

Record Already Cut

McCain Prisoner Eyes Singing Career

By Marty Vega



MUSIC- Buddy Neal strums his guitar in his cell at the McCain prison, making his music while awaiting his Feb. 22 release date and the start of a career as a country and western singer and composer.

Buddy Neal built his first guitar out of a soft drink crate and fashioned strings for it with tobacco twine. With an old Pepsi-Cola bottle as a microphone, the Greenville, N.C. youth sang his country music for anyone who would listen, but mostly for himself.

"All I know is singing country music. It's my whole life," he said. Life hasn't been easy for Buddy, who at age 25, has experienced more of it than most men his age.

There's a train that comes by Central Prison

It comes by everyday with a clickity clack, down the railroad track, as she rolls away.

Clickity clack down the railroad track keeping rhythm as she rolls,

Clickity clack down the railroad track, that train keeps rolling on. Every morning before sun-up you can hear her ridin' them rails.

Then every evening about sun-down she's always right on time. You can hear that whistle blowing for a-half-a-mile-away. Southwest Raleigh is wide awake...

Copyright 1975 by Buddy Neal

Buddy composed "Central Prison Express" after entering Central Prison in Raleigh under a three and one-half to six year term for grand larceny. Today, just a few weeks from his release, Buddy's song is scheduled to be recorded and distributed after attracting the interest of a producer last year.

Buddy also has club bookings awaiting him in the Wilmington area when he leaves McCain prison unit, where he has spent most of his three and one-half year sentence.

It has been a long road since his youth in Greenville, where his mother died before he was ten and an aunt and uncle raised him until he ran away at 15.

Buddy never went beyond the third grade in school. He learned a trade, horses, from a trader who lived near his home, and he learned fast.

After leaving home to join a band of gypsy horse traders in West Virginia, he had already been earning his way as a rodeo worker, breaking horses and performing as a clown.

From West Virginia he went to Waldorf, Md., working at a riding stable. His first brush with the law came in New Jersey, where he wrote

a bad check for a tank of diesel fuel.

"I paid a fine, I was about 18," Buddy remembers.

The theft of some saddles brought him back to court in 1969 while in Waldorf, and Buddy ran.

"I got out on bond, and I was scared to go back to court so I loaded up a load of horses and took off. I picked up a girl, underage, but I didn't know that. I was headed for Indiana when we got stopped. They had me up for statutory rape and dropped the charges on the saddles. When they found out I was only 19, they dropped the statutory rape and put me on probation," he said.

He returned to North Carolina and managed to steer clear of the law for awhile, spending most of his time on the road buying, selling, and trading horses. He always kept his guitar, given to him by an employer in Maryland, in his truck, but he also kept drugs.

"I drank, maybe two six-packs a day and then I took pills to stay awake. Bennies. Never got busted. I just kept a few with me, and I'd be ready to throw them out the window if I had to. When I got to where I was going, I'd get more. All these stockyards and truckstops, if you know someone, you can get them easy," he said.

Buddy was good at his work, although the work of horse trader is not what many would consider an "honest living".

"There wasn't any consumer protection. You'd have to lock them all up," he laughed.

"I can take a smooth mouth horse and make a three year-old mouth of it. Shoe polish, rub it in real good, take away all the grey hairs. We'd take a needle, put it on an old tire pump, blow his side way up and then move it around until he looked fine. That's good for about five days."

"I bought a white horse and I looked at him and said, 'He'd sure

look pretty as an Apaloosa'. I had papers in the truck for an Apaloosa and I got out the black shoe dye. Put in all the spots just the way the papers had him. Sold him to an old farmer in Bennettsville, S.C. Told him 'Don't let him get in the rain!'"

"When I pulled into the stockyard on my next trip, he was waiting for me with a gun. I left, truck and all," Buddy said.

"Most of the suckers wouldn't get the law, they'd just re-sell them. Mostly, the traders stick each other. I bought the same horse many times. I'd sell him in Indiana and buy him back in West Virginia. 'Course, if it was you, I'd sell you a good one, because I'd want you to come back and maybe tell others," he continued.

Buddy's luck ran out in Greenville, where he was engaged to the sheriff's daughter, and a man named Marvin owed Buddy money.

"We were both drinking, and I just decided well, I'll take the saddles. Left them right there on the sheriff's porch, 'course I figured he was asleep, and like I say I'd been drinking. Well the sheriff gets a call, 'somebody broke into Marvin's house and stole the saddles' and he comes tearing out, stumbling over the saddles. Here sits the saddles right on his porch, and he goes right by them," Buddy grinned.

"I jumped bond. That romance broke up mighty fast. I stayed gone three years, working in Hialeah, Fla. If I had to come through, I'd stop at a truckstop, pay somebody \$30 to drive it across the scales for me."

"I went home and got real brave, started walking the streets in the daytime. Next thing they had me surrounded," he finished.

