SAME SONG, SECOND VERSE COULD BE BETTER, BUT IT’S GONNA BE WORSE!

by Jean Granberry Schnitz of Boerne

In 1945 in Alice, Texas, my best friend’s twin brother drove his sister and me crazy singing this parody to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb”:

Rabbit ain’t got no tail at all,
Tail at all, tail at all,
Rabbit ain’t got no tail at all,
Just a powder puff.

Then he chanted loudly:

Same song, second verse,
Could be better, but it’s gonna be worse!

Next time through, it was, “Same song, third verse,” and so on. By the time he got to “Same song, twenty-seventh verse . . . ,” we were chasing him around.

Some historians say that music developed when savages learned to pattern their yelling into recognizable sounds and phrases. As language developed, those who carried news from place to place learned to “sing” the news to tunes familiar to the people so it would be easier to remember and to reflect new happenings.¹ If that is so, then recycling tunes to new sets of words is almost as old as music.
Whether for profit or fun, putting new words with old tunes—and vice versa—has become a way to preserve folklore, which can be passed on from generation to generation and group to group. The subjects of the new lyrics tend to be subjects that reflect the daily lives of people. The tunes are always popular tunes of the times. “Music is an art whose material consists of sounds organized in time. Through the various types of patterns in which these sounds can be arranged, music can serve as a medium for the expression of ideas and emotions.”\textsuperscript{2} Songs are essentially poems set to music—with patterns of meter and rhyme capable of fitting several tunes. All types of music, including classical, sacred, folk, popular, country—whatever—are subject to recycling. The changing of words and lyrics can be accomplished by variations, or by parodies. Variations include minor—or major—changes in the tune or the lyrics and tend to leave the basic content of the song the same. With most folk tunes, variations are quite common, particularly when music was passed on without having been written down. John A. and Alan Lomax in \textit{American Ballads and Folk Songs} put it this way:

Worse than thieves are ballad collectors, for when they capture and imprison in cold type a folk song, at the same time they kill it. Its change and growth are not so likely to continue after a fixed model for comparison exists. . . . There is thus an element of sadness in imprisoning a folk song in type. . . . The printed form becomes a standard, and a fixed standard. So long as the song is passed from one to another by “word of mouth,” its material is fluid, frequent changes occurring both in words and in the music.\textsuperscript{3}

According to one dictionary, to parody is to mimic, “to make fun of another’s style by imitating it with comic effect or to attempt a serious imitation . . . a take-off, a travesty.”\textsuperscript{4} Parodies are
easy to recognize, because they have recognizable melodies but not the original words. Perhaps “recycling” is a better description than either parody or variation.

During the late 1930s, and throughout the 1940s and 1950s, singing was part of just about any group situation, especially family, school, summer camps, service clubs, and church groups. It was a favorite activity to sing familiar tunes with new sets of words, and an ongoing project to come up with new words. Most of these parodies were more fun to sing than the original words. Texas public schoolteachers did a great job of teaching schoolchildren the correct version of the words and music. At Mitchell School in Victoria in the early 1940s, I remember Mrs. Josephine Waller sitting on a high stool looking over the top of the piano and playing as we children sang dozens of classical and semi-classical songs that children were supposed to know. She taught us no parodies, only the correct version of many songs.

Linda Scudder Payne of Nacogdoches remembers:

We were always making up special parodies about whatever took our fancy while we were in school [at Graford near Mineral Wells]. We took school bus trips rather regularly, and singing passed the time. I remember one rather awful song we sang about our coach to the tune of “Kaw-Liga.” Most of these originals were one-time, spur-of-the-minute things that meant something only to us, and were soon forgotten (one of life’s mercies!).

I have sung many of these parody verses for more than sixty years without knowing some of them are actually in print. I found the source of some of them in a dog-eared old songbook my mother used to accompany singing for Rotary Clubs and other Civic organizations across South Texas. It was Sociability Songs, published by Rodeheaver Hall-Mack Co., probably in the early 1940s.
Some songs had words that I was forbidden to sing since they were considered “naughty” by my parents. But we sang them anyway—slyly making sure we were not observed. By today’s standards, the words were not that bad, but singing them could result in having our mouths washed out with soap. I clearly recall the taste of soap.

