



Banjoman

[a tribute to **Derroll Adams**]

Derroll Lewis Adams was born in 1925 in Portland Oregon. His mother was Gertrude Elizabeth Kerr, whose ancestors had come to Oregon in covered wagons. Derroll's natural father was Ernest Raymond "Tom" Thompson, an ex-fairground juggler from Maine, who carved tombstones when he wasn't drunk. Gertrude left him because of his drinking.

Derroll: "My family called me Buddy – short for Derroll is Buddy so they tell me – everybody in the family called me Buddy. (Pointing at a photograph on the wall) This is me. That little boy was acting. That's me – looking you straight into the eye – trying to be strong. I remember the night when that photo was taken.

I had to take a train to Spokane, Washington by myself. My dad was dying in the hospital – cancer of the throat. He'd been a soldier in WWI and had been gassed and the results turned into cancer. My

mother had just left him – she was up in Spokane, working as a saleswoman.

So she went ahead and always left me with people in the family, which didn't make the family very happy – they were always giving me hell. I went up to meet her and she put me in a home with a woman that had a couple kids but that woman was a monster and I wonder what happened to her kids because I didn't have to be there so long."



After Thompson died his mother married Jack Glenn, a truck driver.

Derroll: "That guy was something else – never bugged me sexually – nothing like that, but he was a brute. He beat me with the belt buckle – got a big kick in him."

His mother left Jack Glenn. With Derroll and her mother she went to live in a house where George Irwin Adams was a tenant. The little boy took a liking to

Adams and persuaded his mother that here was a likely father prospect. They got married and Derroll took his surname.

Derroll: *“Adams was really a good guy. He’d been raised as an old western gentleman. His dad – I called him Grandpa Adams – died in ‘39 when I was thirteen. Grandpa Adams had been a scout for the army – like you see in the movies. He told me when he was a little boy in a cabin in North Dakota the Indians burst open the door and took all their food. He also told me about this old fellow that came to them with eleven arrows in him – they saved his life – he lived.*

He had a shack out in the back and he made little birdhouses. Whenever we visited I helped him making birdhouses. I asked him one time, ‘Grandpa, did you carry a six-shooter?’ And he says, ‘No, I carried a sawed off shotgun under my coat.’ Wow, a sawed off shotgun – that’s the most deadly weapon in the world. I mean, goddamn Sam – I was impressed!

My dad Adams had two sisters – they’re both dead. I suppose I’m the only one in the world

that remembers them. They say that’s your second death, when there’s nobody left to remember you – I’m the only one in the world to remember.”

George Adams got a job on the Bonneville Dam power line. The job involved a lot of travelling which lead the family to practically every town in the Northwest. Much of Derroll’s childhood was spent in the backseat of a car.

Derroll: *“When I was a little boy I never really had a home. The nearest thing to home was the backseat of a car. Our possessions – we’d fold them up and put them beneath the backseat so it’ll be just like one floor. I laid back there with my harps – played the harmonica. My mother liked to drive at night – it was terribly sad – we moved like seventeen times in a year. You come to a town – a little kid – you fall in love with some little girlie – you got friends and comes that day where you tell them goodbye and you never see them again. So my songs were kind of sad.*

We got the car radio and the Grand Ole Opry and I heard Jimmy Rodgers sing Muleskinner Blues. The Carter Family were great too in their holy kind of Christian way. Hear their harmonies – pretty good – country harmonies. You can imagine them in the kitchen making bread. I'd hear this 5-string banjo – just something about the rhythm of it that I really liked – but I didn't know what a 5-string banjo was."

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Derroll was 16 and a typical adolescent who was looking for adventure. He lied about his age and joined the Army. After three months he was exposed as a runaway and sent home. At age 18 Derroll married Adeline and joined the Navy. He was assigned to a naval landing force and trained in judo, deep-sea diving, bayonet and knife fighting. In the Navy he shaved his head (they called him "Moon") and began wearing an earring. He spent much of his spare time with sailors from the South, playing harmonica with them and learning their songs. He hated the Navy.

Derroll: *"Then when I was in the navy most of the guys were southerners and we got talking about Doc Boggs and some of those old banjo players and they said, 'Oh, that's a 5-string banjo.' The war was hell to me. I thought my God, when I get out I'm going to art school and I'm going to paint pictures and play the 5-string banjo."*

Life in the Navy with its repetitive battle drills shattered his nerves. Being seasick constantly didn't help either. One night he chased after a lieutenant with a knife. He was stopped in time and sent to the hospital on Treasure Island in San Francisco. His illness was diagnosed as "psycho-neurosis anxiety." After a while he got released, returned to Portland and enrolled at Museum Art School. To cheer him up on his return home, his mother gave him a banjo that she'd bought from an old blind lady.

Derroll: *"I finally got my first banjo – my mother got it for me as a birthday present – but find out how to play a fiver is something else –*

figure out a way to tune it and play it. Then Pete came to Portland – Pete Seeger. I sat in the front row to watch his hands – see what they did – but I couldn't figure it out.

Afterwards there was a party and I took my banjo under my coat to the party and he asked if he could play it. He said, 'Do you mind if I retune it?' I said, 'No, go ahead.' So he put it in a G-tuning and when he was through playing he asked me, 'Shall I tune it back?' I said, 'No, no, that's alright.' I wanted to know his tuning you see. So I hurried home and I memorized the sound.

That was the start of my playing and right away I was singing at Union Halls and so on. That was 1945, so I've been doing the old banjo ever since. Something about the 5-string banjo got to me – the rhythm. I was also playing the guitar and mandolin, but I got that banjo and that was the end of the guitar and mandolin which I kicked my ass many times, because a banjo is wonderful but it's limited. And the guitar – the sky is the limit. And there were songs I'd like to have done that would never fit on the five.

If I'd kept up with the guitar I could've branched out more and did more. But I got completely off

on the banjo – the banjo is a true friend of mine. I call her 'Banje.' Even when people ask for my autograph I write Derroll & Banjo. It's over 50 years I've played the old banje!

My banjo and me are really close. On a good evening there will be a lot of laughter in that banjo – not a cynical laugh, it's more like a chuckle. I don't like to play loud – that way you can hear all the notes."

With his second wife Laureen, Derroll had two children Mark and Debbie. He took jobs as a taxi driver and radio announcer at a small Portland radio station, then he was a window dresser at a local supermarket and a ranch hand, too. For a while he worked as a logger.

Derroll: "I was what you call a windfall buckler. When they have these big storms and the trees all falling down – it's extremely dangerous. You work alone, but you work within calling distance of each other. The insurance for windfall bucklers is higher than for the guys that handle explosives – if you make the slightest mistake you're dead or crippled for life. I liked being a

windfall buckler – you're tough and hard as a rock. You can walk with the greatest and walk straight. I always had my banjo with me and I played with a guy in the logger camp who played the guitar – then I got hurt and I pulled out."

After he left his second wife, he was jailed on a false charge of non-support but was released on probation because of his illness in the service. He went to live with Elisabeth, a fellow art school student. They planned to go to Mexico to study art, but decided to stay in San Diego when they discovered that she was pregnant.

Derroll: "We went to San Diego – I was a spray painter for the Lockheed aircraft factory down there. Then we moved up the coast to Oceanside, California where I got a job washing dishes. I got this beautiful Model A Ford pickup – my favorite car – a Model A Ford. In Oceanside we were living on the beach. Our home was blankets held together with clothespins. We were on a health trip – wanted to live close to the earth. My wife – we never actually did get married – was

pregnant and we lived there through her pregnancy – eating raw food.

There was a big horse racing track there. When the horse season was going on, the horse racing people were camping out on the beach. Some old crazy film writer and his wife came along – they had a little car. They took us to Oceanside where we bought a little one-room trailer. We brought it back and put it on a bluff – so it was like we were living up in a castle on the bluff and the little town around us. It was great."

Then they moved to a trailer park near Carlsbad. Derroll was hired as a taxi driver to take marines home to Florida for Christmas.

Derroll: "My wife became friends with one of the other wives in one of the other trailers, whose husband had taxis. This was during the Korean War and there was a big air strike – bus strike. The whole thing stopped and it was Christmas time. The little taxi companies chartered cross-country cabs to take the marines home. I became one of the drivers. I'd been a truck driver, so I had a license and was ok.

It was my job to drive seven marines from Oceanside, California to Tampa, Florida. Drove them day and night – taking pills to stay awake. My car was a DeSoto; it was slow to pick up but once it got going man, it went like a bat out of hell. I had to average 50 miles an hour. That doesn't sound like much, but when you come to towns you have to go slow and then you have to pick up to make 50 miles average. That means floor-boarding man. That means really getting on it. The taxi was a big made-over DeSoto. They put the light switch – a pull out plug – on the dashboard. There's two marines sitting in the front and there's jump seats in the back to carry all the marines.

We're outside of Sheffield, Texas and the guys are all sound asleep. It's nighttime and that son-of-a-gun is floor-boarded – it's going as fast as it will ever go. Suddenly the headlights go out. Driving like that, you can't put your brakes on – it's pitch-black on a slow curve and I keep hearing gravel – no gravel – gravel – no gravel...Off comes my foot off the gas: gravel – no gravel. Around the curve there was a little cement bridge and we hit it on the side of the cab.

The guy in the middle was thrown forward and split his head open on the rearview mirror. The guy in the back broke his nose. Boom...they're just back from the war – they thought they'd been hit by a bomb or something. They were shitting their pants. The light had been busted and the frame had been bent around the wheel a bit – just by pure luck it didn't get to the radiator.

A butane truck came along with a big metal chain – he pulled my frame back and we drove into the little town of Sheffield, Texas. The sheriff walks in like out of a movie. "Who's driving?" I tell him about my headlights going out and bringing the marines back home. That means I must be a good American. This other guy comes in – didn't see the sheriff: "Jesus Christ – who's driving that taxi cab? I was doing 75 miles an hour and it passed me like a bat out of hell." That put me in deep shit! But I was carrying the marines home so the sheriff put a blind eye to it.

We tied up the car and finished the trip. I drove them to Tampa where they got off and took a bus to wherever they had to go. They were home for 2 weeks and I hung around Tampa and went to pick them up again. I still had to floorboard it

back too and was one of the first taxis back. Floor-boarding like this is dodgy, but I'm a first class driver – took very much pride in it. I love driving and the swing of the road and the balance of the car and how it swings a bit and you can use it – great! I was a good driver so we made it.”

The trip paid five hundred dollars, which allowed them to move to Los Angeles where Derroll worked at a succession of jobs.