His guitar went with him to prison and he began composing songs. He has written nearly 250 and has had most of them copyrighted.

"After I wrote 'Central Prison Express' I wrote truck driving songs. A lot of people told me they were good, and I just keep practicing. As far as notes, I don't know the A or the E, I just know where they are. If I hear a song on the radio, or somebody humming, I can pick it right up," he explained.

"I made tapes and sent them out to record companies and artists. They kept turning me down and turning me down. I got discouraged, but I didn't give up."

Buddy's "break" came last year when record promoter Donald Crowell ran afoul of the law and served a brief term at McCain.

"I was in my room playing and he heard me and came in. He said he might be able to help me, and I said 'Get me out?'"

"He said he had a friend who knows Bill Maclin in Houston, so he had me make a tape and send it to him. Maclin called back and said that boy will make money, back him with every cent you got."

"When Crowell left, he said he'd keep in touch. I forgot about it, thought it was all a joke. Then he sent a guitar to me and \$50. He called and said he's opening up a studio in Wilmington. Don-L Records."

With the cooperation of McCain officials, recording equipment was brought in and a special room was set up Dec. 4 for Buddy to record "Central Prison Express".

Later, after the record was pressed, it was a disappointment to Buddy to learn the acoustics were poor and it will have to be re-done before it can be marketed, but with a Feb. 22 release date from prison drawing near, Buddy is far from unhappy.

"Entertainment will be my life. I won't be back, I've seen too much. I've seen people come in here, go out, and mess up worse," Buddy declared.

After getting situated in Wilmington, Buddy's immediate plans are to make a trip home to Greenville. He also plans to visit his father, who he hasn't seen in ten years.

He isn't bitter about the past, and prison has not been lonely, he says.

"I'm not lonely-as long as I got my guitar."

Community Calendar

Thursday, Jan. 22 Kiwanis Club meets at Civic Center 6:30 P.M.
Monday, Jan. 26 Lions Club meets at Civic Center 6:30 P.M.

N.C. Natural Gas Re-elects Directors

Stockholders of North Carolina Natural Gas Corporation re-elected all nine members of the Board of Directors to serve during the coming year; heard officers report on current gas supply, finance, fiscal position and operations; and were given a complete review of the activities of the Company's exploration subsidiary which began operations during the past year.

Following the annual stockholders meeting, the Board of Directors re-elected Frank Barragan, Jr. as President for the coming year, and declared a quarterly dividend of 25 cents per share to be paid on Mar. 15 to stockholders of record Mar. 1. This represents a 2 cent per share increase.

Re-elected to the Board of Directors for the coming year were: Glenn E. Anderson, Raleigh; Alex B. Andrews, Raleigh; Barragan, Fayetteville; Joseph W. Hibben, La Jolla, California; George E. Kid-

der, Wilmington; Hector McLean, Lumberton; Donald W. McCoy, Fayetteville; Thomas J. Pearsall, Rocky Mount; and T.B. Upchurch, Jr., Raeford.

Other officers re-elected by the Board were: Arthur P. Gnann, Jr., Vice President, Operations; Wilma G. Hill, Vice President, Sales; Calvin B. Wells, Vice President; Cecil C. Dew, Treasurer; McCoy, Secretary; and Mrs. Charles C. Clark, Assistant Secretary and Assistant Treasurer.

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WEEKLY Health TIP



W. Coley M. Wood
When you see a drug advertised and wish to use it for self-medication, a pharmacist can give you the pros and cons on your use of the drug product. For example, a patient taking a prescription tranquilizer would be cautioned against using a non-prescription antihistamine that could bring on extreme drowsiness. An ulcer patient would be directed away from aspirin, as it could aggravate the ulcer. Pharmacists are trained to detect situations that, unknown to the patron, may require a physician's attention. The patron seeking an antacid preparation may, after a few questions, be urged to see his doctor as a potential peptic ulcer or gallstone case.

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Read Job 11: 13-20

"You will have confidence, because there is hope." (Job 11:18, RSV)
We all have known at least one outstanding character who constantly surprises, exasperates, and confounds us, yet who captures our hearts. Such is a lady who was one of my nursing instructors. We students did a great deal of learning and growing throughout training, but for me the greatest lesson came after graduation. Our capable and dignified teacher-nurse became a patient, entering the hospital for a series of tests. The tests revealed cancer. The teacher knows well the cost, the pain it can mean; but she knows about hope, too. Already

past retirement age and involved in lengthy, uncomfortable treatments, she is at work with a new group of students. She says she has decided that with the help of God and the support of her friends she is not going to let this illness get the best of her. She has such a complete appreciation of life that looking forward triumphantly is the only way she knows to live it.
PRAYER: Thank you, Father, for abundant life. With You and Jesus and Your Holy Spirit, life is rich and full and a wonderful experience! Help us to see this daily by remembering our hope to You, Amen.
THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: As God's child, look forward to today.
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Lisa Young - Griffin, Georgia

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