

The Wandering Fool

Producers' Note

For quite some time, many of Bob Dyer's friends and fellow musicians have wanted to express their appreciation of his work in a tribute album. After talking to many people, in the fall of 2006 Cathy and I became convinced that the project had to be brought to fruition. Bob approved of our plans and began compiling a list of prospective artists and songs, most of which appear on this album. During his last months, we talked about some of our intentions and hopes for the project but not in great detail, and he heard the beginning tracks of only two cuts. Primarily, we wanted the album to give flight to Bob's songs in the voices, playing, and imaginations of many artists, and we hoped to employ diversity in sound, styles and arrangements. It was the highest spiritual tribute we could pay Bob and his music.

We were happy to return to Pete Szkolka's studio in Columbia, Mo., for the recording of most of the songs. Cathy and I very much enjoyed working with Pete and with Steve Donofrio on the mixing of the many tracks and performances, employing their excellent ears and studio skills. We credit their help and expertise for the high quality of the sound.

In addition, the artists who played for this album not only donated their own time and creativity, most of them generously covered the expenses of their recording time. Turner Hall River Rats for the Arts, of which Bob was a member, raised funds for the project as well.

Bob was very open to diverse approaches to his songs and warmly accepted musical interpretations that differed from his own. He wrote to Michael Cochran about his "Mike Fink" arrangement, "Feel free to do whatever you want to do with the song. To me that's the joy of having other people do my songs. I'm always interested to see what they come up with." Bob would no doubt have enjoyed this album a lot. Working on it has done our hearts a great deal of good, as does the immeasurable gratitude we owe to the many fine people who gave of themselves for the sake of our friend and his memory.

--Dave Para

Introduction

I can remember a very brief time in my life when my father's music wasn't "cool." It was that tumultuous time between ages 11 and 14, when pretty much everything was uncool. But even then I knew it was something special, and I knew how lucky I was. I can think of nothing

more fitting to pay tribute to him than a CD of his music arranged and performed by many of those who knew him well, and some who knew him only by name and reputation.

I always knew that my dad had many friends and local admirers of his music and writing. But when he passed away, I realized more than ever what an important and special spirit he was, a true Renaissance man in a time when people like him are too few and far between. Musician, historian, teacher, storyteller, writer, father, and friend— all these hats he wore with such ease and authenticity.

He was indeed a "Wandering Fool" in its most esoteric definition. He walked a path of simplicity, a kind of blind faith that there was so much more in the world than we would ever know, and what we could not know was beautiful. In Tarot, an ancient game of cards and divination, The Fool is the foundation of the entire deck, at once being the most valuable and the least valuable card, the most basic and the most complex. And this was the magic I saw when I watched my father equally enjoy a speckled rock unearthed in a creek bed, a football game on television, an elusive poem about death, or the company of his friends and family. This was the magic of his music as well, the simple folk melodies, lyrics that seemed familiar and at times just beyond comprehension.

To hear the words and melodies he composed played by his friends, those that crossed his path in different ways and who were affected by him so profoundly, is a true joy. From a cappella choir to bossa nova, to rock 'n roll to traditional folk styles, this was Bob Dyer in song and in life, with the innate ability to be at home with every walk of life, in every style and genre, to relate to music, stories, and people in a way that transcended name and dipped into the undercurrent that flows beneath us all.

--Amber Moodie-Dyer

1. Talking Waters © 2001 Bob Dyer

Leela Grace, guitars and vocals

"Talking Waters" is a song that I have always loved. As I have grown from childhood to adulthood, it has taken on new layers of meaning for me. When I was a child—a quiet, poetic, hippie child—I used to ponder the lyrics of the second verse of this song. I knew what meditation was, but still I misunderstood that part of the line. Instead of "I meditated on the talking waters," I heard, "I met a Taydid on the talking waters." In my child's imagination, I often would wonder what a Taydid was, what one might look like, what one might say were I to meet such a creature. I thought perhaps it was a magical being like a unicorn, or perhaps an insect like a katydid.

When, much more recently than I would care to admit, I finally realized what the actual lyrics were, I was slightly disappointed. However, as I have grown with this song and made it my own, I have come to love this line, even without the mythical creature I had created. It could be a song about an outer place, an inner journey to peace, the feelings and sounds of home, a passing to a new plane, or all or none of these things.

As someone who was born in the late 70s and came of age in the 80s and 90s in the central Missouri hippie and folk music communities, it seemed to me like Bob Dyer was just someone who was always there, like a kind oak tree. And his songs, too, have always been there, floating around me since I can remember. Bob's songs were like a soundtrack that infiltrated my music and my writing in subconscious ways. My favorite Bob Dyer songs were nearly always the ones that spoke of nature, the seasons, the rivers and the creeks of the land that we both loved. The poetry and the melodies haunt me now that I have moved far away from those places. This spring, only a few weeks after I sang "Talking Waters" at a gathering in Bob's memory, the Missouri River emerged in the imagery of a new song that I was writing. And so Bob's songs, spirit, and poetry will sing on forever--like the rivers themselves.
--Leela Grace

*I grew up by the river, that's my home.
I've got it in my blood and in my bones.
The music moves me.
Like a whip-poor-will there's really only one song I can sing.
River runs outside my door.
Blacksnake sleeps beneath my floor.
Cottonwood and sycamore.
Barred owl calling me to come back home.*

*I went out to walk one day.
I left my house and I walked away.
I took the path down by the Talking Water.
Walked beneath the sycamores.
Went farther than I'd gone before,
And I came upon a land I'd never seen.
Chorus
The valley seemed carved out of time.*

*The sun just seemed to hang there in the sky.
The limestone bluffs they all had caves.
Climbed up to one, looked out at things.
Meditated on the Talking Water.
Felt myself drawn out and down.
Got lost inside the silver sound.
Deep within a landscape in my mind.*

Chorus

*Then the day seemed to suddenly end.
I found myself back on that path again.
And so I made my way back home
Remembering the peace I'd known
Sitting there beside the Talking Water.
And some day I'll go back again.
I'll walk away and wander in,
And this time I don't think I'm gonna leave.
Chorus (followed by instrumental)*

2. Flood Song © 2001 Bob Dyer

Jerry Foster, vocal and guitar

My first memory of Bob was in a small ground-level apartment in Columbia, ca. early 1960. I remember a small table, heart-to-heart talkin', his wife making coffee. I felt: this guy is for real, he is intense, focused, no nonsense, he's not going to waste any emotions. This is a man who can be trusted.

