

## **Studio and Live Recordings**

These recordings were made in various studios in different parts of the Northeast and Middle Atlantic states; it's hard to remember just where and when, but I've noted it when I did. The tapes were old and suffered some in the re-mastering process. Thanks to musician Mark Goldstein of Sandalwood Studios in Charlottesville, Virginia ([www.sandalwoodstudios.com](http://www.sandalwoodstudios.com)) for the many hours he spent with me working on these tapes.

I wrote all the songs, except where noted.

### **Buchanan County Schools Song (1979)**

*The song tells the story, and I wrote it after being asked to sing at a demonstration / fund raiser in Southwestern Virginia to raise money for a court fight.*

In the mountains of Appalachia  
I'm hearing parents say  
Let's work together now to save our schools from decay

All children deserve education  
No matter where they live  
Time to grow and laugh and play  
As much as we can give

It's our children we are fighting for  
Please listen and hear  
To let them learn and grow  
To make their futures clear

An equal chance to live their lives  
Learn right from wrong  
To be happy, healthy people  
To make our country strong

In Southwestern Virginia  
Down Buchanan County way  
The Garden School and Whitewood School  
Stand like a slum

While school board members sleep  
The thunder's just begun  
Of parents who will fight to win

Until their job is done

There's rats in the kitchen  
Copperheads in the hall  
Worms on the sandwiches  
Human waste on bathroom walls

For graduating seniors  
With diplomas they can't read  
There's a future full of poverty  
I'm sure we're all agreed

It's our children we are fighting for  
Please listen and hear  
To let them learn and grow  
To make their futures clear

An equal chance to live their lives  
Learn right from wrong  
To be happy, healthy people  
To make our country strong

The children in Buchanan  
Need money for their schools  
While large corporations  
Are playing them for fools

Taking tax dollars  
Across the county line  
While knowing that the money is for  
The children, yours and mine

In cities, schools are just as bad  
Factories of dismay  
North and south, and east and west  
Across the U.S.A.

We need money for schools  
Not foreign wars  
If we hope to see our children  
As free as they've been before

It's our children we are fighting for  
Please listen and hear  
To let them learn and grow  
To make their futures clear

An equal chance to live their lives  
Learn right from wrong  
To be happy, healthy people  
To make our country strong  
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**KKK Song** (~1981)

*No longer is the Ku Klux Klan the pariah it used to be, but it's been replaced by countless even more dangerous organizations (if that's possible). I never sang this song in concert.*

Riding on horses, white hoods in the air  
They ride through the country spreading panic and despair.  
Their history is long, bloody as a war  
If you care for genocide, they've tried it all before

They keep the races separate, say they treat all men the same  
But why then are black men subject to the flame  
Black folks won't be free till they're free from the Klan  
And for those who love justice, beside them we will stand

You bring up your children in the heritage of the Klan  
And when they're accused of murder, beside them you stand  
If they have to die for what you have believed  
You'll never have to tell them how much they'd been deceived

For all the racist murders the clan has made  
It was all for white America, a spade is just a spade  
So be careful what you do if your color is your crime  
They may need to sacrifice you, we hope that you don't mind

For America must be strong for all its white beliefs  
Black folks are in the way, besides they're on relief  
So help the Klan to burn a cross today  
You wouldn't want your daughter to be a black man's prey

For all the misery you've brought to decent folks  
And for the devil's work you've sought so to provoke  
There's a special kind of hell waiting for the Klan  
Where they are treated as they've treated other men

And the seeds they have sown  
So shall they reap

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**Nuclear Power Blues** (1982)

*In the late 1970s and early 1980s, nuclear power (for weapons plants and power plants) was a central political issue. I never liked this song very much. I think I sang it once at a demonstration in Syracuse. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) was never on our side.*

Well, I've been pushed around by the NRC  
Left to die in a radioactive sea  
It wasn't the way I thought it would be  
We'd just gotten rid of DDT  
Oh mama, it looks like I've got the nuclear power blues

Well, I wonder where my kids are gonna play  
After the clean air's been poisoned away  
The ground is soaked with atomic residue  
It's really sad, but you know it's true  
Oh mama, it looks like I've got the nuclear power blues

