

Introduction

"Harry Smith's Conscious Outrageousness": The Lost 1965 *Sing Out!* Radio Show Interview

By Michael J. Kramer

I tried to play off insane / But found it would not do.

- Kelly Harrell & The Virginia String Band sing about "Charles Guiteau," *Volume 1: Ballads*, Track 16, *Folkways Anthology of American Folk Music*

"I would like to say to any teenagers in the audience that if you can kill the president, I can get somebody to write a song about you," Harry Smith says to listeners in "radio land" on Barbara Dane and Irwin Silber's *Sing Out!* program, broadcast on New York City's Pacifica radio station, WBAI, 99.5 FM, in April of 1965. "This is Harry Smith's conscious outrageousness, right?" Silber exclaims. It was a spur-of-the-moment description, but one that suited Smith. On this long-lost recording, the collector, filmmaker, visual artist, mystic, scholar, and bohemian is in fine form, jousting playfully with his hosts and taking pleasure in revisiting his famous 1952 compilation for Folkways Records, the *Anthology of American Folk Music*.

As editor of the premier folk music revival publication, *Sing Out!* magazine, Silber provides context throughout the show for why Smith's *Anthology* was significant while Dane, a well-known singer of jazz, blues, and folk who was married to Silber, banters back and forth with Smith. They make for a wonderful trio as we learn details about how Smith transported his massive record collection of old 78s from San Francisco to New York, his memories of studying Jewish mystics, and his effort to make a film about Thelonious Monk. Smith talks about his criteria for including certain recordings on the *Anthology*, the antiracist intent of his non-ethnographic sequencing of the tracks, which were all previously released as commercial recordings in the 1920s and 30s, and how he devised the strange booklet that accompanied the compilation, with its faux-newspaper headlines for each song. Dane sings, Smith tries to get Dane to sing more, and Smith himself even sings a bit. By the end of the broadcast, Smith, in typical fashion, almost takes over the entire show.

The broadcast was preserved on a reel-to-reel tape either originally recorded by or saved by *Little Sandy Review* editor Jon Pancake. It wound up in Barbara Dane's personal archive, which now resides at the American Folklife Collection at the Library of Congress. Rarely if ever heard since 1965, the radio show gives us a rare opportunity to hear Smith in action. It adds information to the long interview with Smith conducted by John Cohen a few years later in 1968 and published in two parts in *Sing Out!* magazine itself. Here, on the *Sing Out!* radio broadcast, we get a sense of Smith in action: zany, fun, sarcastic, anarchic, a trickster who also, in his way, wanted to celebrate America, which, as he remarks at the end of the show, is "beautiful, I love it. I would hate to see anything happen to it...."

Special Thanks

Special thanks to Berkeley Folk Music Festival Project intern Sam Sevor at the State University of New York (SUNY) Brockport's Department of History for assistance with transcription. Thanks to Barbara Dane, Nina Menendez, Nina Silber, and the Estate of Irwin Silber for permission to publish the radio broadcast. At the Library of Congress's American Folklife Center, thanks to the incredible staff, among them Judith Gray, John Fenn, Guha Shankar, Stephen Winick, Jennifer Cutting, Allina Migoni, Melanie Zeck, and Eric Graf. Similarly, thanks to the wonderful staff at the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress, among them Kevin Butterfield, Travis Hensley, Michael Stratmoen, Andrew Brenner, Sophia Zahner, and David Konteh.

Bio

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Transcript

Sing-Out! Radio Show with Barbara Dane and Irwin Silber. Guest: Harry Smith. April 27, 1965. WBAI, New York City.

57:30 min. Pancake reel. Tape ID: AFC 1980/001: SR034, MBRS Shelflist number: RWC 6411, Barbara Dane Collection, American Folklife Collection, Library of Congress.

Music: Uncle Eck Robert, "Brilliancy Medley"

Barbara Dane: This is Sing Out, with...

Irwin Silber: Irwin Silber...

