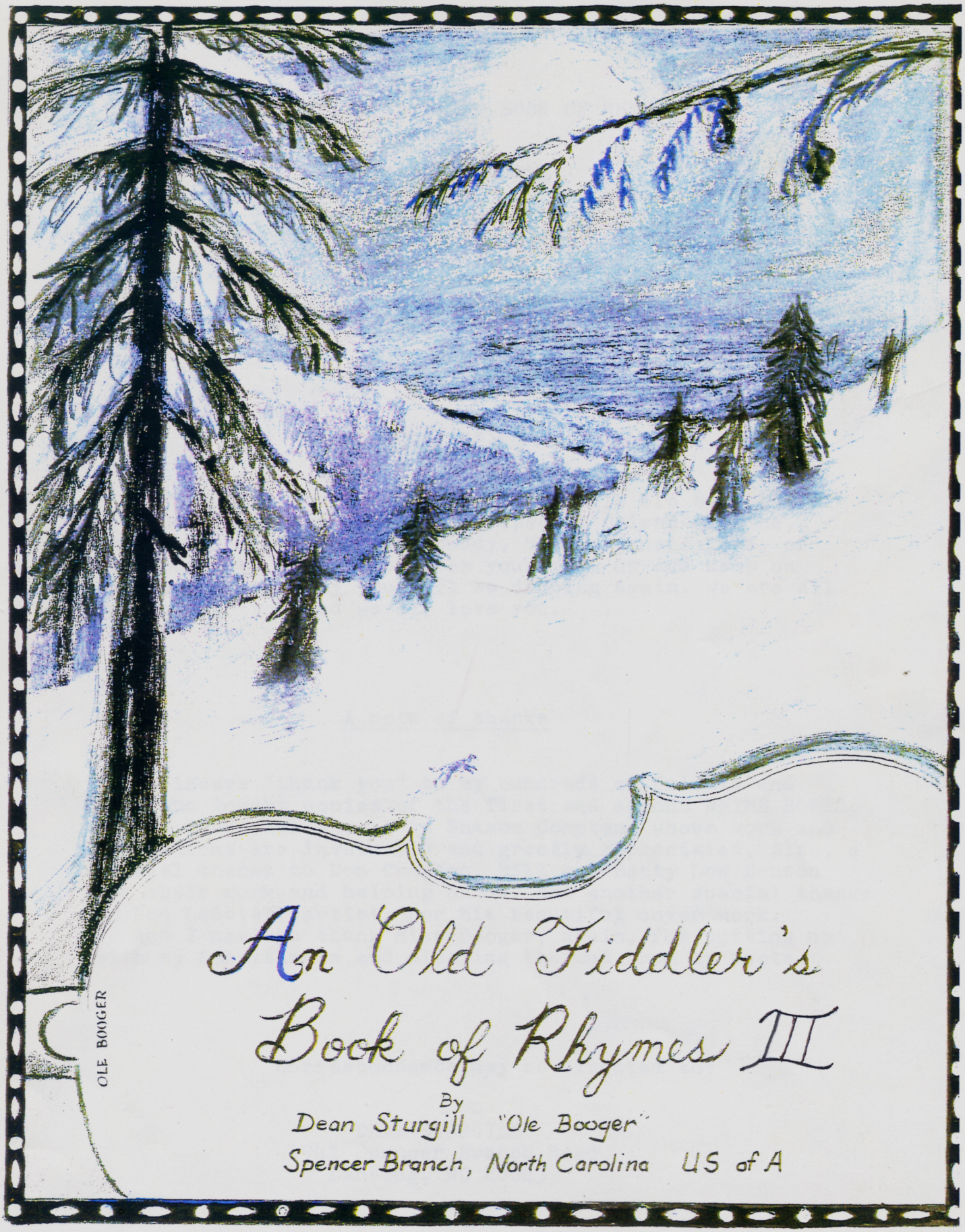

An Old Fiddler's Book of Rhymes III

By
Dean Sturgill "Ole Booger"
Spencer Branch, North Carolina U.S. of A

AN OLD FIDDLER'S THIRD BOOK OF RHYMES

by DEAN STURGILL

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First Edition

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this little ole book to everybody's friend, and a very special friend of mine, everyone's little dancing buddy, Mister Monroe Lowe, of Jonesborough, Tennessee. Keep your chin up and keep on smiling and one day you will be dancing again. We are all pulling for you and we all love you.

