

FLYRIGHT LP528

Another Man Done Gone...

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Flyright LP528

Side A

- 1 *You Can Always Tell*
Baby Tate v/g, Peg Leg Sam sp.
Spartanburg, South Carolina, 8 August 1970
- 2 *After A While*
Jack Harp v/g, Zepherine Harp v.
Crestview, Florida, 24 December 1962
- 3 *Mother's Dead And Gone*
Guitar Shorty v/g
Wilson, North Carolina, 25 July 1971
- 4 *Got The Stuff Right Here*
Willie Rockmore v/g, Bruce Upshaw hca.
Atlanta, Georgia, 1963
- 5 *Greasy Greens*
Buddy Boy Jenkins v/g
Fairfax Station, Virginia, early 1965
- 6 *Rock Tonight Baby*
Henry Johnson v/g
Union, South Carolina, early January 1963
- 7 *Born In The Country*
Willie Moore v/g
Albany, New York, November 1970
- 8 *You Got To Move*
Jack Harp v/g, Zepherine Harp v/wbd.
Crestview, Florida, 24 December 1962
- 9 *Worried Blues*
Elbert Freeman f, Nathaniel Ford g.
Monticello, Georgia, 8 April 1967

Side B

- 1 *Can't Keep From Cryin'*
Henry Johnson v/g
Union, South Carolina, early January 1963
- 2 *Rattlesnake Moan*
Bud Grant v/g
Thomaston, Georgia, 1969
- 3 *Glory, Glory, Hallelujah*
Jack Harp v/g, Zepherine Harp v/wbd, Caroline James
v/bass-drum
Crestview, Florida, 24 December 1962
- 4 *Black And Tan*
Bill Bryant v/g
Boston, Massachusetts, 1 September 1969
- 5 *South Carolina Blues*
Ed Green v/g,
Washington DC, c1965
- 6 *Bad Gasoline*
Baby Tate v/g, Peg Leg Sam hca.
Spartanburg, South Carolina, 7 August 1970
- 7 *When The War Is Over*
Dave Dickerson v/g
Blacksburg, Virginia, 1967
- 8 *Goin' Away To Leave You*
Willie Moore v/g
Albany, New York, November 1970
- 9 *John Henry*
Elbert Freeman f, Nathaniel Ford g.
Monticello, Georgia, 8 April 1967
- 10 *Old Hen Cackled*
Elbert Freeman f, Nathaniel Ford g.
Monticello, Georgia, 8 April 1967

Howard Odum, writing in the Journal of American Folklore as early as 1911, was aware that the secular music of rural blacks was the talent of the common man and seldom the prerogative of professionals. Nevertheless, some writers on blues, basing their armchair deductions on the commercially recorded work of a few bluesmen, have tended to see black secular music as the music of a professional elite, listened to by many and aped by a few. In fact, the truth was the reverse: a broad base of talent, with a wide repertoire, very little of which ever found its way on to commercial releases. This does not mean that the music was inferior because it was not recorded, and the belief that only the very best artists were recorded ought by now to be seen as an understandable but significant blunder.

Of the featured artists on this album, none could be thought of as professional, although Jack Harp's connection with the church in his later years might be so construed. Bill Bryant was a barber, Henry Johnson an orderly in the very hospital in which he died. Bruce Upshaw and Baby Tate both worked in construction - Tate was a bricklayer. These men and thousands like them had a huge musical talent. Playing blues was as much part of their everyday life as whistling in the street used to be, or throwing horseshoes.

To have seen Guitar Shorty in an introspective, blues-filled mood was to have appreciated that it was as much a part of his life as was breathing. The few who saw and heard Henry Johnson in person knew they were in the presence of a man of immense skill, with a deep love and understanding of music. Future writers, their perceptions heightened and sharpened by hindsight, will come to realise that his was the country blues talent to emerge in the 1970s. A man of quiet dignity, he epitomised the best of country qualities in his unhurried, unruffled approach to life, honed by a gentle, wry sense of humour.