Barbara Dane: Barbara Dane...

Harry Smith: and Harry Smith, world's greatest folklore authority.

BD: Yes, indeedy.

HS: Also, the world's biggest wino at this point, dear friends in radio land, so forgive me.

BD: And Uncle Eck Robertson playing the "Brilliancy Medley."

Music: Uncle Eck Robert, "Brilliancy Medley"

BD (singing): As I went out one morning, I was singing a country song / I met a man with a microphone, and oh, he didn't me wrong / He led me to a shady nook and put on a reel of tape / And had my country ditty down before I could escape / To Tin Pan Alley he took my song and there he happened to meet / A publisher who cleaned it up and give the time a beat / And now it's on the hit parade, and now they pay a fee / To that false young man with a microphone, and nobody thinks of me / So all you pretty country girls, who like to sport and play / Be careful of your copyright! It's all they want today / And they ever trust a roving man, whoever he may be / If his hand is on the microphone and not upon your knee

HS: Aunt Barbara, where did you learn to sing?

BD: See, I'll tell you, Harry, yeah.

IS: Our music is truly a people's music created by all Americans. And we are learning the variety of this music, and what stamps it as belonging to this land and this people. In this, the phonograph has been a potent factor. Many of these records were produced for the purpose of sale to one group, such as the shapenote singers, or the Arcadians, the rural dwellers, etc. Others were sold in localities where singers and tunes were of such sufficient popularity that the manufacturer took little risk in merchandising them. Let me point out that this rich heritage of the American people was not and is not available to the majority of Americans, especially those who live in metropolitan areas. When a well-known authority on this music first heard the collection, he said, "And were these records actually put on sale in stores? Are they really from commercial pressings?"

HS: That was Henry Cowell.

IS: "The one logical way to produce an anthology of this kind is to make use of the recordings themselves. Because of the nature of the record industry, a given amount of records are issued of any one selection, and re-pressings are not made until a large reorder is received from dealers. The usual amount is 10,000 copies. However, record manufacturers have been known to repress 5, 000 copies. Some of the records in this anthology had an original pressing of only 500 copies. As it does not pay to re-press this type of music, produced to sell only to a limited audience, many of these records are collectors items. Ironically, in 1952, the record industry tried to legally freeze reissues by other companies, and the record company that instigated the legal action in this state, as the federal government wouldn't put through a bill to this effect, was the only English record company that sells and distributes its own products in the United States. The irony is that English folklorists come to this country to transcribe their music, as it is

almost nonexistent in England, and in this country the English language, literature, culture is so pronounced."

Well, I've been reading from the introductory notes to a record album series, the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, issued 13 years ago, and one of the genuine historic landmarks in the development of the appreciation of folk music in the United States today. This album was put out in 1952 by Folkways Records. The man who wrote what I was reading from was Moses Asch, the founder and director of the company. And what happened with the issuing of this set was I believe, one of the most revolutionary changes that took place in the whole understanding of folk music and the way in which it could be utilized.

BD: Yeah.

IS: First of all, it was revolutionary because he put out records that ostensibly he had no right to put out. In other words, a collection of recordings, most of these made in the 1920s, long out of print, and as he described, which were made primarily for sale and distribution on a local level.

BD: Yes, and made in terms of private property laws.

IS: Right, okay.

BD: By the major recording labels.

IS: And they were put out on the major labels. RCA, Victor, and Columbia, and their subsidiaries. And these records then went out of print. They were unavailable for over 20 years. And nobody dared to put them out again in any form because it wasn't their property. The theory behind this album was that the music was the property of the American people and that no record company had the right to sit on it and freeze it. The man who edited this whole series is named Harry Smith. That's who's sitting here in the studio with us tonight. And we thought that it would be interesting tonight to play songs from this historic anthology, talk about, some of the reasons behind it, discuss some of the music, or whatever we felt like, and hear from Harry about his relationship to the whole project. So with that as an introduction.