Our relationship was based on music. My sporadic musical efforts were received by Bob with consistent encouragement. What he had to say, the tone of his voice, his facial expressions, even his body language conveyed such good will, acceptance, respect, appreciation. He valued me, and I loved him for it, even up to the last phone conversation.

Bob asked me to do something on the project just two or three weeks before he left us. "Jerry, you do the tune any way you want to." I picked his song about the Great Flood of 1993.

What a great song! I had not started to work on it when I was told he was gone. At first I just sat with the Martin on my knee ... numb. I knew he was sick, but I'm a Jesus man. I called out to the Lord about this song. This effort is my musical tribute to Bob. To participate in this project is an honor.
--Jerry Foster

*All that spring across the Plains
Storm clouds blossomed and poured down rain on rain,
We thought it would never end.
And on through May and into June
The weather kept playing that same old tune
Again, and again, and again, and again.*

*And the river kept rising day by day,
And one by one the levees gave way.
The waters came rushing down,
Flooded our fields and towns,
What could we say.
We had chosen to live our lives by the river's side.*

*And all of us know but we tend to forget
That the river can take as well as give,
And it doesn't belong to us, we belong to it.
Then right on into the heat of July
The rain kept falling and the river continued
To rise, and to rise, and to rise, and to rise.*

*And it topped the crest of '73
And of '51 and 1903
And it wasn't long before
It topped the record of 1844.
We would never forget*

What we saw with our own eyes by the river's side.

*So there in the summer of '93
We may have seen what no other eyes have seen
Or ever may see again.
But who knows what the future may bring,
It may just happen over and over again,
And again, and again,
And again, and again, and again,
And again.
And again, and again, and again,
And again.*

3. River of the Big Canoes © 1980 Bob Dyer

Central Methodist A Cappella Choir - Paul Drummond, dir.; with guest vocalists Dave Para, 12-string; Cathy Barton, banjo; Lee Ruth, guitar, and Violet Vonder Haar; Dr. Barbara Hamel, piano; Choir: SOPRANO ALTO: Savannah Byrd, Becca Bales, Becca Campbell, Maria Clark, Cortney Campos, Cassie Coleman, Kathleen Earl, Katie Cummings, Katie Haffer, Maggie Damisch, Lauren Hardcastle, Rachel Dorson, Jordan Held, Traci Earl, Veronica Herman, Cathleen Fullerton, Jenna Long, Mara Guilford, Sarah Lucas, Katie Harris, Rebecca Morton, Mallory James, Lindsey Mowm, Amanda Reed, Mallory Sandrock, Sarah Smith, Molly Teague, Elaine Stevenson, Katie Vestal, Stephanie Terry, Violet Vonder Haar, Kelsy Whitacre, Jamie Wells; TENOR BASS: Josh Atkins, Paul Blanchard, Justin Gillis, Todd Borgmann, Dustin McKinney, David Hutchison, Todd Oberlin, Daniel Martin, Mason Rivers, Kyle McClain, Brandon Wieland, Josh Reed, Shawn Thompson, Church Zumwalt Recorded by Ron L. Shroyer at Linn Memorial Chapel; guest vocals recorded by Pete Szkolka

Paul Drummond, choral director at Central Methodist College, did this choral arrangement of Bob's most well-known song in 1996, and Bob, Cathy and I were fortunate to sing it with his choir once in a spring concert. On the date of this recording at the college's Linn Memorial Chapel, May 2, 2007, Paul informed us he had been diagnosed with lung cancer, and after a heroic summer-long struggle with the disease and treatment he passed away less than five months later. Violet Vonder Haar was in Paul's choral class that spring and sings in the soprano section as well as her solo. Our relationship with Bob began with this song, and it continues like an anthem to center our music and our lives beside the river.

We often credit Bob's song and his years of work in schools with the growing acknowledgment of the correct translation of the word "Missouri" as "people of the big canoe," as for many years people had thought it meant "muddy water."

--Dave and Cathy Barton Para

*You can see her in the mountains in the melting snow.
You can see her in the falling rain.
You can see her dancing down through a thousand valleys,
And she's got at least a thousand names.
She's the spawn of the ice of another age,
River of the Big Canoes.
And she's rolling down from the Rocky Mountains
Carrying the Great Plains news.*

*Down the Yellowstone and the Musselshell,
Down the Milk and the Little Mo,
Down the James and the Grand and the White and the Bad,
The Cheyenne and the wild Moreau.*

Chorus

*When the Frenchmen found her she was Pekitanoui
A muddy river wild and free,
And they gave her the name of the Indians who lived there,
The people called the Missouri (Mizz-ou-ree).*

Chorus

*She's been a river of fur and a river of gold,
A river of crazy schemes,
She's been a steamboat wrecker and a river of coal,
And a river of broken dreams.*

Chorus

*She's a ghost in the night when the moon is full;
A spirit in the mist at dawn.
She's the light in the eye of a painter's mind.
She's the music in a poet's song.*

Chorus

4. Bingham's Song ©1990 Bob Dyer

Dave Para, vocal and guitar; Cathy Barton, vocal and piano; Steve Litwiller, clarinet

For 22 years, Bob, Cathy, and I performed an assembly program for fourth graders called, "Missouri Cultural History," which featured the works of George Caleb Bingham. We have stared countless times at the paintings referenced in this song, *The Jolly Flatboatmen*, *Lighters Relieving a Steamboat Aground*, *Watching the Cargo*, and *Fur Traders Descending the Missouri*; and these works are now like old friends. Bingham's paintings convey a sense of quietness. Even those depicting noisy events seem to indicate exceptions to an otherwise quiet life. So when it came time for us to decide on a song for this recording, this one gently spoke to us.

Once, while in the St. Louis Art Museum viewing *Jolly Flatboatmen at Port* (which Bingham considered his best painting), Bob examined the figure in the lower left wearing a straw hat and sitting in the shadow with his head on his hand. Bob said, "The more I looked at that guy, the more he looked like me." I can attest to the accuracy of that statement, and it's worth a trip to the museum to verify it yourself.