The title of this album reflects the fact that most of these men have already gone. Henry Johnson, Baby Tate, Peg Leg Sam, Guitar Shorty, Willie Moore, Bud Grant, Elbert Freeman, Nathaniel Ford, Ed Green, Jack Harp and Willie Rockmore are dead. For various reasons the others have not been traced and they are unlikely to be located again. With the exception of Jack Harp all these men were alive within the last decade.

Let it be abundantly clear that with their passing, and that of their generations, an era in black American folk music will have ended. Their like will never reappear. There will be no replacements.

BABY TATE Born Charles Henry Tate in Georgia in 1916, he moved to Greenville, South Carolina when he was 10 years old, and soon came to know local bluesmen like Josh White and the legendary Willie Walker. In his early years, Josh White was a consummate guitarist and it is instructive to consider the superlative finger-pickers who came from that area. Gary Davis moved away in 1922 and the sole issued coupling by Willie Walker shows him to have been a master; even Gary Davis considered Walker to have been the finest guitarist he ever heard. The young Tate grew up in a veritable hotbed of fine music and by 1932 was broadcasting over WFBC Greenville with the Carolina Blackbirds. By the late 1930s Tate had played with Blind Boy Fuller, passing through on his way home to Durham, North Carolina. In the 1940s he played with both Brownie McGhee and Lightning Hopkins, and although he was playing blues very rarely after he moved to Spartanburg, where these selections were recorded, his roots and love of the music were such as to pose him no problems when it came to recording. The two cuts on this album were made on the first fieldtrip following his "rediscovery"; Sam Charters having recorded him in the early 1960s when he was primarily documenting Tate's good neighbour, medicine-show performer Pink Anderson. On *Bad Gasoline*, the fine harmonica is by Arthur "Peg Leg Sam" Jackson, who can also be heard offering vocal support on *You Can Always Tell*. Sam died in October 1977 and was one of the last real links with the pitch-men and performers of the medicine show. Sam learned his stock-in-trade from Pink Anderson, but extended it over four decades on the medicine-show stage. By no means primarily a bluesman, he is very much at home with Tate here. Tate was a superb example of the rapidly reducing band of genuine country blues performers. Not only was he a fine artist in his own right, but he pieced together some of the history of the blues scene around north-central South Carolina and it was directly thanks to him that such artists as Peg Leg Sam and Henry Johnson came to light. Just when Tate was reaching a new peak in his music he suddenly died in August 1972 leaving yet another gap that simply could not be filled. It was not just that another fine bluesman had gone, but that a further slice of blues history had gone with him.

Recorded: Spartanburg, South Carolina, by Peter B. Lowry
August 7 (*Bad Gasoline*) and August 8 (*You Can Always Tell*) 1970

Other recordings:

The Blues of Baby Tate: See What You Done Gone Bluesville LP1072
The Blues: Music from the Film by Samuel Charters Anthology,
Asch Records LP101

Charles Henry Tate, 1916-1972...Baby Tate Trix LP3313, Trix
4502 (45rpm disc)

and accompanying *Peg Leg Sam: Medicine Show Man* Trix LP3302

See also Bruce Bastin, *Crying for the Carolines*, London 1971, p66ff.

JACK HARP Born in Crestview, Florida about 1915, Willis Nathaniel Harp was playing guitar by the late 1920s. He claimed to Jeff Tarrer, who discovered him, that he had recorded with Barbecue Bob in June 1927, with Blind Blake in 1929 and with Tampa Red in 1932. Back then he was a blues guitarist: "I was young and kinda wild and foolish." About 1955 he turned to the church and when he was located by Tarrer, was playing from a wheelchair. On some of the numbers recorded, Harp's wife, Zepherine, plays washboard; no ordinary one but an ice-tray from an old-fashioned refrigerator which stood up to the punishment better! Originally she played this with two knife-blades, but Tarrer had that day bought her some thimbles to reduce the sound and make it easier to record. The bass drum is played by her daughter, Caroline James.

