

**BILL KEITH, banjo, autoharp & guitar**  
**JIM ROONEY, guitar**  
**JOE VAL, mandolin**  
**HERB HOOVEN, fiddle**  
**HERB APPLIN, guitar**  
**FRITZ RICHMOND, washtub bass**

**Side A**

1. **LIVIN' ON THE MOUNTAIN**
2. **DEVIL'S DREAM**
3. **HOMESTEAD ON THE FARM**
4. **ONE MORNING IN MAY**
5. **OCEAN OF DIAMONDS**
6. **PRETTY POLLY**
7. **NEW MULESKINNER BLUES**

**Side B**

1. **SALTY DOG**
2. **TEARDROPS IN MY EYES**
3. **JODY'S HORNPIPE**
4. **KENTUCKY MOONSHINER**
5. **LOG CABIN IN THE LANE**
6. **I HEAR A SWEET VOICE CALLIN'**
7. **RUEBEN'S OLD TRAIN**

This record is in many ways a happy accident, but one which was bound to happen sooner or later. All of us expect Herb Hooven (from North Carolina) have continually lived within thirty miles of Boston and we've all been interested in Hillbilly and Bluegrass music for many years. Somehow, we never got together until nine months ago, when Joe Val and Herb Applin came over to my house to make a little music.

Until then, Bill and I had been playing together as a duo or with Fritz Richmond, master of the washtub bass, as a trio at various colleges and coffee houses in the New England area. This was, of necessity, intermittent work because we were rarely in the same place at the same time. Bill was either at Amherst, where we both went to college and first met or I was in Cambridge doing graduate work at Harvard or with the Air Force in Texas — or at home, working night and day on the restoration of an antique Brush automobile.

We didn't start playing regularly at the Club 47 until February, 1962, when Bill was stationed at the Boston Army Base. About this time we also gave a concert at the Community Church in Boston. Joe and Herb came, and I invited them home to "pick awhile."

Joe Val is the senior member of the group and has been playing for a long time. In the early and mid-fifties he was on the WCOP Hayloft Jamboree (a show that I was on a few months before its demise. No connection has been proven!) He was then playing the electric guitar but soon adopted the banjo, which he used with Toby Stroud and his Blue Mountain Boys as well as with the Lilly Brothers when Don Stover was down South. More recently Joe added the mandolin and joined Herb Applin (another three-instrument man: guitar, mandolin and fiddle) to form a solid singing duo in the style of the old Blue Sky or the more contemporary Louvin Brothers. They all performed at the Hillbilly Ranch in Boston, the Lone Star Ranch at Reed's Ferry in New Hampshire, and for numerous radio stations and public parks in the New England area.

So it was that Bill and I were on the lookout for a mandolin and/or fiddle player, as well as a couple of good voices for trios and quartets. Joe and Herb were also searching for a banjo player and another voice. With almost no effort we formed a full Bluegrass band. It took a while for us to find material we all knew (we are still discovering songs we didn't know the others knew) and to get a few of the kinks

out. But by late summer, we felt we should make a record while we were still playing regularly as a group.

Bill and I went to New York to hear the Lilly Brothers at Carnegie Hall. Herb Hooven was playing fiddle with them, and we asked if he would like to fiddle on our record. He would, but didn't have time to rehearse. We know that with Hooven, rehearsal wouldn't be necessary. He had played with Joe a few years back, had played banjo with Mac Wiseman and fiddled with Jimmy Martin and his Sunny Mountain Boys. So we didn't worry a bit.

Herb was in rare form and gave us all an extra lift. Certainly one important reason for whatever success we had was that we really liked the songs we recorded.

To kick off Side A we had Joe sing an old Roy Acuff number, **Livin' On the Mountain**, which comes through loud and clear with a very nice fiddle break.

For the past year and a half Bill Keith has been concentrating on the development of a unique and personal style of banjo picking, and we wanted to make sure that we included the piece that shows it off to its fullest advantage. This piece is actually a combination of two fiddle tunes — **The Devil's Dream** and **The Sailor's Hornpipe**. Bill has some friends who live in West Bridgewater, Mass., Loring and June Hall. On Saturday nights the Halls have open house in their big kitchen. We sit around the fireplace talking and eating all the cookies in sight until someone — usually Bill — prevails on June to get out her fiddle. This is no small task but is more than worth the effort as you listen to June play tune after tune — all remembered from earlier days in Nova Scotia — and all played with wonderful clarity and spirit.

