rumour has it that, like the retired Marius Barbeau, Stan is still there working as hard as ever.

Sources


The Wreck of the Green Cove

words and music ©Stanley G. Triggs, 1965

"The Wreck of the Green Cove" does not appear on Triggs’s LP, but it was printed in the very first issue of the Canada Folk Bulletin in 1978. At that time, Jon Barlett noted, "Though it is not a true story, it is about a real tug... on which Stan shipped as a deckhand. It was such a rotten boat, he says, that it deserved its sinking in the song." (A reverse from the attitude expressed in Stan Rogers’s Mary Ellen Carter!)


Of these songs, Triggs speaks humbly. "The tugs wrote the songs," he told me, which is probably true only to the degree that the subject of a photograph is responsible for the image.

La chanson "The Wreck of the Green Cove" n’apparait pas sur l’album de Triggs mais a toutefois été publiée dans le tout premier numéro du Bulletin en 1978. À cette époque, Jon Barlett avait souligné: "Bien qu’il ne s’agisse pas d’une histoire vraie, on y parle cependant d’un remorqueur ayant réellement existé, et sur lequel Stan s’était embarqué comme matelot. Le bateau était en si mauvais état, poursuivait-il, qu’il s’est bien mérité de couler dans la chanson." (Cette attitude est contraire à celle exprimée dans "Le Mary Ellen Carter" de Stan Rogers!)

De ses quatre chansons sur le thème, Triggs parlait avec humilité: "Ce sont les remorqueurs mêmes qui ont écrit les chansons" m’avait-il affirmé. Ce qui est probablement vrai dans la mesure où l’image relève plus du sujet que de son photographe.

Oh, I was broke in old Vancouver,
Met a friend, an old-time loser,
He said he could help me out,
So to the towboat office we set out.
Well, right away they said, "My boy, We’ll sign you up this very day!"
So to the harbour, unsuspectin’,
Ridin’ high, I made my way.
Oh, I'll never know how we made it out
From the dockside, in and round about,
Past Brockton Point in a dismal fog,
The Green Cove ridin' like a log.

But the fog in the mate's befuddled mind
Was thicker than it was outside,
As at the wheel he weaved and swayed,
As we set out on our fateful ride.

That night, as I heard the mate a-snorin',
Keepin' time to teredos borin',
I tried my darndest not to think
Of the long ride down if the ship should sink.

In the dead of night, a storm came up;
The pumps gave out and the seas came in.
I had to pump her out by hand,
And I thought, by God, that the sea would win.

By luck, we reached our destination,
A wind-swept bay, sheer desolation,
Blowin' gale, blowin' cold—
The coldest night that year, I'm told.

We tied the boat up to the tow—
There wasn't much else we could do—
The skipper says, "Boys, let her blow;
We'll patch her up as good as new."

Three days did pass, the wind died down;
We set off, towin' logs to town,
But a mightier wind was yet to blow,
But how the hell were we to know?

For old Dame Fate, she smiled at us,
As past Refuge we did wind—
Potato Point and Harewood Island—
Towin' logs and makin' time.

Now, this good luck that we could not match
Gave out when we reached the Cabbage Patch;
Down Malaspina we did trail,
A westerly upon our tail.

We rounded Scotch Fir, turned up Jervis,
Buckin' tide all the way.
Made poor time at Agamemnon,
Had to tie up in Boom Bay.

Oh, the wind died down and we cast off,
But the engine soon began to cough.
The patched-up seams began to leak,
And the poor boat she did groan and creak.
We were desperate, low on vittles,
Had some coffee and some tea,
Plus twelve cans of Campbell's finest—
Chicken Noodle and Green Pea.

Oh, at Merry Island, late at night,
A south-east struck—it was a fright.
Trail Islands we knew we must reach,
Or the tow would soon be on the beach.

But the skipper, he was readin' Climax,
Missed the channel in the dark.
With a sickenin' grindin' and a crash,
He piled her up on Southeast Rock.

He piled her up, he bent her wheel,
He cracked her bowpost, broke her keel,
And off that rock we felt her slide
With a terrible list to the starboard side.

The seas did roar, the winds did blow,
The Green Cove went three times around;
She whistled us a last farewell
And slithered forty fathoms down.

Now the skipper and the mate grabbed the only
lifeboat,
Rowed like mad from the sinking tugboat,
Rowin' hard for the nearest land,
That's the last they were seen by any man.
The chief, that skunk from Campbell River,
Grabbed the life-rings, one, two, three.
All I had was a hemlock sliver,
Tossin' round on the stormy sea.

I was washed up at the break of day
Upon the shores of Sargent Bay,
The lone survivor of that gale,
Lived to tell this mournful tale.

And now that you have heard my story,
You'll know why, for evermore,
I'll never go to sea again;
I'm quite content to stay on shore!

Triggs and his daughter Ellen entertain at the 55th Anniversary of their friends, the McAlisters, at their farm near Hemmingford, 1991.

"The guitars I am using in the pictures [were both made] by a man named Dennis in Vancouver about 1940. Spruce tops with sides and backs of mahogany. I bought them in 1961 in a second-hand store on 4th Avenue, near Alma Road, for $10.00 for the sunburst model and $15.00 for the cutaway. I didn't play the cutaway much at that time; I only knew about three chords, so I rarely got beyond the third fret. But now I play the cutaway, as I find it has a much better tone and is good for fingerstyle and flatpicking. And I've finally learned that the upper frets are not just for decoration.

"Emily is playing a little Aspen which is said to be a copy of a 1902 Martin. I bought it just a few years ago at Steve's in Montreal for another daughter. (They borrow each other's guitars like they borrow clothes.)" Photo by Sylvia McAlister.