In other countries they tear the plants down  
You know those folks aren't fooling around  
Tearing 'em down before they're built  
They're just regular folks like me and you  
Trying to save themselves from the nuclear power blues

Well, some folks say that we shouldn't care  
And that Three Mile Island didn't poison the air  
Well, I disagree because its leaking still  
And the way things are going, we'll see more spills  
Oh mama, I've got the nuclear power blues

Well, I had a dream just the other day  
Nuclear war was underway  
Greedy, rich, power-hungry politicians  
Had set the world aflame, seeking riches  
Oh mama, it looks like I've got the nuclear power blues

I've been pushed around by the NRC  
Left to die in a radioactive sea  
It wasn't the way I thought it would be  
We'd just gotten rid of DDT  
Oh mama, it looks like I've got the nuclear power blues

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**Thanks for Being My Friend** (~1983)

*I wasn't going to include this song in the collection, but here it is anyway. It gives a perspective on how innocuous my song writing (and playing) could get. Suffer though it or skip it.*

Well, thanks for being my friend  
Thanks for being around  
When times were gettin' rough  
I didn't think I was strong enough  
I found you right by my side

So, thanks for being my friend  
I didn't think you'd be my friend  
Who'd come when I'd call out in pain  
But you heard when I called out inside  
You came to me, and you were my friend

So, thanks for being my friend  
Thanks for being around  
When times were gettin' rough  
I didn't think I was strong enough  
I found you right by my side

So, thanks for being my friend  
You'd even let me be your lover  
Till you found there was no more to share  
Times and spaces we've shared together  
Have changed our lives, changed our souls

So, thanks for being my friend  
Thanks for being around  
When times were gettin' rough  
I didn't think I was strong enough  
I found you right by my side

And thanks for being my friend  
And I want to say thanks for lettin' me go  
To respect me and love me and trust  
You knew we'd never make it together  
It was something you knew, that I couldn't see

And thanks for being my friend  
Thanks for being around  
When times were gettin' rough  
And I didn't think I was strong enough  
I found you right by my side

Thanks for being my friend  
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### **Times Are Getting Hard**

*This very early song (1979) was inspired by the many protest songs of the Depression Era. It seems more relevant again these days.*

These times are getting hard, folks  
My money's gettin' low  
This old town is gettin' me down  
Is it something you don't know

I've got some songs to sing and some stories to tell  
Thoughts I'd like to share  
If you've got the time to sit a spell  
If it's something you can spare

Well, I don't mind working  
If I'm working for decent pay  
But the rich get richer, the poor get poorer  
It's something I've heard you say

Well I'm payin' more and gettin' less  
I know I'm not alone  
And they said that talk was cheap these days  
Then they came and took out my phone

These times are getting hard, folks  
I'm just trying to make my way  
Want to live my life peacefully  
I don't wanna be rich some day

Well I just wanna do some honest work  
Earn a day's pay  
And find some meaning in my life  
And live from day to day

I can't drive my car or pay the rent  
My money is always spent  
And I know the money's out there somewhere  
But someone is getting more than their share

Well, the government is too busy  
To worry about us workin' folks  
There's important business in foreign lands  
Fighting wars and selling Coke

So, I wrote a letter to my congressman  
About my worries by and by  
And he said if I didn't stop makin' trouble  
He'd send my name to the FBI

These times are getting hard, folks  
I'm just trying to make my way  
Wanna live my life peacefully  
I don't wanna be rich some day

Well, I just wanna do some honest work  
Earn a day's pay  
And find some meaning in my life  
And live from day to day

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### **Where I'm Bound** (Tom Paxton)

*Tom Paxton (born October 31, 1937) is an American folk singer-songwriter and activist who has been writing, performing, and recording music for fifty years. In 2009, Paxton received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. He began his career playing in Greenwich Village; that's where I first saw him.*

It's a long and dusty road  
It's a hot and heavy load  
And the folks I'm meet ain't always kind

Some are bad and some are good  
Some have done the best they could  
Some have tried to ease my troublin' mind

And I can't help but wonder

Where I'm bound  
Where I'm bound  
Can't help but wonder where I'm bound

I've been around this land  
Just doin' the best I can  
Trying to find  
What I was meant to do

And the faces that I see  
Are as worried as can be  
And it looks like they are wondering, too

