Asch Recordings AH 3903

Davenport
Dying Ranger
Little Ommie Wise
Sugar Blues
Loving Nancy
Cuba
John Hardy
Peggy Walker
I Hope I Live A Few More Days
Turkey In The Straw
Calvary
Roses While I'm Living (Boggs)
Leave It There
Prayer Of A Miner's Child (Boggs-Hill)
Coke Oven March (Boggs)
Ruben's Train
Cumberland Gap
Careless Love

Descriptive notes are inside pocket
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DOCK BOGGS
Recorded and edited by Mike Seeger
Volume 3
Asch Recordings AH 3903
All recordings were made on Nagra recorders with either Electrov...e MKH 404 microphones. Recorders kindly made available through Pete Seeger, Newport Folk Foundation, or Friends of Old Time Music.

Roosevelt, NJ. recordings were made in school gym through kindness of the school board. They were made immediately after Dock's 1966 appearance at Newport Folk Festival.

Ann Arbor recordings were made at Canterbury House, a coffeehouse where we (Boggs and Seeger) were playing a weekend.

Asheville, NC. recordings were made at Civic Auditorium where Dock played his first folk festival, the American Folk Festival. Courtesy, Jim Morris, director.

Norton, Va. recordings were made at the home of Dock's sister, Laura (Mrs. Lee) Hunsucker on Guest River near Norton. Her help is much appreciated.

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Cover photo by Fred Baldwin

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Guitar accompaniment by Mike Seeger

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Dock Boggs usually tunes his banjo about one whole tone low. Tunings listed are as if it was tuned standard.

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Xeroxed song texts and clippings courtesy Dock Boggs. Text transcriptions have been made with his assistance.

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With a couple of minor exceptions, song introductions have been taken from an interview 28/July, 1966.

SIDE I - Band 1

Davenport- "I learnt that from my oldest brother, John Boggs... I couldn't play it to amount to nothing but I heard him play it a lot from, I'll say, from nineteen and six on up 'til I could tune a banjo. You see I wasn't but eight years old in nineteen six. Of course I tried to learn but I didn't learn much about playing or haven't yet..."

INSTRUMENTAL

SIDE I - Band 2

Dying Ranger- "Well, I can tell you exactly the person that I learned that from, Gus Underwood. I don't know whether he's a-living yet or not. And he had about as nice a voice, he very near equalled Mac Wiseman in singing.

MS: "Where was he from?"

DB: "I really don't know. He told me, but I don't know what state he was from. Last time I seen him he had North Dakota tags on his car. He come by and eat supper with me.

MS: "About when was this that you learned the song from him?"

DB: "...about '29..."

MS: "Was he a professional musician, or did he have a band?"

DB: "No. And he couldn't play guitar very well. But Lord, the voice he had. He could sing so good."

MS: "What kind of an occasion was it that you happened to learn the song from him?"

DB: "Well, we put on three or four programs at them country schools. A teacher would write me and would want me to come. And after my bunch (band) decided to leave me... me and Gus Underwood went to three or four- but they wasn't all schools. We went to Neon one weekend into, supposed to be, a restaurant. It wasn't supposed to be like that, but you could buy drinks and they'd hand them right through the window to you. He must've had the town on his side, I don't know. And we played in there a little while. According to the times and everything like that they (were) very friendly, very good. I had one fellow to put in a five dollar bill in a offering and just took up a offering, you know. He's a awful fine fellow. That there song about Jerry Damron, it was his brother in law that got killed. And he was hauling me and Gus around... (Underwood and Dock Boggs worked together in Hayman mines and played together on some occasions-ed.)

