

Pick and Shovel Man

The musical score is written on five staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff is labeled 'chorus' and has a 4/4 time signature. The second staff has a 2/2 time signature. The third staff has a 4/4 time signature and is labeled 'verse'. The fourth and fifth staves continue the melody. The lyrics are written below the notes.

chorus
I'll ne-ver be no-thing but a pick and shovel man, dig-ging each day from the be-
gin-ning to the end. With a back that is strong and a mind that is small And
hands that are cal-loused and bent. For what's in a ditch you might ask, There is
water that flows from the land That makes up the ocean and the sea Where the
sailor man can sail and feel free.

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Chorus

I'll never be nothing but a pick and shovel man,
Diggin' each day from the beginning to the end.
With a back that is strong and a mind that is small
And hands that are callused and bent.

For what's in a ditch you might ask,
There is water that flows from the land
That makes up the ocean and the sea
Where the sailor man can sail and feel free.

Chorus

For what's in a ditch you might ask,
There is water that flows on the land
To the fields of wheat and the corn
So the world may feed all its poor.

Chorus

For what's in a ditch you might ask,
When there is no water on the land.
There is work and toil and a barrel full of sweat
And a man that is old and soon to pass.

Chorus

For what's in a ditch you might ask,
That is six by three from the beginning to the end,
There is nothing but a ditch diggin' man
Who sleeps with no sweat upon his hands.

As I was born and raised in a small town in Northwestern Ontario, I have always loved Western music.

In my younger years I worked for the Ontario Government on the Highways Department, and in the 1940s and early 50s most work was done by hand, especially digging ditches. The Engineering Department would say we should dig a ditch here, and it always seemed that we were digging a ditch where there never was any water, or we would dig a ditch on top of a hill, so why have a ditch there because the water is going to run down the hill anyway. It seemed we never dug a ditch in marshland because it was too wet.

About four or five years ago I was thinking of these days and why I had quit digging ditches. Well, I just didn't want to dig the rest of my life, so I quit that job. One evening, as I said, I was thinking about ditch digging in the days past and I picked up a pen and wrote Pick and Shovel Man. Mind you I think digging a ditch is a great accomplishment because it has to be straight and the side bevelled at a certain degree, and I admire people who work with their hands and backs, an honourable profession. It didn't take me long to write this song, just as fast as I could write it down on paper.

Mel Brown

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