Derroll: *“I did warehouse as a warehouse workman. I was a good worker – always wanted to be the best worker. If I did something I wanted to do it good – I always did – that was my goal. I was a truck driver for a while at Max Factor – a big cosmetic firm in Hollywood. My swamper – the guy that helps loading and unloading – was a guy by the name of Sid Berman. One day I'm singing to myself ‘Pretty Polly’ or something. He says, ‘Where did you learn that?’ ‘Oh, I sing and play the 5-string banjo a bit.’ Sid happened to be one of the center guys of the West Coast folk scene. It was through him that I got to know Will Geer and so on. He told his friends about me and*

I was invited. They were thrilled to have a real live truck driver – I was the real stuff! So that was my introduction to the folk scene. Crazy – how it all worked out.”

Derroll moved with his family to Topanga Canyon and lived close to Will Geer's place. Here he got in touch with a community of artists, folkies, communists, painters, freaks, writers, actors – a new generation of so-called “beats” or people that figured in Jack Kerouac's novel *On The Road*. In Topanga



he also met Woody Guthrie, Cisco Houston and James Dean.

Derroll: *"I knew Woody and Pete, Al Lomax, Will Geer, Cisco Houston, Odetta and Guy Carawan. I never really traveled with Woody – I met him in Topanga. Woody had a little cabin there that he used to stay at.*

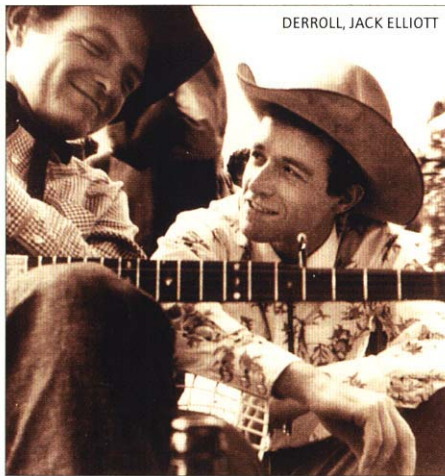
Up in Topanga Canyon there was this wonderful guy – he's dead now – his name was Will Geer. He was a grandfather in that series 'The Waltons.' He also played the character of that wonderful old trapper in Sidney Polack's movie 'Jeremiah Johnson.' He was a big figure in the folk scene – just as much as Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger for that matter. He wasn't a singer and player but a very good actor. In his place in Topanga he had these big hootenannies. He made a lovely stage out of boxes and boards and you sat in the field in front of his house. I started to getting invited up.

'One time – I was living in some little room – they find me: Some guy from New York is playing and Will wants me to play with this guy. I never met him – I didn't know how he plays or nothing

and I didn't have my banjo. Bess Lomax sent somebody up to her place to bring her banjo down. So here I am, meeting Jack Elliott. I didn't have a clue what he played: 'Do you know Muleskinner Blues?' So we get on the stage – never played together before – and bring the house down. Everybody cheering – that was my start with Jack."

Jack Elliott: *"Woody had dropped me off at Will Geer's place in Topanga Canyon where I met Derroll Adams, who was the closest thing to a muleskinner I had ever met at that time. Derroll had been a cowboy and a logger in Oregon and taught himself singing with a five-string banjo. They didn't have any five-string teachers in Oregon – nobody knew how to play a five string. All they knew how to do was run a skidder. And he was a choker setter and a wind-fall buckler. But Derroll had something extra. He had a Chinese kinda beard, and he had sorta Japanese calligraphy written on his banjo. It was some kind of a hip statement that Jack Kerouac wished he'd have wrote. When I first met him, I'd heard about him so much that I didn't need an*

DERROLL, JACK ELLIOTT



introduction. I just walked right up to him and said, 'You're Derroll Adams,' and he said, 'Yup,' and I knew we were going to be friends for life, or pretty near."

Jack and Derroll became good friends – they sang and played together and took several trips up and down the West Coast. Although totally different, Jack and Derroll comple-

mented each other very well. Jack, a brilliant guitarist with a high pitched voice, was the perfect foil to Derroll's deep voice and original banjo style. Elisabeth and Derroll split up; she took the children, Gregorio and Tamara, and went back to Portland. This event inspired Derroll to write his best known song 'Portland Town.'

Derroll: *"The first song I ever really made up was 'Portland Town.' I was living in Hollywood and had lost my children and I felt bad about it. My wife had moved and taken the kids away and that was the end of that. So I was making up a song about it. This was during the Korean War – I knew this old couple then whose only son was sent off to war and got killed, so I changed the words and made it a Korean War song – losing my children in the war. I changed it from personal into the war thing. That was the first real one that I did – not realizing that it got quite well known. I never copyrighted it – didn't know about that stuff. The next thing, people claimed they wrote it – I was shocked. I go see a lawyer – he starts a lawsuit. Then I get a letter*

from this guy and he said that he made 50,000 dollars on that song and he would like to give it to me but he can't, because he had to use it to fight the lawsuit – the story is better than the money, ha-ha! Lots of people did 'Portland Town': The Kingston Trio, Barbara Dane, Joan Baez, Van Morrison and back in England I heard a Greek choral group doing it on the radio – it was beautiful!"



Derroll got a job as a preacher for a faith-healing church.

Derroll: "I was hired as Dr. Adams from the master church – this guy owned several churches and there was supposed to be a master church, but it didn't exist. I spoke every Sunday – didn't really talk about God much – just spoke the truth. I think I helped the people – they were thankful and after my speech they would come and shake my hand."

In 1956 Jack Elliott married June Hammerstein. Derroll was the best man and sang "Rich and Rambling Boy" at the wedding. The couple went on a honeymoon trip to Europe. Derroll played banjo in a 1957 Hal Barlett and Jules Bricken western film "Drango" starring Jeff Chandler. One day a letter arrived from Jack and June asking him to join them in Europe. Derroll got to New York just in time to board the SS United States and headed for England. Big Bill

Broonzy was on the same ship but they never met – Big Bill was travelling first class.

Derroll: *Jack and his wife June – a well known actress – left for England and after a while he sent for me. Said: if I'd come and play for 6 months, he'll pay my way over. So I figure I better say yes, because I'd never get an opportunity like this again. So I came over 40 years ago – came over here and found my home. When I first came over to England, the folk scene was going on there. Jack had showed up just about the time it was getting popular. Everybody went nuts about Jack's flat-picking. Jack couldn't have showed at a better time. So, when he called me over, I stepped right into it. I took it for granted. People asked me for autographs and I pretended that I'd been signing autographs all the time. But I never had before – just went along with it."*



Danny Thompson: *"I used to follow Derroll and Rambling Jack around in London when I was 13 years old... consequently when I had the opportunity to work with him I just got the shivers down my back at the thought of actually being with the same person who was a hero of mine, he never really understood that, but it is a memory I have forever, and I am grateful for being in his shadow, if only for a brief wondrous time. God Bless him and reward him."*

Derroll and Jack called themselves "The Cowboys" and quickly got very popular on the London folk and skiffle scene. Together they held London's fashionable Blue Angel club for three months and Jack and Derroll were

the darlings of the aristocratic visitors of this distinctive club. Here they got the idea to set off for a great European ramble. They did an album for Topic in London, then hit the con-

minent. First station was Paris – at the time the chosen home of jazz musicians Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and Dexter Gordon and the favorite residence of author Ernest Hemingway. The city was a true melting pot of cultural activity. Here Derroll also met Scottish folksinger Alex Campbell, who became Derroll's protégé on the banjo. Derroll, Jack and June spent the summer of 1957 in Portofino, recorded 2 albums in Milan for the Joker label, busked in Rome and bought scooters with the profits.

Youra Marcus: *"I was about 9 years old when I met Derroll in a pub in Paris, near the Contrescarpe which was the club where Ramblin' Jack Elliott and Alex Campbell were playing. My mother had a show there too. That's how it all began. Derroll was sitting in the same pub for about three days, playing and telling stories. Did not want to move along I looked like one of Derroll's sons (anyway that is what I was told). So Jack thought that if I came along that might shock Derroll enough to make him stop. That's what happened and here we were on*



Jack's Lambretta scooter, the three of us, heading to my ma's place, where Jack was living at the time. Derroll stayed for about two or three days and left. Just long enough for me to get hooked on that banjo sound – deep in my mind. Years later, in a French folk club, some guy sang 'Portland Town', so I went up to him and asked him if he knew anything about Derroll. He told me Derroll was living in Belgium – so I went to Antwerp and met Danny and saw Derroll again. I was about 16 then. And for the years to come I was going to visit him as much as I could."

Derroll: *"We went busking around Europe for a while and spent the summer in Portofino. We*

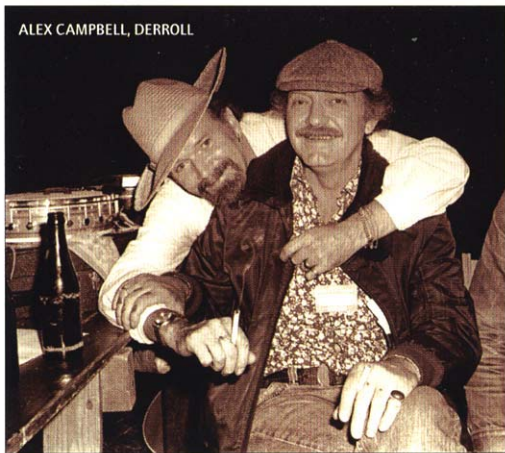
also went down to Milano and did our records and then we split up. Jack and June went their way and I went mine. June and I were getting on each other's nerves anyway. We stayed friends of course but we went our own ways. We got back together for the Expo in Bruxelles in 1958. I met Alex Campbell in Paris – he'd been a big fan of Jack's. We busked a couple times together and we became friends – had sort of a love-hate relationship. Alex died in 1987 up in Denmark."

Arlo Guthrie: "I remember the day when Ramblin' Jack came back from his trip to Europe with Derroll. Jack came back to the USA with a Norton AIS motorcycle and took me for a ride – I must have been around 10 years old. I heard stories of their adventures together as the 'Folk Boom' got underway. The contribution that Derroll and Ramblin' Jack made to the music world escaped me until years later as I became older. Somewhere in the early '70s I began to piece together the lineage of their personal journeys in connection with the others they'd learned from. They'd been in Topanga Canyon during my father's last ride across the country. They'd joined up with some of the characters who defined the coming era by their commitment to changing the world through songs – a people's music – not bought, sold or traded like the stuff flowing from the industry in Hollywood. They shared the idea that real songs sung by real people could make a real difference – they were right."



The most amazing thing was that these were all very unique individuals few of whom were team players. Derroll, like the others, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Will Geer, Cisco Houston, Odetta, had a solo career that long outlasted any group effort. Derroll fit right in as he moved right out – his own man."