A note of thanks

A sincere "thank you" to my hundreds of friends and fans who bought copies of the first and second RHYME BOOKS.

And a special thanks to Sharon Compton, whose work and suggestions are invaluable and greatly appreciated. Also, a special thanks to Don Compton, Bill and Betty Lou Benson for their work and helping hands. And another special thanks to Don Leister, artist, for his beautiful cover work.

And I need to thank Miss Booger, again, for putting up with my foolishness and cleaning the mud from my boots.

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The foreword of a book introduces the work and its author. I'll speak of Dean Sturgill, the author, first.

Dean Sturgill is my friend. My definition, a friend is a person whom one knows, likes and trusts. I'm a flat lander friend of Dean's, one of those Northern Virginia, Fairfax County folks who's reputed not to know much, to have lots of money and not to care how they spend it. My friend, Dean, says these things of me and I still like him. Dean ventured to Northern Virginia last summer and stayed two nights before heading back to Spencer Branch, North Carolina, U.S. of A.. He rode with me as I drove north on Interstate 81 through most of Virginia. He questioned me changing lanes, passing vehicles and marveled at how there wasn't much distance between the telephone poles as I drove. "Why don't you just get in one lane and stay there?" says the man who never goes above 30 mph when he drives or somedays sees no more vehicles than the mailman and the school bus on Spencer Branch.

Dean came to Fairfax County, Virginia to play for Mom, his 81 year old girlfriend who needed to hear the music of her heritage and her life, and to dance one more time. Now, Dad refers to Dean as "the authorities," someone he can call to report to if his supper is late. Dean calls Dad and talks and he loves Dad. Of course William delights in their special friendship. Others, be they in Fairfax County, Alexandria, Richmond or Lynchburg, could give testimony to Dean's special relationship with them. They might speak of Dean's visits by mail, his encouragement to keep fiddlin' or of his flat refusal to fly. Each person who calls Dean "my friend" does so because of a special bond of the caring, love, attention and commitment Dean gives to them.

A man's as good as his word and you can trust Dean with what he says and with your money if you have any to give him to spend for you. He'll have comment on the items he procures for you. I know exactly his thoughts on the carved birds he found for me and how many flashlights I could have gotten for my money that he spent on the lamp I ordered. And, of course, I trust his pronouncement that post holes come with the locust posts he's cut for our line fence we're running this summer.

I can't decide if it's the twinkle of Dean's eyes or the wink and nod followed by the wry chuckle that marks and endears Dean when he's jonerin' you. Perhaps it's his britches that won't button, the toothpick he chews or the tunes he fiddles that distinguishes him. Most likely we sense Dean's skill as a fiddler, a traditionalist in the mountain music ways, a purveyor of a heritage.

This OLD FIDDLER'S BOOK OLD RHYMES, III should be read carefully and thoughtfully by those with age and experience lest you recognize an event, a friend, a relative or yourself in a rhyme. Others should read with interest of times and ways past, of places found in memories, of our heritage. You may smile and nod in recognition, shed a tear as you reflect and remember or laugh and wonder just who he's writing about.

Dean is still working on shaving everyday, coming to the table for meals, believing there are other food groups than taters, biscuits and gravy, and learning not to litter. Dean Sturgill is my friend, a person whom I know, I like and I trust.

