

The Live Wire, Woody Guthrie in Performance 1949
Transcript

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Track 1: Intro: *How much? How long?* (15:02)

Marjorie: I've come to know a little more about folk songs only through Woody, and when Miss Bach asked me to come as commentator tonight, I thought I could only really comment from one folk singer's point of view. But I think Woody does represent, in a way, what many folk singers are and have been from the earliest, earliest times. I think that you'll agree with me that one of the first signs of communication in our lives, even as infants, is through sound. We cry when we want something, we have different kinds of ways of crying. And as time has...as we grow older, we learn to communicate through another kind of speech, but the tone of our voice and the quality of our voice is the meaning.

And um, I think if we can think back even further than before the time we were actually born ourselves, way back to the old troubadours, we also come to learn then that folk singing really was not only a communication between one or two people, it became a communication between two families, and soon between two cities, and soon between two worlds. And it's nice to think, if you can, that a voice can be heard today that can communicate to you one thing, and twenty-five years from now will still mean something to somebody else about our times.

And I think that's one big wonderful part about being with Woody because I know that...I can tell you that he reads every paper, practically, that's printed on the market, everything from the *Pacific Citizen*, all about the Japanese and Nisei, um, people in Salt Lake City, to the *Worker* and to *The New York Times* and to all the New York papers that are available for anyone to read. And my home is one big collection of clippings. They hang all over the walls. If anyone walks into my house he would think it were a scrapbook. It is, but I think it's a very wonderful one, and many times I do read things in the news that Woody has stuck up on the wall. And the next thing I know, he's begun to write about them, and he writes anywhere from one to ten songs a day, to say nothing of the novels and short stories and poems that seem to flow so easily from him.

Well, I've given you a little background on our meeting so that you'll know something about what I can only say about him. And I'm going to ask Woody to talk too before he sings. I'm going to ask him some questions. And I want you to sort of tell us Woody, because I feel it's so important for people to understand what these songs are. First I think you ought to tell us something about your life as a kid. I think that you lived such a different life from anybody else, perhaps, in this room, that I think it would be interesting to know the little bit of the background of your life so they'll understand why you wrote the songs that you did at special times. Want to tell us about Oklahoma? That's a favorite subject—and I'm going to time you.

Woody: How much? How long?

Marjorie: Oh, a few sentences.

Woody: Well, I was born and raised in the state of Oklahoma, called the land of the five civilized Indian tribes: Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek and Seminole. At the time

that I was born, the year 1912, my father was a sort of a hard, fistfighting Woodrow Wilson Democrat. So, Woodrow Wilson was nominated that same year, and at the age of about four or five years old, a long time before I was in school, I remember my dad used to teach me little political speeches and rhymes.

And I'd climb up in a hay wagon around at all the political meetings and rallies they had on the streets, and I'd make my little speeches. And uh, it might be that I've turned out now that where I don't believe the speeches anymore and make speeches just the opposite. But anyway, that was a pretty early age to be standing up in a hay wagon, I remember, barefooted, several years before I ever thought of going to school, I must have been four or five or six years old, along in there somewhere.

But when I first started remembering anything about the town, I remembered that, uh, my life had been a sort of a typical cowboy...town. I had a horse, I had two or three horses, we had several bird dogs, and several, uh, prize hogs, and several prize cattle, and several prize horses. My life was more or less wrapped up in all of that just like any other kids.

But, uh, something started happening to the town, and it happened so fast and so quick that all of that cowboy angle in my life sort of faded out. I mean, uh, the fact that the Indians and the poor Negroes had been given the state of Oklahoma by, sort of, United States treaties of all kinds because they didn't figure that the land was good enough for anything else. But the very minute that everybody found out that there was millions and millions of dollars worth of oil pools under every acre of land, almost, in Oklahoma, why the Indians and the poor Negroes that bid on the land naturally had to be cheated out of it, and fast!

A lot of ways was worked to get them loose from the land. There used to be a state law in Oklahoma that a white man could not marry a Negro nor an Indian. It was okay for an Indian to marry a Negro, it was okay for a Negro to marry an Indian. A white man could not marry either one, according to the state law. Then after the oil come in and the Negro, um, the Indians got so rich, why then they passed a new state law that a Negro could not marry a white man nor an Indian, but a white man could marry an Indian. But a white man could not marry a Negro, because the poor Negroes did not have any state lands. Other tricks they used was they passed a Prohibition Law in 1913, we still got Prohibition in the state. You might say Oklahoma is first in everything worst.

The Indians and Negroes down in there cannot walk into a store like you can here and buy a bottle of whiskey to take up to your home and drink that's got a stamp on it which guarantees that the United States of...it's a little bit, uh, sanitary. Every bottle of liquor that you buy, whether you know it or not, some sanitation man up and down the line has gone through the motions of at least examining. There are several brands of liquor on the market; if you don't know what to buy you get gypped every time. But you got a chance, when you walk into a liquor store to at least buy some real good liquor that will not kill you, won't cause you to have DT, or hangover, or go mad or any of that stuff.