HS: I would just like to say that Mr. Asch is a very bad person. Every time that I come in his office, he throws me out. In fact, that last week he gave me a desk, where I could sit up there, so he'd know exactly where I was to be thrown out.

IS: That's knowing where it's at, right?

BD: That's a symbiotic relationship, Harry.

IS: Is that because of this anthology, or is it for other reasons, Harry?

HS: I've understood that if he was kind to people, that the place would be so crowded with folk singers that there wouldn't be any room for the bills, or records, or anything.

IS: Yeah, true.

BD: With the money, there's no place to put the money.

HS: No, I don't think there's too much money. I was only trying to make a joke there. To let our friends in radio land know that I've known Mr. Asch for a long time and he really has dedicated his life to this sort of project. And I think this was the most elaborate thing he'd done up to that time.

IS: I think so. Harry, how did you come to do this? Who initiated this project? Was it your idea or Moe's? How did it work out?

HS: Well, I had come here from San Francisco. I had a grant from the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation to make films. So naturally I wanted to come here and show them to them. And I'd shipped all my stuff. The heaviest portion of it was the phonograph records. Actually, I sent everything collect because I decided one afternoon, okay, I'll go to New York. So the bill piled up and up. You know, one month it's 235 dollars and a week later it's like 285. And I finally got Pete Kaufman, who is a prominent collector of folk music records, to bail everything out. I'd been sleeping on his sofa. However, to pay him back, which I never have to this day, but in other words, to get a hold of a few dollars, I started selling sort of duplicate records to Mr. Asch. And then one day after I'd been coming in there perhaps for a month with boxes of records, he said to me, "why don't you put some of this down? Why are you being so bad all the time?" And so we did. That was it.

IS: I see. ...One of the features of this set, Harry, is the extensive booklet of notes that goes along with it. I shouldn't say booklet, it's a book.

BD: Worth a dollar, says here.

IS: Well, sold for a dollar.

BD: Probably worth more.

IS: Are these notes all yours?

HS: Yeah, everything in there is mine.

IS: Foot head notes or head foot notes, I don't know how to describe them exactly.

HS: It took months to do that, and that's why it sells for a dollar. I see. That's why we... I think it's the first book they sold also.

BD: When I was a young folknik about 15 years ago, I remember, when it came out, 13, whenever it was, I remember people used to slip them out of the house, they couldn't afford the record.

HS: I'd like to mention Marian Distler's name, who really did all the typing and so forth on these things.

IS: Well, that's in the days when Folkways consisted only of Moe Asch and Marion Distler.

HS: That was all it was, yeah. There they were, and they'd work on it up until, like, maybe 10 in the evening.

IS: Well, let's, what, what would be some of your favorite selections? Let's pick out something just to play.

BD: I have my favorite picked out. May we? Could we play the one about—oh well, they're all my favorite—but can we hear about the history of good old Charles Guiteau?

HS: Yeah, that's a beautiful, beautiful assassination record.

Music: Kelly Harrell & The Virginia String Band, "Charles Guiteau"

IS: Hey, well. I guess the problem is still with us. Harry, you started you said with hundreds of thousands of records. On what basis did you make the selection for material to go into the *Anthology*?

HS: Well, um. Well, er, um, uh. Sorry friends in radio land, I say well, er, um, uh, because, uh, the editor of *Sing Out!* is sitting out over there, he's a very formidable person, he's a big, uh, big folklore authority.

IS: C'mon Harry (laughing).

HS: More or less that the recording had to be well made, and that it was interesting, and that it would add up to so many sides per record, I think was about it. There were many wonderful records that have been recorded by mechanical means before the electric recordings came in. In fact, probably the best ones. But as far as these are concerned, they all had to be clear electric recordings. And I included all the good versions of Child ballads that I was able to locate. Not that they're nearly as good as the ones that Dr. Bronson edited for the Library of Congress, for example. But for commercial records, I tried to get all of the Child ballads and then some of the important later ballads. And so on and so forth.