--Dave Para

*I came to this river when I was a child
And the old town of Franklin was new.
I heard all the tales of the far Western lands,
The Great Shining Mountains and the Indian bands
At the knees of the people who knew.
At the knees of the people who knew.
As a young man I worked at the carpenter's trade,
But a feeling inside of me grew.
I wanted to learn how to paint and to draw,
To capture the light in the faces I saw
In this land that the river runs through.
In this land that the river runs through.
The flatboatman dances to the fiddle and pan
On a long summer slow afternoon.*

*The Lighters leave port for the steamboat aground,
 While out on the island in sight of the town
 The cargo is watched by the crew.
 The cargo is watched by the crew.
 Adrift on the river not far from the shore,
 Two men in their quiet canoe
 Move out of the mist in the soft light of dawn—
 A grizzled old Frenchman and his young half-breed son
 Headed down for the port of St. Lou.
 Headed down for the port of St. Lou.
 A black fox [or bear cub] is chained to the prow of the boat.
 The boy wears a shirt of bright blue.
 For a moment our eyes meet and then they are gone,
 But here in my mind that brief moment lives on,
 And I pass down that moment to you.
 I pass down that moment to you.
 I've been a wanderer most of my life,
 But whatever it was I pursued
 Was not in the East or in Europe beyond;
 It was something I found that the dark river spawned
 In the eyes of the people I drew.
 In the eyes of the people I drew.
 In the eyes of the people I knew.*

5. Wandering Fool © 2008 Bob Dyer

David Lynn Grimes, guitar and vocals

Recorded by Stephen Gardner at the Music House, Columbia, Mo.

I first was introduced to the magic of divination through Bob's remarkable book, *Oracle of the Turtle*, a collection of poems based on the ancient Chinese oracle, the I-Ching. I live in Alaska, and every now and then over the years I'd happen to remember the book and bring it out so I could have a little visit with Bob. To my surprise it often would fall open to some poem that exactly mirrored whatever was going on in my life at the time. Bob knew the timing of our lives is not without elegance and synchronicity.

When I was in Columbia during Christmas 2006, I learned Bob was critically ill. Soon thereafter I visited Bob at home in Boonville. He told me about the idea of friends recording versions of his songs for a CD. That made me think about one I'd heard him play maybe a decade earlier. It was entitled "The Wandering Fool" and was based on the cards of the Tarot. A week or so later, the day before I was to leave Missouri, Bob gave me the lyrics for "The Wandering Fool" from his hospital bed. He told me the song was based on an actual Tarot reading that he had reworked a bit in order to tell the mythical story of his life.

Inspired by my visit with Bob, that night, I began learning the song by watching a DVD of Bob performing it at a concert in Lupus. On my way out of Columbia the next day, I visited Steve Gardner at his recording studio with a bossa nova arrangement that seemed promising. The next thing you know I was singing Bob's song into the microphone. I had never played it all the way through, so it just sort of recorded itself. There was only the one take.

That evening I gave a copy to Bob, back home from the hospital. Bob and Sharon and I listened to the song. Bob laughed and commented that his favorite lyric was, "Sphinx with a sword rules with a smile." Then I said goodbye. That was the last time I saw him. I drove west all night, intermittently listening to the song. Around midnight I hit a barn owl flying across the highway.

Rose in his hand as he steps into space. Good luck out there, brother Bob, and thanks for scouting the territory ahead.
 --David Lynn Grimes

*My card is the Wandering Fool,
 Walking on a mountain path.
 Sun shining down on him,
 White dog that follows him,
 Rose in his hand as he steps into space.
 There's a rose in his hand as he steps into space.*

*I am covered by the King of Swords,
 Sitting on his ancient throne.
 Blue is the robe he wears,
 Gold is the crown he wears,
 Sharp is the sword in his hand.
 Sharp is the sword in his hand.*

*I am crossed by the Wheel of Fate,
Turning in a sky so blue.
Typhon descend with me,
Annubus rise with me,
Sphinx with a sword rules with a smile.
Sphinx with a sword rules with a smile.*

*I am crowned by the Queen of Cups,
Sitting on her watery throne.
Mother of Fools is she,
Mother of Swords is she,
Queen of the deep, the deep salt sea.
She's the Queen of the deep, the deep salt sea.*

*And below in the deep salt sea,
Is where the journey of the crab begins.
Two towers look down on him,
Wild dogs call out to him,
Light from the moon turns into flame.
Light from the moon turns into flame.*

*And behind in the darkening past,
Stands a Hermit in a hooded robe.
The old man he waits for me,
Holding a lamp for me,
Searching the ground for a path.
Searching the ground for a path.*

*And ahead in the darkening sky,
Comes a flash and a deafening roar.
Down from the tower they came,
Down to the earth again,*

*Kings and their crowns falling through air.
Kings and their crowns falling through air.*

*And then in the sky there appears,
An angel with purple wings.
The horn in the angels hand
Sounding a clarion,
Calling me back into the light.
Calling me back into the light.*

*So here in the Garden we stand,
Naked in the angel's light,
Lovers in Paradise
Lost in each other's eyes,
Blind to the snake waiting to strike.
We are blind to the snake waiting to strike.*

*And so it shall come to pass
That our flesh shall become our chain
Holding us here below
Bound to the Devil's Stone,
Slaves to the world we have made.
We are slaves to the world we have made.*

*But soon there shall come a dawn,
And a Knight on a ghost white steed.
Death will come riding by
Bearing his banner high,
Breaking our chains; setting us free.
Breaking our chains; setting us free.*

6. Huckleberry Finn ©1987 Bob Dyer

Rocket Kirchner and Mark Risch, guitars and vocals

The first time I ever talked to Bob Dyer was in the late 80s outside of the Chez Coffeehouse before a gig. I knew he was a Missouri historian, of what I called the "Old Missouri." I had been developing for some time a pet theory of mine I called the "New Missouri!" This New Missouri would be the next cultural wave as talents from the East and West Coasts got burned out on high rents, big cities, and other such negatives, and would move to the Midwest, with Missouri being the center.

Bob thought it sounded interesting. After all Missouri gave the world some of the greats in music, art, writers, etc., between the time of Mark Twain and Chuck Berry, so why can't it discover its own roots with a new wave in the future and draw other talents like a magnet? And so it has.

I talked to Bob just before he died and asked him if Mark and I could record "Huckleberry Finn" for him. He said yes. Mark Risch had been around when Bob recorded *River of the Big Canoes*. So, to the Old Missouri, the New Missouri, and Bob Dyer, Mark Risch, and I offer his song "Huckleberry Finn," who like all three of us "never much cared for the civilized life, but [would] rather be out on the river at night."