But down in Oklahoma where I come from, if you want to have a little fun, if you want to go to a dance, if you want to have a...good time, it's an entirely different story. First you've got to walk ten or fifteen miles to get a bottle of whiskey, you've got to pay ten prices for what it's worth, it's homemade stuff, you know it's poison when you buy it...and I'll take a drink of it. I've seen a whole football team get just dog drunk on a, on a bottle of it. And you have to drive thirty-five or forty mothers, uh miles to give my guy ten times what it's worth. So down there, instead of having gold nuggets, they got boot...bootleg liquor. And the bootleggers are always in control, and they always will be in control as long as they pass the Prohibition Law. And last year they voted the bootleggers back in again by voting Prohibition back in again.

So, that's roughly how the state of Oklahoma was operating. They used dope, they used opium, they used every kind of a trick to get these Indians to sign over their lands in big or little chunks, to some white lawyer from back East, or some, uh, city slicker from some big town.

So Oklahoma was full of those kind of people, and plus another army of people that worked in oil fields. I don't know whether you ever seen a town turn into an oil field town overnight or not, but there's all kinds of guys hit town just wake up one morning and they're there. You don't know where they come from; there's fifteen or twenty thousand of them out there in a little town that used to be five or six hundred farming people, sort of slow, poking around you know, going to the mailbox and back, take an hour to tell you a story about something. But all at once there's fifteen or twenty thousand guys running up and down the street out there, nobody knows anybody else, nobody ever seen anybody else, nobody wants to see anybody else, nobody hopes they'll ever see anybody else.

Nobody will never get a letter, they know that, they never got a letter in their lives, they never wrote a letter in their lives. No folks, no chance except one earthly thing, and that's to get a job putting an oil well down. They run out there and they start to get too aggressive. They got drillers, they got tong-buckers, they got ditch diggers, they got pile climbers, they got preachers, they got pimps, they got whores, they got gamblers, sheriffs, deputies, all kinds of officers, lawyers, educated men, speakers, all kinds of entertainers up and down the streets. Everybody is one big army, transient workers, they're going to work out their few months or a few years at the most, be gone. They don't even build houses, they don't build homes, they don't put down foundations. They put up a little boxcar house that costs twenty-five or thirty dollars apiece, and move on as quick as the oil well is drilled, because when it's drilled they put a little pump on it, they pump it over into the big tank cars and they ship it back here to New York City and Newark, where they burn it up in the form of car smoke.

But roughly talking, that's the way Oklahoma was when I come to start sort of reflecting about it. And uh, I remember distinctly, that my dad was one of the bigwigs there. Almost all the old settlers that lived there before the oil come in and before the boom really hit, the oil really was discovered, almost every person was a land trader. I mean they traded the leases, royalties, deeds, titles, all kinds of legal papers, all kinds of lots,

all kinds of lands, farms, and the sales and commissions and everything else like that. And I remember he was a notary public, and uh, that was his business, so he finally traded to where he got to where he was the owner of thirty farms. Almost every kind of a farm you could think of, he owned. Goat farm, wheat farm, cow farm, chicken farm, horse farm, dog farm. Every kind of farm my dad owned, thirty of them.

But later on, when times got hard and the big shot politicians turned against him, he run for a big office in the state, one of the biggest offices in the state, lost all his money, lost his thirty farms that he put up for security to campaign the state to run for Corporation Commission. So he lost his thirty farms in thirty days, he said, "I'm the only living human on earth that lost a farm a day for thirty days." So every time that you look up during those thirty days there was someone there foreclosing on something. Bankers were foreclosing, they...all of that...I saw my dad lose, in thirty days, I guess the stuff that he'd built up and traded in years and years and years and years of not just talking, fast talking, but fistfighting and, uh, all such stuff as that.

So it wasn't a peaceful, very sleepy life that I'd have had when I was a kid. I may have slept when, uh, Marjorie met me, but I slept very little in my early days. I may be trying to sort of make up for it now, but I don't remember getting any real sleep back in them days. I don't think anybody did in that state, I don't know for sure that they ever will, but uh...

Marjorie: Now speaking of your dad, Woody, uh, didn't you, uh, often hear him sing many songs? I understood your mama and your papa both sang a great deal in the home, and that that is one of the very earliest recollections that you have of having heard music.

Woody: Well, yeah, my mother... My dad would sing sort of an Indian, Negro mixed-up chants, I mean, he'd go to work, uh, certainly chanting some Indian dialect, counting, saying "good day," "hello," "it's a bad day," "it's no good," or cussing, or something in one of the Indian dialects. And he could howl and stuff like that. He used to play with a little square-dance band for a couple of years of his life, way back in the early times, when a big fistfight broke out and he got his guitar all broke up, so he never went back into the business.

But my mother was awful scared, nervous kind of a woman, so she would sing to sort of pacify, I guess, us kids. She had, uh, five children, and she would sing, all about the...uh, every big long ballad you could think of, to put us to sleep at night. And sort of to...when we'd get to worrying about where Papa was, because just about every night them people was chasing up and down the town with guns, hunting each other, and coming in sometimes pretty well shot up. Why, in those days a woman had a whole lot to worry about, just like pioneer women of all times and frontier women, there's lots of times when you don't know quite for sure whether your man's ever going to come home tomorrow or not. And uh, that was sort of the use, I think, that she made of these songs, and when I first remembered hearing them, and why I guess I remember them like I do now, you might say, after all these years that I still remember almost word for word the

songs that she used to sing.

