

ART «» ENTERTAINMENT

BOOKS



B. Traven almost meets A. Hoffman

THE MYSTERY OF B. TRAVEN

By Judy Stone
William Kaufman, Los Altos, Calif., 1978, \$6.95 hard cover

For nearly half a century (at least since the first American publication of *The Death Ship* in 1934), the identity of B. Traven has been an intriguing and, to some, infuriating literary mystery.

As his output of novels (e.g. *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, *The Bridge in the Jungle*, *The Rebellion of Hanged*) novelettes and short stories gained him an international reputation, it became known that Traven wrote in German, lived in Mexico and dealt with the world only through intermediaries—chiefly one Hal Croves, who presented himself as Traven's literary agent.

Many believed that Croves was actually Traven, but the vehemence and persistence of Croves's denial shook the foundations of consensus. As late as 1962, reporters watching the filming of Traven's *La Rosa Blanca* in Mexico thought they had discovered "the real Traven" in the person of Philip Stevenson, an American screenwriter who had done the adaptation for the film and was on location for consultation.

Some wondered in print why it mattered who "the real Traven" was. Others wondered why a man whose work had achieved such wide and lasting success should go to such lengths to conceal his identity. There were rumors of "a disgraceful incident in his past" and of "criminal charges still pending against him" somewhere.

Even after new works stopped appearing in print (the last of Traven's novels to be published in the U.S. came out in 1975, but they had all been issued in England decades before) the mystery continued to intrigue a second

generation of Traven fans. One of these, Judy Stone of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, got involved through her curiosity about the "disappearance" of the film version of *La Rosa Blanca* (a mordant attack on foreign exploiters of Mexican oil), which was not released for seven years after its completion, and then only for a single, short Mexico City showing.

Stone obtained an interview with Croves and came to the conclusion that he was, in fact, Traven. What propelled her into the years of further research that produced her book, *The Mystery of B. Traven*, was the writer's obsession with anonymity and, as a corollary, the story of the young German revolutionary who escaped from the White Terror that crushed the Munich Soviet of 1919.

She has succeeded to a remarkable degree, not only in clearing up the mystery, but in bringing to life an important and little-known chapter of the history of the revolutionary movement that followed WWI. *The Mystery of B. Traven* also contains a critical chapter on "The Novels of B. Traven," a "Sampler" of quotations from them, and an excellent bibliography of works by and about Traven in German, Spanish and English, which will be of value to critics and historians, amateur or academic. —Janet Stevenson

UNDERGROUND: In Pursuit of B. Traven and Kenny Love
By Jonah Raskin
Bobbs, Merrill, 1978, \$8.95

Underground opens and closes in the Mexican jungle—the scene of B. Traven's epics of the struggling peasantry, and our narrator's last stop in his search for details about Traven's life. In be-

tween we are taken on a fugitive ride through the political struggles of the late '60s and early '70s.

There are three main characters: Kenny Love (modeled on Abbie Hoffman), Jonah Raskin (modeled, we may assume, on the author) and B. Traven, whom we never see, but whose presence is continuously felt.

The plot pivots on Kenny Love's flight from the police after being arrested for selling forged passports. For reasons never made explicit, Raskin decides to join Love in his flight, and the two take off across America, accompanied by Love's companion, Annie, and Raskin's incomplete notes about Traven.

We don't really know much about the personal lives of revolutionary leaders. Mao's first wife was butchered by the Kuomintang. (Did he cry?) Chou-En-Lai and his wife made the Long March together. (Did they fight?) Lenin and Krupskaya were separated at different times when he was forced to go underground quickly. (Was she afraid?) Che Guevara, in the Bolivian jungle, had a passionate affair with the guerilla Tanya. (Did he ever plan for the future?)

The characters in *Underground* have weaknesses, which Raskin does not hide. But they, like Mao and Chou, Lenin, Krupskaya and Che, are real people, subject to real personal struggles, in times when they are alone and running scared.

(There is an interesting contrast between Traven and Love/Hoffman in the matter of secrecy. Traven left no clear records even in Germany, dropped false clues, assumed disguises and pseudonyms. Love becomes secretive only when forced to by flight. But Traven was a man who had fought and risked and almost been killed. Raskin never makes us feel that kind of mortal danger for Kenny Love.)