Alex Campbell: (about their time together in Paris in his book *Frac Glesga Toon*): *"We went to a café des ouvriers which was just near St. Sulpice and started to tune up. After we had played through a tune one of the workers gave us two large glasses of vin rouge, which we speedily downed and proceeded to work out another song. Another laddie then gave us two large glasses of vin rouge, which we speedily downed. Three hours later we left the café tuned up as never before, and off we merrily went to our gig which was in the Russian restaurant near the Pont Des Arts."* Al goes on to say what a wonderful show they did. But after their performance the manager took Al to one side and told him firmly never to return. As they



walked up the road he asked Derroll in a puzzled voice why they had got the sack – after all, the audience had loved them. "Hell, Al," said Derroll, "it is just that when I was singing 'Alabama Bound', you were singing 'Oh Susannah' and it sounded kind of bad."

Hans Theessink: *"My first introduction to Derroll and Jack was the album *Riding in Folkland* on the Joker label, that I found in the*

cheap bin in a department store in Holland. I played that record time and time again and loved the sound of it and started singing some of the songs. To me the combination of Derroll and Jack is one of the best in folk music. After all these years I'm still in awe with their chemistry that made for honest – sometimes rough and ragged – musical magic."

Derroll returned to Paris and met Isabelle, the daughter of an aristocrat who didn't agree with his daughter's choice. The couple left France and headed for Brussels where they got married. "Izzy" had been a window decorator for Dior; she and Derroll started decorating together for high couture fashion shops. Within a year they were considered to be the best in their field in Europe. The couple had 2 children Vincent and Catherine. With the decorating job thriving, Derroll didn't play music professionally for a while except for a stint with Jack at the World's Fair

in Brussels where "The Cowboys" were a successful attraction in the American Pavilion. Derroll loved Brussels and was often seen at the famous café Le Welkom, next to the Grand Place. He used to sing and play his banjo at this pre-eminent meeting place for beatniks and artistic outlaws.

The marriage broke up and Derroll went back to playing fulltime again. On his first trip he went to England where he was welcomed as a prodigal son. He became quite a cult figure and influenced many of the



younger musicians on the burgeoning folk- and pop scene of the early sixties. There was a special tie between Derroll and Donovan who was on the verge of a big career which would yield hit songs such as 'Colours', 'Catch The Wind' and 'Mellow Yellow.' Donovan recorded some of Derroll's songs and dedicated 'Epistle to Derroll' to him. Derroll was around when Bob Dylan made his first British tour in 1965 and ended up in Don A. Pennebaker's documentary film of that tour "Don't Look Back" in which Derroll introduces Donovan to Dylan.

Derroll: *"People who argue about the purity of folk music sicken me. I sing my songs the way I feel them – why should I sing a song the way it was sung 100 years ago? I like to listen to the Beatles as well as The Carter Family. I've always liked all kinds of music, country, folk or pop and I believe they all come together. One time I get an offer for a gig deal. If I come down and back Donovan on a record with my banjo, they'll pay me 25 pounds. So I go down to the studio in Soho – Denmark Street, what they call Tin Pan Alley.*

That's when I heard him for the first time – a real nice young kid and I heard what he was doing and I liked it!

Donovan wrote a wonderful thing about me on the back of one of my albums – I was really touched. Don and I had some good times together. We were dear friends – still are – though we don't see each other much. We're in each other's heart."

Donovan: *"Derroll was a tall, bearded fella with a cowboy hat and boots, parka jacket and tattooed hands. He cut a queer figure on the London scene, as he performed in the streets or on the folk-club stages. He would beam down on a young girl or boy with his great smiling eyes and tell stories while brushing the strings of his Zen banjo. Now and again his story would pause as he made the sound of 'chung-chung' nodding his head like an old monk. Everyone knew and loved Derroll, young and old. His circle of friends were from every walk of life, he made no distinction between them. I le fiercely defended me before the onslaught of the press jibes about the Dylan comparison and my heart went out to him.*

Up until the release of my first record in 1965 I had not performed professionally anywhere. I played around the flats of friends or in the London folk clubs, which I visited to hear Derroll or Bert Jansch. Derroll was a direct link to the American folk revival, having known Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie. Derroll had played a duo with Woody's disciple Jack Elliott. Jack and Derroll had busked in Paris and down on the French Riviera with the giant of the Scottish folk scene Alex Campbell. I had to know this guy and when we met we liked each other fine.

We became friends. I learned so much from Derroll although he played banjo and I guitar. He played in such a delicate fashion, brushing the strings very gently and soothing us all with his low sonorous voice. I would sit cross-legged on hotel carpets or in the tiled bathrooms (for the echo) and watch him play. Derroll touched each string with such tenderness, pausing to marvel at the sound which his 'Zen' banjo produced. I fell into altered states, following the one note fading. I was taught by a master. Instructed with no instruction. Awakened to the knowledge without awakening Amazed by his own plucking of one

string he would stop, turn to me and say, 'Donny.. will ya listen to that, isn't it beautiful? And it was. In Zen Buddhism the koan is asked, 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?' Derroll was asking 'What is the sound of one note ringing?' I was taught by a master."

Not all people admired Derroll's unique personality and stubborn honesty though. In England he was evicted from the country for "obscene behavior and swearing on stage." Like many entertainment figures he was loved by the audiences and disapproved of by the establishment.

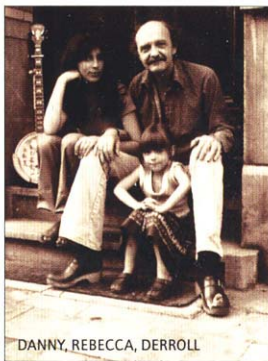
Derroll: *"I was kicked out of England for obscenity and drunkenness on stage – I think it was Manchester. I had a bunch of crabs from this English folksinger – I did not mention her name – and I made jokes about having a crab in my pants. I think I used the word 'fuck' – 'fucking hell' or something – and gee, God almighty, I was banned. And then I got back in again through Scotland. And now they fuck on the television, but in those days – my God – absolute scandal.*

I was delighted – lost my job but it was great! Ha-ha.”

In 1967 Derroll recorded his first solo record Portland Town for Ace of Clubs on the Decca label. Ramblin’ Jack Elliott and Alex Campbell joined him for the recording session and played guitar on a few tracks.

Derroll also traveled to Germany, Italy, Holland and Denmark where he became increasingly successful. Derroll met the much younger Danny Levy; they moved to Antwerp where they got married in 1970. Antwerp was to become Derroll’s home for the rest of his life.

Derroll: *“We came to Antwerp about 1967. Got married in 1970 but we started living together in ‘67 – same year that Woody died. The cops were giving me such a bad time all the time. Being a foreigner – a stranger and not a normal American businessman. We were going to go up*

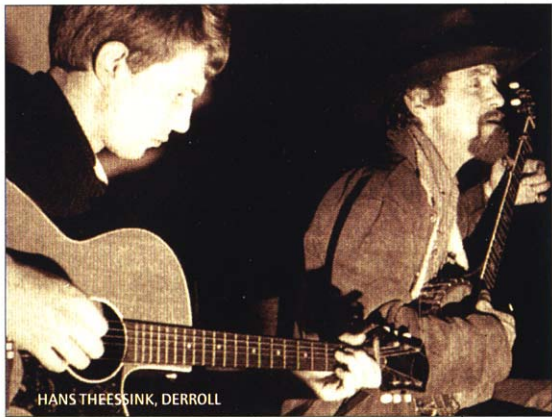


to Copenhagen and stopped for a while in Antwerp. We ended up staying here. When we got legally married I could stay in Belgium being married to a Belgian woman. It became home to me – I got many good friends here and people treat us like family. It worked out all right.

The cops were bugging me here too. Some guy – a lawyer – told me, ‘The next time the cops stop

you, you tell them there’s a lawsuit going on and you can’t leave the country until the lawsuit’s over.’ Then this cop car pulls up downtown to check my identity and I told them there’s a lawsuit going on and I can’t leave Belgium till it’s over. They jumped back in the car and drove off. That was the end of that. I said, Gee, I wished I’d known that one before.”

Hans Theessink: *“I first met Derroll and Danny at the Osnabrück Folk Festival in Germany in 1968 – probably the first festival of its kind on the continent. She was a young girl my*



HANS THEESSINK, DERROLL

age and Derroll looked like somebody out of a western movie. I was already a great admirer of his music and was very excited to meet 'real live Americana' in the figure of Derroll Adams – a man with a direct connection to the times and music that intrigued me (meeting Brownie McGhee for the first time had a similar impact on me). His performance that night was magic and a real eye-opener to me. You didn't have to be loud and technical – his intimacy and simplicity sent shivers through the auditorium and brought

the house down.

Some months later I was booked to do a few shows with him. We were traveling in a van together – Derroll had a big alcohol problem and wouldn't go anywhere without a bottle – before he went to bed at night the manager or Danny had to make sure that he had enough booze to calm his nerves and help him through the night. He'd go berserk if they didn't. I experienced the violent side of this otherwise gentle and peaceful man. After an outburst of rage he'd be even more devastated than his company. He didn't know what had come over him and really felt bad about it. At the gigs he tended to forget which songs he'd sung already – so one night I heard him do 'Muleskinner Blues' four times – including the introduction about how he learned the song off a Jimmy Rodgers record. Though I was sad to see the effect of alcohol on this wonderful man, listening to his banjo and his low voice still had me spellbound and I felt proud to have the chance to play with this master musician."

Derroll's best-known song is 'Portland Town', but he wrote several other great songs including 'The Mountain', 'The Valley' and 'The Sky.'

Derroll: *"That's the trilogy: 'The Valley,' 'The Mountain' and 'The Sky.' I did those when we were living in front of the museum in Antwerp. They're all true – my songs are true songs. Also from the angle of Zen Buddhism: first there is a mountain; then it seems the mountain's gone, but if you take another look – it's been there all along. I'll tell you, something that has influenced me a lot is the freight train whistle. In all my songs is the freight-train whistle. The Japanese have a thing they call the spirit of loneliness and that's what's in the freight-train whistle."*

Years of hard living and hard drinking started to take their toll. Derroll's alcohol problem led him to a psychiatric institute where he underwent detoxification several times. His song '24 Hours a Day' was the result of his experience with alcoholism.

Derroll: *"I wrote '24 Hours a Day' because I got mixed in booze. I was given up for dead. They told Danny that I wasn't going to live or if I did I would be like a vegetable. Well hell – I've always been like a vegetable, ha-ha. That's a good alcohol song. You can always fool yourself with booze, you know. You think things are fine but you don't eat and you don't sleep. With booze it's always a little bit more and the next thing you know you're hooked. Depends on how you can handle a situation. If you goof you're in trouble – if you hold it straight you'll be all right – but who can hold it straight? Once you're in it, you fool yourself – I sure lost a lot of friends through alcohol.*

Going on stage is scary. Going out there all alone. You don't know whether the mic will be okay. You're backstage waiting to hear your name and you walk out there like you've never been afraid in your life – but boy, you're like a radar machine. And you check out the laughs and the noise like a hawk. That's the thing I remember most – it's the terror – being scared shitless. That'll drive you to the bottle. Danny too will tell you – waking up in some hotel: 'Oh, my God, no, why did I get into this?' Then I go back to sleep

and next morning get up and start over again. You never know – I've been booed off the stage. Sometimes I've worked like mad but it just wasn't happening – you can't always tell."

