

The lyrics of the

Trailside Rangers

Catalog of songs



Aimless Charlie

I hitch-hiked from the west coast
My friends said New York was so gorgeous in the spring
It feels so good to be here, in the streets I'm here to sing
I started out this journey
With a friend of mine who said "Let's go out for a drive"
He was running from his troubles
I felt great just to be alive

So we drove on till the sunrise
Two-hundred miles outside of Santa Fe we stopped
To gaze upon the mesas and climb up on the rocks

This has always been my dream
Aimless - travel so serene
Sun burns out the darkest fears
Drying all the falling tears
Don't know where I'll be tonight
But I'll be gone before daylight
I have blossomed from a seed
And now into the wind I'm freed
Drawn into the moonlit sky
Born to live and never die

Left my friend in New Orleans
The car broke down and I just couldn't stay around
So I found myself a highway and a trucker northward bound
Left my wife and kid in Oakland
I love my baby and I miss my Kaity-Ann
I guess maybe I should call her
But she wouldn't understand...

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Angel at the Door

There she stood in the doorway
A scarlet, black and silver robe 'round her
At first I thought it was just the drug
But she shook her head no

Then she reached out her hand
And she led me away
Oh but I had so much left to do,
I had so much to say

And if you're callin' me
No I won't be home
And if you're callin' me
No I can't come home

Cause I - yes I've seen your face before
Oh I - I know you're the angel at the door

There I lay in the jungle heat
Amidst the flies and the stench of death
I was bleeding hard yet still alive
Heard a faint whisper-her icy breath

She said now you're gonna be just fine
Though soon I'll come back again
And you can light your candles and bolt your door
But I'm just gonna walk right in

And if you're callin' me
No I won't be home
And if you're callin' me
No I can't come home

Oh cause I - yes I've seen your face before
Oh I - I know you're the angel at the door

Arcadian Blue

You are the seeds planted deep into my soul
We grew together as the seasons passed us by
Now so far apart and so many miles between
Still it hasn't changed the way I feel inside

Now I look out over this land
It's still so beautiful today
And I wonder about this land
Will it all be swept away?

I lie awake at night and wonder
Just what's going to happen if we don't draw the line some where
How long before we realize something has to give
And somehow no one seems to care

Now I look out over this world
I'm not so sure of what I see
And I wonder about this world
Is it so safe to let it be?

j. Wilford 10/88

Brave the Change

Well I woke up in the morning feeling tired of taking my chances
And I go right through the day spitting out pieces of broken romances
And I can see the enemy every day he's looking me right straight in the eye
And while my head is saying no my heart is asking why

Should I read between the lines
Or say that I'm just acting childish
Go on with your life the way it was
I feel a light flow through my veins
Like a dancing fire-spirit
Calling out for me to brave the change

If I told you all my stories would you laugh and say that I was a fool
If I was down and needed a hand would you have the strength to lift me out of the blue
'Cause I know it's a two-way street baby, but I'm a man with an unquenchable thirst
I want to taste the freedom , savor the love and dive into life head first

I want to gather all the leaves from a tree
I want to throw them into the great blue sky
And while they float slowly to the ground
I'll be hoping one will fly

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Broken Man's Pride

I woke up from a long dream, baby
Can't shake it out of my head
I saw a beautiful house in a meadow
And a hay- barn painted red

But lately we ain't happy honey
Livin' in this beat-up shack
The crops are dying and we're so far from home
And we ain't ever going back

Me and Kelly, we met in high school
Danced every dance that night
We both had problems with our families
And we just couldn't make 'em work out right

So we fled to the windy city
And got a place of our own
It ain't much and we don't have money
But we'll never go back home

You can never go back home again
Now honey don't you cry
It's just the fate of a broken man's pride

It was during the harvest moon
Back in 1962
When Larry joined the army
He felt it was the only thing to do

Well he was wounded in Vietnam
And came home in '71
Stepped off the plane and no one was waitin'
He said, "Ma what have I done?"