Jeff Tarrer described his meeting with the Reverend Jack Harp in an article for *Blues Unlimited* in 1965:

"I first heard Willis Nathaniel Harp, better known to most people as the Reverend Jack Harp, and his wife Zepherine about three years ago on a street corner of Crestview on my way to my wife's home in Andalusia, Alabama. When I heard it, I immediately knew this was the 'old sound' and I screeched the brakes to a halt and went back. The Reverend has been crippled from the waist down since he was nine months old. He is unable to use crutches, but gets around in a wheel-chair and goes from town to town with his singing family. Sometimes he appears at Negro churches and other times he plays at a cafe or some other regular gathering place in the Negro section of the town."

When he recorded, Jack Harp wouldn't play blues: "If you listen to God's Bible being read and hear the portion of the Bible that says 'You must put a difference between holy and unholy - the clean and the unclean'. Ain't that right? If I'm saved and sanctified and sing the blues, I'm not clean. Right?" It's a pity though, for he plays some stunning bottleneck guitar and, sadly, before a proper session could be arranged, died in Pensacola, Florida on 26 March 1965.

Recorded: Crestview, Florida, by Jeff Tarrer, 24 December 1962.

See also Tarrer's article in *Blues Unlimited* 26 October 1965, pp 3-5.

GUITAR SHORTY Born about January 1932 in the coastal town of Belhaven, North Carolina, John Henry Fortescue was a complete individual, eccentric to a degree and completely independent as a guitarist. It is impossible to piece together coherently his influence and *My Mother's Dead and Gone* epitomises the diversity of these influences and his approach to his music. Starting out as Luke Jordan's *Church Bells Blues*, there are touches of Blind Willie Johnson and *Soon This Morning*, but it is a typical, autobiographical Shorty track about his mother, slow and idiomatic.

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Shorty generally earned a pittance picking cotton, doing odd jobs about farms or singing on the streets in Rocky Mount. In view of his physical environment and his own life, we can only ever wonder at how he managed to produce music of such gentleness and sensitivity. Somehow he stayed alive until 1976.

Recorded: Wilson, North Carolina, by Danny McLean and Ken Bass,
25 July 1971

Other recordings:

Carolina Slide Guitar: Guitar Shorty Flyright LP500
Guitar Shorty: Alone In His Field Trix LP3306
Carolina Country Blues (anthology) Flyright LP505

See also Valerie Wilmer, *Guitar Shorty: an Appreciation and Memory*, in *Blues Unlimited*, 120, July-August 1976, pp 20-21.

WILLIE ROCKMORE Born 2 February 1921 in Newton County, Georgia, home of such fine bluesmen as Curley Weaver, and where the great sociologist, Howard W. Odum, had collected black songs between 1906 and 1908, which comprised part of the first serious study of black American secular folk music when it was published in the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1911. Rockmore moved to Atlanta and was resident in the suburb of Decatur when he died on 26 August 1971. He was recorded in Atlanta with

BRUCE UPSHAW, a harmonica player from Montgomery, Alabama, who had moved to Atlanta to work on a construction job. Their version of *Set It Up And Go*, which Rockmore called *Got The Stuff Right Here* before they began to play, is at times reminiscent of the Georgia Browns, a 1933 ARC studio name for an Atlanta blues trio comprising Curley Weaver and Fred McMullen on guitars and Buddy Moss on harmonica.

Recorded: Atlanta, Georgia, by George Mitchell, 1963

Other recordings:

Trouble in Mind Revival LP1007
Georgia Blues Rounder LP2008 Both LPs are anthologies.

BUDDY BOY JENKINS In March 1973 Danny McLean and I were in Edgecombe, North Carolina, trying to locate some of the older bluesmen mentioned by local guitarist Elester Anderson. We were enjoying an afternoon's music with Elester and his cousin, Juke-Boy Anderson, when Elester suddenly said, "That's how Buddy Jenkins used to play. You know how Buddy Jenkins could play 'cos your brother would play just like Buddy Jenkins! He and Buddy Jenkins played just about all the time." At the time, it was just the name of yet another bluesman who used to play in the area and who had vanished from sight. Some time later, from correspondence

with Chuck Perdue who located John Jackson, it transpired that a Buddy Boy Jenkins had been recorded and one track from that session appears on this album.