After a near escape from the police, Love and Annie decide to stay in San Francisco. Raskin heads down to Mexico, locates Traven's widow, who lets him look through Traven's papers. In the trunk that contains them, Raskin finds this note:

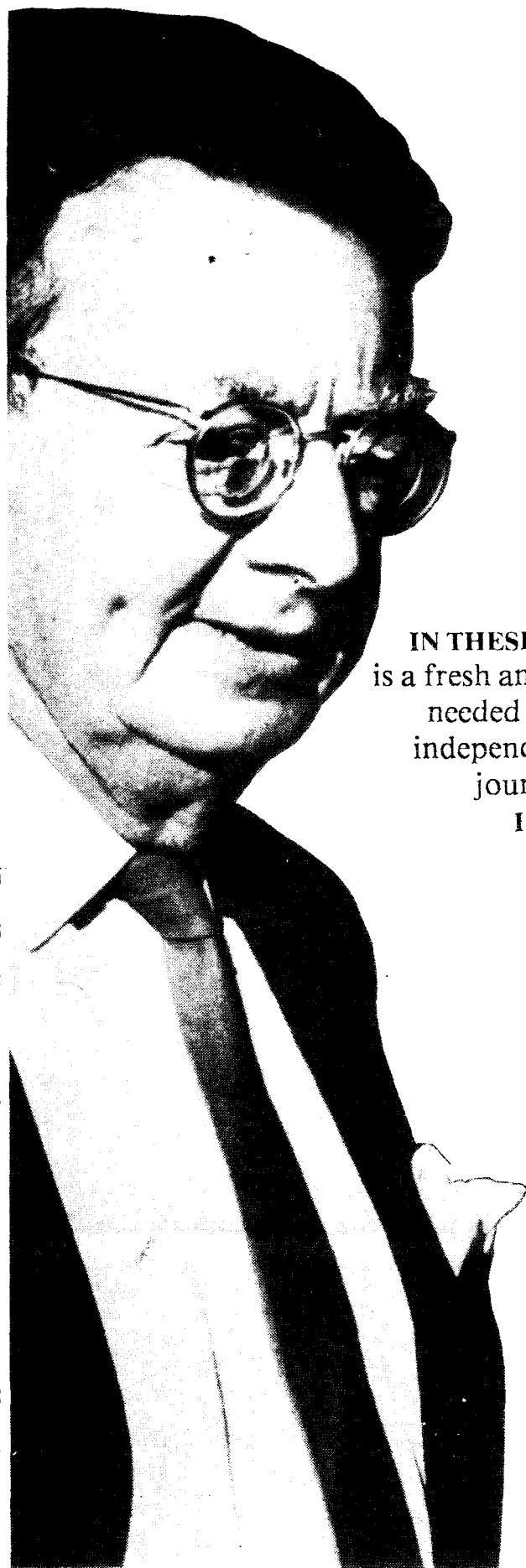
If you find this document, you have come too far. You should not ask for a biography from me. ...If I cannot be recognized and understood in my writings, then I am not worth a damn and neither are my books. Leave my things and go in peace, my friend.

For several days Raskin sits at his typewriter, but writes nothing. Around him a peasant rebellion is breaking out. Cruz, the guerilla, comes for him and asks if he is ready.

...I am ready. I lift my hands from the typewriter. "Si. Vámanos," I whisper. The jungle hears me. The jungle understands. And we ride.

The Americans in *Underground* identify with the Vietcong. But they also remind us that the history of underground political movements stretches back to the early Christians, whose members hid under the Imperial City in catacombs. And if the American Raskin's fugitives traverse has become a sterile, reactionary place, it is still, just below the surface, a place filled with a rich heritage of struggle.

—Richard P. Greenfield
Richard P. Greenfield is a freelance writer in Brooklyn.



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Records

Devi Singh would be more likely to go to a baseball game than to a sitar concert. But the Indian influence is still strong.

THE REASON I LIKE YOU

Dev Singh and Gaynor Jenkins
(Rampur Records)

"Music is like a religion to me. It's a 24-hour state of mind."