You can never go back home again
Now mister, don't you try
It's just the fate of a broken man's pride

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Buffalo Hurricane

I took a last sip of my smooth Kentucky bourbon
It was deep in the dead of night out by the firelight
I got to thinkin' of all the hell that I'd been through
Family and friends all gone, mine's such a lonely song

All my dreams ended up being shattered
And all my accomplishments just don't seem to matter
I don't know why but I just keep on trying
This life is just so harsh sometimes I feel like dying

They filled me full of buckshot in one of those silly wars
The land was painted red, by all the countless dead
I returned home only to find my house consumed in flames
It burnt right to the ground, my wife was never found

Into the starlight I stare and I wonder
If this life is drowning me why don't I stay under?
Everything important to me has been taken
I'm just a leaf-less tree that's still being shaken

And now I feel the earth splitting asunder
Could Satan have unleashed his demons of thunder?
The plains all around me don't provide the escape I need
Angel of death in a buffalo stampede

And now I face the onslaught of around ten thousand head
My fate is sealed for good I'd change it if I could
My heart pounding in my chest I've never felt so alive
I can't believe it's true; the herd has split in two

Buffalo hurricane, you gave me strength at last
Live for today and forget about your past
My life has taken a whole new direction
It feels as though there's been some sort of strange resurrection

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Casy

Casy was a lean young man, maybe seventeen, no more
And with his father worked the land
Some ninety acres 'round junction four
When the bank foreclosed on them it was a sad, sad time indeed
They lost their home, they lost their land
And there were hungry mouths to feed

You search your heart to find the answer
Some people just don't understand I guess, but
It's a shame that we could treat each other
So unkind

Casy headed out one day with a .410 at his side
He held a bank up at high noon
And even killed one man inside
His father stood there right beside him after they caught Casy on the run
Said to the judge, "You took my home, you took my land
And now you take my son

You search your heart to find the answer
Some people just don't understand I guess, but
It's a shame that we could treat each other
So unkind

We've got to figure some way to stop this
It's not like lightning or hurricanes
We've got a bad thing made by men
And by God that's something we can change

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CELEBRATION

Jainey packed up her bags in the darkness
Crept down the stairs then she slipped through the door
She left a note on the kitchen table
“I’m sorry daddy, I can’t stay here no more

Because I don’t know about this situation
I’ll never live up to your expectations
I want to see all I can see of this world,
I want to join up in the celebration”

Jeffrey-Lee sits up straight in his wheelchair
Ever since the war he just can’t stop a-drinkin’
“People see me stare and they say that I’m crazy
They don’t understand that I’m just a-thinkin’

Cause I don’t know about this situation
I’m sick and tired of this degradation
I want to stand up and walk through this world
I want to join up in the celebration”

Cheryl cried as she loaded the pistol
Her baby died and her man he had gone
She held the cold steel right up to her temple
The pain was too much she couldn’t go on

Just then the phone rang and shattered the silence
A voice cried out to her “I’ve made some mistakes
Come with me we’ll start a new life together
I’ve got to have your love—no matter what it takes

Cause I don’t know about this situation
Your love to me is such a revelation
I want to take your hand and walk through this world
Let’s join up in the celebration”

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Daisy-Mae and the Redneck Ghost from Mason City

There's a ghost who roams this town and it's me
I was a lonely drifter from up north in Mason City
There's a few who claim to know my name
And how they love to tell the story of my tragic rise to fame

Now I was just a young man then maybe twenty-three
I loved to drink and gamble but I must confess
Women were my specialty
I was checked into the local saloon and I was playing cards by nine
When I saw a lovely lass in blue and I pledged to make her mine

I walked on over to her table and I sat myself right down
She said her name was Daisy-Mae and she was well known in this town
We danced halfway through the night and ended up in my room
Until that fateful morning after when I faced untimely doom

I said good morning Daisy-Mae I sure do thank ya for the dance
Well you could see I was a stranger here just a-lookin' for romance
Now don't you cry sweet darlin', I'm sure we'll meet again someday
And as I bent to kiss her cheek she pulled a gun and blew my head away

Well that was it for me and my face in this cruel and unfair world
To think I lost my life at the hands of a young broken-hearted girl
Now I felt no need for revenge and yet I knew I had to stay
To haunt this town for two long years in search of my Daisy-Mae

Now I refuse to leave this world although it's probably best
I'd rather stay awhile and be a legend, scaring old folks half to death
But I must admit my hearts a prisoner and my spirit is a slave
To the only woman I could love, the one who sent me to my grave

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Dusty Old Town

Here I am, just riding in my black pick-up truck
Heading down the road hoping I'll run into some luck
But I don't know most likely I'll just run right out of gas
'Cause over me a shadow has been cast

Now you tell me you won't be seeing me no more
You packed your bags and you're headed out the door
You say you're looking for something you ain't found
I doubt you'll find it in this dusty old town

Here I am, just a-wondering what the hell I'm gonna do
Well first I lost my farm and now I'm losing you
I cannot say I blame you for all the things you feel
But somehow I got the short-end of the deal

And now I'm begging you, babe please don't leave this way
You shake your head and tell me there's nothing left to say
Who will I talk to baby, when you're not around
You are the only one I know In this dusty old town

