

FIDDLE TUNES OF CHARLIE ACUFF

Volume I

transcribed by Diane O'Brien



© copyright 1996 Diane O'Brien

Fiddle Tunes of Charlie Acuff

Music transcriptions by
Diane O'Brien

For further information, orders, etc., contact:
Diane O'Brien
12917 Butterfield Lane
Farragut, Tennessee 37922

INTRODUCTION

I first met Charlie Acuff on a chilly, rainy, October afternoon at the Museum of Appalachia in Norris, Tennessee. I stood in the doorway of one of the museum's rustic log cabins where he sat in a time-smoothed, ladder back chair near a crackling fire playing "Bob Taylor's March" on his fiddle. The glow from the flames highlighted the hints of red still lurking in the tendrils of hair above his collar as he said, "Come in an' warm." The fire chased away my goosebumps, but Charlie warmed my heart with his down-home ways and old-time music.

Charlie's family, the Acuffs, came from England and his mother's people were Dutch and German. He was born December 5, 1919 in a three-room house just below the high school in Maynardville, Tennessee. His birth increased the population of the town to about five-hundred and one.

His grandfather, Charlie Boyd Acuff after whom he is named, learned to play the fiddle from one of his uncles, Gordon "Gord" Cassidy. He also learned tunes at parties and dances. Another uncle, Andrew Lafayette "Fate" Cassidy who had been in the Civil War, was a blacksmith and crafted tools which were used to make fiddles. When Fate got up in years he told Charlie's dad, Evart, that he'd give him his tools if he would learn to make fiddles, and agree never sell to them*.

His dad did learn the art of making fiddles, and over the course of his life handcrafted thirty-six of them. It would take a solid three weeks of work to turn out one fiddle, each with his initials or last name and a number on the back. Charlie has five of these fiddles, each with its own unique voice due to variations in wood and workmanship. He usually likes to play number thirty-three. In addition to making fiddles, his dad liked to piece quilts. There's one covering a spare bed in Charlie's house with splashes of color and memories.

When he was twelve years old his grandfather asked him if he ever got his daddy's fiddle down to play. When he replied, "No, I'm left-handed.", his grandfather said, "Well, we'll see about that." His grandfather pasted a piece of paper onto the finger-board beneath the strings of the fiddle to show him where to put his fingers. Charlie then learned a tune in sections. He'd master a few notes, then keep adding a few more until he had the whole tune. His grampa would keep saying, "Play it again". When Charlie got tired, he wouldn't say anything because he didn't want to upset his grampa.

Everyone in Charlie's family played or sang, mostly at home. Among them, his father and mother, Evart and Reva, and his sisters and brother,

* Charlie's brother now has these tools, but isn't using them to make fiddles.

Imelda, Marie and James Gale, they had an array of singers and piano, guitar, mandolin, and fiddle players.

Charlie started playing in bands when he was in high school in the days when most schools were only one-room. He also played for pie suppers where girls would bring pies and cakes, and boys would bid on them. He played for Future Farmers of America, for square dances, and Home Economics banquets. He started playing on radio station WROL in Knoxville in 1938, but had to quit after six months because it was taking so much of his time that he couldn't stay awake in school. His group did a few shows, charging twenty-five cents for adults and ten cents for children.

Charlie married his wife, Dorothy Wallace, in 1950. They had met 13 years earlier when they were still in high school. He says Dorothy was "lookin' for higher briars and bigger berries*". Dorothy never dreamed she'd marry a fiddle player.

Charlie worked for forty years at the Aluminum Company of America in Alcoa, Tennessee where he still lives in a cozy pink house with his wife, and oftentimes his granddaughter Miranda. He retired from his job at Alcoa in 1982, but not from playing his fiddle. He played in the Folklife Center at the World's Fair in Knoxville in 1982, and has also appeared in several episodes of the TV show "Christy".

Today, Charlie performs with a group in Crossville, Tennessee called "The Lantana Drifters" who got their name because most of the members live on Highway 101 which is Lantana Road. He's been playing with them since 1989 when they met at the Museum of Appalachia's Homecoming. He's also played with them at various festivals in middle Tennessee where they've won first place at the competition in Smithville five times.

Since 1988 Charlie has played every Wednesday and Thursday, April through December, at the Museum of Appalachia in Norris, Tennessee. He's also played for all of the museum's Homecomings each October since the first one which was held in 1979.