Marjorie: Will you sing this one that we picked then? Woody...uh, this is a song that Woody selected when I asked him, I wanted him to sing a song he remembered someone else singing to him as a child, so that it would give us a background. So this was one that his mama and papa both sang and loved very much, called "Black Diamond."

Track Two: Black Diamond (4:51)

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Woody: This is a song about a racehorse.

Black Diamond was a racehorse he held a high head
And the mane on his foretop was fine as silk thread

I rode him in Texas and I rode him in Maine
I never lost a dollar I always did gain

Come all of you gamblers from far and from near
Don't you bet your gold dollars on that little gray mare

Most likely she'll stumble most likely she'll fall
See my Black Diamond ahead of them all

So come all you gangsters from far and from wide
And lay down your money on my Black Diamond prize

Sit tight in your saddle let slack on your rein
And you'll never lose a dollar you always will gain

But the horses went racing 'bout halfway around
That gray mare she stumbled and fell to the ground

And way out yonder and ahead of them all
Ran my noble Black Diamond the finest of all

California's green grasses grow fast ponies too
But around them like lightning my Black Diamond flew

Kentucky's fast runners they hold a good pace
But I rode my Black Diamond and I won every race

Florida's fast trackers have some champions to boast
They followed behind when I've run past the post

So bet him to win folks, your...your never will fail

It's always Black Diamond comes first down the lane

This life is a gamble and it's win, place or show
So I'll make love and gamble wherever I go

Sit tight in your saddle, let slack on your rein
You'll never lose a dollar, you always will gain

Track 3: *I was there and the dust was there* (6:56)

Marjorie: I'm just going to ask a question, just for the sake of clarity, and it's very important to me, because I feel that, Woody said to me, and I haven't forgotten, to remember to tell people that folk singers don't have voices, that they are not sopranos, they're not altos...what else was it?

Woody: Baritones.

Marjorie: They're not baritones. They're not well trained, but...uh the most important thing is what they sing, and so I'm going to ask to be sure. The guitar sounded very loud to me, Woody, and I'm not sure, did you hear all the words, or no?

Woody: Too much guitar?

Marjorie: Hmm? You couldn't quite hear the words? Or what? Tell the truth, because I want you to hear the words: you could or you couldn't?

Audience: Could hear...

Marjorie: You could hear it over there? All right. I think then we'd...you'd better be careful with the pick, though. It seems loud. The fact remains that, uh, it is the words that are so terribly important, and particularly in a folk song of the kind that tells a story, which is the kind that Woody, uh, is going to sing for you mostly tonight.

Um, I think it's interesting to know that Woody sort of picked up his speed as a folk singer at a very special time in American history when, uh, the Dust Bowl, uh, became famous. And I think that it would be good Woody if you could, very briefly this time please, uh, say three sentences, if you can, on, um, what did happen in the Dust Bowl area that made you want to sit down and write all the songs that you did about the Dust Bowl.

Woody: What made me want to write all the songs about the Dust Bowl?

Marjorie: Mmm hmm.

Woody: Well, I don't...I was, uh, sort of like to write about wherever I happen to be. I just happened to be in the Dust Bowl. I mean, it wasn't something I particularly wanted or craved, but since I was there and the dust was there, I thought, well, I better write a

little song about it.

And uh, out in the Dust Bowl where, if you'd come out there fifty years ago like most of my relatives did, and they're still there, out on the wheat plains of Texas, and you try to...you'd dig a cellar; instead of digging a house, you dig a cellar. There's no trees, there's no timber, no lumber within five hundred miles of it. So, then, after you start having children, why you start building a house, generally some kind of an adobe house, but if you can ship off somewhere, uh, order some lumber, why you can build a lumber house.

But uh, then when you see these dust storms a-blowing, I mean they don't just blow for the fun of it, the actual...your life or death hangs, we'll say, on when the dust blows or don't blow, why then you see a dust storm in a whole lot different light than you do when you see it the newsreels or read in the newspapers or anything else. But if there was something to happen to all of us tonight that would mean life or death, I mean, uh, that's what a dust storm means.

There's five or six hundred ways...I mean, the dust pneumonia out there was choking lots of people to death. Most of those houses out in that country are built so cheap that the dust comes right on into them, so a woman has got just about as much chance to keep a house like that clean as she has working in a cave, or in a cement factory, or something. So these dust storms, well, up 'til the time that...that I had, uh, all the time that I had been writing songs, I mean, I felt like they was the most important thing that I had seen, so I had to write about them, or try. So...

Marjorie: Do you want to sing this one? I think this tells, just a little bit, in the story itself, about what did happen. And it's called "The Great Dust Storm."

I guess I ought to say a word about these papers. People often say to me, "Why doesn't Woody, uh, you know, memorize all his songs?" And my answer is if you can memorize from one to ten songs a day and write them, you're pretty good. So I have made a point of seeing to it, when I feel that these words are so important, of asking Woody to not worry about people noticing that he is reading the songs. I think it's much more important to hear them and get the words correctly. So that's why they're here. But he really writes much too many to be able to memorize them.