Here I am, just a sitting with my stray dog and a case of beer
There's really not much going on, there never is 'round here
Sometimes we take a ride up yonder to the canyon road
That dog ain't never left, so I named him, "Alamo"

As I walk the fields I think about you still
I wish you'd come back but you probably never will
And I would tell you even if you came around
There's no way I'm ever gonna leave this dusty old town

FIRST STEP'S A START

Give yourself peace of mind
And turn your fears away
Embrace your life with the warmth
Of sunshine on your face

Though the world seems a whirlwind of hatred
There's just no reason for you to take part
Look in the mirror you'll find a solution
You may fall down but the first step's a start

Harry sipped the last of his gin
The third pint of the day
Unfocused eyes searched the room
For his wife who had passed away

So many people are drowning their sorrows
Killing their spirits and numbing their minds
There's no miracle cure gonna save you
Just straighten up and start towing the line

Nobody said this was gonna be easy
Can't face the storm with your back to the wind
Pick yourself up off the ground and remember
This time you won't get knocked back down again

Alicia had hoped for the best
But it turned out for the worst
Her marriage ended in turmoil
Ten years felt like a curse

She had a dream to live out in the country
To raise her kids somewhere so far away
She sold her ring in a pawnshop in midtown
Packed up the car and they're leaving today

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Flamingo Johnny

Johnny ran a parlor down Flamingo Road
About a half mile down from the strip
My sister loved Johnny and I never knew why
I guess she figured he'd be a father to their kids

Well Johnny was a crazy one that's for sure
Always hanging around the dealers and the clowns
And I told myself if my sister ever got hurt
That I would be there with a bat to bring 'ol Johnny down

Johnny used to gamble and he had a big debt
It was due on the fourteenth of May
When the date came and went the mob sent in some men
And in the Flamingo Road parlor eight dead bodies lay

The mob kidnapped my sister at the grocery store
'Cause they knew that she was Johnny's wife
And the boss called Johnny up and said "Now let's make a deal
You either come up with the money or we take her sweet life"

Well I guess you could call Johnny a lot of bad things
But he still had the guts to go down there that day
And they let my sister go but they shot Johnny dead
I guess I'll never think of him in quite the same way

It just goes to show you how we judge someone
Before we really know what they're like inside
Not everyone has a face that's so easily read
And more often than not it's the good things we hide

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Gun Hill

I worked the coal mines down in Gun Hill Tennessee
I'll never forget the sound of the earth as it caved in on me
There were about six of us trapped in an abandoned railway shaft
One mile deep in a mountain hell-hole, goddamn I had to laugh
I don't know why...

"The dead men are the lucky ones," I heard one man exclaim
When the air runs out we'll join them quick or slow it's all the same
I can't begin to tell you how it feels
Oh won't you tell my wife and children this sad story
Daddy's gone up the sky now
C'mon honey don't you cry now, please

The first few hours we sat so quietly and still
Listening for any signs of life up above in Gun Hill
We didn't hear anything
Then a man named Will brought out his mouth harp and he played
He said the Lord could hear his songs and surely we'd be saved
I don't know why...Willie never prayed before

We took turns telling stories as our hopes began to dim
The darkness ever deepened and the air grew deadly thin
I cannot explain all that I have seen- is this a dream
Unconscious to the world for hours
Woke up to the smell of flowers
Gun Hill never smelled so goddamn sweet...

j. Wilford 2-91

Heaven Tonight

I woke up from a campfire nightmare
Stared at the stars all night long
That was some dream though
Felt I was right there
Just as real as this here song

There was a shoot-out just the night before
Yeah, we lost a few good men
So the General said "Take these boys out,
Bury 'em deep- Luke, John and Ben"

I grabbed a shovel, Ed grabbed the J.D.
And we set out to do the chore
While we was digging, I told him about my lady
He said "Bo- don't you marry that whore"

The blood ran through my veins
It burned so red
With my shovel took a swing at Ed
But I guess I must have missed him
Cause here I am on the ground
With a pain in my head

I guess that's when the dream began
I saw Ed put me in the grave with the other men
Shoveled us in, packed us down
Turned around and then he spat
I thought "Ed, how could you do that?"

There was no sunshine- there was no rain
There was a long dark cavern and a golden flame
I saw my buddies standin' in a row
Though they'd been shot- weren't no bullet holes
I got to thinking....maybe I'm all wrong
Maybe this is more than just a cowpokes song
And I turned to my friends with delight
"We're in Heaven, Heaven Tonight."