Research revealed that one of my favorites was in John Jacob Niles’ *Songs My Mother Never Taught Me*, published in 1929, and appeared as “The Hearse Song” in *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, collected by John A. and Alan Lomax in 1934. This came from the Lomax version:

Did you ever think as the hearse rolls by
That the next trip they take they’ll be laying you by,
With your boots a-swinging’ from the back of a roan
And the undertaker inscribin’ your stone. . . . etc.6

Nobody I know ever saw this song in print, but we sang it like this:

Did you ever think as the hearse rolls by
That you may be the next to die?
Ah-um! Ah-um!

They’ll put you down in the soft warm dirt,
And cover you up, but it sure won’t hurt.
Ah-um! Ah-um!

Oh, your eyes fall in, your teeth fall out,
And nobody’s there to hear you shout.
Ah-um! Ah-um!

Oh, the worms crawl in, and the worms crawl out,
They crawl all over your chin and snout,
Ah-um! Ah-um!
At the 1999 meeting of the Texas Folklore Society, Sierra and Acayla Haile and the other children sang a more modern—and more gross—version of this same song.

Many parodies exist for older American popular songs like “Yankee Doodle” and others. Many songs about Texas and cowboy songs are predominately parodies, as I discussed in a separate paper in Nacogdoches in 2000.

Many popular Civil War tunes have been parodied. Time and space prevent my presenting a complete list, but one of the most popular is “John Brown’s Body”—itself a parody. Quoting Maymie R. Krythe in *Sampler of American Folk Songs*:

The tune of “John Brown’s Body” and of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” has had a long and unusual history; not all sources agree as to its origin. However, some say it began about 1856 in the South as a humble Methodist camp-meeting song, often sung by Negroes with religious words. It was said that William Steffe, of Richmond, Virginia, a composer of Sunday-school songs, was asked, in the 1850s to go to Georgia to lead the singing at a camp meeting. The young man was much surprised on his arrival to find there were no song books for the gatherings. Steffe asked how he could get the participants to sing. He was told just to make up words as he went along. . . . This is what he tried in his first song:

Say, brothers, will you meet us?
Say, brothers, will you meet us?
Say, brothers, will you meet us?
On Canaan’s happy shore?
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Glory, glory, hallelujah,
Forever, ever more. 7
This was soon parodied into a version called “John Brown’s Body.” Then, as told by Margaret Bradford Boni from *The Fireside Book of Folk Songs*:

In 1861, Julia Ward Howe, on a visit to some army camps, heard the soldiers singing a grim chant, “John Brown’s Body,” to the tune of a camp-meeting hymn, “Say Brothers, Will You Meet Us?” Deeply moved by the scene, she later wrote for the fine, sturdy tune the words of the “Battle Hymn,” one of the most stirring poems to come out of the Civil War. It became the marching song of the Northern armies, and undoubtedly one of the best of all marching songs. “John Brown’s Body,” however, still remains popular. 

But in the early 1940s I and my friends sang another version, complete with varying hand and body motions:

John Brown’s baby had a cold upon its chest, (Repeat 3 times)
And they rubbed it with camphorated oil.

My favorite parody of “Battle Hymn of the Republic” has been around at least sixty years that I know of:

I wear my pink pajamas in the summer when it’s hot, I wear my warm red flannels in the winter when it’s not, And sometimes in the springtime and sometimes in the fall, I jump between the covers with nothing on at all.

**Chorus:** Glory, Glory, Hallelujah! Glory, Glory, What’s it to ya’? Glory, Glory, What’s it to ya’ If I jump between the covers with nothing on at all?
We sang this verse sometimes:

One grasshopper hopped right over another grasshopper’s back, (4 times)

**Chorus:** They were only playing leapfrog, (3 times)
When one grasshopper hopped right over another grasshopper’s back.

Another Civil War Song (“Listen to the Mockingbird”) was parodied thus (and sung at the Texas Folklife Festival in 2000 by some of the Civil War re-enactors). Parrott shells were developed by Robert Parker Parrott and were used at Vicksburg by the Union army.

Oh, do you well remember, remember, remember?
It was in the siege of Vicksburg,
And the Parrott shells were whistling through the air.