Jenkins had been sleeping rough in Washington, DC, and had been located in late 1964 by Ed Morris, a DC guitarist interested in blues. The little that is known of Buddy Boy Jenkins is told by Ed and Lesleigh Morris.

"In the mid-1960s, Buddy Boy Jenkins paid frequent visits to the home of Flora Molton, where Ed Green had been a boarder for the previous fifteen years. Ed and Buddy spent many evenings together, making music into the late hours. They were disparate personalities. Ed was settled, kindly, gentle, friendly, open, full of good humor, and generally (but in no way Tommishly) circumspect. Buddy Boy was nomadic (changing residence almost daily, it seemed), cynical, and untrusting with a perpetual chip on his shoulder.

"But all of this would melt away when he mounted a stage. Playing guitar as adeptly as any Blind Boy Fuller imitator we have heard, and sounding (vocally) like an East Coast counterpart to Willie Lane, he totally captivated an audience of blues fans at the Ontario Place on the one night that we were able to coax him into performing for a larger-than-living-room-size audience. Once, we did manage to get him to travel with us to a party at John Jackson's house. On this occasion, the tape was made which is represented by the selection on this album. When finished singing, he withdrew into general testiness and overindulgence in alcohol.

"A man apparently guarding something he felt worth hiding, Buddy Boy Jenkins was impossible to interview. We have no knowledge of his real name, age (possibly in his forties at the time), and place of birth. We have nothing less general than the East Coast (probably the Carolinas) for his stomping grounds. The result of all recent enquiries leads us to believe that he is now dead."

Jenkins has a style reminiscent of Blind Boy Fuller, and five songs recorded at the party included *Step It Up And Go*, a heavy seller for Fuller, and *Cat Man Blues*, using some of the same stanzas as Fuller's 1936 recording, including the one closely linked with *Our Goodman*, the old ballad (Child 274). Jenkins also incorporated lines from Fuller's 1937 Decca recording of *Stingy Mama* in the last stanza. The song on this album which represents Jenkins was popular around Rocky Mount, a few miles east of where Buddy Jenkins (mentioned by Elester Anderson) lived. It was the "signature tune" of medicine show performer and harmonica player Arthur Jackson, better known as Peg Leg Sam, who is to be heard on the Baby Tate sides on this anthology. For some years Sam played this over radio and TV stations in Rocky Mount and both song and man are well known in the area.

The only known recordings of a country blues artist for a small local label in North Carolina since 1945 featured *Greasy Greens* on

one side of a 45rpm disc. This was by RockyMount harmonica player, Roosevelt May, recorded in Raleigh about 1966 for the obscure local Hub label. Peg Leg Sam seems to have obtained his version from Bumble Bee Slim's 1932 version, but Jenkins seems to have at least heard Sam, in view of certain verses used and some of his phrasing.

Whether the DC man is the same as the bluesman mentioned by Elester Anderson remains a point of conjecture. However, the North Carolina man had been a Fuller stylist - as is Anderson himself - and Washington DC was a significant stop-over point for musicians migrating to New York from the Southeastern states. At least one other local bluesman, Thelmon Whitehurst from neighbouring Pitt County is known to have moved to Washington DC.

We will probably never know for sure, as Jenkins vanished back into the depths of Washington as easily as he had briefly emerged. The small fragment of music he left behind suggests he was once a fine guitarist but undoubted lack of practice and the tough life of the down-and-out have blunted his playing and ruined his voice. Nevertheless there is a good deal of character about his version of *Greasy Greens* and another firm reminder that the music was never the sole prerogative of a handful but an integral part of the culture of a substantial section of poor blacks.

Recorded: Fairfax Station, Virginia, by Ed Morris and Chuck Perdue, early 1965

Elester Anderson can be heard on Flyright LP505 *Carolina Country Blues*, as can Peg Leg Sam. Sam's *Greasy Greens* is featured on two albums, *Medicine Man Show* on Trix 3302 and a live double album of his medicine show, *The Last Medicine Show* on Flyright LPs 507/508. Bumble Bee Slim's version of *Greasy Greens* can be heard on Magpie LP1801, *Bumble Bee Slim 1931-1937: Everybody's Fishing*.