--Rocket Kirchner

*There's a moon on the Mississippi River tonight,
A sidewheel steamboat makin' up time.*

*A raft driftin' by with a bunch of drunk men,
And I'm catfishin' with my old friend, Jim.*

*They call me Huckleberry Finn, Finn, Huckleberry Finn
I lived for awhile up in Hannibal town,
But my daddy was a drunkard and he beat me around.
So I left my friends Joe, Tom Sawyer and Ben,
And I went off a raftin' with Jim.*

*They call me Huckleberry Finn, Finn, Huckleberry Finn
We run by nights and we tied up days.
Dawn turns the river to a smoky haze.
Lazin' in the shallows doin' just as we please,*

Me and Jim layin' there dreamin'

*They call me Huckleberry Finn, Finn, Huckleberry Finn
Life slides by when your livin' on a raft.
You never rightly know just what's gonna pass—
Sometimes danger, sometimes fun,
Sometimes it's just a piece of driftwood.*

*They call me Huckleberry Finn, Finn, Huckleberry Finn
I never much cared for the civilized life.
I'd rather be out on the river at night,
Layin' on my back and lookin' up at the stars,
Smokin' on my pipe and just driftin'.*

*They call me Huckleberry Finn, Finn, Huckleberry Finn
Steamboat chimbleys spewin' out sparks.
Fiddle music driftin' by in the dark.
There's a hoot owl callin' from a cottonwood tree,
And this lonesome old river keeps rollin'.*

*They call me Huckleberry Finn, Finn, Huckleberry Finn
Repeat first verse*

7. Gooch's Mill ©1987 Bob Dyer

David Wilson, violin

Liner notes from the Radio Ranger needed.

8. Last Man to Hang in Missouri ©1983 Bob Dyer

SRE: John Schneller vocal and guitar; Jesse James, drums; Rob Lampe, electric guitar; Mike Robertson, bass; Jim Hellman; keyboards

We all know about Bob's passion for history and his love of the Missouri River. As a longtime newsman, Bob's music caught my attention many moons ago, in part because of his reliance on newspaper archives as source material for some of his songs. The lyrics for "The Last Man to Hang in Missouri" arose from a 1930 article in the *Boonville Daily News* about Lawrence Mabry, a young man from Cole Camp who ended up on a rope behind the

Cooper County Jail. It's been on our play list for years, but took on a new sound when Rob Lampe came up with an arrangement that departed somewhat from Bob's. We were performing "Last Man" one summer night at Cooper's Landing when Bob wandered up the river banks and joined the other dancers. To our delight, he made a point to tell us that was the way he'd always heard the song in his head. We'll make a point to keep it that way.
-- John Schneller

*He was born in the Ozark foothills. He was a Cole Camp teamster's son.
And before he turned sixteen he got a taste for booze and guns.
His mama tried to slow him down when they moved up to Sedalia town,
But by then there wasn't much she could do.
He was the last man to hang in Missouri.
They strung him up in a barn behind the Cooper County jail.
And the last thing he said was, "I want to die smiling."
And the last thing he heard that day was a hound dog's mournful wail.*

*The first time he got busted he was drinking rot-gut booze.
He was just sixteen but he was on the run, and he was living fast and loose.
His mama got him off that time, but trouble wasn't hard to find,
And it didn't take him long to seek it out.*

Chorus

*The next time he got busted he was carrying a gun.
He robbed a man of three half-dollars and some nickles just for fun.
But his car got stuck on the get-away, and they winged him as he ran away,
And they locked him up and he spent some time in jail.*

Chorus

*He'd only served a year or so when he got out on parole.
He played it straight for a few short months but the straight life was a bore.
So he stole a car and he left one night, headed up for the city lights,
Where a kid like him could make a bigger score.*

Chorus

*He met a man named Collins and they took to stealing cars.
They lived it up and they spent their time in honky-tonks and bars.*

*But Mabry's luck was running thin, and one dark night he killed a man,
And they tracked him down and sentenced him to hang.*

Chorus

*And so at last the day came 'round to pay for what he'd done.
And Mabry's only real regret was that he had to die so young.
He gave a dime to Sheriff Groom, and he gave a dime to Big Jim Drew,
And the prisoners sang, "When the Saints Go Marching In."*

Chorus

9. Jim the Wonder Dog ©1990 Bob Dyer

Bartholomew Bean, guitar and vocal; Lee Ruth, banjo; Dave Para, guitar

Being an infrequent visitor to Columbia, I have been supported and encouraged to perform as a songwriter and artist by the generous souls that form a network of kindred spirits. One such as this would be that gentle fellow, Bob Dyer. After knowing Bob in a touch-and-go manner for many years, I had the opportunity to become more closely acquainted when he and Lee Ruth invited me to join them for a song circle performance at the Focal Point stage in St. Louis, which was hosted by Clint Harding and recorded for broadcast. It was then that I began to understand who Bob was.

The summer of 06, I learned how sick Bob was when I contacted him about playing bass behind him at a show in Kirksville. He told me he was unable to do it because his medicine made him too weak! When Bob called and ask me if I would do a song for the group CD of his material, I told him I'd be honored to. I chose "The *Jim Johnson*," and then Bob went on to say, "I always thought your voice would be good for the wonder dog song!" So there you have it! I told Bob I'd be happy (not to mention, challenged!) to do "Jim the Wonder Dog." The real joy was knowing Bob wanted me to give it a whirl. I miss the kind spirit of our wonderful songteller friend. I have grown closer to Bob by knowing his songs better and by sharing his life's legacy with his family of friends.

