

March Featured Song

by Paul Cooper

Ninety Years Without Slumbering

This song was written in 1875 by Henry Clay Work, who also wrote "Marching Through Georgia". When I first heard it growing up, I thought of it as a children's song, but it is widely known in many circles. It is popular with British brass bands, and was a staple of the common repertoire when I regularly attended bluegrass jams in South Jersey in the 1990s. You can hear a nice version of it by Doc Watson here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8fktZM42Fs> or on the HFMS Audio Archive page at <https://www.houstonfolkmusic.org/AudioArchives>. Doc does it in the key of D, so you can play right along.

GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK

D A D G
My grandfather's clock was too tall for the shelf
D A D
So it stood ninety years on the floor
D A D G
It was taller by half than the old man himself
D A D
But it weighed not a pennyweight more
D D7 G D
It was bought on the morn of the day that he was born
D A7 D
It was always his treasure and pride
D A D G
But it stopped, short, never to go again
D A D
When the old man died

CHORUS

D
Ninety years without slumbering
Tic toc tic toc
His life's seconds numbering
Tic toc tic toc
D A D G
It stopped, short, never to go again
D A D
When the old man died

In watching its pendulum swing to and fro
Many hours he had spent when a boy
And through childhood and manhood, the
clock seemed to know
And to share both his grief and his joy

For it struck 24 when he entered at the door
With a blooming and beautiful bride,
But it stopped, short, never to go again
When the old man died



CHORUS

My grandfather said that of those he could hire
Not a servant so faithful he'd found,
For it kept perfect time and it had one desire
At the close of each day to be wound

At it kept to its place, not a frown upon its face
At its hands never hung by its side
But it stopped, short, never to go again
When the old man died

CHORUS

It rang an alarm in the still of the night,
An alarm that for years had been dumb
And we knew that his spirit was pluming for
flight
That his hour of departure had come

Still the clock kept the time
With a soft and muffled chime
As we silently stood by his side
But it stopped, short, never to go again
When the old man died