And I can't help but wonder  
Where I'm bound  
Where I'm bound  
Can't help but wonder where I'm bound

I had a gal one time  
She had lips like sherry wine  
And I loved her till my heart went plum insane

But I was too blind to see  
She was drifting away from me  
And one day she left on the morning train

And I can't help but wonder  
Where I'm bound  
Where I'm bound  
Can't help but wonder where I'm bound

I've got a buddy from home  
But he started out to roam  
And I hear he's out by the Frisco Bay

Sometimes when I've had a few  
His voice comes singing through  
And I'm going out to see him some old day

And I can't help but wonder  
Where I'm bound  
Where I'm bound  
I can't help but wonder where I'm bound

Well, if you see me passing by  
And you stop and wonder why

And you wish that you were a rambler, too

Nail your shoes to the kitchen floor  
Lace 'em up and bar the door  
Thank your stars for the roof that's over you

And I can't help but wonder  
Where I'm bound  
Where I'm bound  
Can't help but wonder where I'm bound

### **Studio Cuts**

*These are collected partial songs (and some general playing around in the studio) I liked, pulled from a variety of sessions and studios. The songs have no titles, nor, unfortunately, do I remember who is singing with me on the first cut.*

It's in every one of us  
To be wise  
Find your heart  
Open up both your eyes  
We can all know everything  
Without ever knowing why  
It's in every one of us  
By and by

It's in every one of us  
To be wise  
Find your heart  
Open up both your eyes  
We can all know everything  
Without ever knowing why  
It's in every one of us  
By and by

.....

Oh, sing this song  
It won't take you very long  
Stand up and shout it right out loud  
There's a new day comin' round the corner  
You for me, friend, and me for you

You for me, friend, and me for you

We'll sing this song  
It won't take you very long  
Stand up and shout it right out loud  
There's a new day comin' round the corner  
You for me, friend, and me for you  
You for me, friend, and me for you

.....

What can you show a man who will not see  
What can you tell a man who will not hear  
And what can you ask of a people who will not speak out for themselves  
We're all singing the same song  
We're all singing the same song  
We're all singing the same song everywhere

Will you help me to see more clearly  
Will you help me to hear the truth  
Will you speak out with me for justice all over the world  
Because we're all singing the same song  
We're all singing the same song  
We're all singing the same song everywhere

.....

Time will tell what we have done here  
Like nothing else I know  
Like nothing else I know

Walked with King in 1965  
In Selma and Jackson towns  
And we were scared when we saw old Bull Connor's boys  
And we dodged clubs as we ran

But we never wondered if we were right or wrong  
Because we knew that time would tell  
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**The Top of the Stairs** (Blacksburg, Virginia)

*This is my earliest live recording (around 1980); it's easy to tell how nervous I am. My friend,*

*Rob Northrup, and I would play on Tuesdays in a local Virginia Tech dive bar, The Top of the Stairs. Our poorly attended lunchtime performances were entirely informal (Note Rob's comment: "Nine Eric Pappas fans can't be wrong.") The good guitar playing on these cuts is Rob's.*

**Paradise** (John Prine, 1971)

*John Prine (born October 10, 1946, in Maywood, Illinois) is an American country/folk singer-songwriter. He has been active as a recording artist and live performer since the early 1970s. Known for being culturally irreverent, this is one of his more serious songs.*

When I was a child, my family would travel down  
To western Kentucky where my parents were born  
There's a backwards old town that's often remembered  
So many times that my memories are worn

Daddy, won't you take me back to Muhlenberg County  
Down by the Green River where paradise lay  
Well, I'm sorry my son, but you're too late in askin'  
Mr. Peabody's coal train has hauled it away

Well, sometimes we'd travel right down the Green River  
To the abandoned old prison down by Airdrie hill  
Where the air smelled like snakes, and we'd shoot with our pistols  
But empty pop bottles was all we would kill

Daddy, won't you take me back to Muhlenberg County  
Down by the Green River where paradise lay  
Well, I'm sorry my son, but you're too late in askin'  
Mr. Peabody's coal train has hauled it away

Well, the coal company came with the world's largest shovel  
And they tortured the timber and they stripped all the land  
Well they dug for their coal 'till the land was forsaken  
Then they wrote it all down as the progress of man