Dev Singh is a folksinger who first appeared on the San Francisco folk scene more than 15 years ago. He's still performing in local clubs and coffee houses and has just released a record on Rampur (his own label) called *The Reason I Like You*, in collaboration with Welsh singer/songwriter Gaynor Jenkins. (There are no duets. Each of them fills one complete side.)

Singh's music is an interesting mix of different influences—traditional folk, 1964 folk revival and contemporary pop music. His background is also of mixed traditions. His father was an Indian from the Punjab and his mother, of English-Irish-Scotch descent.

"We were raised on Indian food and music," he says. "Culturally speaking, I'd say I'm American. I'm more likely to go to a baseball game than a sitar concert. But the Indian influence is there. I wasn't even conscious of it till I listened to some of my music."

Born and raised in Sonoma County, Singh's first recorded appearance came when he was 15 and played at a benefit concert in Berkeley: one of his trademark songs, "Baby-o," performed on the African mouth-bow.

Fourteen years after that debut, Singh was traveling in England, heard Gaynor Jenkins playing her own songs, and suggested that perhaps sometime they could do an album together. "When I came back to the States, I started recording a song of hers called 'The Reason I Like You.'" And one morning, she called up and said,

"O.K., I'm coming over." That's how it happened."

Dev Singh plays an excellent guitar accompaniment to his voice. His arrangement for the title song takes the listener through instrumental verses that swing between an East Indian harmonic jam and a low-keyed James Taylor back-up. His lyrical abilities show best in "Sad Cafes." And the cultural mix becomes most evident in "Blackbird," a Beatles number that he performs on a traditional American instrument—the autoharp—with chords based on an Indian scale.

On Side Two, Gaynor Jenkins displays her abilities as songwriter, vocalist, pianist and guitar player. The simple, effective tone of her voice expresses real feeling, not just popular culture mush. The harmonies in "I Don't Need That Kind of Love" (almost a personal relationship protest song) strike one as a cross between Joni Mitchell and traditional Balkan music.

Jenkins is a very exciting person, according to Singh. "She has all these experiences and sits down and writes songs about them. She's studied to be a teacher, was an interpreter in France, has traveled all over Europe and has fairly strong political views. She's working now in London with children in music."

Future recordings by Singh and/or Jenkins may have a more popular sound, but it's clear that he wanted to release his first album in the more traditional folk genre—the sound he's been most familiar with all through his career. It's also a pleasant surprise to find a folk revival, early '60s musician who still performs in that style and isn't ashamed to admit it.

—Ed Schoenfeld
Ed Schoenfeld is a free-lance writer in Berkeley who reviews folk music for IN THESE TIMES.

Rampur Records is at 2018 Delaware St., Berkeley, CA 94709.

HONKY TONK MASEQUERADE

Joe Ely
(MCA Records)

Country music is so loaded with "greats" and is such a big business that it's hard sometimes to separate the talent from the desperate imitators.



Marshall Chapman

Country singer Joe Ely hasn't been given his due. And Mick Jagger has at last earned his.

Joe Ely does not create that kind of problem. He and his very hot band have produced two outstanding albums in the last year, and just because they haven't done well on the charts doesn't mean they are not to be reckoned with.

Ely is a talented singer/songwriter who has the ability to create music in styles that range from Tex-Mex waltzes ("West Texas Walt") to electric blues ("Johnny Blues") to ballads ("Because of the Wind"). His songs are fresh and remain so after continuous playing. His six-man band captures a spirit and a sound that is completely energizing, never lets up and is particularly distinguished by the playing of lead

guitarist Jesse Taylor.

Honky Tonk Masquerade doesn't have one piece of filler on it. Every cut represents specific emotional and musical feelings and is presented by a band committed to producing a group sound rather than solitary voices.

Ely's group is one of many bands coming out of the Southwest that haven't been given the exposure due them. That's a shame because they should be listened to by anyone interested in contemporary American music.

—Joe Heumann
Joe Heumann reviews music and films regularly for IN THESE TIMES.