--Bartholomew Bean

*I guess you've heard about George Graham Vest and Old Drum,
And the case up in Warrensburg the Senator won
By showing how a dog really is man's best friend.
But Drum's not Missouri's only famous dog.
There's another noted canine that some people thought*

*Was just about the smartest thing ever walked on four legs.
The name of this wonderful dog was Jim
And he lived up in Marshall with his master, Sam.
And there wasn't any end to the wonders that setter could do.
They called him Jim, Jim, wonderful Jim;
Never been another dog smarter than him.
Hey, all you dogs out there let's hear it for Jim.*

*He was sired by the well-known Eugene's Ghost,
And his grandsire was known from coast to coast
As the fabulous Chicken Champion, Candy Kid.
But Jim was pretty much the runt of the litter,
Sort of a reject English Setter.
Sam couldn't even seem to train him for hunting birds.
But Jim was gentle with the children and he minded real good,
And Sam began to realize that Jim understood
Just about anything anybody said to him.*

Chorus

*Why, Jim could tell one kind of a tree from another.
He could locate cars just from license plate numbers.
Whatever you asked him to find he'd put his paw on it.
As the word about Jim, the Wonder Dog, spread
People started coming to see for themselves
If the things Jim was said to be able to do were true.
Well, it turned out he not only understood English
But also Greek, and a little Italian.
He could read people's minds and even predict the future.
He gave exhibitions all over the State,
And college professors tried to prove him a fake,
But nobody ever put a dent in Jim's reputation.*

Chorus

*Well, Jim finally died in 1937,
And he went right on up to English Setter heaven*

*And met up with Eugene's Ghost and the Candy Kid.
Sam asked the city to let Jim be buried
With the other folks over in the human cemetery,
But the city fathers ruled that couldn't be done.
So Sam planted Jim just across the fence
And put a real nice monument
That anyone can go and see to this very day.
And it's interesting over the years since then
The cemetery's grown and had to expand
And now Jim's right in there with the rest of the humans.*

Chorus

*So the next time you hear about man's best friend
Think about that wonderful dog named Jim,
And remember: dogs can be just as smart as some humans are dumb.*

10. On a Day Like Today ©1986 Bob Dyer

Violet Vonder Haar, piano and vocals; David Wilson, violins and cellos

I remember as young child carrying around Bob's songbook. I'd put melodies to his lyrics as I immersed myself in the stories they told. His rough, warm voice always takes me back to late nights at the Big Muddy Folk Festival as a young child, my head on my dad's shoulder after a long day.

Bob's music has and will always be a part of my life, which is why I feel honored to have been able to take part in this great project. I know that Bob would take heart in knowing that his music is living on.

*On a day like today in the heat of this late summer weather
There's a haze in the trees, the sound of the bees in the clover.
There's a hawk in the sky; there's a shine on the wide river's water,
And I feel deep inside something wanting to stay here forever.
But the seasons keep changing, and the days just keep running away.
And forever's a gift you're forever giving away.*

*On a day like today in the last golden days of October
There's a chill in the air and a light haze of frost on the clover.*

*There's a fire in the trees; there's a sound in the breeze like a whisper,
And I feel deep inside something wanting to stay here forever.*

Chorus

*On a day like today in the heart of a long bitter winter
The light from the moon's making stars on the snow in the clover.
As I sit by the fire in the heat of the slow dying embers,
I can feel deep inside something wanting to stay here forever.*

Chorus

*It's a morning in spring and the dew on the Jewel Weed still glistens,
And I almost can hear the new life being born when I listen.
I walk down by the spring and I drink from the clear flowing water,
And I feel deep inside something wanting to stay here forever.*

Chorus

11. Death of Sitting Bull © 2002 Bob Dyer

*Bob Dyer, guitar and vocal; Cathy Barton Para, drum. Recorded at Thespian Hall, Boonville,
by Bill Adams, Steve Donofrio, Sam Griffin, Matt Griffin, Bill Lacey, Pippa Letsky, Kerby
Mitchell; Radio Ranger, producer*

One of Bob Dyer's greatest talents was summing up a historical moment or figure in a song that made you feel like you were part of the event or very close to that person's life.

During the "Everybody's Got Love" concert December 11, 2004, at Thespian Hall in Boonville, Bob chose to unveil a new song titled "The Death of Sitting Bull." As I sat a few feet away from Bob in the wings of the stage, it was very clear that this was a very special new song and Bob wanted the friends and family of our musical tribe to hear it. I believe if Bob had had more time, we would have heard a collection of songs based on John Neihardt's *A Cycle of the West*.

We were lucky enough to capture a great recording of Bob's powerful performance. Although this song is about the death of Sitting Bull, there is a big piece of Bob's vision of life and the mystery of the afterlife that resonates in all of our spirits. (Last night I dreamed a river running swift and dark and wide)

--Steve Donofrio

*Last night I dreamed a river flowing swift and dark and wide.
And as I floated down it I could see on either side*

*Old camps I had forgotten, and from one a child who ran
Along the bank beside me and became me as a man.*

*And now the stream was fast as wind and all the days and nights
That I have lived passed by me all the hunts and feasts and fights.
And still my life rushed by me, although now on either side
The land was not so green. The sky was not so blue and wide.*

*The sun became a moon and in the ghostly light it made
I could see dim forms of buffalo rise up and fade away.
On that mystery of water under me too deep for sound
I drifted into waking and reached out to touch the ground.*

Heyyah nayah heyyah heyyah..

*So Sitting Bull awakened and he knew the time was near
When the Still Ones say in silence what will make men wise to hear.
"Mother Earth is stricken. The Ancient Voices stilled.
Wasichus spread their darkness. All the people will be killed."*

*And those who gathered with him saw the shadow on his face.
As he gripped each hand in silence, one by one they left that place.
And then once more he slumbered, but something startled him.
"Who's there?" he said and then he saw the rifles in their hands.*

*And they were his own kinsmen, badges on their coats of blue.
"Get up, Sitting Bull," said one. "White Hair sent us for you."
He rose but at the door he stopped and he said, "I will not go."
A shot rang out and Sitting Bull fell dying to the floor.*

*A woman screamed. More shots were fired. And Sitting Bull's trained horse,
Remembering the circus kneeled and bowed with ears alert.
For always after that there came the thunderous applause,
But this time only wailing echoed through the watching hills.*

Heyyah nayah heyyah heyyah..

*So like Crazy Horse before him, Sitting Bull's great voice was stilled.
And soon at Wounded Knee his people's life's blood would be spilled
Last night I dreamed a river flowing dark and swift and deep.
Last night the ghosts were dancing, and I heard the ghost drums*

Beat

Hey yah nayah hey yah hey yah...