Woody: Well, there's a little bit more reason than that. Sometimes when you write a song, we'll say, you try to get it on a three-minute record for a certain company, well, they go through your song and the mark out verse number six, four and three, so then you've got to sing it the way it is on the record, and not like you submitted it. Maybe you submitted five or six different copies of it and they like number...this one a little better than the others. So lots of times, well you did make up some certain song, maybe you made up twenty versions of it, and you're trying to sing the one that, uh, people know best, in this case.

This is called "The Great Dust Storm." This here's got a little bit of a history to it because

I remember awful plain when I was a kid growing up listening to them songs that my mother sung to us, she sung one song called “The Sherman Cyclone.”

Oklahoma is a state, I guess, of all the places on earth, there are more cyclones. I don’t know whether you know what a cyclone is or...but it’s a little bit like a hurricane and it’s got a great big funnel of wind. You can see them coming several miles away, which is pretty lucky; it gives you a little bit of a chance to get out of the way. But if you happen to be in the path of one, you’re just sort of out of luck. But a cyclone, they happen so often in Oklahoma that, uh, everybody there, when you build a house, you build a cellar first, and nine times out of ten you make a run for your cellar a lot more often, or just about as often, as you do for the house.

But she used to sing an old song, I remember, called “The Sherman Cyclone,” telling how a cyclone wiped out a certain little town down there by the Texas line called Sherman, Texas. And, uh, now they’ve rebuilt the town and all. But I used the same tune, later on, 34 years later, to write this song.

This is called “The Great Dust Storm.”

Track 4: The Great Dust Storm (3:35)

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On the 14th day of April of 1935
There struck the worst of dust-storms to ever fill the sky
You could see that dust storm coming, its cloud looked deadly black
Through our mighty nation it left its dreadful track

From Oklahoma City to the Arizona line
Deekoty and Nebrasky to the lazy Rio Grande
It fell across our city like a curtain of black rolled down
We thought it was our judgment and thought it was our doom

The radio reported, we listened with alarm
To the wild and windy actions of that great mysterious storm
From Albeequirk and Clovis and all New Mexico
They said it was the blackest that ever they had saw

Old Dodge City, Kansas, the dust had rung their knell
And a few more comrades sleeping on top of old Boot Hill
In Denver, Colorado, they said it blew so strong
They thought that they could hold out, but they didn’t know how long

Our relatives were huddled into their Oil Boom shacks
And the children they was a-crying as it whistled through the cracks
But the family it was crowded into their little room
They thought it was the end of them, they thought their time had come

That storm took place at sundown and it lasted through the night
When we looked out next morning we saw a terrible sight
We saw outside our window where wheat fields once had grown
It was now a rippling ocean of dust the wind had blown

It covered up our fences and covered up our barns
Covered up our tractors in that wild and dusty storm
We loaded our jalopies, we piled our families in
We rattled down that highway to never come back again

Track 5: Folk singers and dancers (5:28)

Marjorie: So people got in their jalopies and started down the road. And, uh, here is the story of what happened to Woody on the road, and it's called "The Talkin' Dust Bowl Blues."

Woody: Uh...I'm gonna say just a word or two about what Marjorie said a while ago about folk singers don't like to rehearse. Well, folk singers don't especially care whether they're rehearsing or not, of course as long as they get paid for it.

But uh, there's one thing where she gets a little crossed up, see. Uh, it's like if you were singing, a bunch of people come over to your house on...tonight, and you have a little beer and pretzels and, uh, get singing around a piano and talking and then seventeen months later somebody walks into your house and says, "Hey, I want to make up a dance. There's fifteen of my friends. We're all going to make up a dance. We want you to sing that song exactly like you did on that night seventeen months ago here with the beer and pretzels." Now it's got to be count for count, breath for breath, word for word, move for move, eye blink for blink, and not just one extra snap or pause or hold or delay or too fast or too slow—you've got to do it all over again.

And not only that, but when a bunch of dancers get to dancing, if you make a missed beat, or a missed count on your guitar, they bump into each other. I mean, they, they uh, they, they kick each other with their knees and elbows and some are up in the air and some are down on the floor. Some are banging into each other. So, all of this, I mean, you're not just, uh...you're knocking their skin off. I mean, dancers don't just...it's when you...when you start making a mistake. Man, there's all kinds of collisions happening. It's like on a wet slippery day out here on the skyway, somebody throws on her brakes, everybody has a wreck. Well it's the same way in...in...in these dancing things.

So they took a record that a friend of mine made one day in a studio. I remember very well the record and the day. And I remember very well what was wrong with my friend; he had a bad case of asthma. He'd been drinking several bottles of, uh, whiskey, the Irish whiskey to try to open up his asthma a little bit and he, uh, he was singing without any music notes and things, so he put a lot of pauses where he should not have, and he put in a whole bunch of words where there should have been pauses. But he...when the record come out, it was the world's most, uh, uh, we'll say, un...uh...predictable song.