SOME GIRLS

The Rolling Stones
(Rolling Stones Records)

If you're going to bill yourself as "The World's Greatest Rock & Roll Band," the boast must have some basis in fact if it is not to become pathetically self-delusory, as in the case of "The King" (Elvin Presley) during the last years of his life. Whether it's because they've been pushed by

the punks' critique of them, or recognized that their recent albums have been mediocre or been stirred by a renewed creativity, the Rolling Stones' new album, *Some Girls*, is their best in years.

One of the prime reasons for this is that Keith Richards has finally found in Ron Wood a musician whose guitar work complements his own. Wood's predecessor, Mick Taylor, was a talented lead guitarist, but his spacey melodic runs were not particularly suited for the jagged Chuck Berry-style around which Richards has molded the distinctive Stones sound. With Wood and Richards repeatedly throwing out fine guitar riffs, and drummer Charlie Watts sounding great, *Some Girls* frequently drives along with the intensity of vintage Stones.

Yet, as Mick Jagger recognized when he observed recently that "people expect a lot more of us than they do everybody else," a new Rolling Stones album must be compared with the band's entire legacy, not just their recent disappointments or the current fare of other groups.

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song. But some jokes aren't funny.

Despite the absence of a blockbuster song, *Some Girls* is an album worth getting

Although other groups have risen and the Stones have slipped, they once were the "World's Greatest Rock & Roll Band." The accolade rings truer today than it has in years.

—Bruce Dancis

Bruce Dancis writes regularly for *IN THESE TIMES* about rock and reggae music.

JADED VIRGIN
Marshall Chapman
(Epic)

Chapman, a Southwesterner who's paid her dues in the New York club scene, tackles all kinds of styles here—successfully. She fuses honky-tonk and straight rock'n'roll on "A Thank-You Note (Thank You Hank)," a tribute to Hank Williams, and it isn't corny. Her "You're the One for Me," a love song whose lyrics are its soundtrack, is light reggae. Her covers—Bob Seger's "Turn the Page" and her astonishing version of Johnny Cash's "I Walk the Line"—are original interpretations.

In "Why Can't I Be Like Other Girls?" Chapman recounts her rock journey:

*I was playing guitar down at the
"Double-knit Bar" and
them cats was makin' eyes at
me*

*"Say, hey, little miss, sing one
by Kris
and I'll help you make it
through the night"*

*But I had written this song
and when he couldn't sing
along*

*I knew I had it comin' all right
She knows she's not like "other
girls," but that knowledge has
evoked her strength. Eclectic with-*

out being skittish, passionate without being pretentious, Chapman comes right at you. This woman with a man's first name plays good rock.

—Carlo Wolff

HAILE I HYMN (Chapter I)
I Jah Man
(Island) import

In what may be the first reggae concept album, I Jah Man (T.

Sutherland) has fashioned a compelling paean to Jah and Rastafarianism that fuses ecstasy and slickness.

Like other true believers, I Jah Man trusts that the spirit of Haile Selassie lives on, still beckoning the lost African tribes to religious unity in the promised land—Africa. The singer fashions prayers of music and text, in mystical testament to the power of the word.

This is not "roots" reggae, a la Burning Spear of U Roy. I Jah Man has corralled some of the best reggae studio musicians (Earl Lindo, Robbie Shakespeare, Sly Dunbar—and musical synthesizer Steve Winwood on keyboards) to shape a fluid, seamless work.

In the four songs here, I Jah Man concentrates on his faith as if he believed that by singing, he could keep Haile Selassie alive.

This is not "political" music like Peter Tosh's or the early Wailers. Although it offers glimpses of a religious world infused with politics (the promised land, for Rastafarians, means a pure world stripped of the commercialism of "Babylon"), it does so in a setting of beautiful, universal music.

—C.W.

MERCHANT'S LUNCH
The Red Clay Ramblers
(Flying Fish Records)

In the first three decades of the 20th century, before musicians like Jimmy Rodgers, Bill Monroe and Hank Williams wrought major changes in American country music, scores of rural string bands playing the old banjo and fiddle tunes flourished in the southeastern U.S.