Charlie is often asked if he is any relation to Roy Acuff. His response is, "Yes. He's my cousin. All of us Acuffs played music, but he's the only one who made any money at it." Roy also learned many of the tunes he used to play from Charlie's grandfather.

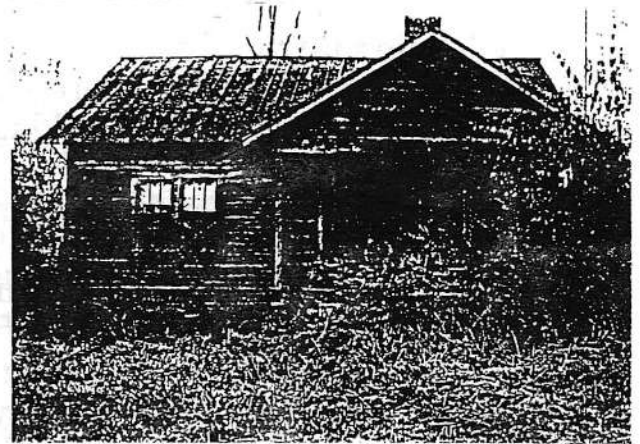
Charlie says that Roy always liked to use comparisons when talking about things. In regard to fiddles and competitions he once said, "If you're gonna get in a horse race, you'd better have one that runs." There was an occasion, during Governor Frank Clement's term of office, that Roy was asked by a family, who lived in the same county as Roy, to use his influence as a celebrity to ask the governor to pardon their son who was in the

* A phrase referring to blackberry picking.

penitentiary. Roy replied, "Hell, no! Why that's just like a 'suck egg dog'*. You turn them fellers loose and they go right back to doing the same thing."

Charlie likes to tell some interesting stories of his own. There is one about a teacher of his, Archie Steiner, who was eating breakfast with his family one morning when they heard the chickens "raisin' Cain" at the barn. Running out to investigate, they found the old hen, which had been setting on twenty-seven eggs, fussing at a black snake that had just swallowed all but three of them. They killed the snake, cut out the eggs, put them back under the hen, and they all hatched! Charlie says it's a true story because he'd never known his teacher to tell a lie.

He tells another story of when Norris dam was being built. The people who were being displaced from the land that was purchased for the dam, were allowed to take whatever they wanted with them off their property. One parcel had a two-story house that the owner planned to leave behind, so Charlie's dad bought it for \$25.00. It was a lot of work taking it apart and pulling out the old square nails, but from the materials salvaged he built a new five-room house in Maynardville for his family.



House, now overgrown, which his dad built.

Charlie doesn't read music; all of his tunes are tucked away in his head. A few have been transcribed in various issues of "The Fiddler" and "The Devil's Box" magazines. He's also made a tape of some of his tunes. The primary reason for putting this book together is to get his tunes on paper so they can be passed on to other generations of musicians (including his grandchildren, Miranda, Ryan, and Laura) and as a companion to his tape. In spite of advances in computer technology, no one can duplicate a tune on paper exactly the way a musician plays it. We can only come close. To learn the tunes as Charlie plays them it would be helpful to listen to the tape to hear his interpretations.

Charlie won't be around forever, but his music can be. That is why I've embarked on this endeavor, to preserve his musical legacy.

Diane O'Brien

* A "suck-egg dog" is a dog which gets in the hen house, pierces, and sucks out the egg's contents. Even when they are tied up for a long period of time, they will go right back to the hen house for more eggs when they are let loose.

CONTENTS

| | page |
|--|------|
| Bob Taylor's March _____ | 10 |
| Cluck Ol' Hen _____ | 13 |
| Dutch Waltz _____ | 15 |
| Going to Chattanooga _____ | 18 |
| Josie Girl _____ | 12 |
| Kitty Puss _____ | 19 |
| Ocean Waves _____ | 19 |
| Old Yeller Dog _____ | 17 |
| Paddy Woncha Drink Some Good Ol' Cider _____ | 16 |
| Raven's Gap _____ | 14 |
| Thump Waltz _____ | 13 |
| Turkey Buzzard _____ | 16 |
| Wait in the Kitchen _____ | 11 |
| Walkin' in the Parlor _____ | 20 |

Bob Taylor's March*

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

The musical score is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of eight staves of music. The chords indicated above the notes are: D, G, D, A7, D, G, D, A7, D, A7, D, A7, D. The music features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with some triplets and a final double bar line with repeat dots.