IS: That's always been one of the most fascinating uh, aspects of this anthology was, one of the things that was a revelation to me. You know, growing up in...getting interested in Folk Music with a capital F and a capital M in New York City where you

start out by believing folk songs is what Burl Ives sings, or Pete Seeger sings. Which is just a step on the way to finding out what it's about. I guess I had a typical big city contempt for...

HS: Now listen, Irwin, what is this? Pete Seeger is no longer with Folkways? Why are you (laughing)?

BD: Well...

IS: No, no, I'm not putting Pete down. You know that. But it's a different thing. That's all.

BD: People such as Pete and Burl served as a bridge, an introduction, and a doorway, but then once you got inside the door, you know, there was the *Anthology*, that was the next step, if you were lucky.

IS: Well, Pete does this on a whole different level, and it's good. You know, I love it. But it's not, it's not the same thing. I don't have to convince you of that, do I?

HS: He's a wonderful banjo player. I like him.

IS: It was interesting to hear, in this anthology, versions of Child ballads, which had been filtered through more than just an oral tradition, as in some of the recordings from the Southern Appalachians, but were the musicians' conception of what would have some commercial appeal, even right in their own neighborhood. And it takes on a whole different character. In some ways it's much more valid than a Child ballad still being sung the way it may have been sung 300 years ago and nobody could care less, except as a folklore study. But in terms of emotional communication, what the heck does that mean?

BD: I agree because I think that what you find on these records is something that reflects...what is the term they use, contemporary community standards? You know, what the people were singing to each other probably and what they felt their neighbors were digging.

HS: In fact, it's number 10 in that series, "Willie Moore," by, uh, I forget who it's by, it's on the list there.

IS: Burnett and Rutherford, it says.

HS: Dr. Bertrand H. Bronson, who I mentioned before, because he once hired me to mow his lawn, or rather Mrs. Stern did, Dr. Bronson, if you're listening to us.

BD: This is all Berkeley talk, now (laughing)

HS: I'm sure it is, yeah. Well, he probably remembers me as living in the basement there. He thought that that might be a very ancient ballad. The only place that that song occurs is on that one phonograph record. It has never been printed.

IS: You mean, it's not a Child ballad, but it should have been.

HS: It probably actually is. Or about that age. Maybe about 1700.

IS: Before we play it, and this is number ten, one of the great things about this anthology is Harry's capsule descriptions of the plot of each album. For instance, this one, "Willie Moore," the description of the plot is, "Annie on the grassy mound after parents nix marriage to king. Death probably self-inflicted."

BD: Laughs. You weren't working for, uh, Hearst Press then or anything?

HS: No, I was trying to make imitation newspaper headlines.

BD: I thought so. It's a gas.

IS: No, it was great.

Music: Dick Burnett and Leonard Rutherford, "Willie Moore"

IS: Well, listen, one of the things that I've always dug—we're talking about the Child ballads in these new kind of versions—is this is the first time I ever heard Clarence Ashley, for instance. Now Clarence Ashley, here he is. It's interesting, a lot of the guys who sang on this series are making a comeback today: Clarence Ashley. "Dock" Boggs, Furry Lewis, all of a sudden they've been rediscovered.

BD: And gee whiz, they didn't even know they were singing on this series when they did it (laughing).

IS: That's right (laughing).

HS: Yeah, there's a issue of the *Little Sandy Review*. What's that man? What's the name of the man that issues the Little Sandy Review?

BD: Paul Nelson.

HS: Yeah, I'd like to put in a good word for him, too.

IS: Is that the good word?

HS: That's the good word.

IS: Is it enough?

HS: Paul Nelson is a good word.

IS: (Laughing) Okay, Paul Nelson is a good word. Now, this one of Clarence Ashley's, "The House Carpenter," well the first time I heard it was, you probably remember, Richard Dyer-Bennett singing, uh, (imitating Richard Dyer-Bennett) "Well met, well met"...(laughing)

HS: Ba woom! No, no, he says it...much more nicer voice.