These bands ranged from little family or neighborhood groups who played for local parties and dances, to highly talented and inventive performers like Gid Tanner and his Skillet Lickers, who augmented personal appearances with live radio shows and recorded extensively in the early days of the phonograph. With the advent of Bill Monroe and his bluegrass music, the clippity-clop of the old "clawhammer-style" banjo gave way to the freight train rhythms of the new three-finger picking, pioneered by Earl Scruggs. The "old time" bands faded back into the hills whence they came.

In the '50s, a group of folklorist musicians calling themselves the New Lost City Ramblers sparked a revival of "old time" music through extensive concert and recording work (still available on Folkways Records). They

The Red Clay Ramblers are a throwback to the old time string bands that used to flourish in the Southeast.

faithfully reproduced the letter, if not the full spirit, of the old time bands: the acoustic instrumentation, unpretentious style and frequently humorous lyrics.

Today bluegrass or "newgrass" bands still dominate the string-band field, often electrifying their sound to some degree. But there is a growing number of musicians and listeners who have turned to the older, more "down home," but not necessarily less energetic styles.

With their new release, *Merchant's Lunch*, the Red Clay Ramblers demonstrate that they are not only the best "old time" stringband recording today, but also skillful interpreters of early jazz.

The best of the old bands wrote original tunes to supplement their traditional material. The New Lost City Ramblers played many of these songs, but contributed none of their own. In their last several albums the Red Clay Ramblers have revived this tradition of originality, and here include three new tunes, including the title track: the hilarious account of a confrontation between Broadway Brenda and a road-weary trucker at a sleazy Memphis bar and grill.

*I looked her up and over and
she did the same to me,
Her teeth were green, as green
as garden peas,
She shaped her hair with dish-
pan fingertips,
An earthquake of excitement
shook her Krakatoan hips,
Her hands went to her bosom,*

*a hush fell on the crew,
An acre of Brenda lay exposed
to view...*

Another fine composition by banjoist Tommy Thompson is "I Got Plans," a wistful look at the pipe dreams of a romantic drifter with a weakness for whiskey and ladies of the night.

The classic "old time" bands are represented by Charlie Poole's hobo song, "Milwaukee Blues," featuring mandolin virtuoso Jim Watson, and "Rabbit in the Pea Patch," an Uncle Dave Macon tune sung by fiddler Bill Hicks.