12. Mike Fink ©1983 Bob Dyer

Michael Cochran, vocal and guitar; David Wilson, fiddle and mandolin; Nick Sibley, banjo, bass, piano and tambourine; Randy Ebrite, harmonica; Steve Donofrio and Dave Para, effects. Recorded by Nick Sibley at Ozark Sound, Springfield, Mo.; mixed at Pete Szkolka's studio

Bob and I first got acquainted through showing up in the same places with our guitars. In those days he was mostly singing old songs like "Tramp on the Street," "Stealin'," and "Old Blue," accompanied by the simple, rock-steady guitar strum that became his trademark. It was the mid-'60s, just as the generation we woke up in was breaking into the white water of a new age. From that time, Bob grew to become our bard, rendering into his poems, songs, stories and drawings the awakenings we continue to experience and share as a karmic tribe.

It was most likely sitting in John Neihardt's class listening to the pioneer poet read from his epic work, *A Cycle of the West*, that Bob first learned of Mike Fink, Will Carpenter, and the fateful shooting of the cup, a reckless rite consisting of one man putting a tin cup on his head and another shooting it off. As old friends, Fink and Carpenter had shot the cup many times prior to the incident referred to in Bob's song where Fink "had to cross his eyes with a musket ball." No one ever knew whether Carpenter's death was an accident, or a willful act. After the mortal Fink died, his legend grew into myth, making him the Paul Bunyan of America's great, untamed rivers.

Imagine you and your loved ones sitting on the bank at day's end, becalmed by a river breeze as the fiddler's bow draws forth a gut string moan. Someone says, "Sing the one about old Mike Fink. My great-granddaddy poled with him." A guitar comes rolling under, with harmonica, bass, and banjo joining the ever-changing current as the story is sung, celebrating at the end as though heaven is just downstream. Then it's quiet again, time to climb in our boats and go home. And one of these days, like Bob and many other dearly departed souls, we will.

--Michael Cochran

*My daddy was a bear in the Allegheny Mountains,
And my mama was a gator on the Ohio.*

*I was born full-growed at the forks of the river,
And I cut my teeth on a catfish bone.*

*O, my name's Mike Fink and I'm a keel boat poler,
I'm a Salt River Roarer and I eat live coals.
I'm half alligator and I ride tornaders,
And I can out-feather, out-jump, out-hop, out-skip
Throw down and lick any man on the river.*

*Well, I've poled the Ohio, and I've poled the Mississippi,
And I've poled the Missouri when she's choked with snags.
I've poled on the Salt in the wilds of Kentucky,
And I've never met a man that I couldn't out-brag.*

Chorus

*I learned how to hunt from the wolves and the painters,
And I learned how to wrestle from a grizzly bear.
I've never been beat and I've never been bested,
And I don't give a damn [or dang] if the Devil don't care.*

Chorus

*"Old Bang All" here's my shootin' iron, she shouts like the thunder,
And she flashes like the lightnin', and she kicks like a mule.
She can clip an Injun's scalp lock slicker than a whistle.
She can knock a tin cup off the head of a fool.*

Chorus

*My jawbone is tougher than a grand-daddy snapper,
And my back is as strong as a buffalo bull's.
I can put my fist through a steamboat's boiler;
I can spit my tobacky through a river boat's hull.*

Chorus

*Will Carpenter's a name that I guess you've heerd [heard] tell of.
I taught that critter everything that he knowed.*

*But he done me dirt on the Yellowstone River,
And I crossed his eyes with a musket ball.*

Chorus

*Some say I drowned in the Arkansas River,
Or was shot by a feller by the name of Talbot.*

*But if you want to know the truth about what really happened,
You're gonna have to come a-knockin' on the Devil's door.*

Chorus

13. From a Star © 1976? Bob Dyer

Lee Ruth, guitar and vocal; David Wilson, violin

Bob Dyer was just a name I'd heard around Columbia for three or four years until one balmy night in 1969 when a bunch of us were playing and singing in the parking lot next to the Ivanhoe, a local watering hole on Ninth Street. It was 1:30 AM, closing time, and we were singing "Satisfied Mind" as people were leaving the bar. One man's ears perked up as he heard the song, and he walked over and joined in singing with us. His voice was rich and melodious and he had a great smile, and I remember flashing, "I bet that's Bob Dyer." Right I was, and for all these years since that night we've been friends, musical and otherwise. At that time, and for a number of years to follow, all his music-making took place at home, in kitchens, living rooms, front and back porches, around campfires, on gravel bars, in the mouths of caves, on a sandy island in the Missouri River. In 1974, I had a hand in setting up his first public performance, and, despite his trepidation about singing into microphones and hearing his voice coming out of loudspeakers, he performed like a seasoned veteran (which he was) and the audience loved him and his songs. That never stopped being true.

In 2003, I was honored when Bob recorded a beautiful version of a song I wrote, "High Winds on the Hilltop," for KOPN radio's thirtieth anniversary CD, *Everybody's Got Love*. Now it is my turn to play turn-about with a song of his. I think "From a Star" was one of the songs Bob wrote in the summer or fall of 1976, during what some people have come to call his "Bermuda Triangle" period. He sang it for awhile until it took a back seat to his ever-growing body of songs about Missouri people, places, and history. It's a beautiful and deceptively simple song, which he never recorded, and very few of Bob's many fans have heard it before. Bob made great music, was a great long-time friend, and one of the finest human beings it has been my pleasure to know. Thanks Bob!

--Lee Ruth

I wonder if you came here from a star.

Do you think you might have come here from a star?

I can see it in your eyes and I can feel it deep inside,

I think you might have come here from a star.

Do you think I might have come here from a star?

I wonder if I came here from a star.

Can you see it in my eyes, can you feel it deep inside?

I think I might have come here from a star.

I wonder if we came here from a star.

Do you think we might have come here from a star?

I can see it in our eyes, I can feel it deep inside.

I think we might have come here from a star.

I think we might have come here from a star.

14. Here I Go (When the Doors Start to Open) © 1976? Bob Dyer Paul Grace, vocals, guitar and fiddle; Win Grace, vocal and accordion

Way back in 1976, Bob spent several weeks house-sitting in our 100-year-old farmhouse at the end of the road in the Cedar Creek valley. It was a very hot, dry summer, and Bob wrote "The Dry Waltz" while he was there. He said it was a dry time in his life, too. We were pregnant with our daughter Leela, had recently married, and were on a tent-camping trip in Colorado for our "honeymoon" and also to escape the oppressive Missouri heat. Bob, always interested in legend and the spirit world, devoured a book we had left behind ó a book about the Bermuda Triangle, with its tale of the destruction of the lost continent of Atlantis. He was inspired to write "Here I Go," which he also called "When the Doors Start to Open and the Windows Come Down."

