

INTRODUCTION

In the mid-1980s, after living in Britain for 20 years during which I played with two top American-style folk bands (New Deal String Band with fellow ex-New Yorker Tom Paley + different fiddlers, then Alive & Pickin' with Robin McKidd, Adrian Legg + sundry others) I began to do some solo folk-club and festival work. Since most of the clubs and festivals had not heard me on my own, they requested a demo, and so I recorded these songs on my home reel-to-reel tape machine, with the aim of selecting a few appropriate numbers for transfer to cassette.

However for various reasons (not least because I most love playing in a band rather than performing solo) I soon stopped playing seriously or in public for about 10 years, including some very long layoffs. But then I ran into Dave Swarbrick, who (even though about half my size) threatened me with physical violence if I didn't start playing again, and Tom Paley, who thought a revamped NDSB trio would work well if I re-started - especially as his son Ben had become such an excellent fiddler. With such encouragement from these two folk-music stars, I did so. WARNING: - if you play music, don't ever quit for a period. It's almost impossible to regain your original level!

Every once in a while I wanted to hear how I had played something, and so I'd refer to these tapes. I also began to realize that they were about as good as I could do on my own, and might also be useful for students and attendees at the workshops I sometimes give at festivals and schools. My friend Andy Metcalfe (ace flat-picker and expert sound engineer) transferred the tapes to CD, and with a little editing and cleansing, he has been able to produce a creditable result, at least some of which I hope you will enjoy.

Joe Locker, 2005.

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Joe Locker Home Alone, On His Own

***** PICKIN' AND SINGIN' WITH 5-STRING BANJO AND GUITAR *****

CD digitally transferred from home-made tapes



1. NEEDLE CASE
2. PRETTY POLLY
3. TALKING DUSTBOWL
4. GASSBERGET GANGLAT
5. ROLL ON BUDDY
6. NEXT WEEK SOMETIME
7. WILLIE MOORE
8. WILL THE WEAVER
9. WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY/
ARKANSAS TRAVELER/
OLD MOLLY HARE
10. THE TENDERFOOT
11. DARLING COREY
12. TOP OF CORK ROAD/
TENPENNY BIT/
PIGTOWN FLING
13. PENNY'S FARM
14. THE CROSS-EYED BUTCHER
& THE WEST FORK GIRLS
15. AS I WALKED OUT
16. THE ENTERTAINER
17. ROLL DOWN THE LINE

1. NEEDLE CASE. This is based on the McGee Brothers version. Nowadays the tune is more commonly frailed on the banjo, but I love Sam McGee's pre-bluegrass picking style - although I think he might have objected to my ending!
2. PRETTY POLLY. I first heard this by the great North Carolina ballad singer Obray Ramsey. Then in my 1960/1 work with Scots folksinger Alex Campbell I accompanied him on his version, which we later recorded. It's an American setting of the British ballad "Gosport Tragedy".
3. TALKING DUST BOWL. One of Woody Guthrie's best dust bowl pieces, and my favorite talking blues.
4. GASSBERGET GANGLAT. I first heard Swedish fiddle music when the New Deal String Band (NDSB) played at some festivals there in the mid- 1970s. Traditional Swedish fiddlers ("spelman") typically play in groups of two or three, sometimes with a viola, and usually without accompanying instruments. Walking-tunes ("ganglats") such as this one can transfer nicely to the banjo, or can even be adapted to American string-band style.
5. ROLL ON BUDDY. This version is close to that by the late ex-pat American banjo player/singer Derroll Adams. We played it together on numerous occasions around Europe - with Derroll on banjo and me on guitar.
6. NEXT WEEK SOMETIME. I always loved the way Tom Paley played this raggy blues piece, so when we did our first NDSB record many years ago, I encouraged him to do it as a solo - that way I could sit at home and learn it!
7. WILLIE MOORE. Another ballad I learned from Alex Campbell during my time with him.
8. WILL THE WEAVER. A jazzier version of this is known as Everyday Dirt, recorded by Doc Watson among others. The melody used here is based on Derroll Adams' "Chattering Jaw"; the words are gleaned from various renditions.
9. WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY / ARKANSAS TRAVELER / OLD MOLLY HARE. Three fiddle tunes played in America - the first comes from Ireland, the second is native, and the third is based on a Scots tune The Fairies' Reel. This medley was used as the music track for an American documentary film "Ro Raises The Roof".
10. THE TENDERFOOT. Although I've never done many of the things mentioned in folk songs, such as committing murder or robbery, picking cotton, or whaling/sailing on the deep blue sea, I have ridden on a horse (once - on a dude ranch), and so I can sing this song with absolute authority! I learned it as a child from a great album of cowboy songs by Tony Kraber. Kraber was a folksinger, actor, and early-days tv producer who then ran into difficulties during

the 1950s McCarthy witch-hunting period. But he remained hugely popular as a performer at NYC folk concerts, based largely on his cowboy recordings. I subsequently recorded this song with the NDSB; on an earlier record we had recorded Green Grow The Lilacs - also from Kraber's album.

11. DARLING COREY. This archetypical mountain banjo song (whose close relatives are Little Maggie and Country Blues) has been recorded by many, including the Monroe Brothers, Pete Seeger, Derroll Adams, and Doc Watson. This version is broadly based on an early rendition by B.F. Shelton.

12. TOP OF CORK ROAD / TENPENNY BIT / PIGTOWN FLING. Two jigs and a reel originally from Ireland, now widely played in the USA. I learned the first one from the fiddling of West Virginian Franklin George, the second from attending Irish sessions, and the third from my younger brother Willie, who played the first two parts on the fiddle. The 3rd part of Pigtown (aka "Wild Horse at Stoney Point") is from a Charlie Poole record with his great fiddler Posey Rorer. I suspect the 3rd part is from another tune - even The Chieftains play only the first two parts.

13. PENNY'S FARM. I first heard this on a Pete Seeger record. Other versions are by Gid Tanner & The Skillet Lickers, and The Bently Boys. I subsequently recorded it with the NDSB.

14. THE CROSS-EYED BUTCHER & THE WEST FORK GIRLS. This is the only (clean) song I know about dentistry. It's sort of a reverse Irish joke, which I learned from an Uncle Dave Macon record. My kids loved it when they were small, and would mime to it when I sang it at home. My grandfather told me that in the old days of traveling fairs, before the advent of good anaesthesia, a dentist would set up his tent next to the bandstand, hoping that the loud brass band would drown out the screams of his patients! West Fork Girls is the fiddle tune I tacked on the end - Uncle Dave used Cackling Hen.

15. AS I WALKED OUT. Also known as Carter's Blues. I first heard this by Mike Seeger, who does a beautiful job on it, with autoharp. I added a few verses of my own.

16. THE ENTERTAINER. Josh Rifkin, whose piano recitals and recordings were so important in reviving interest in the Scot Joplin piano rags, played folksongs as a teenager at the Sunday afternoon sessions in NYC's Washington Square Park - along with a host of top pickers and singers. An orchestral version of this Joplin rag then became the theme music for the famous Redford-Newman film "The Sting".

17. ROLL DOWN THE LINE. One of Uncle Dave Macon's best.