But anyway, that was the one, out of all of the seventeen hundreds of records that I had made and helped make in my life, that was the one song where there was no...no, uh, beat, no pause, no nothing about it that she could pick up and work out. Most songs, they got a sort of a definite beat here and a definite pause there, and definite beat, definite pause. There's a little bit of shape to them, little bit of something that you can grab onto and memorize. So she comes in with a whole bunch of stuff. It looks like a whole bunch of architects and algebra and geometricians and mathematicians have worked out a...some kind of a new atom bomb formula or something. She comes in and lays it down in front of me, says, "This is the way it's got to be. Or, fifteen or twenty dancers are just going to break their necks, that's all."

So that is where the...the rub comes. Folk singers don't sound...don't mind at all, I don't mind how many dancers get banged up. Uh, uh, so when we have to rehearse these songs over and over and over and over and over, five hundred and fifty two times, it ain't the folk singer that really complains, it's generally the dancers. And uh, just need...miss one count in the whole song and the same thing happens, finally gets down to that. So...

Marjorie: You've learned it's pretty hard to take it, so you...

Woody: I know the dancers are pretty tough people, I found that out. But, uh, it ain't that folk singers have got any hatred towards rehearsing. I mean, I personally sort of got a lot of fun out of it. But uh, it was the dancers that, uh, didn't like it, uh.

But you wouldn't sing a song like your Uncle Ben sung it seventeen months ago when he come to your house. That's the way that these dancers...see, they buy a record or something, then the way that record is, that's the way it's got to be because they rehearse with this record. Then they ask me to come down, maybe I'm of a different school of thought entirely, I don't like the guy and all of that. So they bring this in for me to learn, beat for beat and pause for pause, and all that stuff. So...

Marjorie: Back to the Dust Bowl.

Woody: Back to the...work, now.

Track 6: Talking Dust Bowl Blues (2:16)

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This here's called "The Talking Dust Bowl Blues." If you've heard of talking blues, you know sort of where it got its name. There's a lot of talking blueses where you don't have to be a musician at all, you just stand up and start it plunking along on any kind of an instrument and sort of talking...your troubles or, your hopes or, some tale, or the news. And this is sort of a song like that. Tells about when I was living in the Dust Bowl, in 1927.

Back in nineteen twenty-seven

I had a little farm and I called that Heaven,
Prices up, the rain come down,
I hauled my crops all into town
 I got the money...bought the clothes and groceries,
 Fed my kids...and I was raising me a family.

But the wind quit and the rain got high
Black old dust storm filled the sky,
So I swapped my farm for a Ford machine,
I poured it full of this gas-i-lene
 It started...rocking and rolling
 Out of that old Dust Bowl out towards the old California...Peach Bowl

Well, it's a way up yonder on a mountain road
Had a hot motor and a heavy load
I was going pretty fast, wasn't even stopping
Bouncing up and down like a popcorn popping
 Had a breakdown...some guy with a nervous bust-down, then another
 I remember there was a mechanic feller there, alongside the road
 He charged me thirteen dollars, said it was...uh, engine trouble...

Track 7: Tom Joad (6:17)

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Marjorie: ...it does fit in right here, and that is to sing, uh, this song that I had heard, which is my favorite of all, which is "Tom Joad." And it's the...I must say, we named a little boy after that. We had a little boy last year; we named him Joady. And I really had it in my heart to name him always after Tom Joad. Think you can, uh, do that one for us, Woody?

Tom Joad got out of that old McAlester Pen
There he got his parole
After four long years on a man-killing charge
Tom Joad come a walkin' down the road, poor boy
Tom Joad come a walkin' down the road

It was there he found him a truck-driving man
There he got him a ride
Said I just got loose from the McAlester Pen
Charge called homicide
It was a charge called homicide

That truck rolled away in a big cloud of dust
Tommy turned his face toward home
Well, he met Preacher Casey and they had a little drink
And he found that his family they was gone, Tom Joad
Found that his family they was gone

Well, he found his momma's old-fashioned shoe
Found his daddy's hat
And he found little Muley and little Muley said
They've been tracted out by the cats, Tom
They've been tracted out by the cats

So Tommy walked down to a neighboring farm
Found his family
And he took Preacher Casey and loaded in a car
And his mammy said, we got to get away, Tom
His mammy said, we got to get away

Well, the twelve of the Joads made a mighty heavy load
Grandpa Joad he cried
Grabbed up a handful of land in his hand
Said, I'm sticking with my farm 'til I die, God knows
Sticking with my farm 'til I die

Fed him spare ribs and coffee and soothing syrup
Grandpa Joad he died
They buried Grandpa Joad on the Oklahoma Road
Grandma on the California side
Buried Grandma on the California side

Well, we stood on a mountain and we looked to the West
And it looked like the promised land
Was a big green valley and a river running through it
And there was work for every single man, we thought
Work for every single man

Well, the Joads rode away to the jungle camp
There they cooked a stew
And the hungry little kids in the jungle camp
Said, we'd like to have some too.
Yes, we'd like to have some too

Now a deputy sheriff cut loose at a man
He shot a woman in the back
But before he could take his aim again
Preacher Casey dropped him in his tracks, poor boy
Preacher Casey dropped him in his tracks

Well, they handcuffed Casey and took him to jail
Then he got away
And he met Tom Joad by the old river bridge

These few words he did say to Preacher Casey
These few words he did say

Well, I preached for the Lord for a mighty long time
Preached about the rich and the poor
Us working folks we've got to stick together
Or we ain't got a chance anymore, God knows
We ain't got a chance anymore