HENRY JOHNSON Born 8 December 1908 in Union County, South Carolina, where he remained all his life. Indeed, until he travelled in 1972 to play at small concerts in North Carolina, he had never even travelled beyond three counties which adjoined his own. He played both piano and guitar for local gospel groups and is unusual in that he "crossed over" in a reverse path in the early 1950's, when he began to play blues. By the late 1960's he had teamed up with Peg Leg Sam Jackson to play a 15-minute programme over WBSU in Union, advertising second-hand cars! Baby Tate from nearby Spartanburg had literally brought Peg Leg Sam to Pete Lowry and myself for a recording session and, loyal to the man who had given him that little exposure in 1970, Sam revealed the existence of Henry Johnson only after Baby Tate was dead. Henry was a quiet, dignified musician, who belied his nickname "Rufe", a contraction of "Rooster", which he earned in

his younger days. Just as Henry began to play rather further afield he succumbed in early February 1974 to the kidney disease which had been with him a long time, but which he kept a secret. Tragically, his passing came just at a time when his true potential was beginning to be realised. He was never more at home than when playing his guitar and his use of slide was both delicate and authoritative. While *Rock Tonight Baby* is a typically infectious good-time boogie, *Can't Keep From Cryin'* harkens back to Blind Willie Johnson but is all Rufe's own. They were both recorded in his front room one cold, snowy evening in January by a small film unit from WXPN Philadelphia, on a grant from Columbia University, documenting blues singers in the southeastern states. Henry was always relaxed when he played, a superlative musician at all times but perhaps at home among his friends, playing the gospel music which was so much part of his heritage, he reached his peak.

Recorded: Union County, South Carolina by Michael Levine, early January 1973

Other recordings:

Henry Johnson

The Union County Flash Trix LP3304

Carolina Country Blues Flyright LP505 Anthology
Flyright 45002 (45 rpm disc)

WILLIE MOORE Born 22 April 1918 in Kinston, North Carolina. He began playing guitar about 1930, learning from such local bluesmen as Francis Suggs, Leo Hamilton, George Weasley and 'Black Cat'. By 1934 he was good enough to win first prize at a blues contest organised by local furniture-store manager J B Long. Long was soon to commence his brief career as recording agent for Blind Boy Fuller, Brownie McGhee and a number of Durham, North Carolina bluesmen. In 1934 Long was looking for a white country group to record a topical song he had co-written about a train wreck in nearby Lumberton, as well as a Negro gospel group, for he noticed how well this sort of record sold in his store. The Cauley Family and Mitchell's Christian Singers won these categories in his contests while Willie Moore won the blues contest. Records by the first two groups appeared on ARC and a Boll Weevil Bill recorded four vocal-guitar blues, after the Mitchell's Christian Singers had recorded. It could well be that Moore travelled with this group, and recorded at the end of the session, although Long was not really interested in recording a bluesman at that time. Boll Weevil Bill's sides were never released, despite being scheduled for Vocalion, according to the session files.

By 1949, Moore was living in Albany, New York, where he was located by Kip Lornell in 1970. A rough, preliminary recording session was arranged but unfortunately Willie Moore died of cancer

on 2 May 1971, before the planned session could take place. The tracks for this anthology come from that warm-up session; all but ruined by a serious mains hum. Although skilled mastering has removed much noise, some ineradicable hum remains.

Recorded: Albany, New York by Kip Lornell, November 1970

Possible other recordings: 4 unissued sides for American
Recording Company in New York
22 August 1934

See also *Living Blues*, Summer 1971, pp 15-16 for an article on Moore by Kip Lornell and Bruce Bastin, *Crying for the Carolines* (London, Studio Vista, 1971) pp 12-13 for details of Long's concerts. Further details of these are given in *John Edwards Memorial Foundation Quarterly*, Summer 1973 pp 41 and 66. Further details in substantiation of the claim that Moore was Boll Weevil Bill are given in Bruce Bastin and John Cowley, 'Uncle Art's Logbook Blues', *Blues Unlimited*, 108, p 13

ELBERT FREEMAN AND NATHANIEL FORD These notes are taken directly from the field notes of John Burrison, Professor of English at Georgia State University in Atlanta, who teaches folklore courses there.

