

Snow Plow Blues

©Cal Cavendish (COP Publications, SOCAN)

I heard Cal sing this backstage at the Sancious about 1975 (just after his manure raid over downtown Calgary). When we began to plan this special issue of the Bulletin, I quickly remembered the song and knew we had to include it. I was afraid it was something he'd whipped out at the spur of the moment and wouldn't remember. As it turned out, the song had a little history.

Cal's father moved to North America to pursue a career as a photojournalist after retiring from the British army, his mother, a high school teacher, was Acadian. Cal was born in Michigan and spent his childhood and adolescence in the southern US, where he developed his taste for the blues. The family moved to western Canada when Cal was 18; his father put food on the table by photographing livestock.

Cal hasn't recorded this song, but the Society's Mail Order Service carries a variety of his recordings. [GWL]

Thanks George Lyon and friends of the Canadian Folk Music Bulletin for the interest in this fearless fossil. "The Snow Plow Blues" was inspired years ago in the 60s as a spoof on the music scene in Calgary. One of the groups here was

a Mills Brothers, blues-type band called The Proctor Family, and we caught their act on black and white TV and got to meet them when our little band shared a show with them.

I found the juxtaposition of black blues in Alberta a great concept and, being raised in the Deep South, had no trouble getting into the feel of the story. I used the first verse or chorus of the tune in my gigs and hootenannies at Sancious Coffee House and here and there around western Canada until I went south to make it big in Nashville in the late 60s.

Getting back to the "Snow Plow," go ahead, have fun with it. I think you can fit a kind of 12-bar blues progression to it, and just wail in the snow bank!

PS. I am not a starving songwriter any more. I am now also a fat truck driver, so deduct 50% credibility. I am also a pilot, deduct 25%. Pick guitar, 15%. And I hunt and fish.

Remember all the sevenths.
Cal Cavendish

I got the snowed in my cabin
Waiting for the snow plow blues (2X)
Man, this cold weather's flat got to stop!
We gonna lose this year's banana crop.

Outside the blizzard's howlin'
Gonna fill my driveway deep (2X)
Weatherman is talkin' inches
How come I gotta shovel feet?

That Manitoba flasher
Always worried about his health (2X)
He comes down to Portage and to Main Street
When it's cold and windy, just describes himself!

Saskatchewan winters
Can't take it, if you're soft (2X)
Talk about a deep freeze,
Brass monkeys got 'em frozen off.

Oh, them poor Alberta farmers,
Cryin' 'bout the crops and lack of dough (2X)
Guess they can't afford the gas bill,
So it's off to sandy beaches, islands, and Mexico.

I got the snowed in my cabin
Waiting for the snow plow blues (2X)
Man, this cold weather's flat got to stop!
We gonna lose this year's banana crop.