IS: Well, whatever it is, I mean, we're not trying to put Richard Dyer-Bennett down. He's got his thing.

HS: Hey, let's try to put Richard Dyer-Bennett down.

IS: There is Clarence Ashley.

Music: Clarence Ashley, "The House Carpenter"

IS: I know I've been talking a lot, but maybe you would give me one more favorite.

BD: That's alright, you talk pretty.

IS: Awww.

BD: Oh, of mine? Can we play? You know what I like?

IS: You go ahead. We haven't let Harry vote yet, but that's...oh yeah, he did vote for one...

BS: Oh, well he voted when he picked the whole collection, man. Didn't he?

IS: Okay.

HS: Well, I would like to say to any teenagers in the audience that if you can kill the president, I can get somebody to write a song about you.

BD: You're immortal. ...You can get someone to?

HS: Yeah, I have somebody. I won't tell you who they are, but...

BD: Oh, oh. You have a little old lady locked in an attic somewhere...

HS: from Pasadena uh huh.

IS: This is Harry Smith's conscious outrageousness, right?

HS: I'm serious about that.

BD: Well, were you talking about a particular song in here that you wanna do now? Another one of your...

IS: We already did Charles Guiteau.

BD: Yeah, I know you did, but isn't there another, isn't Mr. Garfield in there or anything?

HS: Yeah, there is another one in there. And of course, the Library of Congress puts a record out on that subject, which is why I happened to mention it (paging through booklet)

IS: Well, listen, look for it, Harry, because I wanted to tell about one of the most fascinating songs I ever heard learned from this anthology.

BD: Good, and then later I get to pick another one.

IS: Yeah, right.

IS: Ah, this one. Let me read Harry's description: "Technology unemployment hits shoe industry in the year of 18 and 4."

HS: Ah, that's a pretty one, yeah (laughing).

IS: Right? Isn't that a great one? I've never seen as successfully a song dealing with an economic subject. And I've listened to every union song and labor song and, you know, all those kind of things. But to get a summing up of the industrial revolution and automation, there's just nothing to beat it.

Music missing on recording: Carolina Tar Heels, "Peg and Awl"

BD: Pete Seeger sings that now.

IS: Not on this album. That was the Carolina Tar Heels.

BD: Well, the one that I was thinking about before...I'm very partial to one that's called "The Fishin' Blues." What do you know about that? I don't know anything about it.

HS (singing) "I'm a goin' fishin'"

HS and BD (singing together): "Yes I'm a goin' fishin' / I'm a goin' fishin too."

HS: Yeah, I just recorded the Holy Modal Rounders, uh, singing that for Folkways.

IS: What do you mean for Folkways? They don't, uh.

HS: Yeah, they do. They just made a record for Folkways last week.

BD: Who is Henry Thomas, who made this record that you use?

HS: I really don't know. One of these uh.... Because of course I haven't been interested in these subjects for many years. I came to New York to study the Kabbalah, or rather I came here to make a movie of Thelonious Monk, but I, uh, fell in with, uh.

IS: And what went wrong?

HS: What went wrong? During the day I got here, I, I met someone sent me to a place called the Home of the Sages of Israel, where a lot of old men, like 80 and 90 years old, threw handkerchiefs on the floor around a model of the Tree of Life and danced on them, so I devoted about ten years to that particular subject.

IS: Sounds like the folk music of New York City, right?

HS: Yeah, they sang beautiful songs about Shimon bar Yochai, who was supposed to have written the Zohar, and, uh, long ballads of various sorts. And, you know, they...

IS: And this distracted you from Thelonious Monk?

HS: Not really, no, uh...Thelonious and I got to be really good friends later.

IS: I realize I'm not supposed to follow the train of this thought, but I have this habit. Anyway, we were talking about fishing blues, right?

BD: Fishing blues. That was a big occupation around my house at one time, and I really enjoy that song.

HS: Fishing blues?