* Bob Taylor wasn't much of an orator, so when he was traveling around campaigning for Governor of Tennessee, he'd say a few words and then play the tune "Screakin' Ol' Fiddle" at each stop he made. Not only did he win the election, but the tune became associated with him, and thus people began to call it "Bob Taylor's March".

Wait in the Kitchen

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

D A7 D

Wait in the kit-chen 'til the cook comes in, the cook comes in, the cook comes in,
Stuck my fin-ger in a duck's eye - ball, a duck's eye - ball, a duck's eye - ball,

D A7 D

Wait in the kit-chen 'til the cook comes in.
Stuck my fin-ger in a duck's eye - ball.

A E7 A

A E7 A

A E7 A

A E7 A

Josie Girl

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

G

G

Where's that girl? Where's she gone? Where's that girl with the jo - sie* on?

D7 G

Stole my heart and now she's gone, Where's that girl with the jo - sie on?

D7 G

G

G

G D7 G

8va lower

D7 G

* A josie is a long coat with a cape.

Cluck Ol' Hen

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

A E7 A E7 A

Cluck ol' hen, cluck a lit-tle loud - er. Cluck ol' hen, make your chick-ens proud-er.
Cluck ol' hen, cluck a lit-tle fast - er. Cluck ol' hen, find a new past - ure.

A E7 A E7 A

A G A

A G A (go back to beginning)

(Ending)
A E7 A 8va lower ----- E7 A

Thump Waltz

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

A7 D (to ending) G C Am

D G D (Ending)

Raven's Gap

As played by Charlie Acuff

from his grandfather

The musical score for "Raven's Gap" is presented in a single system with eight staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The melody is written in the treble clef. The first four staves feature a repeating melodic phrase with chords G, D7, and G. The last four staves feature a different melodic phrase with chords D, A7, and D. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Chord progression for the first four staves: G, D7, G.

Chord progression for the last four staves: D, A7, D.

Dutch Waltz

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

The musical score for "Dutch Waltz" is written in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of ten staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is composed of eighth and quarter notes. Chord markings are placed above the staff: G above the first measure, D7 above the second measure, G above the third measure, and D7 above the fourth measure. The second staff continues the melody with similar rhythmic patterns. Chord markings are D7 above the first measure and G above the second measure. The third staff has G above the first measure and D7 above the second measure. The fourth staff has D7 above the first measure and G above the second measure. The fifth staff has G above the first measure and D7 above the second measure. The sixth staff has D7 above the first measure and G above the second measure. The seventh staff has G above the first measure and D7 above the second measure. The eighth staff has D7 above the first measure and G above the second measure. The ninth staff has G above the first measure and D7 above the second measure. The tenth staff concludes the piece with a double bar line and repeat dots. Chord markings are D7 above the first measure and G above the second measure.

Paddy Woncha Drink Some Good Ol' Cider

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

Musical notation for the first line of the song. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/2. The melody is written on a single staff. Chords are indicated above the staff: D, G, D, and A7.

Pad-dy won-cha have some, Pad-dy won-cha drink some, Pad-dy woncha have some good ol' ci - der?
You be the gray horse, I'll be the rid - er, we'll go to Wat-kins to get some ci - der.

Musical notation for the second line of the song. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/2. The melody is written on a single staff. Chords are indicated above the staff: D, G, D, A7, and D.

Pad-dy won-cha have some, Pad-dy won-cha drink some, Pad-dy won-cha have some good ol' ci - der?

Musical notation for the third line of the song. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/2. The melody is written on a single staff. Chords are indicated above the staff: D, A7, and D.

Turkey Buzzard

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

Musical notation for the first line of the song. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/2. The melody is written on a single staff. Chords are indicated above the staff: G and D7.

Musical notation for the second line of the song. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/2. The melody is written on a single staff. Chords are indicated above the staff: G, D7, and G.

Musical notation for the third line of the song. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/2. The melody is written on a single staff. Chords are indicated above the staff: G, D7, and G.

Shoot that tur - key buz - zard, oh, com - in down the moun-tain, oh.

Musical notation for the fourth line of the song. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/2. The melody is written on a single staff. Chords are indicated above the staff: G, D7, and G (go back to beginning).

