**Poetry from Daily Life: Why stick to one meaning when you can have two (or more)?**

By Randle Chowning

*My guest this week on Poetry from Daily Life is Randle Chowning, who lives in Springfield, Missouri. He was born in Howell County, Missouri and spent the first ten years of his life there. Randle says, “I don't apologize for being 100% Hillbilly.” At age ten he was already writing songs. Two of his favorite songs are "Whippoorwill" and "My Old Band." A unique fact about Randle Chowning is that he was founder of the Ozark Mountain Daredevils. ~ David L. Harrison*

**Reflections of a retired songwriter**

The late Bob Marley, who is credited with popularizing reggae music worldwide, stated he felt “music was a Godly thing.” In my opinion, no other art form comes close to music.

Songs in particular can make you laugh or cry, they make you want to dance, they preserve history and influence social change. Songs have the power to transport one into a world of fantasy or spirituality. The list of emotional responses to music is as vast as it is amazing.

Bob Marley skillfully wrote tunes of social injustice under a strong canopy of religious conviction, all delivered in the rhythmic, sexual style of Jamaican reggae. This triple whammy couldn’t be ignored! Ideally a songwriter’s poetry and musical abilities should evolve and improve over time. I think a certain degree of reverence, humility, along with responsibility, should be considered when engaged with the endeavor.

I’ve had the honor and privilege to co-write songs with folks who have gold records on their walls, some with Grammys on their shelves, as well as unknowns. All of them were interesting and unusual people. I personally or with others have written songs that range from absurd to obscene or even prayer-like in nature. We often want to come up with lines that can have double meanings.

Here’s a bluegrass tune titled “Hey Boys” that I wrote alone. First the entire lyric and then I’ll offer some explanations:

**Hey Boys**

Mountain top got your chainsaw crew

Come five o’clock we’ll be cutting loose

Not a drop ‘til the last one falls

Where the buck stops find us skidding logs

*Chorus*

Hey boys, meet me back in town

The devil won’t get us when the sun goes down

Hey boys, have another round

The devil won’t get us when the sun goes down

Shore to shore, yard by yard

Door to door you can see our mark

We may be poor but we’re strong

We built the floor that you’re standing on

*Repeat Chorus*

In Jerusalem lived a carpenter

I’m not like him but I do work

In God’s woods where the dear do play

Make me a good box of pine someday

*Repeat Chorus*

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In the first line, "cutting loose" not only means being done for the day and leaving, it also means being loosened up and working smoothly, as opposed to starting stiff and slow in the morning. Second line, first verse, "not a drop ‘til the last one falls," last tree hits the ground and a reminder that whiskey and chainsaws don’t mix. Third line, first verse, "where the buck stops" that’s both money and a deer. "Skidding logs" refers to a piece of machinery known as a log skidder, similar to a wrecker that draws logs out to be loaded for the trip to the mill. In the chorus, "devil won’t get us," these guys or gals are not worried about being damned for celebrating when away from a rough and dangerous occupation.

First line, second verse, "yard by yard," meaning that you can see it in your backyard privacy fence or it’s a yardstick or a lumberyard.

In the last verse, the carpenter who lived in Jerusalem should be obvious. "Where the dear do play," I’m meaning people. If you think of fawns, cool! "Good box of pine," a coffin of course. It should be noted that logging is highly regulated and the thinning of mature trees helps the forest ecosystem and is a sustainable resource.

Songwriting is an equal opportunity sport. You don’t necessarily have to know how to play an instrument. It has brought me a lot of satisfaction and contentment. I haven’t made a fortune but have been rewarded in many other ways. For those who may try your hand at it, good luck and best wishes.

*Randle Chowning is currently writing an autobiography and calls himself “more or less retired from music.” Even so, he has over a dozen CD's and one live video compilation. For those interested, contact* [*jaynieandrandle@gmail.com*](mailto:jaynieandrandle@gmail.com)*.*