Derroll got full support from Danny who was instrumental in getting him back on his feet again. In 1973 their daughter Rebecca was born. Derroll recorded several albums, Feeling Fine, Movin On, Along The Way and Derroll Adams Live – recorded in Belgium at Het Natiepeerd. He took part in the Folk Friends album projects in Germany and played concerts all over Europe. In 1972 Derroll was invited to The Cambridge Folk Festival in England where he met Arlo Guthrie and Happy Traum.

Happy Traum: *"I first met Derroll at the Cambridge Folk Festival in 1972, where my brother Artie and I were playing for the first time. As I walked through the festival grounds I heard a rumbling bass voice accompanied by sparkling banjo sounds that stopped me in my tracks. There, on a small stage set up outside one*

of the tents, was a lone figure, tall and slim and looking like he had just stepped out of a western movie. He was playing age-old American folk songs that mysteriously sounded brand new and ancient at the same time.

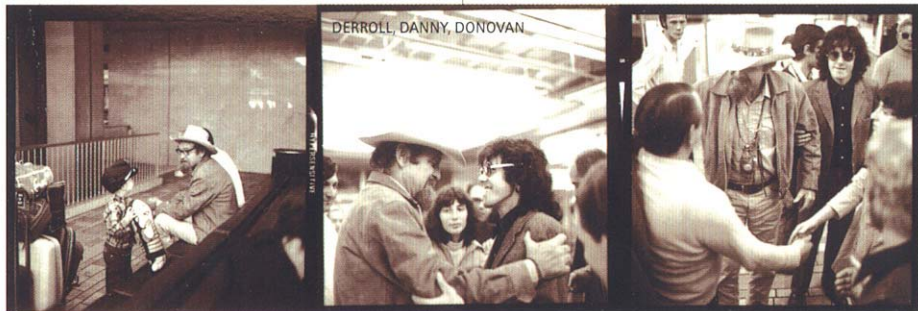
I had known Derroll's song 'Portland Town', which was popular among anti-war folk singers in the U.S., and had heard a little about his European exploits with Ramblin' Jack. None of this prepared me for the emotional power his music would have on me. After his set I introduced myself, and we talked and played some tunes together. I found myself in awe of this gentle but rough-looking guy, with his craggy face and not-yet-fashionable tattoos on his fingers and arms. A year or so after this first meeting, Artie and I recorded 'Freight Train Blues' for our Hard Times in the Country album, inspired by Derroll's version of the song.

I ran into Derroll several times during my many tours throughout Europe during the Seventies and each time he greeted me as if I was a long-lost buddy. His warmth and generosity of spirit always amazed me, as did the sound of his voice, which I never tired of."

In 1976 Derroll accepted Donovan's invitation to join him on a tour of the U.S.A. For Derroll, who hadn't been in his native country for twenty years, this was in some ways a rather brusque meeting. Though he enjoyed seeing the greatness and beauty of the country, he didn't like the "rat race for the money" where only the strongest and fittest can make it. He realized that America was not really his home anymore and that he felt more at ease in Belgium. On this trip he had the opportunity to visit Portland and meet with his family. A big family reunion with uncles, aunts and many other relatives was organized on the occasion. Derroll sang and

played for them and found out that his son played the five-string too. Derroll really enjoyed spending time with his daughter Debbie, his son Mark and his first granddaughter Signe.

Derroll: *'Sometimes I make a joke, 'I'd rather be a stranger in a strange country than a stranger in my own.' Belgium is not a strange country to me, but you know, I'm a stranger, a foreigner – got nothing to say. America is a huge place and I'm from Oregon and the only reason that I didn't give up my citizenship is because of my family. They came out there in the old covered wagons. They were old Westerners. To them I*



stay American, but otherwise I don't really care. If my family had known I'd give up my citizenship it would have broken their hearts. They're of course all dead now.

I went over and did that tour with Donovan in the States and we started in New York at the Bottom Line. Then we went to L.A. and San Francisco and we were able to go to Portland to meet my kids. [Pointing at some photographs on the pinboard] This is my son Mark. I always had this little secret dream that it would be wonderful to meet my son, look him in the eye and shake his hand.

So we're there at the terminal waiting for him to come – I don't know what he looks like. So the guy is 6'6" and he weighs 250 pounds and is a professional bodyguard – tough guy. He told me about where he beat up seven policemen. My daughter Debbie was there and saw it and it was all true. He beat the shit out of seven cops before they got enough help to get him. Can you believe that – a tough son-of-a-gun – my son – just like his dad – I remember when I used to do that. Ha-ha.

And this is my one little granddaughter. She's a lawyer in Seattle. She goes all over America fight-

ing for the working people. My little granddaughter is a lawyer – ain't that something!"

Derroll continued playing around Europe in clubs and at festivals. The fatherly, friendly banjo-picker with the whiskey-warm voice and the narrative songs fits in the spirit of the time and continues to entertain his audiences. Always supportive of his fellow musicians which – even on the folk scene – is not necessarily a common thing.

Allan Taylor: *"It was at a festival in Bonn, Germany, that I really started to get to know Derroll. I was waiting back-stage, as I was due to play my set after Derroll. I watched him play and got so involved that I almost forgot that I would have to follow him. He finished the last song and left the stage – the crowd applauded loudly and demanded an encore. We stood talking and I said, 'Derroll, I've always wanted to play 'Trouble in Mind' with you.' Instead of taking the encore alone, he said, 'Come on, let's play it together.' Now that's the measure of the man – he'll share anything. He's generous with his*

knowledge and with his love. That first time remains as one of the special moments in my life.”

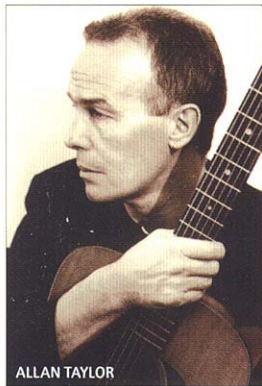
Jean Pierre van Weyenbergh: “In the early ‘80s Derroll was invited to play two concerts with Doc Watson at the Olympia in Paris. Just before we left, a friend of ours who is an artist, gave Derroll a beautiful handmade banjo-belt, the only thing our friend didn’t make himself was the hook to attach to the banjo. Derroll, being a great entertainer, starts telling a story about his friend and the beautiful present that he specially

made for him. The first concert ends without any problems. Great show – a few encores, etc.

Then he starts his second concert, telling his stories, fooling around, and again starts his story about his friend and the

belt. This time telling in detail how the belt was made. ‘Got this belt just before we left for Paris and hadn’t got the time to really check it out, so if there is a problem, then, by God, I wouldn’t know how to get it fixed. You know folks the banjo is a very heavy instrument to hold in your hands and I’m a very old banjo picker, so maybe some one should give me a hand to hold this thing up.’ He turned his head to the side of the stage where Danny and I were standing and at that moment we both knew that something was wrong. The only thing I could think of was to run to the dressing room to pick up a chair and bring it on stage. Derroll sat down and I changed the stands of the microphones. ‘You know folks my manager is a nice fellow; he knows exactly what I need, I think he can read my mind. Can you imagine, that damn hook on my new belt just broke in the middle of my story.’”

Ralph McTell: “Pete Seeger once said of Woody Guthrie, ‘Any damn fool can get complicated, it takes a genius to keep it simple.’ Those words could easily apply to Derroll Adams. Part of Derroll’s genius is he makes it sound simple.



ALLAN TAYLOR



However, those sparse banjo-accompaniments were the understated contrast to his deep musical spirituality and poetic vision. As someone who had known Derroll for a long time but only caught up with him occasionally, I only knew his good points. Firstly he was always gracious and welcoming to me. He had the quiet certainty of a man who knew he had done the best with what he

had. Just this fact alone gave him great poise and dignity. He also had grace, understanding and great kindness. Although he could express anger I never saw him angry. Bewildered and frustrated sometimes, especially by his fellow man's brutality and intolerance, but more often overwhelmed to the point of tears by some small act of kindness.

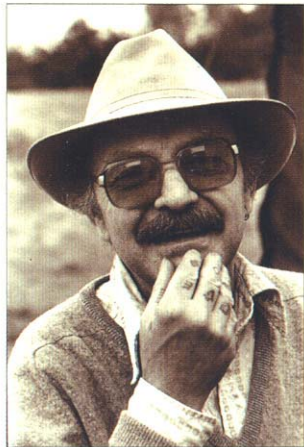
As younger musicians, we all wanted to sit next to him, drink with him, play tunes together and be his friend. After all, apart from his own wonderful music, Derroll had recorded with Ramblin' Jack Elliot and he had also known Woody Guthrie who had played with Leadbelly, etc., etc. Here was a living thread to all the inspirational folk heroes of the past that somehow connected us all together. The conductor of that feeling was the value Derroll appeared to place on us all. Some of us emulated him to the point of ramblin' and travelin' too, as if to accumulate bonus points of credibility with him. This cut little ice with Derroll and he was only really moved by the honesty of a person's intent."

As the Eighties approached, the snugness of the pub backroom had to give way to yuppie comfort. Musical fashions usually come and go in waves, and generally the popularity wave for handmade music like Derroll's, was on its way down. Drum machines were taking over and the mainstream audience was into more polished sounds. Derroll was having some health problems. He broke a finger and his left hand wasn't as good as it used to be, so he had to adjust his playing and ended up sounding even more sparse than he used to.

Derroll: *"I purposely stayed simple. For a while I was trying to get fancy – got into bluegrass a little bit and tried bluegrass picking. It takes a lot of work, but I'm more of a storyteller – the banjo is my little orchestra. My voice tells the story and the banjo is my band. It's simplicity. When I'm up there on stage in front of young kids I show them that everything I do they can do too. I don't do anything fancy and people come to me for banjo lessons – I always give 'em free, but hell – in an hour I can teach you all I know: I use G, C Major and I got two minor tunings: the mountain tuning*

and one I call E minor – but it could be G. I use a capo, so no sweat. G and C fit my voice – I can sing in them. I like the minor keys – it's beautiful on the banjo.

It's just picking around. I don't frail. Sometimes they write about me frailing, but I don't frail at all: I'm an up-picker. I got that back-flick. I can run through the melody but it's up-picking. I can get a little melody run in there and pick out a few places here and there, or I can double it up. I play behind a little here and there. It's nothing fancy – just like that – got a lot of pleasure out of it but I wished I'd done more!"