"By the time we had reached the sleepy town of Monticello in Jasper Co. north of Macon, it was early afternoon and we had found enough folk architecture to satisfy me. As we had parked momentarily by a downtown auto repair shop, I asked the mechanic if there was anyone in the area who played any old-time instruments. He directed us to the Middle Georgia Music Store and told me to ask Franklin Lynch, the proprietor, who would know better than anyone else in town ... he immediately thought of a Negro blues fiddler who lived in town, Elbert Freeman, who worked as a carpenter. He drove us to Mr. Freeman's house, but we found only his daughter at home, and she made us promise that after we had found her father and recorded a few of his tunes, we must let him go home so that he could go fishing that afternoon. It took a while to locate Elbert and his usual guitar accompanist, Nathaniel "Natty" Ford. Meanwhile, Mr. Lynch agreed to record the music in his own studio ... After a recording session lasting from 2pm - 3pm and taping seven tunes, Elbert seemed eager to continue - they had just gotten warmed up - but we kept our promise to his daughter and got him back home in time to get in some good fishing. Because of the rush and the unnatural surroundings of the studios we were unable to interview the two musicians. One of (my) students returned several weeks later to conduct an interview with Elbert but simply could not locate him.

Both men are approximately in their early sixties ... Elbert is

short and stocky, "Natty" is tall and thin. Evidently they had both lived in Monticello all their lives, playing at dances for the Negro community ... Elbert plays a raggedy blues fiddle, intentionally bouncing the bow on the strings to produce a squealing effect and sliding into the higher notes, as well as striking disharmonious chords. To one unfamiliar with this type of Negro fiddling it might sound like poor playing, but actually Elbert has a good sense of pitch and control over his instrument. Natty does a nice clean job of backup chording, holding his strumming hand in a peculiar extended position illustrated by the photographs".

Since 1940 Fort Valley State Teachers College in Fort Valley, Georgia, south of Macon, had held festivals of local black folk music which attracted musicians from the surrounding countryside. The 1952 festival featured a string band from Monticello which consisted of Elbert Freeman and Ortis Ford, who won \$20 with *Shoe Shine Boy* and *Tennessee Waltz*, both numbers that were recorded in 1967 for Burrison. In 1953 the Freeman String Band was augmented to a 5-piece unit and besides Elbert Freeman on violin and Ortis Ford on guitar, there were Nathaniel Ford on electric guitar, Howard A. Smith on piano and Alfred Johnson on bass. As well as such old fiddle tunes as *Leather Britches* and *Sally Goodwin [Sally Gooden]* they also played *Blues - Freeman arrangement*, according to the festival notes, no doubt the same tune as the fine one recorded by Burrison and issued here for the first time.

Recorded: Monticello, Georgia by John Burrison, 8 April 1967

For further details of the Fort Valley festivals see Bruce Bastin, *Fort Valley Blues*, in *Blues Unlimited* 111 (December 1974-January 1975) pp 11-13, *Blues Unlimited* 112 (March-April 1975) pp 13-16 [with specific reference to the Freeman String Band] and *Blues Unlimited* 114 (July-August 1975) pp 20-21.

Selections from the 1941 and 1943 festivals were released on Flyright-Matchbox LP SDM250 *Fort Valley Blues*

BUD GRANT Born in 1924, he lived all his life in Thomaston, Georgia. By the age of 12 he was playing "mostly little frolicking pieces ... just for somebody to dance off. Buck dances." Later he started playing blues at sawmills where he worked. *Rattlesnake Moan* is a close cover of *I'm A Rattlesnakin' Daddy* from Blind Boy Fuller's first recording session in July 1935. Like many bluesmen of Grant's generation, and not only those from the southeastern states, he was strongly influenced by Fuller's material. At the time of his death one year after this song was recorded, he was playing with several gospel groups on the Thomaston radio station.