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Just as Natural as Rain

The sun is gone now, the land is dark as the
Clouds roll in from the west
The air is cold and damp, the rain is coming to
Water the seeds of unrest

I hear men talkin', and they've been planning
But their lives are shadowed in doubt
These men are angry and their families, hungry
And surely time has run out

People shouting for revolution
People crying for change
Let's stick together we'll find a solution
Just as natural as rain

The storm is raging, the thunderheads rumbling
And there's miles of water and mud
What work we had is gone, and yet we carry on
Lives swept away in the flood

The women watched closely, the faces of the men
Had the break come at last
But as the men gathered, the break would never come
As long as fear could turn into wrath

People helping each other in troubled times
All for one just the same
Give me your hand and when you're down I'll lend you mine
Just as natural as rain

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Lady Moonshine

Silver-haired lady can you see
What does the future hold for me
And will I rise up from this gloom
You see I prayed to the Lord above
It didn't work I fell in love
She left me just this afternoon

Now I'll give you all my money-I just hope you understand
I have no place left to turn- my life's a wreck, it's in your hands

Young man just sit right down
I'll turn your life around
Lady May deals in cures
Hold out your hand and it's yours

Incense smoke is burning thick
Crystal balls and candlesticks
What is the cure you have in mind
Will you recite an ancient spell
And call a demon straight from hell
Or will the stars give you a sign

Now I've put my trust in you-oh lady please don't let me down
Give me the cure to change my life- what is the secret you have found

Young man just sit right down
This is the cure that I have found
Your cards were easy to read
Moonshine is all that you need

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Lock and Key

I pulled off the road at Al and Susy's place
A man walked in with me, I swear I'd seen his face
I said, "Sir, don't I know you?" He said, "I'm sure you're wrong
But if you'd like to sit awhile I'm sure we'd get along

He said "Now son, I'm not here looking for your sympathy
But if you could lend me your ear, I've got some thoughts I'd like to free
I feel my body's no longer flesh and blood, but clay
So much evil inside, eating me away

"In my dreams I can hear their cries
I see the horror that fills their eyes
Don't run now baby, let me set you free
'Cause you know that I'm the keeper of the lock and key"

I stared unmoving as his voice began to fade
Suddenly he turned and calmly said "Don't be afraid,
Forbidden fruit is always picked ripe from the tree,
Usually never planned yet always meant to be.

"Maybe this is the chance I've waited for and missed.
Is it just a sinking dream or the Apocalypse?
Tonight I'll reap heavens glory, and gaze upon its wealth
'Cause I can hear the voices calling me to use that key myself..."

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Lonely Drifter (part iv)

I've been rollin' down this sun-drenched open highway
It seems it's longer than the rest
I've been thinkin' about all those things that I say
My choice of words they aren't the best

You could give me something that I need so much
You could make me happy every single day
What I want sweet lady it won't cost a lot
'cause you're all I haven't got

I've been thinking 'bout the situation I'm in
This lonely drifter's had enough
Time drifts away and all these lonely nights they kill me
And one night stands are always rough

I'd build a house for you and me up on the hillside
We could raise a family as we lived off of the land
Just say you will and all my wandering will stop
'cause you're all I haven't got

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Man of the Road

I have traveled over one-thousand miles
From highway cornfields to the subway turnstiles
Life ain't easy for a travelin' man
You wear your heart on your sleeve
And put your head in your hands

I play my songs for people in bar rooms downtown
You've probably seen me 'cause I'm always around
I have a message but it's not very clear
I'm just a man of the road and I don't have to be here

What would the people say now?
What would they what would they what would they what would they
What would the people say now-
If I was gone

All the stories I tell you've heard them before
I go from town to town and then I come back with more
Though they're all similar-the characters change
I'm not a poet or a prophet, I'm not here to explain

I don't have to be clear
I don't have to be here
I don't have to be real
It just has to make you feel - something

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McAlester Swing

Well I'm swinging on the porch
I figured her out
The road to me is just a symbol of my doubt
So I took that lonely road
Followed it out of town
But since I left you baby things are looking down

Oh sweet baby, I know I told some lies
I know I made you cry
Your love to me was like a flame
The fire's out and I'm to blame
For leaving you so cold and far behind
Just a memory in my mind

I stopped in Amarillo
God, I needed a drink
The Texas heat was like a weight, I could not think
The bar-maid had your features
My heart broke in two
I was determined just to drink away these blues

Next thing I remember
Woke up with a knife in my hand
The bar-maid's screaming at me
She says I killed her man

Oh sweet baby, now look at what I've done
Now I'm on the run
Please tell me that it's just a dream
Or a drive-in movie picture screen
I know that it's just the fate I've drawn
Without you I just can't go on

Now I'm up in McAlester
Been doing some time
But not for long because I'm on that killin' line
I wish that I could see you
Maybe you'd understand
Sometimes the sense runs right out of the common man