**Chorus:** Listen to the Parrott shells,
Listen to the Parrott shells,
Oh, the Parrott shells are whistling through the air,
Listen to the Parrott shells
Listen to the Parrott shells,
Oh, the Parrott shells are whistling through the air.9

It is an obvious parody—meant to be funny or make fun—when a song from the 1890s such as “Daisy Bell” gets an added verse not written by the original author, Harry Dacre.10 I suspect this parody had been around for a long time before I and my friends sang it.

Harry, Harry, here is your answer true,
I’m not crazy all for the love of you,
There won’t be any marriage,
If you can’t afford a carriage,
'Cause I’ll be switched if I’ll get hitched  
On a bicycle built for two.

Other versions are more emphatic:

‘Cause I’ll be damned if I’ll be crammed  
On a bicycle built for two.

“In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree,” with words by Harry Williams and music by Egbert Van Alstyne, was composed in 1905 after the writers strolled through New York’s Central Park and were unable to find an apple tree such as they had enjoyed during their boyhood in the Midwest.\footnote{11} I never did learn the correct words, as I sang:

‘Neath the Crust of the Old Apple Pie  
There is something for you and for I,  
It may be a pin that the cook just dropped in,  
Or it may be a dear little fly.  
It may be an old rusty nail  
Or a piece of a pussy cat’s tail,  
But, whatever it be, it’s for you and for me,  
‘Neath the crust of an old apple pie.\footnote{12}

As long ago as I can remember I have sung these two sets of words to the tune of the pre-World War I song, “There’s a Long, Long Trail” (words by Stoddard King and music by Zo Elliott, who meant it to be a sentimental song to be sung at a fraternity banquet before WWI started\footnote{13}):

\textbf{Version I:}

There’s a long, long nail a’grinding  
Up through the sole of my shoe,  
And it’s ground its way into my foot
For a whole mile or two.
There’s a long, long hike before me,
And the time I’m dreaming about,
Is the time when I can sit me down,
And pull that long nail out.\(^{14}\)

**Version II:**

It’s a short, short life we live here,
So let us laugh while we may,
With a smile for every moment
Of the whole bright day.
What’s the use of being gloomy,
Or what’s the use of our tears,
When we know a mummy’s had no fun
For the last three thousand years?\(^{15}\)

To the tune of “Auld Lang Syne,” we preferred to sing:

The fish it never cackles ‘bout
Its million eggs or so,
The hen is quite a different bird,
One egg—and hear her crow.
The fish we spurn,
But crown the hen,
Which leads me to surmise,
Don’t hide your light,
But blow your horn,
It pays to advertise.\(^{16}\)

This was one of my favorites of the many parodies of “Mary Had a Little Lamb”:

Mary had a swarm of bees, swarm of bees, swarm of bees,
Mary had a swarm of bees,
And they to save their lives
Went everywhere that Mary went, Mary went, Mary went,
Went everywhere that Mary went,
For Mary had the hives.

Classical tunes were not immune to the “treatment”:

Toreador—Hey!
Don’t spit on the floor
Use the cuspidor,
That’s what they’re for.

Classical, you say?

Oh, the girls in France do the hula, hula dance
And the clothes they wear would freeze a polar bear—

We sang:

Here comes the bride—big, fat and wide . . .

My children sang:

Happy birthday to you, you live in a zoo . . .
You look like a monkey and you act like one, too.

My irreverent grandson sang:

Jingle bells, shotgun shells,
Grandma laid an egg . . .

To the tune of “America” my friends and I sang:

My Country ‘tis of thee,
I came from Germany,
My name is Fritz.
Give me some cigarettes,
Give me a keg of beer,
And we’ll be jolly friends, forevermore.

To the tune of “The Star Spangled Banner” we sang:

Oh, say can you see
Any bedbugs on me?
If you do, pick a few
So we’ll have bedbug stew.

To the tune of “Into the Air, Army Air Corps,” my Cub Scouts in the 1960s sang:

Into the air, Junior Birdmen,
Into the air, upside down . . .

At the Bandera Storytellers meeting in May of 1999, Bob Reeder sang a parody to “A Spanish Cavalier”:

A Spanish cavalier
Sat on a keg of beer
And smoked him a great big cigar, dear,
And the smell of his feet,
Killed a neighbor down the street,
And now he’s in the jail behind the bars, dear.