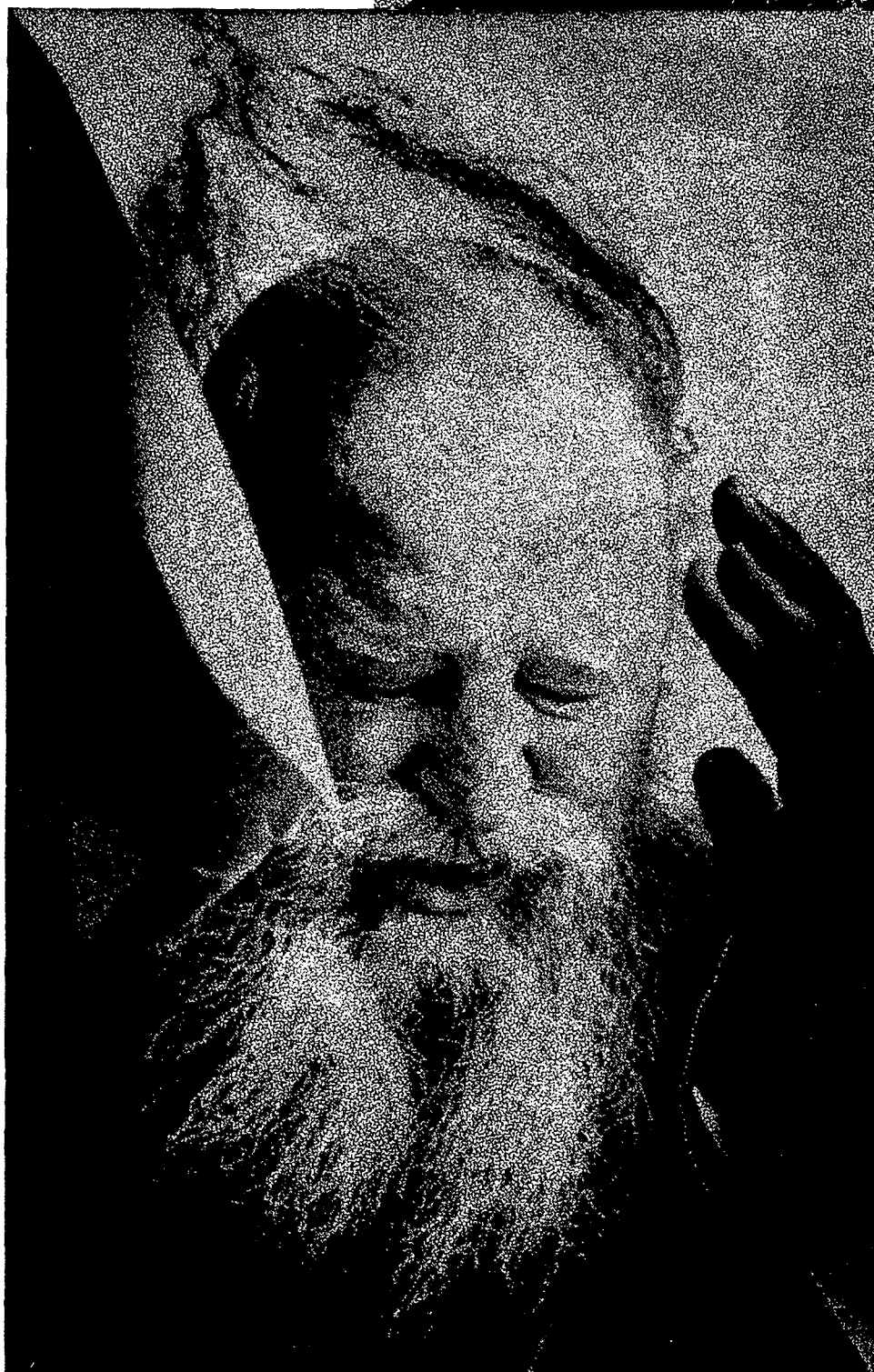
The addition of Jack Herrick on string bass and trumpet, and Mike Carver on piano has brought an infusion of jazz material to the Ramblers, including Fats Waller's "Sweet and Slow," and the bluesy "Woman Down in Memphis." Here the boys make interesting use of some unusual combinations of instruments: banjo and piano, and trumpet and fiddle, interweaving and complementing each other. A standout effort is Mike Carver's solo piano and vocal on the old standard "Melancholy," a feat not often attempted these days, carried off by Carver with masterful grace and artistry.

The R.C.R. have always included gospel material. Here they perform the hymn "Daniel Prayed," a capella, with stunning four-part harmony. The band's vocal talents are prominently displayed throughout the album, in the nicely arranged background harmonies and in the compelling leads, especially Tommy Thompson and Mike Carver. Thompson sings in a gruff, unpolished style; Carver's voice is sweet and high. Each is well suited to the material he performs. With Watson and Hicks also singing lead on a tune or two, the Ramblers show more vocal variety and inventiveness than any other present-day stringband I've heard.

This is a record that will delight anyone who likes the plain unvarnished sound of acoustic stringed instruments played by modern masters. It is particularly recommended to bluegrass fans who might like to know what came before Bill Monroe, and where it is going today. —Joe Stevenson
Joe Stevenson is a member of a musical group called the Famous Potatoes.

The Red Clay Ramblers





RUSHMORE PALES BEFORE CRAZY HORSE MEMORIAL

Korczak hews South Dakota mountain to commemorate Sioux chief who led fight against Custer. Begun 30 years ago, his life's work will be completed by future generations.

By Tyna Thrall Orren

Americans have traditionally memorialized their conquering heroes in stone. But the biggest stone monument to an American hero will honor a man many Americans once regarded as a national enemy: Tashunka-Tico-Crazy Horse—the war chief who led the Sioux and Cheyenne against George Custer at the Little Bighorn.

In the Black Hills of South Dakota, just 20 miles from Gutzon Borglum's portrait heads of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt, a 563-foot equestrian statue of Crazy Horse is being blasted into Thunderhead Mountain by a man who first came to the Black Hills to work on Mt. Rushmore.

The man is Korczak Ziolkowski.