Oh sweet baby, you're gonna make me cry
And now I'm gonna die
Aw baby won't you forgive me
Though I'm just a haunting memory
Please find it baby, in your heart to try
Now I wish you sweet goodbye

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Mississippi Goldfish

I woke up early to the San Francisco sun
Sleepin's not too easy for a man who's on the run
I've been down every single back-road I can find
Tryin' to shake 'em from my tail and buy myself some time

Now they call me the "Mississippi Goldfish" by trade
I've robbed every steamship off the shore
Give me a challenge and I'll meet it in spades
But right now just show me out the back door

My first hideout was a burnt-out silver mine
I met a dame down there, her name was Caroline
It seems that she was also running from the law
Hot damn she shot down every lawman that she saw
Now on her horse named "Buccaneer" we rode out to the west
She pistol whipped some old sheriff on the way
I said "My darlin' Caroline your aim is just the best
Maybe we'll shoot the breeze again some day"

So many stories 'round the campfire I could tell
Maybe I'll write a book to take with me to hell
But I can't write now with this bounty on my head
If I'm not careful I'll end up in a flower - bed

Now they call me the "Mississippi Goldfish" by name
I've robbed every steamboat off the pier
Tell me a story and I'll put it to shame
Just don't ever tell the sheriff I was here

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My Home

Well I feel just like a stranger in this town
You don't know me but I've always been around
I been sittin' on this park bench nearly every day
People walk by but they have nothing to say

Well if you'll notice I'm out here sunshine or rain
In my face you'll see the loneliness and pain
I've got no one else to talk to, so I talk to myself
But this pride- filled lonely old man won't ask your help

I need to find a place to rest
Maybe a big old house with a fireplace so warm
It's wishful thinking I confess
But it's not easy to call this here park bench my home

© j. Wilford 6/92

218

My Daddy was a farmer outside a Midwest town
My backyard stretched as far as I could see
I remember walking barefoot down that old dirt road
I had a burning curiosity

'Cause the dirt met with asphalt and concrete
Thick yellow lines, well they cut it in two
Big trucks rolled by and sent the dust rolling
This boy began to wonder where they were going

Down 218

My oldest brother Bobby- he used to take me riding
He had a '67 Chevrolet
He used to drive so fast, my Father would get so mad
He swore to take ol' Bobby's keys away

One night I woke up 'cause I heard ma was crying
She cried out that her baby was gone
Bobby sped through the night down some old lonesome highway
A truck had swerved and the two hit head on

On 218

Well I'm older now and just out of high school
I look back on how my life has changed
I see these folks around me, and I respect their ways
Still I wonder if I'll end up just the same

I'm proud of my home and my family
But I'm like a wheel that has just started rolling
Maybe I'm just looking for a little a little adventure
'Cause when the sun comes up I guess I'll be going...

Down 218

Ol' Snakeskin

Well I'm sittin' here on this hobo train
Just tryin' to think of all the people that I could blame
For this predicament that I'm in now that I've run away from home
I'm just an angry young man who just can't seem to get along

Now there's an old man that I got to know sittin' next to me
He smokes really cheap cigars and call himself Snakeskin Connoly
He knows somethin' 'bout everything and he swears it's all true
Some other bum told me he won't shut-up there's nothing we can do

Old man why don't you just quiet down
I know you're trying hard but you're never gonna make this frown
Disappear from my face until I get some peace of mind
I wish there was a way to leave this old cootin' codger behind

Hey, hey, hey you're just an old man
I don't care what you say

Now we've gone five-hundred miles on up the California line
Ol' Snakeskin hasn't shut-up yet, he's tellin' stories all the time
Nobody cares about the war or about how many men you killed
And I don't really give a damn 'bout your Tennessee moonshine still

Old man won't you listen to me and my bitter truth
I'm a product of a broken home and resentful of my shattered youth
And I don't want to hear you rambling on and on through the night
Your stories don't amuse me and your advice will never change my plight

Hey, hey, hey, you're just an old man
I don't care what you say

Now weeks had passed on the hobo train as we chugged across the land
And something changed inside my heart- something that I hadn't planned
And when ol' Snakeskin was around I listened to him for awhile
He seemed to be a man of strength who faced his hardships with a smile

Now one day as we chugged along I looked around to my surprise
Ol' Snakeskin was nowhere in sight - somebody told me that he died
My heart clenched like a knotted fist I never thought it'd come to this
He lived his life out on the tracks and now he wasn't comin' back

Old man wherever you may be, in heaven I hope you can hear
Try to understand I'm just a boy full of hate anger and fear
And though I didn't listen to you until the very end
I feel it in my heart that on this earth you were my only friend