That same Spanish cavalier
Sat in the electric chair
And smoked that same big, black cigar, dear
And the smell of his shoes
Blowed out the electric fuse,
And now he’s as free as you and I, dear.17
Linda Scudder Payne’s favorite parody is sung to the tune of “When You Wore a Tulip”:

When you drove a Buick, a big yellow Buick,
And I drove a little red Ford,
Oh, ho-oh you tried to crowd me,
Yes, you zoomed right by me,
But your insults I ignored, I ignored.
Then you stuck in a mud hole, a big, slippery mud hole,
Your engine it raced and roared.
Oh-ho, then I pulled your Buick, your big yellow Buick,
At the tail of my little red Ford!

Still another of Linda Payne’s favorites is sung to the tune of “After the Ball,” a song from the 1890s by Charles K. Harris:

After the ball was over,
Nellie took out her glass eye,
Put her false teeth in some water,
Threw her blonde wig on the floor,
Stood her cork leg in the corner,
Her hearing aid hung on the door.
The rest of poor Nellie went “bye-bye”
After the ball.

Spike Jones and his orchestra performed many popular parodies in the 1940s and 1950s, including a great musical parody of “Glow Worm.” My favorite was a parody of the Stephen Foster song “Jeannie with the Light Brown Hair”—which he called, “Brownie with the Light Blue Jeans.” Somebody (maybe Spike Jones) in the 1940s or 1950s parodied “Glow Worm” like this:

Shine, little glow worm, Turn the key on.
You are equipped with tail light neon,
When you gotta glow, you gotta glow,
Glow, little glow worm, glow.

To the tune of “My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean,” my friends and I sang this gem:

My Bonnie has tuberculosis,
My Bonnie has only one lung,
Her eyes are worm-eaten and sightless,
Her teeth are worn down to the gum.

**Chorus:** Bring back, bring back,
Oh bring back my Bonnie to me, to me,
Bring back, bring back,
Oh, bring back my Bonnie to me.

One night as I lay on my pillow,
One night as I lay on my bed,
I stuck my feet out of the window,
Next morning my neighbors were dead.

**Chorus:** Bring back, bring back,
Oh, bring back my neighbors to me, to me,
Bring back, bring back,
Oh, bring back my neighbors to me.

I found some other verses that we sometimes sang, but had almost forgotten:

My Bonnie leaned over the gas tank,
The height of its contents to see,
I lighted a match to assist her,
Oh, bring back my Bonnie to me.

My breakfast lies over the ocean,
My luncheon lies over the rail,
My dinner is still in commotion,
Won’t someone please bring me a pail?\textsuperscript{19}

This version was pretty popular during the 1940s and 1950s:

My mother makes beer in the bathtub,
My father makes synthetic gin,
My sister makes fudge for a quarter,
My God, how the money rolls in!

I tried making beer in the bathtub,
I tried making synthetic gin,
I tried making fudge for a living,
Now look at the shape I am in.\textsuperscript{20}

Lew Schnitz sang it this way:

My father makes counterfeit money,
My mother makes synthetic gin,
My sister’s a Zeta Tau Alpha,
My God, how the money rolls in!\textsuperscript{21}

“\textit{My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean}” has become a personal favorite of mine as a vehicle for parody and poetry. Its tune and meter just beg for parody! To date I have written dozens of parody verses for various occasions to this tune. Coming in second place for my poetry-writing purposes is “\textit{Red River Valley},” also with dozens of parody verses.

“\textit{Clementine}” lends itself to parody. This is the version we sang some 60 years ago:

I found a peanut, found a peanut,
Found a peanut just now.
I just now found a peanut,
Found a peanut just now.
Cracked it open, cracked it open,
Cracked it open just now,
I just now cracked it open,
Cracked it open just now.

Additional verses:

It was rotten, it was rotten, etc.
Ate it anyhow, ate it anyhow, etc.
Got sick, got sick, etc.
Went to the doctor, went to the doctor, etc.
Had to operate, had to operate, etc.
Died anyhow, died anyhow, etc.
Went to heaven, went to heaven, etc.
Kicked me out, kicked me out, etc.
I found a peanut, found a peanut, etc.
Etc. (*ad nauseum*).

Since the songs of World War I were popular long after the war, the parodies were numerous! To the tune of “K-K-K-Katy”:

K-K-K-K P,
Terrible K P,
It’s the only j-j-j-job that I abhor!
When the m-moon shines over the guardhouse,
I’ll be mopping up the k-k-k-kitchen floor.