Bob never recorded the song, and no one else that we knew of seemed to know it. But we had kept the song in his mental repertoire by bugging him to play it every time we were in a jam with him ó since 1976! We debuted it at First Night, Columbia, 2007. He was not well enough to be there, but he was happy to hear that it was very well received.

Through the years, we learned more than thirty of Bob's songs and performed them all over North America. We recorded a Bob Dyer song on every album we made. His songs draw a

beautiful picture of our home state and its people, and so when we were performing far away from home, they helped us bring home with us onto the stage. The unique storytelling style of his songs always went over like gangbusters with children and in schools.

More than thirty years later, this song has become rather prophetic, with our own civilization and planet now clearly in jeopardy as Bob wonders, "Do you think we'll know how to change this time?" We offer this song now with hope that maybe some who hear it will be inspired to become among the ones who indeed can change this time. Our very survival might depend on it.

--Paul & Win Grace

*When the doors start to open and the windows come down.
When the lights in the sky start moving around.
When the ice starts to thicken at the polar caps
And the earth starts looking like the ancient maps.
When the Crystal of Atlantis starts to rise from the seas
And we start to hear voices in the rocks and trees,
Do you really think we're gonna know how to change this time?
Here I go: I'm living the mystery over.
I don't know, maybe I'll live it forever.*

*It's another one of those ancient tales,
Like the legend of Odysseus and the Holy Grail.
And it's all gonna happen like the legends say.
It's happened before in a similar way.
They say that the people who were living back then
Are being born on the earth to try it again,
And I really hope they're gonna know how to change this time.*

Chorus

*Brothers and sisters run and look outside.
Are there any strange lights in the sky tonight?
I think that any moment now it's all gonna change,
And nothing that we knew is gonna be the same.
Brothers and sisters tell me what can we do?
Do you think that we're many or just a few?*

And do you really think we're gonna know how to change this time.

Chorus

*You know it's not just a matter of wrong or right,
And it's not just a matter of black and white,
And sometimes when I'm sleeping it's as clear as glass,
And sometimes it's as black as the blackest black
Brothers and sisters we're out here on the edge,
And although this might not be the end,
Once we fall in I've got a feeling it's a long way down.*

Chorus

15. Gooch's Mill Reprise ©1987 Bob Dyer

David Wilson, violin

16. Phantom Black Carriage ©1983 Bob Dyer

Rick Hocks, vocals and guitars, Jake Hansleman, drums; David Bradley, keyboards; Kevin Hennessy, bass; Will Hocks, vocals. Recorded by Adam Roehlke and Bruce Barcalew at Mansion Studio, Jamestown, Mo.

My love of Cathy Barton's and Dave Para's music led me to Bob Dyer. In late 1982, I saw the notice for *River of the Big Canoes* and bought the album, totally enjoying it from start to finish.

During the preternaturally hot summer of 1980, still a fresh memory, the first song I worked up as a young pup for personal performance was "Dry Waltz." I loved "Phantom Black Carriage," but actually it was John Schneller (with whom I worked for a decade) who sang that song, while I backed him on guitar. This performance owes much to John. Once, in 1995, we were performing "Phantom Black Carriage" at the Blue Note ó more or less a hard rock version ó Bob walked in and, according to Lee Ruth, asked what song we were playing. This humorous moment was the inspiration for my present recording ó an otherwise serious swipe at Bob's ballad.

Over the years I sang this song every fall around Halloween at innumerable gigs large and small. Ever the writer and academic, Bob was intrigued that I once made "Phantom Black Carriage" part of a literary conference presentation and consistently employed it as an educational outreach piece on folk versus literary balladry. Indeed, for two decades Bob and I often crossed paths at these school presentations, as well as on stages and at riverside gigs and

parties. I can hardly believe he's gone! Like the river bluffs and meandering stream he loved so much, Bob Dyer has taken his place as part of our local landscape. And like the local legends he chronicled so adroitly, Bob will persist in memory for a long time. "Phantom Black Carriage" is, in my best estimation, one of the best ballads (folk or literary) ever penned, so I'm totally honored to submit it to this tribute for the "Bard of Boonville."

--Rick Hocks

*There once was a town called Overton Landing;
Back in the days of the steamboat trade.
It was down in the bottoms on the banks of the river,
And just like the steamboat it faded away.
And there's nothing left now but the story
Of the people who lived in a house on the bluff above town,
And a phantom black carriage, and a woman in a black silk gown.*

*The house on the bluff had once been a mansion,
But the fortune that had built it had dwindled away,
And now it was old like the people who lived there,
A tumbledown dream of the glittering days.
And the old man dreamed of the glory;
The old woman dreamed of the good times she'd known long ago,
And a shiny black carriage, and a black silken gown she once wore.*

*A stranger came looking for shelter one evening,
His carpetbag was filled with silver and gold.
They killed him for his money and they threw him in the river.
They thought that his story would never be told.
And then they said that they'd gotten their fortune
From a relative who died in a city way down in the South,
And they got the black carriage; the old woman got her black gown.*

*But then one day the woman took a fever.
There wasn't any doctor who could figure out why.
She made the old man swear he'd never remarry*

*If it turned out this was her time to die.
And then she died that very next morning.
The old man put her in her casket in her black silk gown;
And he put the black carriage out back behind the old smokehouse.*

*Well, now the old man he had all of the money,
And everything he touched seemed to turn to gold.
He went to the city and he met a younger woman.
She followed him back to his country home.
But on the night of the day they got married,
As the old man was seeing the last of the guests back to town,
There came a phantom black carriage, and a woman in a black silk gown.*

*The man's young wife she looked out of the window.
She saw him standing on the front porch stair;
And then from the shadows came a phantom black carriage.
The man got in and the carriage disappeared.
It's been a long time now since it happened.
There's nothing left now of the house on the bluff or the town,
But people still see the carriage, and a woman in a black silk gown.*

17. DRY WALTZ ©1982 Bob Dyer

Don Cooper, vocals and guitar; Dan Tressler, fiddle. Recorded by Dan Tressler at Tressler's Barn, Easton, Conn.

Place holder from Songteller

Bob wrote the original version of this song during a drought in the summer of 1976 while house sitting a lovely old farmhouse near Cedar Creek for Paul and Win Grace. He described it as a dry time in his life, which the season echoed. The spirit of the music in Paul and Win's house give him the song, which he later revised for Dave and Cathy Barton Para's recording, *Ballad of the Boonslick*.