Daddy, won't you take me back to Muhlenberg County  
Down by the Green River where paradise lay  
Well, I'm sorry my son, but you're too late in askin'  
Mr. Peabody's coal train has hauled it away

When I die let my ashes float down the Green River  
Let my soul roll on up to the Rochester Dam  
I'd be halfway to heaven with paradise waiting

Just five miles away from wherever I am

Daddy, won't you take me back to Muhlenberg County  
Down by the Green River where paradise lay  
Well, I'm sorry my son, but you're too late in askin'  
Mr. Peabody's coal train has hauled it away

**Where I'm Bound** (Tom Paxton, 1971)

(lyrics above)

**Ramblin' Boy** (Tom Paxton, 1964)

And here's to you my Rambling Boy  
May all your rambling bring you joy  
And here's to you my Rambling Boy  
May all your rambling bring you joy

He was a friend and a pal always  
He lived with me in the hard old days  
He never cared if I had no dough  
We rambled on in the rain and snow

And here's to you my Rambling Boy  
May all your rambling bring you joy  
And here's to you my Rambling Boy  
May all your rambling bring you joy

To Tulsa town we chanced to stray  
We thought we'd try to work a day  
The boss said he had room for one  
Says my old pal, well we'd rather bum

And here's to you my Rambling Boy  
May all your rambling bring you joy  
And here's to you my Rambling Boy  
May all your rambling bring you joy

Late one night in a jungle camp

The weather it was cold and damp  
He got the chills, and he got 'em bad  
They took the only friend I had

And here's to you my Rambling Boy  
May all your rambling bring you joy  
And here's to you my Rambling Boy  
May all your rambling bring you joy

He left me here to ramble on  
My rambling pal he's dead and gone  
If when we die we go somewhere  
I'll bet you a dollar he's rambling there

And here's to you my Rambling Boy  
May all your rambling bring you joy  
And here's to you my Rambling Boy  
May all your rambling bring you joy

### **These Times Are Getting Hard, Folks**

(lyrics above)

### **Me and Bobby McGee** (Janis Joplin, 1971)

Busted flat in Baton Rouge, heading for the trains  
I was feeling nearly as faded as my jeans  
Bobby thumbed a diesel down just before it rained  
Took us all the way to New Orleans

I pulled my harpoon out of my dirty red bandana  
I was blowing sad while Bobby sang the blues  
With the windshield wipers slapping time, and Bobby clapping hands  
We finally sang every song that driver knew

Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose  
Nothing ain't worth nothing, but it's free  
Feeling good was easy, Lord, when Bobby sang the blues  
Feeling good was good enough for me  
Good enough for me and Bobby McGee

From the coal mines of Kentucky to the California sun  
Bobby shared the secrets of my soul  
Standing right beside lord, though everything we've done  
Every night she kept me from the cold

One day near Salinas, I let her slip away  
She's looking for that home, and I hope she finds it  
But I'd trade all of my tomorrows for one single yesterday  
Holding Bobby's body close to mine

Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose  
Nothing left is all she left for me  
Feeling good was easy, Lord, when Bobby sang the blues  
Hey, feeling good was good enough for me  
Good enough for me and Bobby McGee

**Joe Hill** (Earl Robinson / Alfred Hayes, 1936)

*Joe Hill (1879 – 1915) was a Swedish-American labor activist, songwriter, and member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, also known as the "Wobblies"). He was framed on a murder charge by the government due his "subversive potential" as a union organizer. Following an unsuccessful appeal, political debates, and international calls for clemency from high profile people and workers' organizations, Hill was executed in November, 1915. After his death, he was memorialized by several folk songs. His life and death have inspired books and poetry.*

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night  
Alive as you and me  
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten years dead,  
"I never died," said he  
"I never died," said he  
"In Salt Lake City, Joe," says I  
Him standing by my bed  
"They framed you on a murder charge"  
Says Joe, "I ain't dead"  
Says Joe, "I ain't dead"  
"The copper bosses killed you, Joe  
They shot you, Joe," says I  
"Takes more than guns to kill a man"  
Says Joe, "I didn't die"  
Says Joe, "I didn't die"

