

HIS EDUCATION WAS ON THE ROAD

This song goes out to our good member in Nashville, John A. Lomax III. In 2017, John III, his sister Anna and his son John Nova Lomax worked with the University of Texas Press to bring out a new edition of John Avery Lomax, Sr.'s book, Adventures of a Ballad Hunter, chronicling his decades-long quest to find and record literally thousands of our ballads, blues, cowboy songs, and folk music of all types. It is an important book and a very enjoyable read. John Lomax, Jr, together with his brother Alan, were founders of the Houston Folklore Society in 1950. So this song waited too long to get written, but here it is and I hope you all like it. You can hear it played on the Audio Archive page of the HFMS website at http://www.houstonfolkmusic.org/HFS_Audio_Archive.html.

THE BALLAD HUNTER

By Paul Cooper ©2021

G **C** **G**
Ten thousand songs the man collected, and he gave us free of charge.
G **Em** **A** **D**
He travelled across our singing country – John A. Lomax, a man at large.
G **G7** **C** **B7**
He listened to the prisoners holler their work songs and moan their blues at night.
C **G** **E7** **A7** **D7** **G**
And he gave us a legacy of stories and songs that we sing with all our might.

Goodnight Irene, it's time I'm leavin' down the Chisholm Trail at dawn.
In her Home on the Range Sweet Betsy's grievin' for the Buffalo Hunter that's gone.
When we hear the whistle of the Midnight Special or the old Rock Island Line.
Echoes of our country's story that take us back in time.

Chorus:

Thank you, Mr. Lomax, for giving back our stories and songs.
We got distracted and we almost lost 'em but they're right where they belong.
On the porch, in the park, at the ice cream social, in the concert hall they ring –
The Ballad Hunter listens when America sings.

He hunted the songs, and he searched for the singers with a questing heart that showed.
He went to Texas and he went to Harvard, but his education was on the road.

With a 1930's record machine that weighed three hundred pounds
In a loaded up Ford with his son aboard they made their musical rounds.