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Opaque

In the town that I grew up in
There was this girl I knew next door
Her name was Eileen May Frances Winfield
I called her Ellie just for short
Ever since I can remember
We were as close as kids could be
We fished for bull-heads at the culvert
She even climbed that big oak tree

I used to say "Hey Ellie May, won't you come on out to play
I need you just to hold my hand and tell me stories all day long
Hey Ellie May, i'll just wait out here all day
Until you come on out and run with me down through the trees"

Now she was a little older
A little smarter just the same
She used to quote me lines from Shakespeare
While I read aloud Mark Twain
And we savored all the good times
We stuck it out through all the bad
And through the early years of my youth
She was the only friend I had

Now around the time I went to high school
Ellie's family moved out of town
And though we wrote each other every single day
I never, never felt so down

One day the letters stopped coming
And some of mine came back returned
So I took all those of hers that I saved
Put them in the fire and watched them burn

How can time ruin friendships?
How can distance play a part?
How can fate be the dull blade that severs the ties
That bind out lonely hearts?

Why do children have to grow old?
Why do old friends always change?
How can something that once meant so much
Mean less than anything?

© joe Wilford 9-94

Peacemaker

There was a man that i once knew
His face was dark and his eyes were blue
He spoke with a voice i could barely understand
He said, "Son i want you to take this from my hand"

Inside his hand was a gun called a Peacemaker
He looked kind of strange but i felt sure
It was a gift from this man that filled me with such pride
I was the only man who had seen it and survived

He said, "Now i can show you a thing or two
But there's one thing you must promise to do
And that's never use it unless you have no choice"
As he said the words there was anger in his voice

Now i don't want you to do
The things that I've done
But you can learn from the
Battles I've lost and I've won
Take a chance on your life
But don't gamble it away
You're going to make some mistakes
And you'll have to pay
Keep your sights upon the sun and
You'll be known as the one
Who rose above the rest

Well he showed me how to use it alright
I shot up everything in sight
Now i can shoot the petals off a daisy in the wind
He said, "Son looks like you found yourself a friend"

Now it's been twelve long years since that summer day
And a lot of trouble has come my way
But i never felt the need to use my friend
I would swear by my promise to the end

Inside a bar near the spring hill mining town
Was a wild-eyed man with a killer's frown
Who held his colt .45 right up to my head
Before his finger touched the trigger he was dead

Promise and Prayer

Young boy, young man your world reeling
Trying to decipher all these feelings you're feeling
Struggling to read the page that's turning
Ever and always looking out for a guideline
Trying to stay off the field on the sideline
Trying to save the bridges you forgot were burning

No you're not – no you're not turning back now
No you're not – no you're not giving up now
No you're not – no you're not just a kid now

Everyday every night every hour
Everyone that you see has the power
To influence and teach you stand there pleading
Someone to aspire and look up to
Someone with inner-strength and enough to
Withstand the blows of life without them bleeding

No you can't – no you can't turn away now
No you can't – no you can't fan the flames now
No you're not – no you're not just the same now

All the heroes and visions and lies
It's no trick to discern their disguise
A fall from grace is not far when you're
Already face down upon the Earth
The question is – will you stay there?

All the promise and prayer has been wasted
Every fruit from the tree has been tasted
Can it be that virtue is derided
Everyman I thought had an answer
Turned out to carry within him a cancer
Which each of them had long before invited

No I'm not – no I'm not just the same now
No I'm not – no I'm not giving up now
No I'm not – no I'm not turning back now

j. Wilford 12-95

RED WILLOW

A starry night falls over silken skies
Shimmering blue it slowly fades to gray
A torch light calls you to an open field
A flame you hope will burn your pain away
Take it away...

Close your eyes and fly with me
Slip through your chains and you are free
Like a stream you'll find a course
And you will run and never fall down

Anger rages in you even still
Stings in your eyes and stains your soul
Your cross to bear in blood one-hundred years
A passion for a life you'll never know
You'll never know...

Sing to my fathers - i want to go back home
Sing to my brothers - i want to go back home
And to the skies - i want to go back home
The eagles cry - i want to go back home
All the spirits of a feather joined as one
With this pipe you shall walk upon the earth
Whatever sickens there you shall make it well
Oh thunder nation deliver me from hell

Close your eyes and fly with me
Turn from the dark and you will see
Like a stream you'll find a course
And you will run and never fall down

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Return to the Sea

(Our souls are like those orphans whose unwedded mothers die in bearing them: the secret of our paternity lies in their grave, and we must there to learn it.) Herman Melville (1819-91)

The ocean roars to meet the thunder in the sky
We ponder what it means to die
The Captain at the ships prow, ravaged by the wind
Heart of wrought steel he has within

Eyes full of pain I see his madness permeate
An unerring course since the day of his malediction
Coercing his malignant will upon us all
To join his singular revenge upon the world of his downfall

Captain:

"All my life has been a struggle just to try to be one with the earth and sea.
I see my world as just an open book and as I read, the hero isn't me."