And standing there as big as life  
And smiling with his eyes  
Joe said, "What they forgot to kill  
Went on to organize  
Went on to organize"  
"Joe Hill ain't dead," he says to me  
"Joe Hill ain't never died  
Where working folks are out on strike  
Joe Hill is by their side  
Joe Hill is by their side"  
I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,  
Alive as you or me  
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten years dead"  
"I never died," said he  
"I never died," said he

### **Buchanan County Schools Song**

(lyrics above)

### **Untitled #3**

*A first studio cut on a song I never performed publically.*

What are we gonna do about the children  
Will they know a better way  
Will they do a better job than we have done  
When we're gone and far away

Will they know that they must live  
By their own hands  
Hands, held round the world

Will we teach them in time  
About a simple plan  
That life  
Extends beyond our time

Will they believe in survival  
For more than just me and you  
Will they know we're a family of people  
And will they know  
How to love

What are we gonna do about the children  
Will they know a better way  
Will they do a better job than we have done  
When we're gone, and far away

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**Rosa** (a eulogy)

*Dr. Rosa Judith Cisneros, an attorney and Episcopalian active in social causes, was assassinated Aug. 18, 1981 by four unidentified gunmen outside her home here. Cisneros, 45, was on her way to the office for justice and peace in El Salvador. None of the country's warring factions claimed credit for the murder, civil authorities told Church officials. Long active in humanitarian causes, she had served four years as legal director of a program designed to assist peasants in winning their legal rights. She had a special interest in the women of Latin America and wrote "The Juridical Condition of the Salvadorean Woman" to pursue that cause.*

Rosa, Rosa, Rosa  
The blind will not see  
And the deaf will not hear  
And the mute will not speak  
For Rosa  
For Rosa

She was the helper of the poor  
She was the campesina's friend  
For the women she would work

No more  
No more  
No more

Brothers will you come  
Sisters will you come?  
Fight with me for Rosa  
For Rosa

Rosa, Rosa, Rosa

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## Taking Back Our Land

*From 1979-1981, I was coordinator of The Citizens for the Preservation of Floyd County, a 500 member group of farmers and local citizens trying to prevent Appalachian Power Company from building a 21 mile, 765,000 volt power line through the center of the county, invoking the right of "eminent domain" to confiscate the land on which to build the nearly fifty 125 foot towers.*

Well the government says  
You know it's our land, and we'll do just what we wanna do  
And if you don't give it up, we've got lawyers and judges  
To make you act like we want you to  
And if you get in the way, and fight for your rights  
We've got police and the National Guard  
We'll let you use your land as long as you please  
Until we need it for the master plan

We're taking back our land  
We're taking back our land  
They can't steal it anymore  
Like we let 'em before  
And we're taking back our land

All over this country, they're stealing our land  
For any project that needs a little earth  
And there's power lines and highways  
And power plants and strip mines, spread like cancer on the land  
The corporation's in bed with old Uncle Sam  
They say it's for the good of us all  
But you know it's only for the power and money  
That they invoke the right of *eminent domain*

We're taking back our land  
Taking back our land  
They can't steal it anymore  
Like we let 'em before  
And we're taking back our land

Well, things are changing all over this world  
We're fighting to save our land  
And it doesn't really matter about the lawyers and judges  
Or police and the National Guard  
Because you can't fight the truth with all the guns in the world  
Or take away our rights by law  
We're taking back our land

And do as we please  
It's been our right all along

We're taking back our land  
Taking back our land  
They can't steal it anymore  
Like we let 'em before  
And we're taking back our land

In Floyd County, Virginia we're standing our ground  
Against the power company's fight  
To build a giant power line across our land  
And rape the farms that we've worked so long  
And you can say we'll never win against the money and power  
But we're winning just the same  
Because the people have the power now as they should  
And we're taking back our land

Taking back our land  
Taking back our land  
They can't steal it anymore  
Like we let 'em before  
And we're taking back our land  
They can't steal it anymore  
Like we let 'em before  
And we're taking back our land

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### **They're Bringing Back the Draft** (1980)

*In 1980, Congress re-instated the requirement that young men register with the Selective Service System. At that time, it was required that all males, born on or after January 1, 1960 register with the Selective Service System. Those of us from the Vietnam era saw this as the precursor to another wartime draft and, of course, another war.*