"Gus Underwood and me went to a little place they call Blair's Branch, a little school down in, I think it's the lower end of Letcher County (Ky.), the teacher wanted us to come there and play. It wouldn't hold very many but we had the house full and standing plumb across the back of the house... And so we played at this here little school and they wouldn't charge us no percentage at all. Admission would be 25 or 50 cents for them to come in. We played that song, the 'Dying Ranger' and there was..."
six, seven or eight in the back end of the house, some of them had on bib overalls. They had been in the war and got back home. And they hollered at the top of their voice—there was a lot of women and children in there, too—and some of them was cursing. There was about seven or eight come running right towards the stage and cursing, saying: "Give us that again! Give us that piece again. We want to hear that again." And pulled out one dollar bills, I don't whether they got them off a roll or what, but anyway they pitched six or eight one dollar bills up on the stage. I called them down, I said 'Boys,' I said, 'be quiet.' I said, 'Don't talk vulgar language.' I said, 'We have little children here,' and I said, 'Women and Children,' I said 'We'll play the piece for you again, we'd be pleased to.' And I said 'We'd thank you very much for wanting it that bad and willing to give us extra money for it,' And so we went ahead and played it. We was wanted at a lot of other schools we didn't even go to..."

MS: "(Underwood) was about your age, was he?"
DB: "No...he must have been five years older than me."

DYING RANGER

The sun was sinking in the West and fell with a lingering ray,
Through the branches of a forest where a wounded ranger lay;
A group had gathered around him, his comrades in the fight;
A tear rolled down each manly cheek as they bid his last goodnight.

One tried and true companion was kneeling by his side,
To stop the life blood flowing, but alas, in vain he tried;
To stop the life blood flowing, he found 'twas all in vain;
The tears followed down each manly cheek like light showers of rain.

"Draw closer to me comrades and listen to what I say;
I'm a-going to tell a story while my spirit hastens away;
Away back in Northwest Texas that good old lone star state,
There's one that's for my coming with a worried heart will wait.

It's a fair young girl, my sister, my only joy, my pride;
She was my friend from boyhood, had no one left beside;
I loved her as a brother, and with a father's care
I strove from grief and sorrow her gentle heart to spare.

But our country was invaded, she called for volunteers;
She threw her arms around me then bursted into tears,
Saying, 'go my darling brother, drive those traitors from our shore!
My heart may need your presence, but our country needs you more.'

'Tis true I love my country, for her I gave my all;
If it had not been for my sister boys, I'd be content to fall;
I'm dying comrade, dying, she'll never see me more,
But in vain she'll wait my coming by our little cabin door."

SIDE I - Band 3

Little Ommie Wise- "Well, I learnt that from my sisters, Laura, Annie, and sister Jane."
MS: "They all knew that same tune?"
DB: "Yeah."
MS: "Do you have any idea where they learned it?"
DB: "I don't know where they learned it. They used to sing it when they were just young girls..."

MS: "Do you remember when you made your banjo arrangement?"
DB: "It's been a awful long time ago...I've played it the way I play it for fifty years, anyway, maybe more."

SIDE I - Band 4

Sugar Blues- "Well that was accompanied by piano, I think sung by Sara Martin...some colored lady in New York it must have been 45-48 years ago...

"I knew the words for several years but really, to get it worked out to where I could sing it and play it on banjo, it's just been the last couple of years."
SUGAR BLUES

Have you heard these blues,
Baby I'm a-going to sing for you;
When you hear them
They will play you through and through.
They're the sweetest blues you ever heard,
And listen and don't say a word.

Got the sugar blues,
Everybody's singing
The sugar blues, the
Whole town is ringing,
I love my coffee,
I love my tea,
But the doggone sugar blues
They got 'em for me.

I fell so bad
You could lay me down and die;
Say what you choose
'Bout the old-time blues;
Got the sweet, sweet sugar,
Gor the sweet, sweet sugar blues.

Loving Nancy- "Well a neighbor of mine gave me that song. Woman by the name of Holbrook...I used to live on their property, lived under them, there at Mayking, I lived there awhile. They were good neighbors. She wanted me to play that song, 'Loving Nancy'. She said, 'I believe that would make a nice song for you, Dock.' Said, 'I just want to give it to you'. It's on old yellow paper at home somewhere. Of course I had it printed (typed)...along about '29, I guess."

MS: "Why did these people give you these songs?"