Sharon Keys Compton

THE FEES BRANCH FIDDLER

Dean Sturgill

We waded through the snows of winter when no winter moon shown
And walked through the storms of summer to get to his home.
Forty years ago, the Fees Branch Fiddler was young and thin.
He'd say, "Come in younguns. How have you younguns been?"

He says, "I'm doin' very well, I reckon, able to potter about."
He'd pull a Prince Albert from his pocket and peck the Prince Albert out.
With a cigarette rolled and lighted, he settled back in his seat
To rest his worn back and to rest his weary feet.

We knew with an axe or cradle he had toiled all day
But sooner than later, we'd ask him to play.
He would take the fiddle from the wall, pick and tune the strings,
And say, "Boys, I don't play much anymore. I can't do much with the thing."

His fiddle was a fiddle of beauty, of spruce and curly maple, handmade.
On the back an engraved peacock, many colors of little jewels inlaid.
The scroll was the head of an eagle, mean eyes look every way,
A finger board of ebony with flowers from mother-of-pearl inlay.

He played the fiddle under his chin, on his head and behind his back.
Big-eyed, backwoods booger boys had never seen anything like that.
The "Cackling Hen" cackled and the red rooster would crow
When the Fees Branch Fiddler sawed the strings with his bow.

To the "Arkansas Traveler" the boys listened as the lamplight danced
And the love, mystery and magic of the fiddle and fiddler were enhanced.
He played "I Held Her By Her Little Brown Hand" then put away his bow.
Through the snows of winter and storms of summer, back home we would go.

With suppertime over, milking done, again to Fees Branch we would dash
Because the Fees Branch Fiddler was the great ALBERT HASH.

Forty years later the Fees Branch Fiddler is gone
But the Fees Branch Fiddler didn't leave us alone.
Today beside the falling waters of Fees Branch, the spring birds still sing
And the resounding sounds of the Fees Branch Fiddler's fiddle still ring.

HOME, HUNTER and HOUND

Whipped and warped and worn from the hundred winters it has stood
Home is a weathering wonder a withering in the woods
Smoke still curls from the chimney at the breaking of dawn
To soothe the hunter's soul on a hunter's February morn

Now, the hunter is old and there is snow on the mountain top
His strides are getting slower and he seems to stumble a lot
He has watched the seasons come and watched the fox run
And has watched the fox flip and fold in front of his gun

The hound is old, too, weather beaten, scar faced and foot worn
His eyes getting cloudy, steps slow and ears torn
He walks to the door and looks out on the morning snow
Walks back to the hunter and with cloudy eyes says, "Lets go."

In to the snow the hunter slowly strides and thinks of a fox pelt
The hound walks behind stepping in the steps the hunter left
Farther along the trail, Ole Reynard has left his mark
The old hound finds the scent and finds a young hound's heart

A song of great gladness fills the morning sides
As the singing hound seeks the hide away where Ole Reynard hides
The hunter claims the mountain top, sets on a stump in the warm sun
And thinks back on sixty seasons, Ole Queens and old guns

The hound waltzes on the trail singing pure, sure and true
The melody swings high and is swallowed up in the blue
Now, the hound's spirit is moved, the hunter hears a new tune
Ole Reynard is running and the hunter should see Ole Reynard soon

If old legs can run, the hunter run to his stand
The constant chime of the chase put a tremble in his hand
Far across the morning sides with flaming fur all aglow
Reynard bounded from the Piney Woods gracefully leaping thru the snow

Sixty seasons have slipped by, the hunter selects the right place
To reward the old hound by ending another Reynard chase
The gun leaps to the hunter's shoulder, belches smoke and hot lead
He watches the fox flip and fold, lay still, stone dead

The hound sang on and finds Ole Reynard in the snow
His wily life taken, the flaming fur still aglow
By the fox the hound lies with cloudy eyes and worn feet
The hunter builds a fire to warm the hound beside the heat

With the gun on his shoulder and the fox slung on his back
The tracks that took us away, will also, take us back (to the)
Whipped and warped and worn from the hundred winters it has stood
Our warm withering wonder a weathering in the woods

(On Feb. 20, 1994, this rhyme was scratched out for my favorite teacher, Miss Sharon, of Fairfax County, Virginia.)