Now the deputies come and Tom and Casey run
To the bridge where the water run down
But the vigilante thugs hit Casey with a club
And they laid Preacher Casey on the ground, yes they did
They laid Preacher Casey on the ground

Tom Joad he grabbed that deputy's club
And hit him over the head
Tom Joad took flight that dark, rainy night
There was a deputy and a preacher laying dead, two men
A deputy and a preacher laying dead

Tommy run back where his momma was asleep
He woke her up out of bed
And he kissed goodbye to the mother that he loved
And said what Preacher Casey said, Tom Joad
Said what Preacher Casey said

Everybody might be just one big soul
Well it looks that way to me
Wherever you look in the day or the night
That's where I'm gonna be, mom
That's where I'm gonna be

Wherever little kids are hungry and cry
Wherever people ain't free
Wherever men are fighting for their rights
That's where I'm gonna be, ma
That's where I'm gonna be

Track 8: *Columbia River* (1:47)

Marjorie: ...Woody made a career of traveling, and then, uh, one day, he was asked by the, uh, United States Bonneville Administration to go out to the West Coast and write some songs for them there, where they were going to build the Bonneville Dam.

Woody: Well, these songs are...there was twenty-six of them...we made records, uh, traveled around with a camera crew, you know, while they was taking shots of the five

rivers that run into the Columbia. And the Columbia, uh, that uh, had been such a wild river all its life, done so much destruction and just lately, as you remember, washed out the town out there of Kaiserville. And uh, the thing was that this was gonna open up thousands and thousands of acres of land, and irrigate all of that land that had been desert land all its life, so that several thousand families of migratory farm workers could move out there and settle down. Plus the fact that it would run ten or fifteen cities of electric currents, and run all the factories that was gonna beat Hitler and Nazism and Fascism. Out of the new...out of the new metals they was working out in those days: manganese, chrome, aluminum, and all kinds of new factories, building, at that time, bombing planes.

Track 9: Pastures of Plenty (2:39)

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And this is one of the songs, uh, called “Pastures of Plenty.”

It's a mighty hard row that my poor hand has hoed
My poor feet have traveled a hot, dusty road
Out of your Dust Bowl and westward we rolled
And your deserts are hot, and your mountains are cold

Oh, I worked in your orchards of peaches and prunes
Slept on the ground in the light of your moon
On the edge of your city you will see me, and then
I come with the dust and I'm gone with the wind

California and Arizona, I make all your crops
And it's north up to Oregon to gather your hops
Dig the beets from your ground, cut the grapes from your vine
Set on your table your light sparkling wine

Green pastures of plenty from dry desert ground
From that Grand Coulee Dam where the waters run down
Every state in this union us migrants have been
And we'll work in your farms, fight 'til we win

Well it's always we ramble that river and I
All along your green valley I will work 'til I die
My land I'll defend with my life if it be
Because these pastures of plenty must always be free

Track 10: Grand Coulee Dam (3:33)

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Woody: Now here's another one along that same line, with the same purposes. Called “The Grand Coulee Dam.” This here's the tune of “The Wabash Cannonball,” maybe you know it.

This old world has several wonders the traveling salesmen tell
Some gardens and some flowers, I guess you know them well
Now the greatest wonder is in Uncle Sam's fair land
On the King Columbia River, it's the big Grand Coulee Dam

She heads up the Canadian Rockies where the rippling waters glide
Comes a-rumbling down her canyon beneath that saltry tide
From that wide Pacific Ocean where the sun shines in the west
And that big Grand Coulee country, that's the land I love the best

She winds down the granite canyon and she bends across the lea
Like a silver running stallion down her seaway to the sea
Cast your eye upon the biggest thing yet built by human hands
It's that King Columbia River and the big Grand Coulee Dam

In the misty crystal glitter of that wild and windward spray
We carved the mighty history of the sacrifices made
Well, she ripped our boats to splinters, but she give us dreams to dream
Of that day that Coulee Dam crossed that wild and wasted stream

Uncle Sam took up this challenge in the year of thirty three
For the farmer and the worker and for all of you and me
He said, Roll along, Columbia, you can ramble to the sea
And river, while you're rolling, you can do some work for me

Up in Washington, and Oregon, you hear the factories hum
Making chrome and making manganese and light aluminum
Yonder flies a super rocket ship across this land of hearts and hands
Born upon that King Columbia by that big Grand Coulee Dam

In that misty crystal glitter of that wild and windward spray
We carved the mighty history of the sacrifices made
Oh, she ripped our boats to splinters but she give us dreams to dream
Of that day that Coulee Dam crossed that wild and wasted stream

Track 11: *Told by Mother Bloor* (1:42)

Marjorie: I'm going to let Woody turn very serious because I know that Woody has always been very, very much affected by everything that's happened in this world, and sometimes, even though he himself was not a witness to a very, very many moving incidents in the life and growth of a country, when he read about them he was very moved by them. And one of them is the story that was told to him by Mother Bloor, some of you may know of her, and, uh, I'm going to ask him to sing this song that he made up called "The 1913 Massacre." I think it tells the story without us telling you any more about it.