Recorded: Thomaston, Georgia by George Mitchell 1969

Other Recordings:

Trouble in Mind Revival LP1007
Georgia Blues Rounder LP2008 Both are anthologies

BILL BRYANT Born William P Bryant in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, where he frequently played with Alden Bunn, better known as Tarheel Slim. Bryant moved to New Jersey, following the normal migration route for east coast Negroes, and thence to Boston. There he came to know Robert Gear, who recorded *Black and Tan* at a party on Labor Day 1969. While in Boston, Bryant taught the young Alvin Hankerson, who recorded there as Guitar Nubbitt. Bryant moved between Boston and Newark, New Jersey but his North Carolina origins are very evident in this Blind Boy Fuller number, having grown up flat-picking in the local style, under the influence of records by Fuller, Buddy Moss and Josh White. For over 20 years his barbershop was the hang-out for guitarists such as Kenny Burrell, Wes Montgomery and George Benson ... but the roots are there still.

Recorded: Boston, Massachussetts by Robert Gear, 1 September 1969

ED GREEN Born in 1890 in Beecherville, South Carolina, he took up guitar at the age of twelve. His family was musical, his father played violin and his mother played the organ. Within a year, young Ed became proficient enough to join John J John's carnival - reputedly one of the largest in the South at the time - and toured with them for the next five years. In the years that followed, he played for churches, dances, and house-rent parties, maintaining a fairly active career as musician. His post-musician years were spent in Washington DC where he worked as a house-painter. In 1964 he began playing in DC coffeehouses including the Ontario Place where Skip James, Mance Lipscomb, Flora Molton, John Hurt and Son House often performed, until his health failed a few years later.

Ed Green played sacred, blues and other secular music in a style that predated the earliest recorded black folk music. His music belonged to the period when Negro folk musicians were turning from banjo to the guitar. His is a style which includes a great many raps, taps and stretched bass strings. At times, he would play a machine-gun-like run of up to eight notes or more, lifting a bass string at least four inches from the fretboard for each note played. Although his songs came from oral tradition, he expressed admiration for recording artists such as Blind Blake, the Carver Boys and Ford Brisco, who recorded with the Cumberland Brothers.

Into his late seventies, he was a dashing rascal of a gentleman. His demeanor was young. Over sixty years earlier, he was entertaining black minstrel and medicine show audiences all over the south with his guitar playing, singing and monologues. (Ed's son, Little Willie Green, now deceased, also travelled from 1916 to 1922 with "Doc Andy's Medicine Show" as a musician, backed recording artists and recorded for Brunswick in April 1928). During the time that John Hurt lived in Washington DC he and Ed were good buddies and made the most natural, unique, and cohesive kind of music whenever they would get together. Ed died around 1971, in his early eighties, alone at Glendale Sanatorium in Washington.

Recorded: Washington DC by Ed Morris [who wrote the notes], about 1965

DAVE DICKERSON Born 4 May 1913 in Tip Top, Virginia, in the mountain region close to the West Virginia border. He listened to blues as a child, learning much of his material from records, especially Blind Lemon Jefferson. As for many persons in the remoter regions of the South, these records came by mail-order, and Dave well remembered awaiting the arrival of the postman with the new order. For much of his life he worked in construction and for US Steel, at the West Virginia mines at Thorpe and Filbert, but was forced to retire through ill health in 1967, about the time he was playing occasional weekend gigs at a coffeehouse in Blackburg, Virginia. He had been 'discovered' in 1966 in Welch, West Virginia by Roddy Moore, who now heads the Blue Ridge Institute at Ferrum College, Virginia.

Although there has been little documentation of the place of black secular music in Appalachian Virginia and West Virginia, it is quite evident that there was a black secular music tradition, partly based on the transient workers with the railroads, the construction companies and the mines. Their influence was considerable, not only on local blacks but also white artists, such as Dick Justice and Frank Huchison of Logan County, West Virginia, where there was a sizable black population. At one time Dave Dickerson played with a black string band in Gary, West Virginia which played for dances and house parties. Gary is within 20 miles of the southern edge of Logan County.

Recorded: Blackburg, Virginia, by Roddy Moore in 1967

Bruce Bastin
February 1978