

HE DIED WITHOUT A PENNY

This traditional song has been covered countless times by folk, folk rock and country artists – often with the lyrics altered to memorialize the passing of a particular person, as in the Byrds’ 1963 version that was a eulogy for John F. Kennedy. The lyrics shown here are the way I learned it from a folksinging friend in the early 1960’s, before different versions such as Willie Nelson’s (which can be heard on the sound track of *Brokeback Mountain*) and others became popular. The version recorded by **The Greenbriar Boys**, which can be heard here: https://youtu.be/jn7dFz-AuYE?si=2jl_eLrfbhElXisz. It is very similar to the way I first heard it (which is the way that sounds right to me, of course). A couple of chords shown below are slightly different, but fit perfectly with the melody.

HE WAS A FRIEND OF MINE

Traditional

C G C G C
He --- was a friend of mine. He was a friend of mine.

E7 Am F G
He died without a penny, he didn’t have a dime.

C G C
He ---- was a friend of mine.

He died on the Gila Bend run. He died on the Gila Bend run.
His wandrin’ days was over, his loneliness was done
When he died on the Gila Bend run.

I stole away and cried. I stole away and cried.
My tears they fell like raindrops – the night my old friend died.
I stole away and cried.

He was a friend of mine. He was a friend of mine.
He died without a penny, he didn’t have a dime.
He was a friend of mine.