DB: "Well, I don't want to try to flatter myself, or say anything like that, but I was pretty well thought of by my neighbors and people I got acquainted with and it seemed like that nearly all of them, they wanted to help me all they could along in my career if I wanted to play and make phonograph records or anything like that. And they liked my first records that I put out. Nearly all of them had the first ones. And they wanted me to go on, that's what they wanted you know, And that's one reason that a lot of them would give them to me. Some of them just volunteer, people hand me songs..."

MS: "They're often old songs that they give you."

DB: "Yeah, well that's the kind of songs that I generally ask for. I ask people if they know them, or anything. Well, I was told just before I started down here (to Newport RI and Roosevelt, NJ)...someone told me that they had a uncle or/a aunt, or somebody who had a lot of old songs, and said they'd be glad if I come up to their place and they'd go with me. I believe it was a guy by the name of Steele, I won't say for sure. I know he come and bought on of each of my albums from me and he's a awful nice seeming fellow. He works away from home and lives back towards Clintwood below Coeburn."

(Ed. Note: Until about 1965 Dock sang this with a major-sounding tune of his composition. At about that time he changed the tune to the present one: "The tune I thought up myself to start with and this other one, it came to me a little more natural."

The original text of this song was written on lined tablet paper headed 'Ballet of Loving Nancy Aug. 22, 1904 Leslie (or Lester) Ky.' Dock adds that he thinks Mistress Holbrooks' grandmother (born 1878) sang this song.)
You find nobody by that name. There happened to be some old-timers a-living that served over there with him and the Rough Riders and so forth and so on. That would be nice, you see. And I figured there ought to be more verses of it. Maybe the way I've had it kind of explained - I don't know whether it's true or not - that Cuban war we had back in, was it eighteen and ninety-eight... you know whenever the Rough-Riders or Teddy Roosevelt, he was right over there in the middle of it. And my oldest brother in law went into the army under an assumed name, you see, not his right name because he had a wife and two children back here, you see. He got shot and killed at Esserville Virginia, and my sister would have been due for years a widow's pension from him, but the government couldn't find nobody by that name. There happened to be some old-timers a-living that served over there with him and seen him in Cuba... and there's about two or three that went and made sworn affidavits that they went and served with John D. Rogers over there during that war with Spain.

I learnt that 'John Hardy' and 'Poor Ellen Smith' from them..."

DB: "Well, the way I've had it kind of explained - I don't know whether it's true or not - that Cuban war we had back in, was it eighteen and ninety-eight... you know whenever the Rough-Riders or Teddy Roosevelt, he was right over there in the middle of it. And my oldest brother in law went into the army under an assumed name, you see, not his right name because he had a wife and two children back here, you see. He got shot and killed at Esserville Virginia, and my sister would have been due for years a widow's pension from him, but the government couldn't find nobody by that name. There happened to be some old-timers a-living that served over there with him and seen him in Cuba... and there's about two or three that went and made sworn affidavits that they went and served with John D. Rogers over there during that war with Spain."

MS: "Did you consider this as a song that was really about that war or more as a banjo tune?"

DB: "No, I figured it was made concerning that war. And I figured there ought to be more verses of it. Maybe about that San Juan Hill... and bring Teddy Rossevelt in there, and the Rough Riders and so forth and so on. That would be nice, you see..."

CUBA

Take me over to Cuba, I'll cross the waters o'er;
Take me away to Cuba, you'll never see me no more.

If I go to Cuba, I'll cross the waters wide;
If I go to Cuba, I'll marry me another bride.

The railroad is finished, the car's on the track;
Take me away to Cuba, they'll never bring me back.

Engineer blows the whistle, the fireman rings the bell,
Brakeman takes up tickets, conductor drunk as....

Ed. Note: The following are two verses which Dock composed in the early 1960's and sometimes sings with this song. The version on this LP is the original at the request of the editor.

Castro's in Cuba, he's a-ruling like a little God
Anyone says anything about Castro, is put before the firing squad.

Many Cubans in this country, they're feeling mighty alone
Had their way about it, they'd all go back home.