Seems like we're close to war  
Ain't it so these days  
The army wants your body  
To stuff their uniforms  
And if you don't resist the draft  
Get ready for war  
Standing with a gun on some  
Foreign shore

They're bringing back the draft, boys

What are you gonna do  
And when they fight in another war  
You'll be part of the crew

They say there's good pay  
To learn a skill  
\$419 a month to learn to kill  
And you can travel far and wide  
We've got troops on all sides  
And you can pay for it all with your life

The widows of the last war  
They're crying it's such a shame  
For the price of war is human lives  
Sorry, there is no fame  
For it's always the old  
Who are making the wars  
And it's always the young who must fall

They're bringing back the draft, boys  
What are you gonna do  
And when they fight in another war  
Will you be part of the crew

Let's not forget  
What an army is for  
But it's alright  
If you need to fight  
'Cause we've got wars in our land  
You know it just seems right  
To fight for our rights here at home

We've got a war on poverty  
A war on crime  
So many more if you've got the time  
You won't need a gun  
Because you'll kill no one  
And everybody wins when it's all done  
And you know that it's all right  
Because we're working for life  
And we'll fight for the peace 'till it's won

They're bringing back the draft, boys  
what are you gonna do  
And when they fight in another war  
You'll be part of the crew

Seems like we're close to war  
Ain't it so these days  
The army wants your body  
To stuff their uniforms  
And if you don't resist the draft  
Get ready for war  
Standing with a gun on some  
Foreign shore

©Eric Pappas 1980

### **Train Song** (1978)

*The third song I wrote. Sometimes telling a story is the best way to tell the truth.*

When I was just  
A boy of ten  
Back in my hometown  
I used to wait in the station yard  
For the trains to come on down  
I'd lay my ear right on that track  
You could hear it a mile away  
Till the whistle sang a homebound tune  
Bringing working folks on their way

Well, I don't know why it happened this way  
But our trains are almost gone  
And the Erie Lackawanna comin' rollin' down the track  
Its memory lingers on  
I long to hear the whistle and squeal  
Of the steel wheels on the rail  
And the whistle and the smoke as the engineer spoke  
Was music, in my ears

Then came the day  
I don't know why  
The train passed our town no more  
It seems folks spent their time in cars  
It wasn't like before  
The old station house  
Got torn down  
It had no use anymore  
And they tore up the tracks

And they sold the land  
No trace of those rails remain

Well, I don't know why it happened this way  
But our trains are almost gone  
And the Erie Lackawanna comin' rollin' down the track  
Its memory lingers on  
I long to hear the whistle and squeal  
Of the steel wheels on the rail  
And the whistle and the smoke as the engineer spoke  
Was music in my ears

So let's bring back the trains  
I wanna hear the whistle blow  
Lay down the tracks  
For those rollin' wheels of steel  
Our future is riding on those old steel rails  
Is that something you don't know

So, let's bring back the trains  
I want to hear the whistle blow  
Bring back the trains  
I want to hear the whistle blow

©Eric Pappas 1978

**Nuclear Game** (Elizabeth McCommon, ~1982)

*This is an unusual track— built from two recordings I made in the mid-80s that were so close to being identical that we were able to combine and re-mix them in the studio.*

My name is McCommon  
And I'm here to say  
That it won't be long boys 'till you face the day  
That your country will want you  
They'll call you by name  
And make you a part of the Nuclear Game

Now nuclear war boys is easily fought  
We just deploy weapons in the countries we've bought  
And they catch the hell, and they bear the blame  
For taking a part in the Nuclear Game

When you join the army, they'll teach you a skill  
You won't need no guns boys when you have to kill  
You'll only push buttons when you have to maim

And that is the beauty of the Nuclear Game

You won't have to look anyone in the eyes  
You won't have to listen to dying men's cries  
You won't bear the burden, and you won't bear the shame  
And that's the best part of the Nuclear Game

From country to country, in all distant lands  
With peace on the planet in our command  
You'll have to choose sides boys when they call out your name  
Will you be a part of the Nuclear Game

My name is McCommon  
And I'm here to say  
That it won't be long boys 'till you face the day  
That your country will want you  
And they'll call you by name  
And make you a part of the Nuclear Game