More than four pages of verses to the World War I song regularly called “Hinky Dinky, Parley-Voo?” are included by John and Alan Lomax in American Ballads and Folk Songs. Lomax states: “There is in print a private, not mailable, collection of more than six hundred stanzas concerning the famous mademoiselle.”22 Many of the verses Lomax attributed to John Jacob Niles’ Songs *My Mother Never Taught Me*. My mother did not teach me this version:
The first Marine, he found the bean, Parley-vous,
The second Marine, he cooked the bean, Parley-vous,
The third Marine, he ate the bean,
And blew a hole in a submarine,
Hinky-dinky parley-vous.

Lew Schnitz remembers that his young teachers in Sutherland Springs during World War II sang the following verse expressing jealousy for the cadets on the fast track to being pilots at nearby Randolph Field at San Antonio:

Cadet got into the barber’s chair, Parley-vous,
Cadet got into the barber’s chair, Parley-vous,
Cadet got into the barber’s chair,
Instead of a wolf,
He’s a teddy bear,
Hinky-dinky parley-vous.\(^{23}\)

Linda Scudder Payne sang this version:

Farmer, have you a daughter fair, Parley-vous,
Farmer have you a daughter fair, Parley-vous,
Farmer have you a daughter fair,
Who washes the family’s underwear?
Hinky-dinky parley-vous.

Another World War I vintage tune was sung by Ira Scudder to the tune of “‘Til We Meet Again”:

Where the roast is turning,
And the toast is burning,
Though the boys are far away,
They dream of home.
There’s a silver lining
Thro’ the dark clouds shining.
So, turn the roast,
And scrape the toast
‘Fore the boys get home.  

We sang several versions of “Halls of Montezuma” but that has been adapted by children of the 2000s like Sierra and Acayla Haile:

From the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Spitwad Bay,
We will fight our teachers’ battles with spitwads made of clay,
We will fight for lunch and recess
And to keep our desk a mess.
We are proud to claim the title of “Teacher’s Number One Pest.”

Summer camps have been popular among Texas children for many years, and parodies are definitely popular at these camps because people already know the tunes and the words can be adapted to whatever situation. The same is true for various scout activities. Activity directors at the Presbyterian Westminster Encampment in Kerrville led the singing of these words to the tune of “Alouette” in the early 1940s:

All you et-a, think of all you et-a
All you et-a, think of all you et,
**Leader:** Think of all the soup you et,
**All:** Think of all the soup you et,
**Leader:** Soup you et.
**All:** Soup you et. Oh.
Repeat, adding new item.
(Each verse added something, repeating from the beginning each time, for example: Meat you et, salad you et, potatoes you et, corn you et, soup you et . . .)
Sixty years ago these words sung to the tune of “Are You Sleeping?” were funny, but no longer! They’re much too true to be funny now!

Rheumatism, rheumatism,
How it pains, how it pains,
Up and down the system,
Up and down the system
When it rains, when it rains.

Perfect posture, perfect posture!
Do not slump, do not slump,
You must grow up handsome,
You must grow up handsome,
Hide that hump! Hide that hump!

Nancy Harrison remembered singing (to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands,” which is the same as “I Was Born About Ten Thousand Years Ago”):

Get your elbows off the table, Mr. Best,
Get your elbows off the table, Mr. Best,
We have seen you once or twice,
And it really isn’t nice,
Get your elbows off the table, Mr. Best.26

At camp, and at other gatherings, we ALWAYS tacked this parody onto the traditional words of “Show Me the Way to Go Home”:

Direct me to my domicile
I’m fatigued and I want to retire
I partook a little intoxicant about 60 minutes previous
And it ascended to my cerebellum.
Wherever I may perambulate,
Over terra, aqua, or atmospheric vapor,
You will always detect me warbling this melody,
Direct me to my domi,
Direct me to my domi,
Direct me to my domicile.

Another favorite is “Good Night, Irene,” with many versions.
My favorite verses:

When Irene goes off to dreamland,
She rolls up the hair on her head,
She pins it all up in curlers
And hangs it on the foot of her bed.

Sometimes she sleeps in pajamas,
Sometimes she sleeps in her gown,
But when they’re both in the laundry,
Irene is the talk of the town.