John Hardy- "Well, I learned that from my brother and sister. My oldest brother, John, and sister Jane, married Taz Whompler. They picked 'John Hardy' in the 'knock down' - 'clawhammer' - style... I learnt that 'John Hardy' and 'Poor Ellen Smith' from them..."

MS: "Did they play it pretty much the way you do?"

DB: "Well, pretty much. Only you see, they weren't picking it, just kind of the knock-down, you know... They didn't sing too much... Brother John, I never did hear him try to sing any at all; Sister Jane, she had a good voice for singing. But Brother John, he played fiddle or banjo, either one, but he just didn't try to sing. He was always kind of an odd ball, different-turned to every one of my brothers and sisters. From a little child I've heard Mother say that he was stubborn and he had a disposition and turn of his own, and wanted to do as he pleased about certain things. You just couldn't beat it into him, hardly. He learnt to chew tobacco - he was the only one in the family out of nine children that lived to be grown to use tobacco. And he's the one that defied my Dad, and he chewed tobacco anyway. He was the oldest boy, though, Brother John, if he was a-living he'd be around close to a hundred years old now..."

JOHN HARDY

Oh little John Hardy was a bad little man,
He carried two guns every day;
He shot him a man in Chinatown.
Ought to saw John Hardy make his getaway,
To saw John Hardy make his getaway.

He run 'til he got to the East bound bridge,
Oh the East bound train was late;
Up walked an old policeman and caught him by the arm,
Said, 'John Hardy come and go with me Lord, Lord, John Hardy come and go with me'.

I've been to the East and I've been to the West,
I've been this whole world around;
I've been to the river and I've been baptized,
And now I'm a-going to my hanging ground,
Oh now I'm going to my hanging ground.

Peggy Walker- "You know, I would love to know where I got that song from, but it's absolutely... slipped my mind who it was. And when they gave it to me they gave it to me in printed form just like I've got it... type-written.

MS: "About how long ago was that?"

DB: "...I wouldn't know how many years to say, probably forty years..."

MS: "Did you start playing it on the banjo then...?"

DB: "I started to play it on the banjo right from the first. Whoever gave me the song, why they gave me enough of the tune... and that's the way I sing it."

PEGGY WALKER

(1)

There was a jolly old farmer
Who lived a neighbour nigh,
He had one only daughter,
Upon her I cast my eye.

(0 he had one only daughter,
(0n her I cast my eye.

(2)

I asked her if she would be willing,
For me to cross the Plain,
And if she would be true to me,
'Till I returned again,

(3)

She said she would be true to me,
'Till death came on decline,
So I shook hands and parted,
From the girl I left behind,
I steered my boat for Portland,
Strange Countries for to see,
I met Miss Peggy Walker,
And she fell in love with me,

I knew if I should marry her,
That I would be to blame,
That the girl I left behind me,
Would laugh at me for shame,

I quit my work one evening,
And walking up George Street,
The stage was just returning,
And the Posy Boy I did Meet,

He handed me a letter that,
That I might understand,
That the girl I left behind me,
Had married another man,

As I stood there lamenting,
Says he "poor boy don't cry",
For I have money a plenty,
To serve both you and I.

My pocket-book has grown quite empty,
And I think it is full time,
To stop and think no longer,
Of the girl I left behind,

But to marry Miss Peggy Walker,
And have a jolly old time.

(Repeat the last two lines for chorus.)

SIDE I - Band 9

I Hope I Live a Few More Days - "There was some woman someplace in the country gave me that song, but I can't remember who it was.

MS: "Was that around the time that you had a band?"
DB: "Yes. It was about, I guess '29 or '30."
MS: "Did you ever play it with the band that you remember?"
DB: "... Don't think I did. I think I got it about the time we broke up."

(Dock adds that he learned the song from the Phillipps family, relatives of his.)

SIDE II - Band 1

Calvary - "... it was in an old Holiness song book that my brother in law used to have, Lee Hunsucker. But I learned the song, well I got the words, even, from Lee Hunsucker."