SILENT SHOUTING SISTER SALLY

In the backwoods of October, fox grapes falling from the vine
At Big Bear Baptist Church it was revival meeting time
The crippled came by hoss sled, the able ambled through the woods
If anyone could down the devil, this crowd shore 'n hell could

In the night quiet of the churchyard, some were down on their luck
Calves wouldn't suck and there was corn in the shock still to shuck
Some suffered with the tizzic and some suffered with child
Some suffered with the 'zootic and from boils that was about to bile

In new suits of blue were preachers Potter, Perry and Preacher Pettigrew
On the ground they spit their twisted chew, then filed in to fill the pew
A pumpkin moon hung over the ridge, a Hoot Owl hooted in the dark
The last night of revival meeting time was about to start

Silent shouting Sister Sally sot in the spot where she always sot
While Preacher Potter preached heaven awful high and hell awful hot
Lamplight shone on her gray fox hair, light of heaven shone on her face
As sneaky no-see-um spirits begin to stir at the revival meeting place

Preacher Pettigrew preached of Nicademus and the Prophet Issiah of old
Of a heaven with walls of jasper and streets filled with purest gold
About a haven for the weary traveler and a place of eternal rest
And shouting on the hills of glory for the redeemed and the blest

When with the Saviour we enter gloryland, "Won't It Be Wonderful There"
Was sung by the bib overall and boar hog feed sack apron choir
With the hells getting hotter and the heavens coming down
Sally spraddle-leg split to the shouting section and never made a sound

Her hands hovered above her head, swaying as leaves in the breeze
Her shoe heels stirred up a dust on the floor and she commenced to sneeze
The stretch string in her bloomer top broke, they fumbled to her feet
She hog hopped right out of them sisters and never skipped a beat

A knot hole opened in the church wall, the moonlight shone about
Was the knot hole to let the moonlight in or Sister Sally out
Those that had been long asleep suddenly became wide awake
Brother Boomer grabbed his collecting hat and a collection begin to take

No-see-um spirits were scared away, the hells begin to cool
Sister Sally shouted to a dark corner and hopped up on a stool
She wiped sweat from her gray fox hair, the light of heaven from her face
Preacher Perry announced the revival over with a touch of charm and grace

Silent shouting Sister Sally spied the sisters stretched on the floor
She shoved the sisters in her pocket and shuffled out the door
The devil had been downed, there was no more Big Bear sin
May the hoot'ls be with these sisters and Sister till they meet again

(On April 13, 1994, this rhyme was "scratched out" for my favorite "little Indian" girl, Miss Betty Lou Davis-Benson of Gainsborough Avenue and Gypsy Hill, Virginia.)

SOUND ASLEEP AT THE WAKE

I was just a little boy, still I remember it well
Now, it is time for this old man, this old tale, to tell

When the bee was buzzing the blossom and spring springing to life
Ol' Henry Hogwood took Henrietta Hobgood to be his seventh wife
The wedding was an odd affair, shotgun and buckshot held by Uncle Perk
When the last, I do, was said, Ol' Henry said, "It's time to go to work."
Ol' Henry worked at the sawmills, Henrietta worked at the stills
There was lumber and licker and rattlesnakes all about them thar hills

Then, a way back yonder in the backwoods, during the March of Ides
Ol' Henrietta Hogwood just got up and laid down and died
Sister Hattie say, "She die from a pizzened still overdose."
Ol' Henry say, "Dat's a lie, she die 'cause a rattlesnake got to close."
No one could seem to agree as to the cause of Henrietta's demise
Henry say, "Bury her quick fo someone steals da nickels from her eyes."