"A little Polish orphan boy from Boston," he calls himself, but "little" is not a name most people would use to describe Korczak.

This is a man who demands a mountain to work on. A full, greying beard covers him from his cheeks to his chest. When it opens below the mustache, Korczak's voice bellows forth in the elegant rhythms of his native city: an unexpected blend of Beacon Hill and Thunderhead Mountain.

So the white man will know...

The idea for the monument came from Chief Henry Standing Bear, a nephew of Crazy Horse. Standing Bear, who also worked at Mt. Rushmore, came to feel

that his people and their struggle should be memorialized in Black Hills Stone. So in 1939, after consulting with fellow Sioux chiefs, he asked Korczak to carve a monument to Crazy Horse, "so that the white man will know that the red man had great heroes also."

The first problem Korczak and the Sioux chiefs faced was money. They had none. "Henry Standing Bear," as Korczak recalls, "didn't have enough to eat." So the Crazy Horse Memorial had to wait for nearly a decade.

In 1947, Korczak returned to the Black Hills and sat down with Standing Bear and five survivors of the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Korczak listened as the old warriors described Crazy Horse, who had never been photographed. "He was a small man, less than six feet tall." Although entitled to elaborate regalia and a flowing war bonnet, he went into battle wearing only a breechcloth and a single feather.

From this description, Korczak built his model and the work on Thunderhead Mountain began. Henry Standing Bear touched off the first charge of dynamite on June 3, 1948.

Getting a piece of the rock.

How did Korczak get hold of a mountain to carve on?

The question raises a smile.

"Oh, boy!"

Korczak first bought 160 acres (not including the mountain) at \$25 an acre, just hoping he'd be able to get a mountain later. When a man from Custer, S.D., asked if he'd like to buy a mining claim

on 20 acres of land that included the mountain, Korczak jumped at the offer.

Still holding the mountain on that claim, he is technically "mining" up there. He must turn in an assay sample and do \$100 worth of mining work every year, or the land will revert to the government. (If his drilling and blasting counts as mining, he does his required \$100 per year every hour. Construction costs on Crazy Horse run from \$1,700 to \$2,000 per day.)

Korczak and his two sons do all the labor on the mountain. For years, it was Korczak alone, walking up the mountain every day, carrying enough equipment to blast out a road to the peak. Today, he has heavy Caterpillar equipment and his own electrical generating plant for drills and airhammers. But the labor is his and his sons'.

At present that labor involves very little sculpting. The many works on display in Korczak's workshop testify to his skill and sensitivity as a sculptor. But for now, work on the mountain consists first of drilling, then of blasting.

Throughout the summer of 1977, Korczak and his sons drilled half a mile of blasting holes in the part of the mountain that will form the head of Crazy Horse's war pony. They filled the holes with dynamite and set it off, throwing tons of Black Hills granite into the valley below and revealing on the mountain the pony's steep-angled nose and forehead.

What keeps him going?

The forms of horse and man emerge only slowly from the mountain rock. Korczak has been working on Thunderhead Mountain for 30 years, and still it takes

imagination to see Crazy Horse's war pony and its rider, his arm pointing defiantly out over the lands he fought to keep.

The years Korczak has worked with drills, airhammers, bulldozers and dynamite show in his sun-darkened face and grizzled beard and, most of all, in a twisted right elbow and two gnarled hands.

What has kept him at it?

You begin to understand when you hear him talk about the Indians, about their chief who—for him—represents their common struggle and their common fate. ("If you ever get me started on Indians...but...well, you'd never get out of here!")

Korczak intends the monument to be the focus of an Indian cultural center, consisting of a museum, a hospital and a university. He has already built an impressive small museum, and his study's walls are lined with memorabilia, including Henry Standing Bear's first letter, framed and hung in a place of honor.

In spite of countless hardships, including two heart attacks, Korczak has been kept going by the sense of honor he feels in being the man chosen to tell in stone the story of Crazy Horse and his people.

"I have the right," he declares in his husky, thundering voice, "to tell the story of a whole people!"

Will the granite-engraved saga be completed?

Korczak says, "Give me six more years."

Tyna Thrall Orren is a free-lance writer in California. This article is adapted from a longer version published in *Northliner* magazine.