Woody: Well...this happened, this happened to a bunch of copper miners that was on strike in 1913, in the town of Calumet, Michigan. And it tells you about how the miners was having a Christmas ball, the strikers, and how the thugs and the scabs, a-working for the copper bosses, broke up the celebration.

Take a trip with me in...

Take a trip with me in 1913
To Calumet, Michigan, in the copper country
And I'll take you to a place called...

Track 12: 1913 Massacre (4:32)

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Take a trip with me in 1913
To Calumet, Michigan in the copper country
I'll take you to a place called Italian Hall
Where the strikers are having their big Christmas ball

I'll take you in a door and up a high stairs
Singing and dancing is heard everywhere
I'll let you shake hands with the people you see
And watch the kids dance 'round the big Christmas tree

You ask about work, and you ask about pay
They'll tell you they make less than a dollar a day
Working their copper holes, risking their lives
So it's fun to spend Christmas with children and wives

There's talking and laughing and songs in the air
And the spirit of Christmas is there everywhere
Before you know it, you're friends with us all
And you're dancing around and around in the hall

Well, a little girl sits down by the Christmas tree lights
To play the piano, so you gotta keep quiet
To hear all this fun you would not realize
That the copper boss thugmen are a-milling outside

Well, the copper boss thugs stuck their heads in the door
One of them yelled and he screamed, there's a fire
A lady she hollered, there's no such a thing
Keep on with your party, there's no such a thing

Well, a few people rushed, it was only a few
It's just the thugs and the scabs fooling you
And a man grabbed his daughter and he carried her down

And the scabs held the door and he could not get out

And then others followed, a hundred or more
But most everybody remained on the floor
The gun thugs they laughed at their murderous joke
While the children were smothered on the stairs by the door

Such a terrible sight I never did see
We carried our children back up to their tree
The scabs outside still laughed at their spree
And the children that died there was seventy three

Well, the piano played a slow funeral tune
The town was lit up by a cold Christmas moon
And the parents they cried and the miners they moaned
See what your greed for money has done

Track 13: *Quit sending your inspectors* (2:33)

Marjorie: And then, just to relate that to one incident that you know about, which is also, uh, a very moving one, and that was when the Centralia Mine went in, remember, several years ago, Woody wrote a number of songs about that. And uh, I 'member only too well the day the news came out, and I came home that night and he had written oh, about six songs. And don't know which one told the story best, but I did pick out this one.

Woody: This is called "Goodbye Centralia."

Marjorie: Can you see it?

Woody: The government mining inspector made several trips down to this mine, called Centralia No. 5, as you well remember. The government inspector said that, uh, that mine was so full of fumes that it was gonna blow up any day because the miners was working down there with open lights on their caps, on their la...on their mining caps. So the mine owner laughed at him, and he didn't want to spend the money to put in a cleaning system, so he said, "Well," said, "If you'll quit sending your inspectors down inside of my mines, you'll quit finding anything wrong with them." So that's the kind of human brains that just so happens to control the lives of several hundred thousand miners, and not in Nazi Germany, but right here, hundred or two miles from here, or less. This is called "Goodbye Centralia."

Well, it happened an hour ago
Way down this tunnel of coal...

I'd ought to explain first that this here's taken from the actual notes that the men wrote on the slate walls of the mine, and some scribbled little notes on pieces of paper that they had in their pockets. So the song is, uh, like one of the guys down in the mine at

the time of the explosion, and what was going through his mind, because, uh, you could read the notes on the slate. And in the story of *PM* as they printed it, I remember, the notes and stuff I made up sort of every song...every line of a song was about the notes.

Track 14: Goodbye Centralia (3:11)

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It happened an hour ago
Down in this tunnel of coal
The gas caught afire from somebody's lamp
And our buddies are choking in smoke

Dear daddy and mother, goodbye
Dear sister and brother, goodbye
My fingers are weak and I cannot write
Goodbye Centralia, goodbye

Well, it looks like the end for me
All of my partners I'll see
When the work whistle blows and we don't come home
Do all that you can to help Mom

I can hear the moans and groans
Of more than a hundred good men
We're all writing letters to the kids we love
Please carry our notes to our wives

Dear daddy and mother, goodbye
Dear sister and brother, goodbye
My fingers are weak and I cannot write
Goodbye Centralia, goodbye

Well, the smoke is a-choking me down
The fumes are blinding my eyes
I see Joe Ballantini, Fred Gutzler and Joey
Trapped down in this hellhole of fire

Forgive me for the things I done wrong
I love you lots more than you know
Just work and fight and fix up the mines
So fire can't kill daddies no more

Dear daddy and mother, goodbye
Dear sister and brother, goodbye
My fingers are weak and I cannot write
Goodbye Centralia, goodbye

Please name our new baby Joe
So he'll grow up like Big Joe
He'll make that old mining boss clean out the mines
So fire can't break out here no more

Dear daddy and mother, goodbye
Sister and brother, goodbye
My fingers are weak and I cannot write
Goodbye Centralia, goodbye

Track 15: A cowboy of some kind (1:20)

Marjorie: You know, every time children come into our house and see a guitar hanging around, they always figure Woody must be a cowboy of some kind, so I think in the...in sort of, uh, memory of the Oklahoma days and the cowboy period that Woody did sort of live through, we have a request that somebody here in the audience made. I'm looking for it, if I can find it, "Dead or Alive." Woody, did you see it?