From hollow to hollow, word spread of a one night wake
Some was a bringing sweet 'taters and some a bringing 'possum to bake
To go sound asleep, Ol' Henry would be a little hesitating
From over in the 'tother hollow, he had the Harriet woman waiting
The over in the 'tother hollow woman, she'd be doing the cooking
Feet propped on the hearth, Ol' Henry would be doing the looking

The preacherman come, read a tad in CORINTHIANS, Paul's Second Epistle
Then took a slurp from the jug to whet his appetite and wet his whistle
When the preacherman left, after unwaking the dead
Ol' Henry pulled another jug from underneath his bed
In the lamplight, Ol' Henry passed the jug round and around
Slurped another dipper full, for hisself, to hold the 'possum down

Ol' Henry showed no grief, he had seen death six times before
Ol' Henry showed no sorrow and he commenced to snore
Behind the wooden box, Sister Hattie, Bruton snuffed and weeped
The jug juice and 'possum juice had put Ol' Henry sound asleep
With the 'possum gone and the jug gone, the wakers to home did take
Ol' Henry, Harriet and Henrietta were alone, sound asleep at the wake

(This little tale was written in the winter of 1953.)

THE GUFFIE GATE GHOST

Sheee listen, the old folks have long been dead
Still, I remember what the old folks said,

"When the moon is in the dark and the signs in the feet
The Guffie Gate Ghost you will always meet
One night old Guffie was riding from a wake
His hoss was galloping hard, the hour getting late
The whip-poor-wills wasn't willing, the owls deathly quiet
The little stream shivered and sang in the night."

Sheee listen, the old folks have long been dead
Still, I remember what the long dead old folks said,

"Old Guffie lifted the latch and swung open the gate
The ghost sheeted down and his saddle did take
The black hoss raced away, running with all his might
Blood curdling, bone chilling screams filling the night
The Guffie Gate Ghost rode the mighty hoss to death
Screamed back to the gate with blood on her breath

Sheee listen, the old folks have long been dead
Still, I remember what the old folks said,

"A filch found the saddle in a fissure far away
The hoss was never found, still gone till this day
No one seems to know old Guffie's where abouts
His boots were found in a bog with his feet pulled out
A pipe was found in a pit with the tobacco still lit
A hat was found in the haze with a head still in it

Sheee listen, the old folks have long been dead
Still, I remember what the long dead old folks said,

"When the moon is in the dark a hoss neighs 'neath the night sky
A black hoss with no rider, by the Guffie gate, gallops by
Old Guffie still calls to his hoss from a hill so very high
The wail wakes the whip-poor-wills, the owls hear the cry
The little stream sings and shivers with a starry sheen
And a sheet settles down with a blood chilling scream."

(This was written in the Dogwood days of May for my letter writing gal pal, Miss Esther. Also known as Miss Frizz and Miss Sally Ann, the mother of the "little Indian girl.")

CHOLESTEROL FREE

Waiting in the waiting room, all alone Ole Booger sit
When in walks this stethoscoped, spectickled, bald headed,
big bellied, full of it, little wit

He says, "I've checked you outside, I've checked you inside out
Yep, I gum, you've got it, of that there's no doubt
Your pipes are very rusty, you are in quite a plight
It is caused by too much fat and sodium in your diet
Us doctors have a name for it, we call it cholesterol."
I begin to smell fresh dirt, see flowers and bearers-pall

Ole Booger say, "How much do I owe you for finding all this out?"
I paid 77 dollars & 77 cents of another dollar and got the heck out
On the way home Ole Booger thinks, "I'se seen slim coons and
bears that are fat
Cholesterol? I swares and declares, I'se never seen that."
Ole Booger knows even a coon knows what to do for constipation
And even a bear knows what to do for a burning butt sensation

At home, Ole Booger found some cold biscuits and het a pot of
pork to pour on 'um
Bent his knees under the table and commenced to chaw up on 'um
He slurped all the coffee from the coffee cup
And you know what Miss Cassie? That blame pork grease et all
my cholesterol up

(This was written for a wonderful, fun loving, banjer pickin'
friend, Cassie Greer-Keys, in the spring of 1993.