Music: Henry Thomas, "Fishin' Blues"

BD: Yeah. That sounded like a little ten-cent plastic whistle from the dime store.

HS: The pitch is very accurate, so it must be almost. Yeah. But I think that Ralph Rinzler or somebody has discovered Henry Thomas again, haven't they?

BD: (Laughing)

IS: Well, if anybody has discovered Henry Thomas again, it's undoubtedly Ralph Rinzler.

BD: Or John Cohen. I don't know. Anyway, what were you saying about this, this, the recording industry at that time, while the record was on there, Harry?

HS: Well, actually I was asking Irwin and Barbara if it was alright to say the word Negro on the air because it's peculiar these racial classifications.

IS: Well, WBAI is a non-profit...just be careful.

HS: (somewhat sarcastically) Yeah, they're a bunch of communists.

BD (laughing) Which we're going to prove next week, I think, or the week after.

IS: One of these weeks.

HS: Long ago, my teacher of physical anthropology, Wilton Krogman, had pointed out that all of these things like racial designations are really due to conditioned reflexes, that the only reason that, say, Indians or Chinese or Negroes or anything exist is because the brain has become conditioned to pick up certain features and use them as the cues to recognition of types. So, I was just asking Barbara and Irwin—which is a much better way than saying Irwin and Barbara—if it's alright to use the word Negro on there.

IS: You're supposed to alternate.

BD: But what would you say about how they designated the records, or didn't?

IS: Or didn't, that's the point.

HS: Well I think that in most preceding series that the racial background of the recordees had been rather carefully stipulated. That, that was the thing.

BD: On the catalogs, they always did. Sure.

HS: Sure. More than anything else that was to me the interesting thing about this series—that was not done. So it, proved a sort of an interesting psychological test for all of these people who claimed that they were able to decide that this record was made by such and such. I collected a number of catalogs that had been annotated by, you know, Mr. X and Mr. X and Mr. Y and Mr. Z, who were famous authorities on those subjects and they really didn't know. Funny thing is that nobody was able to...for example, "Mississippi" John Hurt, really no one was able to decide what he was.

IS: Is "Mississippi" John Hurt in the *Anthology*?

BD: Sure, it's the first place his records were reissued, along with a great number of other people like "Dock" Boggs and Buell Kazee and...ta ta ta, you know, blah blah blah. I think it was one record of "Blind" Lemon Jefferson...

IS: Yeah, I see "Mississippi" John Hurt, the "Spike Driver Blues," listed there as number 80 on the thing.

HS: Yeah, I got tossed out of.... There's a couple of his records in here. That's a good one, "Spike Driver Blues." Why don't we play that?

IS: Yeah, I like that very much.

HS: And I don't know, if Andy Warhol...

BD: Yeah, play it, and while you're listening to it, just think in your own mind whether it makes any difference where he fell in the catalog (laughs).

Music: "Mississippi" John Hurt, "Spike Driver's Blues"

BD: And that counts for the discovery of "Mississippi" John Hurt, more or less, doesn't it?

HS: Yahoo!

BD: Yippee! Sure.

HS: As Peter Stampfel would have said, "Aoooo!"

IS: One has to explain to your favorite radio land audienc, that the price you exacted from us for appearing on tonight's program was the right to give your acknowledgements to various and assorted friends and associates who have contributed to your, um, present state of being.

HS: Yes, if there are any friends in radio land who have money of any amount, you may contact me through Folkways.

BD: (laughing) For any purpose.

HS: Yeah.

BD: Harry Smith is currently one of the country's leading outrageous filmmakers, in case you're interested in outrageous filmmaking.

IS: I'm only interested in outrageous films, not in outrageous film-*making*.

HS: Well, I am embarking on a very elaborate project now. I don't know whether there's any of our friends in radio land have ever looked at movies.

BD: Some of them also have eyes besides ears, you know, so go ahead.

HS: Like Andy Warhol and Jack Smith and Robert Frank, William Burroughs, and Ed Sanders, and so forth, you know, making a movie with, you know.