The tempest unrelenting hurls us through the mist
Ships sinking from her deadly kiss
Archangelic shrieks are heard above the din
We are resolved this is the end

And still the Captain poised upon the deck remains
Implacable and ensconced in enmity
He stands like Satan who would not sink to hell
Till he had dragged a living part of heaven down to eternity

Captain:

"All my life has been a struggle just to try and be the man I hoped to be.
I see my world as just a question mark and for the answer I return to the sea..."

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The Hunter

So the child became a man
He pulled the trigger and then marked his face with the hot blood
An initiation of the soul
Into the womb of earth and sky
The dying buck lay at his feet
Still in the attitude of speed...

And as the days began to pass
He became ever sentient of the world he loved at last
The wilderness had nursed this orphan child
As though he was its own
Having drawn the worthy blood
Noble spirit of the trees...

Then he saw it through the cane
The biggest buck he'd ever seen
And then he lowered his aim
Unmoving eyes stared back at him so wild and dark and unafraid
He dropped the gun stretched out his hand... "Father"

In this consecration freed from self-reproach
Strength centers on how much you show
Love and sorrow for all that lived and ran
And returned to the earth

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The Leaving

Walk with me down to the river
We'll reminisce that country mile
'cause my heart is doing time
We only have a little while

Now I don't want to see you crying
It will only magnify the pain
Though our roads have split apart
In the end they'll meet again

'Cause I know-in this world it's such a rocky road we ride
But I know- in the spirit world you'll never leave my side

j.Wilford 10/90

The Prophet

(Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom if the grave wither though goest.) Ecclesiastes

Sage was a man I'll always remember
He lived out in the woods somewhere
I used to fish the Steep Rock river
And I would often see him there

He was a man of peace and wisdom
Although his outlook was rather grim
He said he'd seen all the works of this world
And life was a striving after wind

Just look around-what do you see here?
The sun brings forth abundant light
And then just strips it all away
The more you learn the more your grief is
Stare into the deepest well
The answer's never going to sound
And all the happiness you've found
Will not join you in the grave

And though he held these strong positions
He was far from an embittered soul
He often talked of his great adventures
Though these were all so trivial

He taught me to rejoice the morning
Savor the smell of the springtime wind
Embrace the day as a celebration
For it's all vanity in the end

Well I don't know-if I believed him
Surely he was quite sincere in the convictions that he held
But when he died-I still remember
I saw a smile upon his face
It broke my heart to see it shine
Could it be he changed his mind
In the end after all....?

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hree Days

I used to follow her everywhere
"Anastasia," I said
"Your name derived from the rising
Of Jesus Christ from the dead
She said, "Go away, you don't understand me
You don't know what I'm about"
There's something missing in her life
I hope she figures it out...

Born on a Sunday in April
It didn't mean much, I guess
Some kids are showered with love and affection
Some kids aren't quite so blessed
Nobody knew much about him
But we could still not believe
The day he laid down by the tailpipe of his Ford and
Breathed a sigh of relief...

Dilsey's sweaty palm gripped the cross around her neck
The tears streamed down her face
She had just come from the Church of Redemption
Where she redeemed her faith
She said she'd always been searching for something
It waiting just around the bend
"I seed the beginning a long time ago,
And now I see the end..."

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Tough Enough

She's built like a truck but the headlights they ain't too bright
She's gonna tear up the road and run you down in the heat of the night
And this girl she'll surely make you sorry
And this girl she'll surely make you cry
And when she makes short work of your egocentric world
You won't be wondering why

She's tough enough

She kicks like a mule and spins just like a spoke in a wheel
She's fair but she's mean she's got a heart made of gold plated steel
And this girl she'll eat your heart for breakfast
And this girl she'll steal your life away
And when you've nowhere to run and your back's to the wall
You're gonna say what she wants you to say

She's tough enough

Tough enough to make a stand
Any cause to distance herself from the common man
Tough enough to make a change
There's nothing set in stone that can't be rearranged

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Trailside Blues (Life Goes On)

Early one autumn morn i set out on my way
Following any trail that led me far away
Until i crossed the Sioux i felt that i might turn—
Around but i knew i had memories to burn

You were so precious forever I'd have held you
But something changed your love turned cold like a stone
You meant the world to me - now it's all over
And now I'm thrust into this life all alone