"Miss Cassie" passed away November 6, 1993. She will always
be remembered for the fun and joy and smiles she brought
to so many lives.)

POSEY THE 'POSSUM

Once upon a time in old Jonesborough town
Lived one ole 'possum and one ole hound
The long tailed 'possum, he was named Posey
The long tailed hound, he was named Mosey

When the sun went down and the moon come up
Ole Posey and Ole Mosey always got the hiccups
The only thing to help was find something to eat
The 'possum liked persimmons and the hound liked meat

They trotted off to FRED SKEEN'S RESTURANT, he filled them up
With their bellies full, they no longer had the hiccups
Mosey drank a gallon of wine and feeling like a fool
Decided to go to the dance down at Larue's school

Ole Mosey hit the dance floor two stepping with a city cat
Ole Posey hit the dance floor two stepping with a city rat
They danced and danced all across the dance floor
Danced and danced till they could dance no more

The hound wanted to take the city cat home
Mister Tomcat says, "She is my cat, leave my cat alone."
They snarled and growled and got in to a fight
They fought and fought till long after midnight

Then looked around and everyone was gone
Ole Posey, the 'possum, had taken the city cat home

- -

THE ONE EYED COON

Once upon a time, there was a one eyed coon
He was so blind in that eye, he couldn't see the moon
If the one eyed coon found anything to eat
He had to find it feeling with his feet

One night in the woods, the hounds bayed, all about
The one eyed coon climbed so high in the tree, he run
out of limbs and the one eyed coon fell out
The hounds grabbed him by the head and grabbed him
by the tail, under the moon
And that was the end, dead end, of the one eyed coon

(These rhymes were written especially for the man that rode the mule around the world. My little dancing, Cajun buddy, Mister Monroe Lowe, of Jonesborough, Tennessee.)

THE DAY JEHOVAH CAME

I'se a setting in the backwoods, in my backwoods home
Just finished a buzzard leg, gnawed 'er down to the bone
I'se thinking about youth and living down in the December of life
Of foxfire and foxhounds, honeysuckles and another man's wife
About the rivers I'd swum and the mountains I'd climbed
Fiddlin' and dancing, rattlesnake wimmen and wine
I peered out the window to see what I could see
Lo and behold, Jehovah had done slipped up on me

With black hat and black satchel, down the bank, he came
Followed by a beauty blonde that would put big Dolly to shame
They walked up on the porch in front of the open door
I looked at them, they looked at me and then we looked some more
Finally, I say, "Come on in, I wasn't exactly 'specting you.
Truth is, the people that come here are sorta very few."
And wouldn't you know the blond with the big bust
Put the stove 'tween me and her, so I couldn't see to lust

I say, "Jist who ire you and where ire you from?"
He say, "I'se Jehovah and I make Sugar Tree Branch my home."
I say, "I knows Sugar Tree Branch and I knows Larry Pennington.
He picks that banjer and has won a hundred blue ribbons."
Looking to see if his blonde was still hidden from me, Jehovah say,
"Larry Pennington is my uncle."
Looking to see if there was another way, his big blonde I could see
I say, "You have a helluva good uncle."

Jehovah say, "We thought you would read the Bible with us."
Ole Booger say, "I would love to, since I can't see to lust."
He 'retch in his black satchel and pulled out his Good Book
My Good Book was up the stairs, so up the stairs, I took
I fetch the Good Book, Misses Cassie and Esther gave to me
Put on my be-speckticles for the better for me to see
Jehovah say, "Turn to the Book of Daniel, verse 44, Chapter 2."
Ole Booger turned and turned and under his breath, he say,
"O' Daniel, where in the devil ire you?"