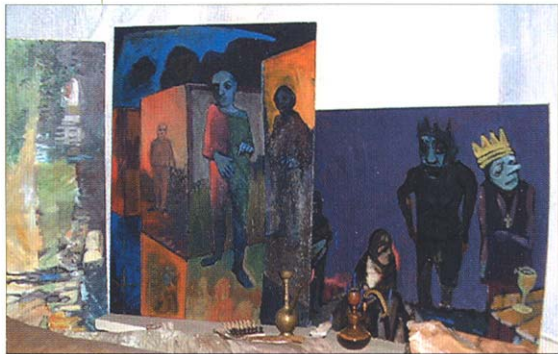


Youra Marcus: *Derroll taught me a lot about banjo, music, silence and life in general. A banjo lesson with Derroll went like this: We sat in the small yard and I started my tape-recorder. Derroll picked the banjo and started to improvise and tell stories – a lot of fun but no real teaching. After hours, I dared to ask something like, ‘How did you do this?’ And he’d say, ‘You try and get the thumb lead off so that you can interchange with first finger lead working both with pull off and hammers on.’ And then with the nicest smile on his face, he’d say something like, ‘Man, listen to this beautiful sound, it just breaks your heart.’ All I can say is that I was lucky enough to be the chosen son (he called me his son every so often) of a chosen father.”*

Derroll enjoyed the family life in Antwerp. By the time he’d become 60 in 1985 he’d more or less stopped performing. Travelling and playing concerts were getting hard on him so he enjoyed staying at home and spending more time

with his books and his paintings.

Derroll: *‘I’ve always painted – it has always been important to me. Before, I’d paint them – then I’d move on and just leave them behind. I figure that ninety percent of the paintings I ever did are probably in the garbage now. I got big cardboard boxes and painted on them – always painted. I sort of went my own way – not thinking of exhibitions or anything like that at all. I just enjoyed painting. The painting and the banjo kind of go together in a weird kind of way – I think of them very much alike. When we settled*



here in Antwerp, I started getting a studio and I had a few exhibitions – they were very successful. I had nineteen paintings at this last expo and sold six but I don't really care – I just paint.

Before, I was standing up and I used can paint and bigger brushes so I really could whoop it up. Now it's sitting down with little brushes. It's like a whole other thing – I call it scribble painting. What I'm doing is just scribbling – building scribbles over scribbles that turn into something. You don't know – it could be a face, a person, people back there. But to me what it represents – every one of us – we all have our background, our past, our raisings – hell we were given.

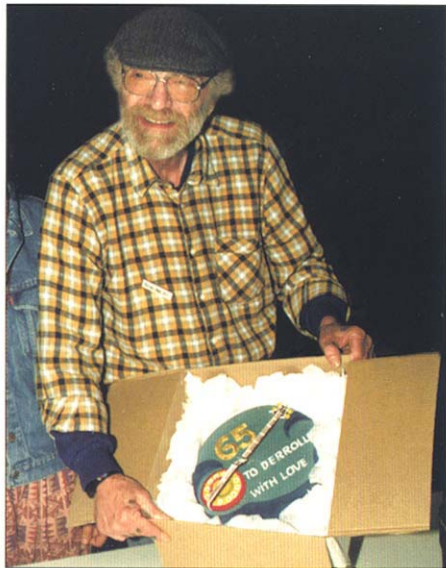
The shit that we got in us that we have in our subconscious minds; the ghosts and the demons – the puppet masters – they're the ones that run us. When I paint I just kind a play around – but very seriously, you see, 'cause I spent five years in one of the best art schools in America. I worked very hard on composition and things like that. I never really did know what people had to say about it. Lots of people knew me all these years and never knew I painted. It was my own thing – just painted – never talked about it.

In the painting world it's even dirtier than the show business world. In our business you get sharks all over the damn place – you gotta watch out. The painting world is even worse. These galleries take seventy percent – most of what you earn. And the attitude – cocktails and discussing the latest thing – it's not my trip."

Derroll constantly worked on his paintings and hardly ever considered a painting finished. It seemed that the actual painting process was the most important to him. He was rarely satisfied with his work and would often paint over existing paintings to change bits here and there. When he'd run out of canvas or material to paint on he'd just take a less satisfactory painting, paint over it and start working on something new. Lots of his paintings "disappeared" this way.

Hans Theessink: *"I had expected Derroll's paintings to be soft and gentle like his singing and banjo playing which was the case for some of his artwork but other paintings really showed a side of his personality that's quite opposite to his*

music – when I saw his paintings for the first time, I was very surprised to see such strong bright and positive colors in combination with forlorn, scary faces and creatures that look like they're possessed and haunted by demons of the worst sort."



Occasionally, Derroll got invited for special performances. One of his musical highlights every year was the Tønder Festival in Denmark where Derroll, as a festival mainstay, was invited every year right up until 1999, a few months before his death. Here he hosted the Woody Guthrie memorial concert in 1984. Derroll did the narration between songs from a script that had been put together by Alex Campbell, who at that time – a few years before he died, had lost his voice.

Another Tønder Festival highlight happened in 1990 when Pete Seeger headlined the festival. The two men had lots to talk about. In October, that same year Derroll had his 65th birthday, Derroll's Belgian friends Stefaan Francois and Walter Ertvelt organized a big birthday celebration concert for him in Kortrijk, where many of Derroll's musical friends showed up to congratulate him, play music and sing songs in his honor. The concert, which coincided with Derroll's first art exhibition, was recorded by Belgian radio which resulted in the Derroll Adams – 65th Birthday Concert CD (1991, Waste Productions

WP9101, BE). It was a beautiful celebration for a great friend.

Rod Sinclair & Carsten Panduro /

Tønder Festival: *Derroll Adams came to Tønder Festival whether he was booked to play or not. He was more than just a musician working to entertain festival-goers. He was more than just a delightful character sitting around and swapping memories with Pete Seeger, Arlo Guthrie, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Alex Campbell, Iain MacKintosh, Hamish Imlach, and the rest, or shooting the breeze with Tønder friends, old and young who could draw on his wealth of experience and insights based on a long life on the road. He was a pioneer who helped open up the paths others could follow.*

When Derroll Adams first came to Tønder in 1976, it was at the suggestion of Alex Campbell, who had played with Derroll on the streets and in the clubs of Paris twenty years previously. In Tønder, Derroll found 'his kind of festival.' The reasons for the mutual sympathy were simple. Tønder was tuned into the kind of music that Derroll identified with, and Derroll's kind of musi-

REBECCA, DERROLL, DANNY



cian – professionals who know that good folk music has as much to do with people and empathy as it has with instruments, songs and the technicalities of stage performance.

Tønder has many pictures of Derroll. Derroll the raconteur, steering younger smart-asses away from the worst pitfalls with a few well-chosen words that stuck. Derroll the humorous anchor-man, at the 1984 Woody Guthrie memorial concert: An American Voice. Derroll in a wheelchair, up on main stage on Sunday night at the 1999

festival, making his farewells in that calm, slow voice, still like dark honey. Derroll's voice was like his banjo-playing, an economy of expression – not one superfluous word or note – that revealed the musician who had lived his music, and the man who lived his thoughts.”

Happy Traum: *“The last time we met was at the concert in 1990 commemorating Derroll’s 65th birthday in Kortrijk, Belgium. What a great party that was, with so many of his friends coming together to celebrate the life and artistry of this legendary folk singer. I only wish he could be around to hear this new tribute by so many artists who loved and admired him.”*

Barney McKenna & John Sheahan: *“Derroll, old timer, you left us a rich legacy of music, and we are proud to be an echo of it on this tribute CD.”*



TØNDER FESTIVAL - WOODY GUTHRIE MEMORIAL CONCERT 1984: JOE LOCKER, DERROLL, HT, MIKE WHELLANS (HIDDEN), ODETTA, GARY RICHARD (HIDDEN), ALLAN TAYLOR, HANNES WADER, HOLLY NEAR, HAMISH IMLACH, TOM LUKE, IAIN MACKINTOSH

Ralph McTell: *“The last time I saw him was at a charity concert performed by Billy Connolly. Billy and I have been friends for more than thirty years and one of our common bonds has always been our admiration for Derroll and his music. Billy had flown Derroll and me up to be his guests at a packed concert of two thousand people in Glasgow. Derroll was already a little frail but I know he enjoyed the occasion tremendously. After the show we went out to eat and Billy and I relished the chance once again to spend time with the*

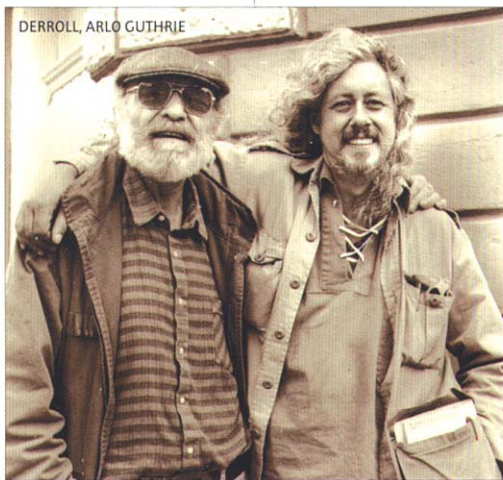
man. There was much laughter, some wisdom and a great curry. Over dinner Billy showed Derroll his new tattoo. It was of a banjo tattooed on the side of the palm of his hand, exactly like the one Derroll had. In less tangible ways, Derroll left his mark on all those who knew and loved him."

Arlo Guthrie: *"I don't remember meeting Derroll for the first time, or the last. I felt like I'd always known him – always will. Seeing him at Tønder Festival in Denmark every few years, he'd begin talking as if we had been with each other only moments earlier. He didn't waste words. He looked very frail in 1999 when he showed up in his wheelchair. But as his body diminished his spirit seemed to*

soar. He drew his friends to him with a look in his eyes or a slight motion with his hands. He spoke his truth in whispers. We spend a lot of time together that year. Our daughters became friends. It was good to see the next generation playing, singing and enjoying the music. As the festival ended I guess everyone knew we would never see him again.

After the last event of the last evening I walked back to my hotel room alone in the cool Tønder night air. I held my tears for another time.

As I read through the comments my friends have contributed to this project, I realize how much Donovan was right when he said he was taught by a master. It's hard to say what a master is until you meet one,



and then you can only say – yeah, he's one. And more than that, he was my friend."

Despite his bad health, Derroll was a "tough old guy" with a strong will to live. He surprised us all by sticking around so long – enjoying his life with Danny and Rebecca in St. Laureisstraat in Antwerp. Musical friends visited every once in a while and Derroll was always interested to hear their stories from the road. "How's it going – plenty of gigs? Are you making some money?" Even when he was confined to a wheelchair, he kept his optimistic outlook on life. His paintings were reduced from big canvases to small bits of paper that he could put on the table in front of him and "scribble" on. For a free spirit and a rambler like Derroll it must have been hard to live such a monotonous life, burdened by his bad health. Plenty of time to contemplate and think things over.