IS: Actually, what he's doing, he has a telephone book open, and he's just reading names.

HS: Yeah, they are names, they're names, they're names, names, names. But, I would like to point out that where I discovered Aunt Barbara Dane was in the—strangely enough, due to the population explosion, we don't have to go to the Appalachians anymore, like Cecil Sharp or something. I went to the Folklore Center.

IS: The best field recording in the world is done at the Folklore Center.

HS: And I was talking to Izzy Young and suddenly Aunt Barbara and, her manager.

BD: Who may your manager be, right, you heard that phrase (laughing)?

HS: (singing) Who may your manager be?

BD: Listen, let's get off that subject and play "John the Revelator." That's a gas.

IS: Well, the reason I asked about "John the Revelator" is it's one of these songs, Harry, that's always confounded me. I could not...I tried and tried and tried to get all the words. I assigned 12 different people to try and get all the words so we could print it sometime in *Sing Out!* and nobody has succeeded.

BD: You never asked me!

IS: I don't mean to "John the Revelator," but I mean to "John the Revelator" as sung on this particular recording.

BD: I know.

IS: Okay.

BD: I'm the best interpreter of recorded words.

IS: Listen, make up a prize now we can offer to anybody who's listening.

HS: A free copy of the latest *Sing Out!*

IS: A free subscription to *Sing Out!* to anybody. Now, I mean this. This show is a big put-on except for this genuine one-hundred percent gift offer: a free subscription to *Sing Out!* to anybody who successfully notates the words to "John the Revelator" that we're gonna play now.

HS: Notes, not notate. (playfully) What sort of a magazine editor are you?

BD: Notate is a musical thing.

IS: Well, okay, but just get us the words, okay? All of them.

BD: We need the *woids* [words]. As a matter of fact, you know you're talking about "Blind" Willie Johnson, right? The singer on this record is "Blind" Willie Johnson. I just got through claiming that I was the greatest, you know, record-listener-to-word-getter-off-er-record-er that exists, and I tell you, on the question of...

IS: You already have a subscription to *Sing Out!*

BD: ...on the question of "Blind" Willie Johnson, I resign. My skills are no longer...so in other words, if you can do it, I'll also, let's see, what'll I do? I'll give you a free autographed picture of Harry Smith (laughing).

HS: I would suspect that "Blind" Willie Johnson already has a subscription to *Sing Out!*, though.

Music: "Blind" Willie Johnson, "John the Revelator"

IS: "John the Revelator" sung by "Blind" Willie Johnson. We repeat once again our once-in-a-lifetime offer: a free subscription to *Sing Out!* for the first person to write out the words as sung and send them in to us.

HS: Okay, here's the words. Now, (laughing) where's my *Sing Out!*?

IS: Okay, leave your name with the girl at the front desk and don't call us, we'll call you.

HS: Hey, why don't you play this Number 61, "James Alley Blues," by Richard "Rabbit" Brown. It became a joke in New Orleans according to Louie Dumaine. I don't know if anybody knows about Louis Dumaine. He was a trumpet player with Buddy Bolton's band and so forth. But he told me that, that with Richard "Rabbit" Brown a specialized thing developed which was called "running rabbit," see, because poor Richard "Rabbit" would be drunk singing in the middle of the night and everybody would throw water on him. And it became quite a thing to see who could make him run the farthest. He must have been quite a character, but that record was made in a garage in New Orleans.

BD: Some of the best music.

HS: He only made those two sides, which this is one, and then another version, which is a vocal version of "Tiger Rag." And a 12-inch record, strangely enough, one side of which has "The Sinking of the Titanic." (Singing) "Twas on." I know that whole song, I won't sing it though.

IS: Sing it, sing it, sing it.

HS: I can't remember it. (Singing) "An April morning in the year of 19...." (fades out).