Another favorite camp song was sung to the tune of “Stars and Stripes Forever”:

Be kind to your web footed friends,
For a duck may be somebody’s mother,
Be kind to your friends in the swamp,
Where the weather is always damp.
Now you may think that this is the end—well, it is.

Parodies were also popular at adult meetings such as Lions Club and Rotary Club during the 1930s and 1940s—and beyond. Meetings were frequently started with a singing session. My mother played piano for several service clubs during the years, and the paper clips and markings on the songbooks indicate that parodies were quite popular.

Winnie Sandel of Huntsville and I sang this parody to the tune of “The Girl I Left Behind Me” in Refugio, Texas, in the early
1960s, but I suspect this parody had been around quite a long time before that:

Oh, the liquor was spilled on the barroom floor
When the bar was closed for the night,
When out of a hole in the wall came a mouse,
And he sat in the pale moonlight.
Well, he lapped up the liquor on the barroom floor,
And back on his haunches he sat,
And all night you could hear him roar:
“Bring on the dad gum cat!”

I found this verse (and a slightly different version of the above) in *The Beer Bust Song Book*:

From behind the bar came a big black cat,
And he gobbled up the little mouse.
So the moral of this story is:
Don’t ever take a drink on the house.27

One of the most popular parodies of the 1960s was written by folk singer Tom Glaser after he heard children parodying some of the songs he sang at his children’s concerts. This was a parody of “On Top of Old Smoky,” which was very popular in the early 1950s and was itself a parody of one of the variations to “The Little Mohea.”28 Reba Short’s research found it in an old Kentucky Mountain songbook.29 There is also more than one version of “On Top of Old Smoky.” “On Top of Spaghetti” got such an enormous response the first time Glaser sang it at a concert that when he recorded it in 1963, it promptly went to the Number One spot on the hit charts, surrounded by rock ‘n roll records. Since then the song has been heard in unexpected places. It is now used to help teach remedial reading because it holds the children’s attention so successfully. “I never intended anything like that,” Glaser admits, “But kids still find it as hilarious as ever.”
On top of spaghetti all covered with cheese,
I lost my poor meatball when somebody sneezed.
It rolled off the table and onto the floor,
And then my poor meatball, it rolled out of the door.

It rolled in the garden and under a bush,
And then my poor meatball was nothing but mush,
The mush was as tasty as tasty could be,
And early next summer it grew into a tree.

The tree was all covered with beautiful moss,
It grew lovely meatballs and tomato sauce
So if you eat spaghetti all covered with cheese
Hold onto your meatballs and don’t ever sneeze.30

A shipwreck in the 1860s inspired “The Ship That Never Returned.” The same tune was used in 1903 to tell about a train wreck in “The Wreck of the Old 97.”31 Then in the 1960s the tune was appropriated to tell about a man who never returned (“The MTA Song”);

Well, let me tell you of the story of the man named
Charlie,
On a tragic and fateful day.
He put ten cents in his pocket, kissed his wife and family,
Went to ride on the M.T.A.

Chorus: Well, did he ever return,
No, he never returned,
And his fate is still unlearned.
He may ride forever ‘neath the streets of Boston,
He’s the man who never returned.32

“Froggie Went A-Courtin’” has a long history, dating back to 1549, 1580, and 1611. In Singin’ Texas, Abernethy includes this
information along with a version he learned in grade school, which is pretty close to the version I learned when I was in grade school.\textsuperscript{33} We sang this version of “Froggie Went A-Courtin’” in the 1960s, but I don’t know where it came from.

Froggie went a courtin’ and he did go, Uh, huh.
Froggie went a courtin’ and he did go, Uh, huh,
Froggie went a courtin’ and he did go
To the Coconut Grove for the midnight show, Uh, huh.
    Uh, huh, Uh, huh.

He sidled up to Mollie Mouse’s side, Uh, huh.
(Repeat twice more)
He said, “Miss Mousie, will you be my bride,” Uh, huh,
    Uh, huh, Uh, huh.

Not without my Uncle Rat’s consent, Uh, Uh.
(Repeat twice more)
I wouldn’t marry the president. Uh, Uh, no, sir, Uh, Uh.

So long, Clyde, you better hit the road, Uh, Uh.
(Repeat twice more.)
You ain’t no frog, you’re a horned toad. Uh, uh, Uh, Uh,
    Uh, Uh.