Woody: Uh, "Dead or Alive." Yeah, I uh, marked it on this one.

Marjorie: Which one? Oh here it is. I see it. Here it is. I always laugh when I think of my father-in-law being a sheriff.

Woody: Think about what?

Marjorie: My father-in-law being a sheriff, or something of that order. Out in the, on the wild West. It makes me think of this one too.

Track 16: Dead or Alive (3:42)

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Woody: This is a song about an outlaw. And a new sheriff gets elected in a little town, and so the new sheriff writes the outlaw a letter. And the outlaw's sitting around with his gang, waiting to pull their next job, and he's reading the letter the sheriff wrote him. Called "Dead or Alive."

Dead or alive, it's a hard road
Dead or alive, it's a hard road
Dead or alive

Well, that new sheriff wrote me a letter
And the new sheriff wrote me a letter
Come up and see me dead or alive
Come up and see me dead or alive

Well, he even sent me my picture
Well, he even sent me my picture

How do I look boys, dead or alive
How do I look boys, dead or alive

Well, he said he will pay expenses
Yes, he says he will pay my expenses
Dead or alive, hey, hey
Dead or alive, hey, hey

Well, he says he will clothe and feed me
Well, he says he will clothe and feed me
Dead or alive, man, man
Dead or alive, man, man

Well, he says he will furnish lodging
And he says he will furnish my lodging
Dead or alive, what do you know
Dead or alive, hey hey

Well, I'm sorry I can't come, sheriff
I am sorry that I can't come, sheriff
Dead or alive, poor boy
Dead or alive, poor boy

I don't like your hard-rock hotel
I don't like your hard-rock hotel
Dead or alive, no, sheriff
Dead or alive, no, sheriff

Well, I gotta go and see my sweet thing
And I've gotta go and see my sweet thing
Dead or alive, yes, sir
Dead or alive, yes, sir

But it's a hard road, dead or alive
And a hard road, dead or alive

Track 17: *Jesus Christ has come!* (1:35)

Marjorie: During the war, Woody wrote many songs, and I feel that it would be fun to do them, but our time is short, and so I'd like to do one more song, which I feel is something that has, that I've always loved, and particularly even being here, uh, in Newark and meeting here in the Jewish Community Center, uh, I've always felt this was a wonderful song, indicative of really what a ballad singer means to the world, regardless of, uh, race, color, creeds and thoughts.

And um, I must tell a little, just a small story about this: when Woody went to sea, he came back one day very unexpectedly, with a very tall fellow who had been on ship with

him, and they had been torpedoed, and they came home. And of course, as most seamen do, they had grown long beards. And they had bought little, sort of, uh, woolen hats which they, uh, got, I think it was in...

Woody: Fez.

Marjorie: Oh Fezes. It was in Morocco, or somewhere. And, uh, after Woody came in the house, after the first fright we, uh...and when I went out on the street to buy some food, I heard people were yelling up and down, all the kids were teasing, but they really meant it, and they were saying, "Jesus Christ has come, Jesus Christ has come." ...and um...he had his guitar on his back. And this is a song that Woody wrote about Jesus Christ, and I thought that since he looked so much like him, and in a sense, since he lived so much, very much, the life of Jesus Christ, even now, I feel, in his travelings, I'm going to let him end on this note.

Track 18: Jesus Christ (3:46)

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Woody: Jesus Christ was a man that traveled through the land
A carpenter true and brave
Well he said to the rich, share your goods with the poor
So they laid Jesus Christ in his grave

Jesus was a man, a carpenter by hand
A hard-working man and brave
And a dirty little coward called Judas Iscariot
Has laid Jesus Christ in his grave

And the people of the land took Jesus by the hand
Followed him far and wide
Well, I come not to bring you peace but a sword
And they killed Jesus Christ on the sly

Jesus was a man, a carpenter by hand
A hard-working man and brave
And a dirty little coward called Judas Iscariot
Has laid Jesus Christ in his grave

Well, he went to the sick, he went to the poor
He went to the hungry and the lame
Well, he took the poor folks...oh...someday you'll win this world
So you laid Jesus Christ in his grave

One day Jesus stopped by a rich man's door
What must I do to be saved
You must take all your goods and divide it with the poor
So they laid Jesus Christ in his grave

Jesus was a man, a carpenter by hand
A hard-working man and brave
And a dirty little coward called Judas Iscariot
Has laid Jesus Christ in his grave

Everybody held their breath when they heard about his death
Everybody wondered why
Well it was the landlord and soldiers that he'd hired
Who nailed Jesus Christ in the sky

Jesus was a man and a carpenter by hand
A hard-working man and brave
And a dirty little coward you call Judas Iscariot
Has laid Jesus Christ in his grave

Well, this song is made up in New York City
Of rich man, preachers and slaves
And if Jesus was to preach here what he preached in Galilee
You will lay Jesus Christ in his grave

Jesus was a man and a carpenter by hand
A hard-working man and brave
And a dirty little coward called Judas Iscariot
Has laid Jesus Christ in his grave

END