INSTRUMENTAL

SIDE I - Band 10

Turkey In the Straw - "Well, now I picked that up a little bit at a time, just here and there. I heard colored people playing it, that Turkey in the Straw, and it put the idea in my head to learn it. The first time I heard them playing it. And then I've heard white fellows play it but I never did hear them play it the way I heard these colored fellows play. They played it different. I learned it as much like the colored people played it as I could, the way it stuck in my head as I first heard it...

"That sliding part, I coined that myself. I don't remember seeing nobody else doing that."

INSTRUMENTAL
Roses While I'm Living - "Well if I remember right, there was one of my neighbors in Hayman, Ky. about 35 or forty years ago, she wrote most all them words. She didn't put no tune to it or anything. But she wrote that... She gave me that song, them words. It was Bertha Holland... (Her husband) he was that Indian left-handed fiddler I was telling you about that used to play with me."

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BY MORAN L. BOGGS

Roses While I'm Living

What care I for the purest white rose,
Placed in my cold still hand;
What care I for the words of praise,
When I can't understand.

I care not for the flowers,
Hesped in wreaths upon my mound;
I care not for the words of love I crave;
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
I care not for the flowers,
When I'm beyond the grave, I care not for the flowers.

Beyond the lonely silent tomb,
I hope to find sweet rest;
Speak now the words of comfort brought,
And calm my troubled breast;

For I will not need your songs of praise,
When I'm once beyond the grave;
When I'm beyond the grave, oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave;
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave.

CHORUS:
When I can't understand, oh love,
When I can't understand;
I care not for the words of praise,
When I can't understand.

SIDE II - Band 3

Leave it There - "I learnt that song from Lee, too, But it's out of a song book . . ."

Copyright, 1929
BY MORAN L. BOGGS

Retired Norton Coal Miner is Now Pickin' A Banjo Instead Of Just Twiddlin' Thumbs

'Dock' Boggs

When I'm beyond the grave, oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave;
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave.

CHORUS:
When I can't understand, oh love,
When I can't understand;
I care not for the words of praise,
When I can't understand.

SIDE II - Band 3

Retired Norton Coal Miner is Now Pickin' A Banjo Instead Of Just Twiddlin' Thumbs

'Dock' Boggs

When I'm beyond the grave, oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave;
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave; oh love,
When I'm beyond the grave.
Prayer of a Miner's Child - Text by teenager Shirley Hill of Dragerton, Utah printed in UMW of A Journal from which Dock Boggs copied it. He asked for and received her permission to use the text and composed the tune about 1965.

Prayer of A Miner's Child
By Shirley Hill
Dragerton, Utah
Out of the Miners Journal. UMWCA,
I Am a Member of the Miners Journal, UMWCA,
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Careless Love- "Well I couldn't give no one person credit for where I learned that, cause I just picked up a little bit of the "Careless Love" here and there and really don't know just how the song goes together. But I put it together enough that I made a song out of it anyway. But I've heard in my life a dozen or more different people play it and sing it, you know. Then I've heard it on phonograph records, I've heard it sung by people in the country around, and an awful lot of different versions of it, and different words... But I just picked it up from this, that and the other one, the verses I thought sounded the best... There's an awful lot of 'Careless Love'; it's very easy to make a verse of 'Careless Love'. I don't know, some of the verses, I may have made them myself, that I sing."

CARELESS LOVE

Oh love, oh love, oh careless love;
Oh love, oh love, oh careless love, Lord, Lord;
Love, oh love, oh careless love,
You see what careless love has done.

Oh when my money you could blow,
Oh when my money you could blow, Lord, Lord;
When my money you could blow
You was always hanging 'round my door.

I wish to the Lord that train would run;
I wish to the Lord that train would run, Lord, Lord;
I wish to the Lord that train would run,
To carry me back where I came from.

Oh now my money's all spent and gone;
Oh now my money's all spent and gone, Lord, Lord;
Oh now my money's all spent and gone,
You pass my door and sing a song.

(Repeat third verse)