Much early church music was borrowed from secular songs. Edmund Lorenz’s history of church music describes it as follows: “In 1540 appeared in Antwerp a collection of spiritual songs with 152 folk melodies. . . . About the same time Marot issued his metrical paraphrases of the Psalms set to hunting and dancing tunes. . . . From this it may be seen how prevalent was the fashion of transferring secular tunes to sacred uses.”\textsuperscript{34}

Ehret and Evans in \textit{The International Book of Christmas Carols} write,
The first Christmas hymns were probably sung to the melodies of Jewish temple hymns and psalms. . . . Carols were a very different breed from the hymns. They derived from secular, pagan sources. . . . As the church struggled against the influences of pagan customs, she sternly barred carols from sacred services. But outside the church, Nativity carols appeared in increasing quantities and flourished. Nearly all were simple folk songs that sprang from the hearts of humble country people.35

A study of the tune names or metrical indices of almost any hymn book will indicate the prevalence of using and re-using the popular hymn tunes. In the Methodist Hymnal, for instance, some tunes are recycled as many as five and six times, and it is very common to see a tune appear more than once—or to see the same words appear with alternate tunes. This could be the subject of a separate paper, called “Same Song, Third Verse.”

Some of the parodies of hymns will never make it into a hymn book. Lew Schnitz sang this one to the tune of “At the Cross”:

At the bar, at the bar where I smoked my first cigar
And the nickels and the dimes rolled away,
It was there by chance that I tore my Sunday pants,
And now I have to wear them every day.36

A more recent addition to my list of parodies is one that was sung at Mountain View, Arkansas, at the folk center there in the summer of 2001. It is sung to the tune of “Just a Closer Walk with Thee.”

**Chorus:**
Just a bowl of butter beans
Pass the cornbread, if you please
I don’t want no collard greens
Just a bowl of them good old butter beans.

Verses:
Just a slice of country ham
Mashed potatoes, strawberry jam
I’d trade my brand new pair of jeans
For a bowl of them good old butter beans

See that big old country lad
He’s made everybody mad
They don’t love him by no means
‘Cause he ate up all those butter beans

See that gal a’standin’ thar,
With blue eyes and yaller hair
She’s not pregnant as it seems
She just ate a big bowl of butter beans.

It seems to be more of a robbery than a parody that the religious folk tune, known during the 1930s as “Great Speckled Bird” first became “I’m Thinking Tonight of My Blue Eyes.” (Same song, second verse.) Then in the 1940s the same tune was sung by Hank Thompson with the words of “I Didn’t Know God Made Honky Tonk Angels.” (Same song, third verse.) Along came Kitty Wells, who sang, “It Wasn’t God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels.” (Same song, fourth verse!)

During the 1940s and 1950s we were singing school songs that we didn’t know were parodies. For example, our favorite Raymondville High School fight song was sung to the tune of the Notre Dame fight song. Though these words were not popular with the school administration, it was sung anyway. Years later, I realized that half the schools in South Texas—and probably all over the United States—were singing the same song, adapted for their school’s name and initials:
Beer, beer for Raymondville High,
Bring on the whiskey; bring on the rye,
Send those freshmen out for gin
And don’t let a sober senior in.
We never stagger, we never fall,
We sober up on wood alcohol,
All ye sons of R H S,
We’re out on the drunk again.

“The Eyes of Texas” was itself a parody of “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad.” It was written by John Lang Sinclair in 1903. The tune is popular for parodies.

While this one is not a “school song” per se, it was sung in 1948 on the campus of Raymondville High School. During the noon hour, about ten to twenty girls (a large percentage of the entire student body) would link arms and do a form of line dance to the tune of “Ta Rah Rah Rah Boom De Ay”:

We are the gopher girls,
We always go fer boys,
They never go fer us,
We only go fer them.
We are the beaver girls,
We’ll always be fer boys,
They’ll never be fer us,
We’ll always be fer them. Repeat.

My sister-in-law, Dauris Granberry, sang this parody to the tune of “Washington and Lee Swing”—which was also parodied by “Betty Coed” (or was it the other way around?):

You take the legs from some old table;
You take the arms from some old chair,
And take the neck from some old bottle,
And from a horse go pull some hair,
You can put them all together,
With the aid of paste and glue,
And I’ll get more lovin’ from that gosh darn dummy,
Than I’ll ever get from you.