This is where Bill learned **The Devil's Dream** and where he first became interested in adapting fiddle style to the banjo. This style has become a trademark of Bill's and won him the banjo contest last September at the Philadelphia Folk Festival. As a matter of fact, this is the tune that did it.

In addition to playing the banjo, Bill also gets some very pretty music out of the autoharp. In the course of an evening we always feature a few numbers with the harp. Here is **The Homestead on the Farm** — one of the old Carter family tunes. Joe does a particularly nice mandolin break on this, "crosspicking" in the style developed by Jesse McReynolds of Jim and Jesse, another first-rated Bluegrass band.

One of my own favorite tunes, **One Morning in May**, follows. The words are very old, possibly Irish in origin, and we composed the tune. The song has a bit of a laugh in it. We hope you enjoy it, too.

We put Joe back to work in **Ocean of Diamonds**, but gave him a hand on the chorus. This is a Jimmy Martin tune which Hooven can probably fiddle in his sleep. It is typical of a great many of the written Bluegrass songs, but the next two numbers show that Bluegrass roots comprise the real folk music of the Southern Appalachian Mountain region.

Even today in rural regions of Virginia and Kentucky one of the most popular songs is the old murder ballad **Pretty Polly**. Everyone has his own way of singing it, and I have mine. We've tried to keep it spare and wild with just two instruments. We never tire of playing it.

The final selection on Side A is **The Muleskinner Blues**. The most famous recordings of it are by Jimmie Rogers and Bill Monroe, two of the greatest Country music singers. Joe comes closest to the Monroe version, and he's rarely sounded better. This was the first song I ever heard Joe sing and it improves all the time.

# KEITH &

# ROONEY



PRESTIGE FOLKLORE



Side B open with **The Salty Dog Blues**, which became a trademark for Bill and myself before we had the big group. Flatt and Scruggs also popularized this, but our version is a little different. I'm not exactly sure how we came by it.

Joe and Herb Applin next combine voices to revive a song released earlier by the Osborne Brothers — a sad number called **Teardrops in My Eyes**.

The voices are given a rest on **Jody's Hornpipe**, a good old instrumental that Joe heard somewhere in his travels. Hooven had never played it before this session!

One of the finest Mountain songs we know is **The Kentucky Moonshiner**. Bill plays the second guitar. It's a grand, tough song — very lonesome.

Next is an old-time tune first recorded by Fiddlin' John Carson over forty years ago, **Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane**. It's been reworked since then, our version deriving from a recording by Jim Eanes. The banjo technique is a combination of Allan Shelton, who played with Eanes and is now with Jim and Jesse and who is a fine banjo player, and Keith's own style — also evident in **Salty Dog Blues**, where it was compounded with a solo after Earl Scruggs.

Joe, Herb and Bill now team up on a real hair-raiser, **I Hear a Sweet Voice Calling**. You'll hear some genuine falsetto singing. I always love to watch people's faces when Joe hits the high notes and their glasses begin to break. This became one of our most requested tunes at the Club 47, so we've included it.

We close with a fine old banjo number, **Reuben's Old Train**. This has been most recently recorded by Earl Scruggs, but without the words. Our feelings of local pride couldn't omit a song which mentioned Boston.

This, then, is our record. We made it for fun, just as we play for fun. None of us are professional musicians. Joe repairs typewriters, Fritz goes to School, Herb works for an electronics firm, Herb Hooven is an automobile mechanic, and I teach, attend graduate school and will be studying the Classics in Greece next year on a Fulbright scholarship. Bill, I suppose, does come fairly close. During the second half of 1963 he has been Bill Monroe's banjo picker, and earlier this year he was in Washington having quite a time with Red Allen and his Kentuckians. When he's away we borrow Bob Siggins from the Charles River Valley Boys (PRESTIGE/INTERNATIONAL 13074).

What is significant is that we were together long enough to make this recording. We caught the bird on the wing once, and with a little luck maybe we'll catch it again someday.

Notes: Jim Rooney & Linda Solomon (June 1963)  
Recording: Stephen B. Passett  
Produced by Paul A. Rothchild



Photo/Byron Lord Linardos