Derroll: *"I wished I'd done more with the music. I could've – had it all in my mind. I could've done great – way out things. Worked*

with some other guys. I regret that. And I've been married a few times and I'm sorry that it couldn't have worked out better, but I don't really regret it because otherwise I'd never have met Danny for example. I've had different relationships in the past – some of them awful – some of them not bad at all. No complaints, except I wished I'd done more with the music – but still, I had a good time and turned a lot of people on too. I did not realize what I mean to people. Never thought much about it. But I'm getting letters and mail and people coming and telephoning and television people. They love me, you know. That's a great honor; makes you feel very humble. Makes you feel unworthy sort of – 'I am not worth all that.' Really and truly amazing.

When my singing days were coming to an end; when I was starting to get sick and couldn't do it too much, it was probably just as well because I was having a problem. I was too much singing the same old songs over and over. When I'd be at home I'd have to learn more songs but when you come home after you've been travelling, you don't feel like singing and playing. I learned a couple new ones but that wasn't enough. A few of the old

songs – great! But I needed a new program.

It was going down for me – my program wasn't getting changed. I don't know how some of these guys do it – come home and get a whole new program and go out and hit the road again. I mean – you never stop! It's a nervy business. I need to get away from it – just lay on the beach in the sun for a few days, ha-ha. Towards the end I wasn't getting new stuff. I'd needed a year off. It was all-right, but it wasn't as good as it had been. So that worked out too, I got sick and had to stop. Thank God – otherwise I'd been ruined, ha-ha.

I see guys do things on stage and they don't particularly take the house. Then I go out there and hardly do anything except scratching my head and everybody is clapping and carrying on. And all I'm doing is just talking – just talking – but I do it in a way – I use my voice and then the banjo coming in a little bit here and there and it gets the thing going. But that's my way and I'm just lucky that it worked out good. Because it could have been the opposite – I could've fallen on my ass. But something about the way I did it worked out.

I was a lucky guy. I was able to keep us alive and



pay the bills and keep coats on us in winter. It's kind of being like a comedian, too, in a way. You're like a Charlie Chaplin or a Billy Connolly, you make them laugh – you make them cry – leave them in stunned silence. You're

like a conductor – I always thought of being like a conductor and the audience is the orchestra. Anyway, I was able to keep us alive.

You do the best you can and hope they hire you back. I want to do it as good as I can: drunk, sober, upside down or backwards – I'm there. That's the way the ball rolls."

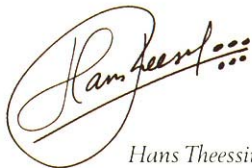
Derroll's last public appearance was at the Tønder Festival's 25th Anniversary in August 1999. He was determined to be brought on stage in his wheelchair on the final night of the festival anniversary celebration and speak to all his friends and thank the audience that loved him so well – one last standing ovation. Everybody in the room was touched by his words of farewell and we all sensed that he wasn't going to make it much longer.

This last trip was hard on him and he was taken to hospital on arrival in Antwerp. Derroll died on February 6, 2000 at home in Antwerp at the age of 75.

Tucker: *"I had the melody of the song that became 'Goodbye Derroll – Goodbye Friend'*

when I last saw him in November of 1998. I went up to his place in Antwerp and we shot some scenes for a documentary film they were doing on Derroll. I played the chords and hummed the melody and Derroll read a poem of his against this musical background. Later, the night Derroll died, the words came to me in a rush and I realized that the song was meant to be an elegy from the start. I will always be pleased to know that Derroll got to hear the melody of this song"

Lots of friends from near and far gathered for the cremation. Music was played, songs were sung, poems were recited – a very special and worthy final farewell. The coffin was laced with green weed and Derroll took off in style. At the after-gathering Tucker sang his song 'Goodbye Derroll' for the first time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hans Theessink". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The name "Hans" is written in a large, looped script, and "Theessink" follows in a similar but slightly more compact style. There are three small dots at the end of the signature, and a horizontal line underlines the entire name.

Hans Theessink





Columbus Stockade Blues (trad.)

Way down in Columbus Georgia
Want to be back in Tennessee
Way down in Columbus stockade
My friends all turned their backs on me

Go and leave me if you wish to
Never let it cross your mind
In your heart you love another
Leave me, little darling, I don't mind

Last night as I lay sleeping
I dreamt I held you in my arms
When I woke I was mistaken
I was peering through the bars

Go and leave me if you wish to...

Many a night with you I've rambled
Many an hour with you I've spent
Thought I had your heart forever
Now I find 't was only lent

Go and leave me if you wish to...

Arlo Guthrie: vocal, guitar
Donovan: vocal, guitar
Hans Theessink: vocal, guitar, mandolin
David Ferguson: upright bass

*(Studio Ollersbach, Austria - engineer: Chris Scheidl
Additional recording The Cowboy Arms Hotel and
Recording Spa, Nashville, TN - engineer: David Ferguson)*

Portland Town

(Derroll Adams – copyright control SABAM, Belgium)

I was born in Portland Town
Yes I was

I got married in Portland Town
Yes I did

Children I had one two three
Yes I did

Sent my children off to war
Yes they did

Murdered my children one two three
Yes they did

I won't have no kids no more
No I won't

I was born in Portland Town
Yes I was

Arlo Guthrie: vocal, guitar
Hans Theessink: guitar

*(Studio Ollersbach, Austria – engineer: Chris Scheidl
Additional recording Derek Studios, Dalton, MA - engineer: Greg Steele)*

The Cuckoo (trad.)

Well the cuckoo is a pretty bird
And she warbles as she flies
But she never says cuckoo
Till the fifth day of July

I've gambled in England
And I've gambled in Spain
If I's here for to gamble
I'd win you next game

I build me a cabin
On the mountain so high
So I can see Willy
As he goes passing by



HANS, DONOVAN, ARLO

Oh Willy Oh Willy
I'm afraid of your ways
Your mind is to gambling
And lead me a-stray

Well the cuckoo is a pretty bird
And she warbles as she flies
But she never says cuckoo
Till the fifth day of July

Ramblin' Jack Elliott: vocal, guitar
Arlo Guthrie: guitar

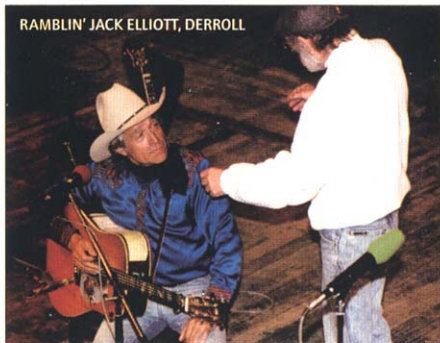
(Peter Miller Recording Studio, San Francisco, CA - engineer: Peter Miller)

Freight Train Blues (trad.)

I was born in Dixie, in a boomer shack
Just a little shanty by the railroad tracks
Hummin' of the drivers was my lullaby
Freight train whistle taught me how to cry

Freight train blues
Got them in the middle of my ramblin' shoes

I'm old enough to quit this runnin' 'round
Tried a hundred times to settle down
Every time I find a place I want to stay
Freight train whistle sends me on my way



Freight train blues...

My daddy was a fireman and my mammy dear
Was the only daughter of an engineer
My sweetie's a brakeman and it ain't no joke
It's a shame she keeps a poor man broke

Freight train blues...

I was born in Dixie, in a boomer shack
Just a little shanty by the railroad tracks
Hummin' of the drivers was my lullaby
Freight train whistle taught me how to cry

Freight train blues...

Hans Theessink: vocal, guitars, banjo

Arlo Guthrie: guitar, b.vocal

Donovan: harmonica

(Studio Ollersbach, Austria – engineer: Chris Scheidl)

The Mountain

(Derroll Adams – Donovan Music Ltd. London)

It was up some laughing river
Where I'd gone to spend the day
I had such fantastic visions
I could hardly stand to stay
And I stood up within myself
And suddenly felt free
And I stood above the burdens
That puzzle you and me

I became awareness
That was shared with all around
With the trees the sky the flowers
And the wind the sun the ground
I heard the birds were singing
And I found them same as me
And I understood our sorrows
And why they should not be

I saw this plane of living
It was nothing more than faith
A skin that covered glory
Far beyond our love or hate
A living crystal fairy land
Where loving is our grace
A pyromanic garden
That knows no time or space

I saw what we've been doing to it
Saw it as insane
Still a-marching like good Christians
With our wars the sword the flame
To crash down all those infidels
To defend what should be shame
And again I shared our sorrows
Knew we all must bear the blame

I see it all as part of us
To know and share alike
With a universal willingness
To know and do what's right
To understand our brotherness
And stop this awful race
Let our children run and grow in peace
Know their lives shall not be waste

First there is a mountain
Then it seems the mountain's gone
But then if you take another look
Why – it's been there all along
We can be just like a river
As it laughs along it's way
Or stand beneath the shadows
That take the sun away

Donovan: vocal, guitar

(Donovan Studios, County Cork, Ireland - engineer: Donovan Leitch)



The Sky

(Derroll Adams – copyright control SABAM, Belgium)

There's a time when the truth is bad
And that's so very sad I know
When I was a kid like a mother's sigh
I used to hear the freight train cry
They kept me on the go you know
Even now I stop to hear
The big freight-trucks a-shifting gear
They tell me what I want to know you know

There's a time when the past is past
Filled with things that never last I know

The freight trains lonesome whistles cry
Becomes a song but there's the sky
Spring always comes again again
That old car it was Christmas time
Filled with kids and they all were crying
They had no place to go I know

There's a time when you face your soul
To find if you are true and whole you know
I remember your face so clear
Sometimes it seems I hear
The softness of your sigh
But remember another time

Autumn's here and summer's dying
You asked me not to go

There's a time when you face the sky
To find if you are here and why you know
The freight trains far away cry
Or on the ground when the dew's not dry
And you hear a rooster crow
Just like a morning star
That you see so far
Through the clear sky the sky

Allan Taylor: vocal, guitar, psalter

(Pauler Acoustics, Northeim, Germany - engineer: Günther Pauler)

The Valley

(Derroll Adams - copyright control SABAM, Belgium)

Autumn time is getting closer
Soon green leaves will start to fade
Dripping rain they'll start a-falling
Summer's gone and past away

Children's hopes are like green leaves
They soon fade and tumble down
Come to rest in that lonesome valley
Where they never can again be found

That lonesome valley's name is sadness
Flowers they are coloured blue
Autumn leaves are coloured sorrow
There's not many left to fall

Children's hopes are like green leaves...

Winds played rain will be the music
Played upon those falling leaves
Played deep within that frost white valley
Summer's gone and past away

Children's hopes are like green leaves...