I thought about us as i crossed the great divide
I saw your face in the mountain i climbed to get to the other side
I heard your voice in the howling wind by the fireside near dark
Though I'd come a hundred miles your love still left its mark

And still I've learned oh so much on this journey
You give and take and then you give back again
All of the reasons i had just for giving up
Throw 'em away cause baby i want to live

And it goes on and on
It goes on and on
Life goes on and on without you

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Trick of Fame

He liked to write stories 'bout different people
Capture in words their lives
Those he'd known and those he'd only heard of
And those he created in his mind

He wrote of the cynical and saturnine infidels
These were the traits of people he knew well
Their lives dearth of happiness and divested of decision
Choices atrophied in time
Furtively romanticized
Searching someone salient to look up to...
"I'm waiting for you"

The lost and the lonely the weak and the wicked
Searching for some sort of sign
But he never embodied the spirit or essence
Of those on a level sublime

He read all classic literature the heroes and heroines
Still it wasn't something he deftly portrayed
"If only I could meet someone whose imperfections
Were overshadowed by their works
Lives underscored their promise
I'm searching someone congruous to look up to...
"I'm waiting for you"

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Unfurl My Soul

Addie:

As I lay dying- descending into hell
I can hear them building the box
driving in the nails...

You cannot bathe me of my sins-oh no
A matter of words just the same- salvation too

Don't try to save me - you can only forestall what must be
Life is preparing to stay dead
no shining light to see

Unfurl my soul...

Darl:

I cannot love my mother- my mother is no more
death a constant familiar- life its sullen core

She cannot be if she is was- oh no
her eyes like two flames just blown out
and I said, "Jewel, your mother is dead"

The odyssey continues
her only wish to be fulfilled
their motives are in question here
despite what she has willed

Unfurl my soul...

© j. Wilford 2/93

WILL TO WIN

Minutes seem like hours and days seem like weeks
But I finally pick up the phone ringing there and she speaks
In a calm voice like an angel she says she ain't coming back
And I stare into a broken mirror and try to face that fact

Now I'm standin' in this desert heat just waiting for the end
Cause nothings gonna save me now I've lost my will to win

I've burnt a lot of rubber tryin' to get out of this town
I've never looked for trouble but that's all that I've ever found
In the pool halls and the bar rooms that's where I spend my night
Till the locals come to lock me up for jumpin' in a fight

My dad will come on down to bail me out again
But nothing's gonna save me now I've lost my will to win

She was standin' on the corner with a diamond in her eye
She had lost all her money but she was never one to cry
When he offered her a job turning tricks for a spell
Her life all but unraveled as she spun a path to hell

Now she's vanished down that road into the dust, into the wind
And nothin' could've saved her since she lost her will to win

7-93 j.Wilford

Winton Flyer

I saw her in the square today
So beautiful was she I could not turn away
I longed to touch and smell and feel her chrome plating
Glittering in the sun she is shining with waiting

So Luster, Jule, and I, we planned
We'd steal that car somehow and drive across the land
Take a trip to New Orleans the maybe down to Texas
We'd be three vagabonds; the law would never catch us

We'd sing: Oh, oh, oh, oh-oh

And so we put our plan to test
Waited till the owner took his weekly train out west
He left the car entrust to old Edwin McDowne
Jule got him drunk, I took the keys and we drove out of town

Sun on our faces and the wind blows through our hair
Luster forgot the map but we'll end up somewhere
These are the cards of chance we thought we'd never hold
Three roguish thieves at just eleven years old

We're singing: Oh, oh, oh, oh-oh

Winton Flyer won't you take me away
I've been too young for too long
Although I realize I may have hell to pay
It's worth this feeling ringin' through me like a song

Like a song now singing: Oh, oh, oh, oh-oh

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Without the Sin

Into the wind my hair was blowin'
As I walked straight down that road
I didn't even turn around to see if you were watchin'
I just couldn't bear to stop and look
If I was crying, the rain was hidin' it
If I felt hurt, the cold was numbing it
If I only had a single dollar in my pocket
I would find a warm place to stay

Oh baby how you make me wonder
What is love without the sin
Sweet child of the devil's thunder
Your lightning strikes me down again

I'm on my way- now don't you try and stop me
I've just got to make a break this time
Well you entice me here and you seduce me there
With your story-telling candle lit eyes
It's as I stagger down onto the open highway
That I understand it wasn't real
You're just a lonely spirit in a world of confusion
Looking for a lost soul to steal

Oh baby how you make me wonder
What is love without the sin
Sweet child of the devil's thunder
You will haunt me once again

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