I peered over my specks to say, "My father was a fire and brimstone
Baptist preacher, you see
For 25 years, he pastored a church on the Branch of Sugar Tree."
I'se a coming afeared, Old Daniel, I would never see
I looked back down at the Good Book and there's Old Daniel
looking up at me
Jehovah read and with my thumb and finger, I followed along
With verse 44 finished, Jehovah just got up and went home
Left Ole Booger sorta puzzled why in the devil Jehovah split
Then, Ole Booger thinks, "Well, hell, if it wasn't making any more
sense to him than it was to me, he might as well quit."

(On the last May day of 1994, I writ this tale for the man that put Ole Booger in a big Oldsmobile automobile. That gentleman is, William D. "Pete" Keys, of Fairfax county. Thank you, Uncle Pete.)

THE FIDDLERS, THIRTY AND THREE AND ONE

Ramona Jones plays "Whiskey Before Breakfast," on Grand Ole Opry time
Buddy Pendleton fiddles "Snowflake Reel," in the August sunshine
Earnest East plays "Chinese Breakdown," in Independence town
Whit Sizemore fiddles "Walking In My Sleep," dancers go round and round

Tim Smith plays "Florida Blues," in the Virginia highlands
Lynn Worth fiddles "Leather Britches," in Fox Creek Ramblers Band
Johnny Jackson plays his fiddle in Galax on a cold, cold night
Donna Ray plays "San Antonio Rose," 'neath the Texas moonlight

Jerry Moretz fiddles "Gold Rush," with the Deep Gap guitar man
Nancy Slys plays "Fiddlers Reel," around Pilot Mountain land
Frank Grayson plays "Lee Highway Blues," in the hills of Tennessee
In Clifton, Don Leister played many tunes with Chicka-diddle Dee

Bobby Hicks fiddled "Roanoke," in Mister Monroe's band
Tiny Pruitt set "Fire On The Mountain," in the Wilkes county sand
There are more fiddlin' Millers than there are milling mills
Add Jim, Ray and Howard and somewhere is there a fiddling Will

Robert Byrd fiddled from the hills of W. Va., to the halls of Capitol Hill
Charlie Cline fiddled in the Lonesome Pine about "Ole Cheatem Bill"
Whitetop to Hollywood, Harold Hensly played, "Find Her Name Written There"
Roy Russell fiddled "Round Town Gals," over WRVA's Richmond air

In Troutdale, Wade Petty pulls a Big Country Bluegrass bow
And the Virginia Barndance Band has Fiddlin' Wiley S. Mayo
Glenn Duncan fiddles "Sugar In The Gourd," around Nashville land
Stuart Duncan plays "Whistling Rufus," in a hot bluegrass band

Johnny Warren plays "Black Eyed Susie," with his father's fiddlin skills
Jimmy Coe played the Fireman's Jamboree in the Marion, Va. hills
Jimmy Edmonds plays "Holding Up The Ladder," and traveling on
Larry Pennington fiddles "Durham's Bull" and "No Place Like Home"

Rafe Brady fiddles "Silly Bill" and a tune called, "Katy Hill"
And sings of "Cherokee Rose," how he misses her nobody knows
Benny Jarrell fiddled in Surry county about "The Cattle In The Corn"
Mark O'Connor has been fiddlin since the day before he was born

Now, I have two spots left and I saved them for the best
Easily, I found Helen White and Chrystal Mahaffey in my fiddlers quest

Helen plays many fine tunes and "Black Mountain Rag," from end to end
And she is the smiling-est friend of Wayne C. Henderson and Friends

Chrystal is the fiddlin-est young girl I have ever met
And if sons and sunshine don't get in her eyes, I've not heard the best,
yet

(This concludes the list of a 100 fiddlers I've known/heard in my time
There are a hundred more, I could include in my "FIDDLER'S RHYMES.")