Hans Theessink: vocal, guitar, mandola

Donovan: vocal

Arlo Guthrie: guitar + intro

(Studio Ollersbach, Austria - engineer: Chris Scheidl)

Curtains of Night

(Derroll Adams - copyright control SABAM, Belgium)

Well the curtains of night are pinned back by
the stars

And the dewdrops from heaven kiss the rose

I remember your love - I remember your love
I remember your love in my heart

Well the curtains of night are pinned back by
the stars
And the beautiful moon sweeps the sky

I remember your love.....

Well the curtains of night are pinned back by
the stars
And the nightbirds are singing in the trees

I remember your love.....

Well the curtains of night are pinned back by
the stars
And the dewdrops from heaven kiss the rose

I remember your love.....

Youra Marcus: vocal, banjo
Yves Rouchaville: guitar, b.vocal

(Studio Tube, Lausanne, Switzerland - engineer: Marc Champod)



JOHN SHEAHAN, HANS THEESSINK, BARNEY MCKENNA

Dixie Darling

(A. P. Carter)

My Dixie darling – listen to the song I sing
Beneath the silver moon – with the banjo
right in tune

I love no one but you – my heart is ever true
My dixie darling – my dixie queen

Going down south to have a big time
See that boy in old Caroline
Drink my booze and do as I please
For all the boys I long to squeeze

Singing a song of Dixie darling
That's where I long to be going
Down where the jelly roll growing
with my dixie dream

My Dixie darling – listen to the song I sing...
Way down below the Mason Dixon line
Down where the honeysuckles are entwined
There's where the southern winds are blowing
There's where the daisies 're growing
The girls of the north in the gay finery
Whirling around in society
Singing a song of Dixie darling
Where I long to be.

My Dixie darling – listen to the song I sing...

Dolly Parton: vocal
Arlo Guthrie: vocal
Hans Theessink: guitar, b.vocal
Barney McKenna: banjo, b.vocal
John Sheahan: fiddle, b.vocal
Jack Clement: ukelele
David Ferguson: upright bass

*(Studio Ollersbach, Austria - engineer: Chris Scheidl
Additional recording The Cowboy Arms Hotel and Recording Spa,
Nashville, TN - engineer: David Ferguson)*



ARLO GUTHRIE, DOLLY PARTON, JACK CLEMENT

Muleskinner Blues

(Rodgers/Vaughn)

Good morning captain – Good morning to
you shine

Good morning captain – Good morning to
you shine

Do you need another muleskinner out on
your new road line

I like to work – I'm rolling all the time

I like to work – I'm rolling all the time

I can carve my initials on a mule's behind

I'm working on that new road – A dollar and
a dime a day

I'm working on that new road – A dollar and
a dime a day

I got three women waiting on a Saturday night
Just to draw my pay

I like to work – I'm rolling all the time

I like to work – I'm rolling all the time

I can carve my initials on a mule's behind

Good morning captain – Good morning to
you shine

Good morning captain – Good morning to
you son

Can you use another muleskinner out on
your new mud run

Ramblin' Jack Elliott: vocal, guitar

Arlo Guthrie: vocal, guitar

(Peter Miller Recording Studio, San Francisco, CA - engineer: Peter Miller)



24 Hours a day

(Derroll Adams – copyright control SABAM, Belgium)

Well I got hooked on whiskey
It was a terrible thing
I just didn't dream the truth
Like swinging on a swing
I was flying high – I was flying high
I didn't want to come back down
Didn't even wonder why

Whiskey first thing in the morning
Whiskey last thing at night
Put the whiskey here by the bed
God don't turn out the lights
I'm flying high
Don't even want to come back down for you
Let me go swinging – swinging in my booze

I lived by singing and playing
With booze it didn't work so good
My hands began to shake so bad
My head was made out of wood
I was flying high – flying high to the moon
I didn't want to come back down
Anyway not too soon

When I began to notice
't was already too late
My health had really gone to hell
I hardly slept or ate
I was flying high – thought I was doing good
Couldn't even count to ten
And my body hardly stood

Well I still thought things were a-swinging
Couldn't even get out of bed
Then they took me to the hospital
Where they gave me up for dead
I was flying high – thought I was doing good
Didn't want to come back down
And wouldn't have if I could

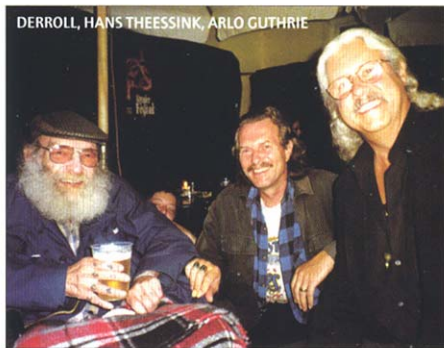
Somehow we got me through it all
A chance in a million they say
Hope none of you ever'll make that scene
It's sure a nowhere way
You think you're flying high – You think
you're doing good
You might not want to come back down
Probably wouldn't if you could
There are angels up in heaven
Devils down in hell

But I am somewhere in between
And living sure feels swell
I'm feeling fine I'm feeling fine
I don't know how or where or when
But I am feeling fine

Hans Theessink: vocal, guitar

Arlo Guthrie: guitar, foottap

(Studio Ollersbach, Austria – engineer: Chris Scheidl)



DERROLL, HANS THEESSINK, ARLO GUTHRIE

Epistle to Derroll

(Donovan Leitch – Donovan Music Ltd, London)

Come all you starry starfish – living in the
deep blue sea
Crawl to me I have a proposition to make
thee
Would you walk the North Sea floor to
Belgium from England
Bring me word of a Banjo Man with a tattoo
on his hand

The spokesman of the starfish spoke as
spokesmen should
If'n you met our fee then certainly we would
Should you cast a looking glass upon the
scalloped sand
You'll have word word of this Banjo Man
with the tattoo on his hand

Oh come you starry starfish – I know your
ways are caped
Maybe it's because you'r astrologically shaped
Converse with the herring shoals as I know
you can
Bring me word of the Banjo Man with the
tattoo on his hand

The eldest of the starfish spoke after a sigh
Youthful as you are young man you have a
Wisdom Eye
Surely you must know a looking glass is made
from sand
These young stars are fooling you about your
Banjo man

Oh come then aged starfish – riddle me no more
For news I am weary and my heart is sore
All on the silent seashore – help me if you can
Tell to me if you know of the Banjo Man

All through the seven oceans I am a star most
famed
Many leggies have I lost an many have I gained
Strange to say, quite recently, I've been to
Flemish land
And if you are courteous I'll tell you all I can

You have my full attention – I answered him
with glee
His brother stars were twinkling in the sky
above the sea
So I sat there with rapt attention on the sand
Very anxious for to hear of the Banjo Man

I have seen this tattooed hand through a
ship's porthole
Steaming on the watery main through the
waves so cold
Heard his tinkling banjo and his voice so grand
But you must come to Belgium to shake the
tattooed hand

Gladly would I come – O gladly would I go
Had I not my work to do and my face to show
And I rejoice to hear he's well but I must go
inland
Thank you for the words you brought of my
Banjo Man

I walked along the evening sand as charcoal
clouds did shift
Revealing the moon shining on the pebble drift
Contemplating every other word the starfish
said
Whistly winds they filled my dreams in my
dreaming bed

Donovan: vocal, guitar
Danny Thompson: double bass
Hans Theessink: dulcimer, banjo

(Morgan Studios, London, England - engineer: Mike Bobak)

A Feather Fell

(Ralph McTell – Misty River Music)

We took the train to Bruxelles
Eddie had a girlfriend there
They fell into each others arms
So I'd plenty of time to spare
In the "Welcome Bar" they all spoke French
but sometimes strange things happen
I picked up a couple of words or three
And two of them were music to me
The name of Derroll Adams

Took him down to the bar next day
He sipped scotch and coke
And I hung on to every word
And he stopped shakin' and joked
"When some folks drink they get so stoned
they end up fallin over.
The opposite seems to happen to me,
An hour ago I was stumbling see,
Me and my tongue just couldnt agree
Now I drink till I get sober"

We took our instruments to town
I was trying too hard to impress

I had to learn to play it soft
I must have been OK I guess
Little birdie little birdie
That was what we sang
I was twenty one with a big guitar
Flown the nest left the door ajar
Pickin' out tunes in a Belgian bar
With the tattooed banjo man

That birdie little birdie
Must have been a dove
He had hate written on his left hand
His picking hand was love

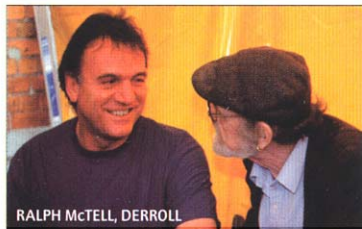
When I got back to Paris
It was early in sixty six
I'd locked that evening in my mind
Though I doubt if he did in his
A few francs and a handshake
Sweet as a soft shoe shuffle
A little bird's feather fell that night
Across the street from the neon light
Silently and out of sight
Under a winter moon so bright
Cracked the frosty pavement right
In the cobbled stoned heart of Bruxelles

Little birdie little birdie
Must have been a dove
Hate was written on his left hand
Picking hand was love – sweet love

Ramblin's a decision made
Whilst heads still rule our hearts
Moving on means something else
Than having to depart
A feather fell to the pavement
I was lucky to watch it down
And it fell with a whisper not a shout
There wasn't anybody else about
But someone saw a star go out
Over Portland town

Ralph McTell: vocal, guitar

(RMS Studios, London, England - engineer: Andy Levien)



RALPH McTELL, DERROLL

Banjo Man

(A. Taylor – M.C.P.S.)