Old Yeller Dog

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

G D7 G



The old yel-ler dog come trot-tin' thru the meet-in' house, trot-tin' thru the meet-in' house, trot-tin' thru the meet-in' house.

G D7 G



The old yel-ler dog come trot-tin' thru the meet-in' house down in Al - a - bam'.

G Em



Brave boys there, brave boys there,

G D7 G



brave boys there, way down in Al - a - bam'.

G Em



G D7 G (go back to beginning)



(Ending)

G D7 G



Going to Chattanooga

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

G

Kitty Puss

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

Musical score for 'Kitty Puss' in G major, 2/2 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff has chords D, A7, D, A7, D, and G. The second staff has a D7 chord. The third staff has G and D7 chords. The fourth staff has D, G, D, G, and D chords. The lyrics are: 'If you can't dance Kit-ty Puss, you can't dance noth - in', you can't dance Kit-ty Puss, you can't dance noth - in'.

Ocean Waves

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

Musical score for 'Ocean Waves' in G major, 2/2 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff has G and D7 chords. The lyrics are: 'It's oh Fe - lox - ie fun, it's oh Fe - lox - ie fun, it's'. The second staff has G and D7 chords. The lyrics are: 'oh Fe - lox - ie fun, a drink - in' wine and beer.'. The third staff has G, D7, and G chords. The fourth staff has G, D7, and G chords.

Walkin' in the Parlor

As played by Charlie Acuff

learned from his grandfather

D A7 D A7 D

D A7 D A7 D

Walk - in', talk - in', walk-in' in your hand, walk -in' in the par-lor, you aint got no man.

D A7 D A7

Give the fel-ler meat, and give the fel-ler rest, watch the fel-ler eat, and scratch his cur-ly head.

D A7 D A7 D

Diane O'Brien was born in California and began playing the piano accordion at the age of nine. Her mother signed her up for lessons with a door-to-door salesman. It wasn't long before she discovered she had the ability to learn tunes by ear. She now finds that having the combined abilities of reading music and playing by ear has its advantages, one of which is being able to compile this book of tunes.

She once spent a month traveling in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland where she absorbed all of the music she could get her ears on. Upon her return, she joined and eventually became a bagpipe player with the "Omaha Pipes and Drums". She also played for ten years with an Irish band in Omaha, Nebraska called "The Turfmen". During this period she learned to play the tin whistle and the bodhran (an Irish drum). She also plays the piano and has written a number of compositions.

For many years, Diane has "adopted" nursing homes in the various places she has resided, including an "Alt Haus" in Germany. She has again taken a nursing home under her wing since she and her family moved to Knoxville, Tennessee.

In addition, she was delighted to find and join an Irish jam session which meets in downtown Knoxville twice a month. She says, "It is wonderful to play once again with other people who have a passion for Irish music." She also finds it interesting that much of this area of the country was settled by people from Ireland and Scotland and sees the influence of these roots in many of the old-time tunes in Appalachia including one in this book, "Paddy Woncha Drink Some Good Ol' Cider".

Diane is a thirsty learner interested in the music and history of the East Tennessee area where she and her family have decided to retire, and which they now call "home". She read once that every time an older person dies, it is as though a library has burned down. She feels there are many "musical libraries" residing in east Tennessee, and she hopes to preserve as much of this music as possible so that future generations may be able to learn and enjoy it.

Charlie Acuff has been playing the fiddle since he was twelve years old. He was taught by his grandfather, and still plays many of the old time tunes that he learned from him. This is the first book of some of those tunes.

If the name "Acuff" sounds familiar, it is because Roy Acuff, Charlie's cousin, played for many years on the "Grand Ole Opry". All of the Acuffs played music, but, as Charlie says, "Roy was the only one who made any money at it."

All the tunes in this book have been transcribed from a cassette tape called, "Charlie Acuff". Putting notes on paper cannot capture the exact way each tune is played, especially on the fiddle. But, listening to the tape and having the music to follow will get you pretty close to the way each tune should be played.

Once you've played these tunes a number of times, you'll find that they have a way of growing on you. If you close your eyes, you can imagine how it used to be in the days before radio and TV. You can picture yourself with your family and friends, sitting on the porch on a warm summer evening. Your feet are propped on the railing, while everyone takes turns swapping stories, singing, and playing music. You are relaxed and comfortable as the evening breezes cool you after a long, hot day. This is living; it just doesn't get any better than this!