

## Alan Mills—References

Helen MacNamara. "Alan Mills—Canada's Balladeer." *Saturday Night* 68 (December 13, 1952): 13, 42.

"Portrait." *Canadian Composer* 54 (November 1970): 45.

"Longtime CAPAC member Alan Mills dies at 63, career spanned folksongs, radio and television." *Canadian Composer* 124 (October 1977): 40-41.

When he interviewed Wade Hemsworth for the Vicki Gabereau program, David Grierson characterized the lack of published material on Hemsworth with a comment that seemed to take the singer aback, "You almost shun publicity, don't you?" We complained in our *Bulletin* piece on Hemsworth that the Canadian media had ignored this important singer and songwriter during most of his productive years. Even after this disappointing excursion into bibliography, we were still surprised when a search of the *Canadian Periodical Index* from 1938 to 1995 produced only three portraits of Alan Mills, along with a review of a reissue of *Singing Our History* (in *Canadian Children's Literature* 47 (1987). Why did Maclean's reject Vera Johnson's article in 1954? Perhaps because they determined that it did not meet their stylistic criteria, but perhaps they simply weren't very interested in the subject. A shame. Given the lack of attention Mills received, his comment to Vera that these articles don't sell records may be seen as justifiable sour grapes.

Considering the shortage of material *about* Mills, one could do worse than to read what Mills himself wrote, though unfortunately he does not seem to have written about his own life or

career. Nevertheless, reading the notes to Mills's Folkways recordings, which were typically written by the singer himself, one is struck that the singer was well versed in the scholarship of his day and able to write a fluent, highly readable prose. If he was influenced by his years in the newspaper business, the effect was to make his prose direct and pithy, but not unnecessarily slangy or shortened to the point that his own thoughtfulness was under-represented. As Taft points out, Vera Johnson's contemporary portrait reveals a jovial man who loved life, but he was also an intelligent human being—a combination some artists would do well to attempt to emulate.

There are a number of institutions and individuals who deserve thanks for their help as we put this issue together. The Music Department of the UC Library allowed us to photograph Alan Mills record covers, for which Smithsonian/Folkways gave us permission. We wish we could thank the National Archives of Canada, but they failed to respond to our request for photographs of Mills. Undoubtedly this can be attributed to the dubious blessing of budget cutbacks. (And to the Phantom Discographer: Thanks, sorry to have wasted your time!)