbara Allen.
3. Then slowly, slowly, she got up, And slowly she went to him, And all she said when she got there, Young man, I think you're dyin'.
4. Oh don't you remember the other day, When we were in the tavern. You drank your health to the ladies there, And it slighted Barbara Allen.
5. He turned his face unto the wall, He turned his back upon her. Adieu, adieu to all my friends, Be kind to Barbara Allen.
6. She looked to the east, she looked to the west She saw his corpse acomin'. She set him down for me she cried, That I may gaze upon him.
7. The more she looked, the more she grieved, She burst out to cryin'. Say'n pick me up and carry me home, For I feel like I am dyin'.
8. They buried William in the old church, They buried Barbara by him. From William's grave, grew a red red rose, From Barbara's grew a briar.
9. They grew to the top of the old church wall, And they could grow no higher. They wrapped on top into a knot The rose around the briar.

Side 2

band 1: Two Dollar Bill

Sung by Bobby Harrison and Ollen Galyean, and accompanied by Glen Neaves (fiddle) and Bobby Harrison (guitar). Also known as Long Journey Home, this song was recorded in the 1920's by Crockett Ward (OKeh, 45170), the great fiddler and the older brother of Wade Ward (both now deceased).

Chorus Lost all my money, but a two dollar bill, Two dollar bill, boys, a two dollar bill. Lost all my money, but a two dollar bill, I'm on my long journey home.
1. Bright smoke's arisen', sure sign of rain, Sure sign of rain, boys, a sure sign of rain. Bright smoke's arisen', sure sign of rain, I'm on my long journey home.
2. Look it yonder comin', comin' round the bend, Comin' round the bend, boys, comin' round the bend. Look it yonder comin', comin' round the bend, I'm on my long journey home.
3. Dark and a rainin', got to go home, Got to go home, boys, got to go home. Dark and a rainin', I got to go home, I'm on my long journey home.

Chorus

band 2: Drunkard's Dream

Sung by Ollen Galyean and accompanied by Herman Dalton (fiddle), Bobby Harrison (guitar), and Ivor Melton (mandolin). This piece, also widely known as Drunkard's Lament, dates from the last century, according to Vance Randolph (Ozark Folklore, vol. 2; State Historical Society of Missouri). It was recorded from Riley Puckett in 1925 (Columbia 15035-D) and later from Posey Rorer with Charlie Poole's North Carolina Ramblers (Edison 11009).

1. 0 wait! you look so hearty now, Your clothes look neat and clean. I have not seen you ramble round. Pray tell me what this means.
2. Your wife and children, are they well? 
You used to treat them strange. 
Or have you kinder to them grown? 
Pray tell me what this change.

3. Your wife and children, are they well? 
You used to treat them strange. 
Or have you kinder to them grown? 
Pray tell me what this change.

4. Oh, you look so hearty now, 
Your clothes look so neat and clean. 
I have not seen you drink a drop, 
Pray tell me what this means.

5. Oh, you look so hearty now, 
Your clothes look so neat and clean. 
I have not seen you drink a drop, 
Pray tell me what this means.

band 3: Drinkin' from the Fountain:

Sung by Glen Neaves, Oullen Galyean, and Bobby Harrison; accompanied by Ivor Melton (mandolin), Bobby Harrison (guitar), and Oullen Galyean (banjo). A long-standing popular religious song with its characteristic chorus in close harmony.

1. O father, I love Jesus, 
O father, yes I do. 
O father, I love Jesus, 
And you can love him too.

Chorus: We are drinkin' from the fountain, 
We are drinkin' from the fountain, Lord. 
We are drinkin' from the fountain, 
That never runs dry.

2. O mother, I love Jesus, 
O mother, yes I do. 
O mother, I love Jesus, 
And you can love him too.

Chorus:

3. O sinner, I love Jesus, 
O sinner, yes I do. 
O sinner, I love Jesus, 
And you can love him too.

Chorus:

4. Band 4: On the Banks of Old Tennessee:

Glen Neaves (vocal) and accompanied by Glen Neaves (guitar), Bobby Harrison (guitar), Oullen Galyean (banjo), and Ivor Melton (mandolin). A short version of a widely known ballad which is one of Glen's favorites. The ballad was recorded in 1929 from Grayson and Whitter (Bluebird 70722). A more complete text is given in Whitter's Familiar Folk Songs, as sung by Harry Whitter, 1935.

1. I have no true love in this world, 
But, I have no true love in this world. 
She's sleepin' tonight, where the moon shines so bright, 
On the banks of Old Tennessee.

Chorus: On the banks of Old Tennessee, 
She's sleepin' tonight, where the moon shines so bright, 
On the banks of Old Tennessee.

2. Well, I have no mother in this world, 
But, I have no mother in this world. 
She's also lost tonight, where the moon shines so bright, 
On the banks of Old Tennessee.

Chorus:

3. I have no true love in this world, 
But, I have no true love in this world.