BD: Do you know ever since I heard that line in this song we're going to play right next—"I've been looking for a cat to offer me some Uneeda biscuits and a half a pint of gin"—but nobody made such a concrete offer yet. [

HS: I would love to play the guitar like he does. He's as good as Thelonious Monk in his own way.

Music: Richard "Rabbit" Brown, "James Alley Blues"

BD: Ooh, that's tough sayings. Tell us about, you were talking about Robert "Rabbit."

HS: Rabbit? Tell me, Aunt Barbara, do you know another song like one of the Child ballads that you could sing for us as a sort of a closing...?

IS: Don't you like the way Harry moved in here, took over the.... This is the Harry Smith Show.

BD: Right, yeah.

HS: (Grunting) Ha-ba-da-ba.

IS: With his two guests, Barbara Dane and Irwin Silber.

HS: Barbara never gets to do anything though, don't you like...Barbara?

BD: I tell you, one of these fine days I'm gonna start singing on this show. I don't know what it is with me. But the thing is, I like to hear people sing all the time and when I sing myself I can't hear them. I'm inside my head, so I'd rather....

HS: Don't you know that protest song goes WBAI?

BD: I'm gonna write one. Listen...

HS: (Singing) The elevator is small and the engineer's good / *Sing Out!* is the one that should be understood.

IS: It's a good beginning, Harry. It's a good beginning. Can I get the copyright on that song?

BD: (Giggling) We've got a very limited amount of time left, so let me recapitulate. We've been talking with Harry Smith. Who is very hairy. I don't know about how smithy. He's also the person who had the perspicacity to put together a rather completely....

HS: That was many, many, many, many years ago, you see, because I devote most of my time these days to being interviewed on the radio.

BD: That's right, I know Harry.

HS: And to my city of a shanty gold wage [?].

BD: I know, your schedule is really appalling. See, he beat everybody out. See he put out this completely uncensored.... I mean, he just used his own taste as the only guideline. What did he like, you know?

HS: I have a very bad voice. Actually, I'm a very nice person, see, but my voice is against me now.

BD: Well.

IS: One of the great things about the *Anthology*, of course, is, as you said, the tremendous variety of material. There are many areas we didn't cover, but one in particular...

HS: America.

IS: America, yes (laughing).

HS: Yeah, it's a beautiful, I love it. I would hate to see anything happen to it and they better stay out of Vietnam. Have a bad thing happen to it.

BD: We're going to wind up with a, with a mad Cajun dance tune. Because within these six records, there is, there is really the whole world of music. If I had to throw everything else in my collection away, I think if I kept these six records, I could be quite content. I was, for a number of years, quite content with just these six records.

IS: Before we play it, you tell me, Harry, is the title of the song and the artist's name a put on?

HS: Where?

IS: On this here. It's number 37.

HS: You mean Folkways Blues by...?

IS: No, no, no.

BD: Wait, you can say that in a minute. But the first thing, I have to make an announcement, which I've been trying to build up to here, and you won't let me get at it.

IS: Oh, alright, go ahead.

BD: We have, besides our famous for the words of the song that we announced a few minutes ago, we have a new concept to announce and we want you to pick up on this and tell your friends and your children and your enemies or whoever. We're going to accept the submission of tapes of tunes written by yourself and sung by yourself. We will listen to the tapes and pick, every week, one, best one. Best. Better. Good. Decent. Something. Anything that's valid that we think we ought to play. We'll pick one, arbitrarily (laughing).

IS: Anyway, send us your original song. Sing them yourself. Send it on some kind of a tape that we can play over the radio. And at the end of the year we'll announce a big once-a-year contest and we'll give away WBAI to whoever wrote the best song. Right?

BD: Chris Albertson [WBAI disc jockey and eventual biographer of Bessie Smith].

IS: Okay, to wind up the *Anthology*, number 37. It's spelled S A U T C R A P A U D.

BD: It's sautéed frog legs, right?

IS: It's "Saut Crapaud," and it's performed by Columbus Fruge.

Music: Columbus Fruge, "Saut Crapaud"