Cowboy hat – cowboy boots
Denim jacket full of Mexican cheroots
How that man could sing
I got trouble on my mind
It's good to know that
He's a friend of mine

Came to Paris from Portland Town
Carrying a banjo playing around
How that man could sing
I got trouble on my mind
It's good to know that
He's a friend of mine

Too much whiskey – too much wine
Too much travelling down the line
How that man could sing
I got trouble on my mind
It's good to know that
He's a friend of mine

Headed down that one way track
Carrying the devil on his back

How that man could sing
I got trouble on my mind
It's good to know that
He's a friend of mine

He got a lady so sweet and kind
He's okay now and doing fine
How that man could sing
I got trouble on my mind
It's good to know that
He's a friend of mine



Cowboy hat – cowboy boots
Denim jacket full of
Mexican cheroots
How that man could sing
I got trouble on my mind
It's good to know that
He's a friend of mine

Allan Taylor: vocal, guitar
Hans Theessink: slideguitar, banjo, b.vocal
Donovan: b.vocal

(Studio Ollersbach, Austria – engineer: Chris Scheidl)

The Rock

(Derroll Adams – copyright control SABAM, Belgium)

Well I wished I was a rock
sitting on a hill
Doin' nothin' all day long
but just sittin' still

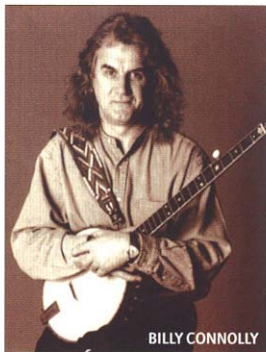
Wouldn't sleep and I wouldn't eat
and I wouldn't even wash
Well I just sit still a thousand years
and rest myself by gosh

Hi di deedle dum.....
And I wouldn't even wash

Well I just sit still a thousand years
And rest myself by gosh

Billy Connolly: vocal, banjo
Hans Theessink: guitar

*(Studio: Electric Avenue,
Sydney, Australia -
engineer: Phil Pinch)*



Memories

(Derroll Adams - copyright control SABAM, Belgium)

Something cries so low at night in silence
Something cries so low at night of home
Drifting far across that Columbia River
I still hear that freight-train's lonesome cry
Winds in forests nothing now but memories
Mountains turning dark against the sky
There's a sudden movement in the dark
woods
Down there by the clearing stands a deer

Stillness seems to be the only music
Echoed in the night an evening star

Winds in forests nothing now but memories
Mountains turning dark against the sky

Something cries so low at night in silence
Something cries so low at night of home

Happy Traum: vocal, guitar, banjo

(Nevessa Production, Woodstock, NY - engineer: Chris Andersen)

Lovesong

(Derroll Adams – Donovan Music Ltd. London)

My heart is like a flower for my love
That blooms as I hold her tenderly
But it's planted deep in fear
Just as heavy as the tear
That whispers low her love is not for me

My love is true
For her it is true
And I pray that her love is mine

My love is like the first star of the night
That brightens up the world's first darkness
Like lovestories very old
That a million times been told
Her eyes are worth more than bright
diamonds

My love is true
For her it is true
And I pray that her love is mine

Alone at night in my dark lonesome room
I lay awake and sadly dreaming
Though she's not very near

But still I can hear
Her soft and tender heart a-beating

My love is true
For her it is true
And I pray that her love is mine

Donovan: vocals, acoustic guitar, leadguitar and Arp string ensemble
Leland Sklar and Dave Hungate: bass
Jim Keltner: drums
Bobby Hall: percussion

(A Donovan Discs Recording, Studio: A&M Studios Los Angeles, CA - Produced by Donovan Leitch - engineer: Pete Romano)

Willie Moore (trad.)

Willie Moore was a king he was scarce
twenty-one
He courted a lady fair
Her eyes were as bright as two diamonds in
the night
And raven black was her hair

He courted her both night and day
Till to marry they did agree
But when they came to their parents to consent
They said it could never be
She threw herself in Willie Moore's arms

As oft times she'd done before
And little did he think when he held her that
night
Sweet Anne he'd see no more

It was just about the month of May
That night I remember it well
That very same night that her body
disappeared
In a way no tongue could tell

Sweet Anne she was known both far and wide
Her friends were all around
And in the little brook before the cottage door
The body of sweet Anne was found

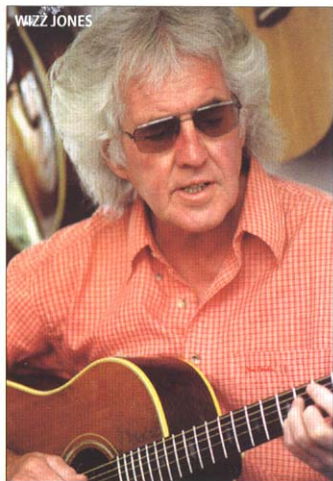
She was taken off by her weeping friends
And carried to her parents' room
And there she was dressed in a shroud of
snowy white
And laid in a lonely tomb

Willie Moore never spoke – he took to the road
And from his friends he did part
Last heard of him he was in montreal
Where he died of a broken heart

Willie Moore was a king he was scarce
twenty-one
He courted a lady fair
Her eyes were as bright as two diamonds in
the night
And raven black was her hair

Wizz Jones: vocal, guitar
Ralph McTell: banjo, b.vocal

(RMS Studios, London, England - engineer: Andy Levien)



The Rock

(Derroll Adams – copyright control SABAM, Belgium)

Well I wished I was a rock
sitting on a hill
Doin' nothin' all day long
but just sittin' still
Wouldn't sleep and I wouldn't eat
and I wouldn't even wash
Well I just sit still a thousand years
and rest myself by gosh

Spoken: This is the philosophical part folks

Hi di deedle dum...
And I wouldn't even wash
Well I just sit still a thousand years
And rest myself by gosh

Ramblin' Jack Elliott: vocal, guitar

(Peter Miller Recording Studio, San Francisco, CA - engineer: Peter Miller)

Goodbye Derroll – Goodbye Friend

(Tucker Zimmerman – copyright control SABAM, Belgium)

Summertime has come and gone
Leaves have fallen from the trees
Rain is falling from the sky
Time has come to say goodbye

Goodbye Derroll – Goodbye Friend
This is where the trail ends
You ride on – I stay behind
With you always on my mind

I recall the night we met
Raining hard and soaking wet
Said I'm your friend don't you know
From a long long time ago

Goodbye Derroll – Goodbye Friend
This is where the trail ends
You ride on – I stay behind
With you always on my mind

Tucker Zimmerman: vocal, 12-string guitar
Didier Bourguignon: banjo

(Soliman, Stockay / St. Georges, Belgium – engineer: Michel Gilsoul)

A Profound and Beautiful Sadness

(Text: Derroll Adams, Music: Tucker Zimmerman – copyright control
SABAM, Belgium)

A profound and beautiful sadness
Was the passage of all times
I hear the wind – the rain is falling
Through it all I hear time calling
And years go by like a silent cry

And there as a child my heart was thrilled
And all the dreams that speak to me still
And now my heart feels sad
Memories too – so many bad

A profound and beautiful sadness
Was the passage of all times
I hear the wind – the rain is falling
Through it all I hear time calling
And years go by like a silent cry

And there as a child my heart was thrilled

Derroll Adams: voice

Tucker Zimmerman: 12 string guitar

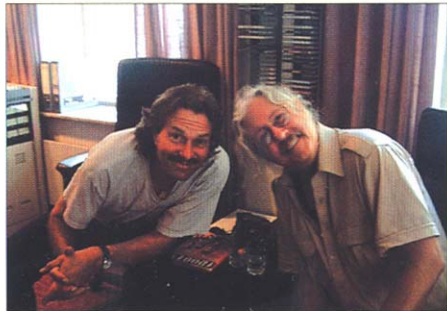
*(Recorded in Antwerp, November 30, 1997 · sound engineer: Alain Sironval ·
from Patrick Ferryn's tribute film to Derroll Adams „I Was Born in Portland Town“)*



The making of the CD For quite a while I'd had the idea to make a tribute CD to Derroll Adams - gather some friends that Derroll had an impact on and record some of the songs that he wrote or liked to perform. In April 1998 I sent a letter to Derroll and Danny to tell them about my plan. At the same time I contacted several musical friends - they all were excited about the idea and wanted to be part of the project. I had planned to do the CD fairly quickly so that Derroll still could hear the result. This all changed when Derroll sadly passed away on February 6, 2000.

We got the recording sessions going and all the musicians donated their talent and time for this worthwhile project. Arlo, Donovan, and Allan got really involved right from the start and were continually in touch with ideas, suggestions, and comments. We recorded at different places - musicians never stay at one place too long, so at times it wasn't all that easy to pin folks down - also part of the reason why this project has been

in progress for a few years. Sometimes we were lucky to get some of the musicians gathered in one place to do a live group recording - on other occasions people recorded their song and sent me a finished tape. Getting the songs in the post was a great experience. Derroll was a dear friend to all the singers involved and it was wonderful to find that every song touched upon something Derroll-esque. Derroll had made such a big impression on all of us that it wasn't necessary to explain much - I just gave the singers a choice of songs. Sometimes they came up with something extra. That's



why there are two versions of „The Rock“ – at the end of his recording session Ramblin’ Jack mentioned a funny song that Derroll used to do – Jack does a striking Derroll imitation and we had to include it. We also ended up with more songs than one CD can hold and unfortunately had to leave several great songs out.

A number of studios donated studio time – among them Günther Pauler in Germany, Jack Clement in Nashville, Michel Gilsoul in Belgium and Peter Miller in San Francisco - thanks a lot. Also thanks to Dave Peabody, who donated some great photographs including the cover shot. One Sunday morning in Antwerp, Danny, Milica and I went through a big box full of concert souvenirs and photos – we came across many great shots, but unfortunately we weren’t always able to trace the photographer (Let us know if you see your photo!). While in Antwerp, Milica took the photo of Derroll’s banjo that’s on the backcover – we placed the banjo on Derroll’s chair out in the little back

garden that he loved so well. On this occasion she also made the shot of the banjoskin that’s printed on the CD itself.

Viennese stringmakers Thomastik-Infeld sponsored the graphic design and printing – thank you for your generosity. A great help in writing the liner notes was the 1967 Sing Out article „Banjo Pickin’ Expatriate“ by Bill Yaryan. Luckily I still had the opportunity to meet up with Derroll and do some interviews at his kitchen table – many of his stories and comments are included in the liner notes. Derroll and his music have played an important role for everyone involved in this CD. He has touched us all with his music and his larger than life personality. These recordings are a celebration of Derroll’s life and music and show our shared love and admiration for the Banjoman.



Hans Theessink

This Tribute to our old friend Derroll Adams was begun while Derroll was still alive. Derroll's life affected so many people that as it came to an end friends everywhere were busy talking about films, documentaries, tribute concerts and, of course, records. This recording is only one of many projects that honors the spirit of the Banjoman.

Banjoman is produced and distributed in Europe by Blue Groove and in the United States by Rising Son. From the beginning it was decided that we would co-produce and release the recording simultaneously and that all proceeds would go to Derroll's family in Belgium. The recorded material was donated freely by the artists. The studio and production costs were greatly reduced and in some cases totally free. For more information on Blue Groove you can visit www.theessink.com – for Rising Son Records please visit www.arlo.net



Arlo Guthrie

Produced by:

Hans Theessink and Arlo Guthrie

Project coordination: Milica Theessink

Special thanks to: Danny Adams, Jackie Guthrie, Milica Theessink, Aleene Jackson, Cindy Bradley, Patrick Ferryn, Jean Pierre van Weyenbergh, Carsten Panduro, Bill Yaryan and Mark Moss at Sing Out.

Photographs: Dave Peabody, Milica Theessink, Beth Gwinn, Mogens Eskildsen, Patrick Ferryn, H.C.Gabelgaard, Gil Egger, and unknown

Booklet painting: Derroll Adams

Graphic design and layout: Harald Ergott

Mastered by: Toby Mountain at Northeastern Digital Recording, Inc., Southboro, MA