*All the fields are turning brown.
There ain't no rain been falling down.
It's the driest that it's been 'round here in years.
Sometimes I just can't carry on.
Sometimes the hope and faith are gone.
I'd like to cry, but I just can't find the tears.
The days are hot. The creeks are dry,
And the sky is blue and hazy.
These dusty roads I'm driving down,
Lord, they're driving me crazy.
All the springs are running slow,
And the ponds are getting low.
I don't know how long it's been since we've had rain.
And when the love no longer flows,
And the cracks begin to show,
I'll understand, but I just can't stand the pain.
The air is thick and still.
The heat hangs heavy in the hills.
And nothing seems to move for miles around.
Another day, another dawn,
Seems like it just goes on and on,
And no one seems to know when it will end.*

18. When the Rains Come Down ©1983 Bob Dyer

Big Medicine: Joe Newberry, lead vocal and banjo; Jim Collier, harmony vocal and mandolin; Bobb Head, harmony vocal and bass; Kenny Jackson, fiddle. Recorded live into one microphone at home in Chapel Hill, N.C.

I left Missouri a long time ago, but have often returned over the years for a quick "visit" by listening to or playing Bob Dyer's songs. That beautiful muse, combined with his ease of language, made for an inspiring body of work, and Big Medicine is honored to perform this classic Dyer song. We grafted on "Elk River Blues" to underscore the line in the song about the fiddler calling. Perhaps Bob will hear our tribute, and do a little jig dance to it down beside his stream of time.

--Joe Newberry

*When the rains come down in the Ozark mountains.
When the clouds hang low in the Ozark hills.
When the cold springs flow like silver fountains,
Then I'll return with the whip-poor-wills.
From the Black Jack oaks up on Thorny Mountain,
To the Dogwoods blooming in the valley below,
When the fiddler calls, well I'll be going
Back where the ferns and the mosses grow.
There's a turkey buzzard sitting in a twisted cedar.
There's a rattlesnake hiding in a rocky glade.
There's a red-tailed hawk, and he's looking for some dinner.
There's a black bat sleeping in a limestone cave.
When the Blood Root blooms down in Stillhouse Holler.
When the salamanders spawn down at Turner's Mill.
When I hear the sound of the coyotes calling,
I'll return to the Ozark hills.
Well, I'm walking on the rim of a limestone canyon.
I'm taking my life one step at a time.
You can keep your cities. You can keep your mansions.
Just as long as I can walk underneath the pines.*

*Lay my head by a rippling river.
Rest my bones by a cottonwood tree.
Lord, and when I die just cover me over
Down by the side of an Ozark stream*

19. One Last Time ©2001 Bob Dyer

Ed Trickett, 12-string guitar and vocals; Cathy Barton, banjo and vocals; Dave Para, guitar and vocal; One Last Time Chorus: Jim and Tia Higbie, Sharon Dyer, Brenda Hanson, Bill Lacy, Ed and Judy Scrivner, Lesley and David Oswald, Jim and Sue Denny, Knox McCrory, Kathy Gordon, Margaret Waddell, Larry and Rita Sanders, Doireann O'Brien, Violet Vonder Haar, Ken and Linda Askren, Lee and Rena Ruth, Ron Morris, Diane Huneke, Ken Stroker, David Owens, Paul and Win Grace, Carolyn Mathews, Pippa Letsky and Doug Elley

Cathy and Dave are responsible for my long and rewarding relationship with Bob. In the early 1980s, before I knew there was a Bob Dyer, Cathy sang Bob's "River of the Big Canoes" for me, and I shamelessly asked if I could record it, which I did with Cathy and Dave in 1982. They introduced me to him around that time. Regardless, for the next 25 years I looked forward to going to Missouri to see Cathy and Dave, check in with Lee Ruth, and spend time with Bob. I marveled at the way Bob made history—real or fictitious—come alive, his lyrical way with a tune, and his poetry, and in subsequent years I had the opportunity of sharing his music with many others, mostly through my collaborations with Cathy and Dave and Gordon Bok and Ann Muir. A few years ago I was at the Big Muddy, and Cathy said something like "He's done it again, You've got to hear this new song." It was "One Last Time," and when Bob sang it for me, I had the kind of feeling fellow musicians know—that life could not meaningfully continue without learning that song. I asked Bob to write the words and I later called him on the phone for the tune, to make sure I got it right (or close enough, as I sometimes take unconscious liberties with the melodies of others), and then, of course, he sent me his recording of it. I still sing it all the time, and Gordon, Ann, and I closed most of the concerts on our farewell tour in 2000 with it. To have the honor of recording it with Cathy, Dave, and Bob's family and friends is just a spectacular privilege, as Bob's songs, stories, and friendship have been to all of us who had the pleasure of his company over the years.

--Ed Trickett

*There's a place I'd like to go to one last time before I die,
Where three creeks come together and cedars touch the sky.*

*A little cabin on a ridge line with a path down to a spring,
And a cave where friends are gathered,
And a song that we're all singing one last time,
One last time, yo da lay dee odle, one last time, yo da lay dee o
One last time, yo da lay dee odle, one last time, yo da lay dee o
One last time, a lay dee odle, one last time, yo da lay dee o
And a song that we're all singing one last time.*

*I'd like to go out on the river one last time before I die,
On a warm clear night in summer with a full moon on the rise.
There's an island in the distance where laughing voices ring,
Shadows dancing in the firelight and a song that they're all singing one last time.*

Chorus

*I'd like to lie down here beside you one last time before I die,
Hold you're body close against me, and feel you holding mine.
And remember not to worry what tomorrow's dawn might bring,
And know love goes on forever like this song we think we're singing one last time.*

Chorus

*I've heard that there's a dancing place we go to when we die.
And we'll know it when we get there
And we'll dance there one last time.
Then we'll feel the earth release us and we'll spread our spirit wings,
And our voices will remember*

How to sing this song we're singing one last time, etc.

Repeat final chorus twice (second time a cappella)

Credits

Producer, Dave Para
Associate Producers, Steve Donofrio and Cathy Barton
Recorded by Pete Szkolka in Columbia, Mo., and mixed by Cathy Barton, Dave Para, Steve Donofrio and Pete Szkolka, unless otherwise noted
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