Rarely a day goes by that I do not hear on the radio or television a parody of some tune or other. For instance, Ford has a commercial parodying “God Bless Texas” by saying “Ford is the Best in Texas.” Wal-Mart has a version of “Rawhide” with the familiar sound effects, including a yellow smiley face wearing a Stetson and nodding in time to the music. Wal-Mart has another to the tune of “Put on a Happy Face.”

I once heard a Fruit of the Loom commercial to the tune of “Turkey in the Straw,” and also a Velveeta commercial to the tune of “I’m a Yankee Doodle Dandy.” If you listen for parodies in television commercials, I can guarantee you will find them!

Parodies have always been popular vehicles for political songs. This has been a fact throughout history, but space will not allow inclusion of very many of these. There is an entire book full of nothing but parodies about the Kennedy family. I found a parody in the San Antonio Express-News entitled, “The Feats of the Mayor,” sung to the tune of “The Streets of Laredo.”

Proof that parodies are still popular can be found in these examples that were used during the Republican National Convention on August 3, 2000. Tune: “The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You”:

The eyes of Texas are upon Bush
And Dick Cheney, too,
We’re going to kick Al Gore’s tush,
The Democrats are through!

Chorus:
Can’t you hear the Texans cheering
On that January morn
When our President is sworn in?
George W, blow your horn!39

On Friday, August 4, the headline read, “‘Yellow Rose’ is a
crowd-pleaser.” This was sung to the tune of “The Yellow Rose of Texas”:

George Double-ya from Texas
Is here to save the day
Our nation needs a Texan
To steer our country’s way,
With Secretary Cheney
And Laura by his side,
We’ll finally have a president
For whom we can take pride.
(Words to both parodies by Sherry Sylvester)40

By far the funniest thing I saw on television during the presi-
dential election aftermath was the image of a bearded hippie-type
holding a candidate’s placard and singing a parody to “Blowin’ In
the Wind” that ended,

The answer, my friend, is on CNN;
The answer is on CNN.41

On November 21, 2000, Dr. Laura Schlessinger read a parody
of “Hokey-Pokey” that ended:

You put the stylus in, you pull the stylus out,
You make a dimpled chad or else
You let the chads fall out . . .
You do the hokey-pokey and you turn it all around,
That’s what it’s all about.
On *Saturday Night Live*, November 18, 2000, two characters wearing Bush and Gore masks sang a parody of Sonny and Cher’s “I’ve Got You, Babe” that was really funny.

An article in the *San Antonio Express-News* pointed out the many parodies that were being bandied about during the election crisis, but they also pointed out the value of keeping a sense of humor about a bad situation. After September 11, 2001, numerous parodies were written about a very non-humorous situation. So many parodies were played on the radios and television that WOAI radio spent several afternoons playing and talking about the various parodies that were proliferating. My favorite—to the 1960s tune of “Oh, Donna,” started out: “Osama. Osama.”

Parodies are indeed alive and well in 2002! In fact, the most recent addition to this collection of parodies appeared in Dear Abby’s column on March 10, 2002, with a version of “My Favorite Things” attributed to Julie Andrews’ concert for AARP:

Maalox and nose drops and needles for knitting,
Walkers and handrails and new dental fittings,
Bundles of magazines tied up in string,
These are a few of my favorite things.

Cadillacs, cataracts, hearing aids, glasses,
Polident, Fixodent, false teeth in glasses,
Pacemakers, golf carts and porches with swings,
These are a few of my favorite things.

When the pipes leak,
When the bones creak
When the knees go bad
I simply remember my favorite things,
And then I don’t feel so bad.

Hot tea and crumpets, and corn pads for bunions,
No spicy hot food or food cooked with onions,
Bathrobes and heating pads, hot meals they bring.
These are a few of my favorite things.

Back pain, confused brains, and no fear of sinnin’,
Thin bones and fractures and hair that is thinnin’,
More of the pleasures advancing age bring,
When we remember our favorite things.

When the joints ache, when the hips break,
When the eyes grow dim,
I simply remember the great life I’ve had
And then I don’t feel . . . so baaaad!\(^{43}\)

Parodies have served many purposes through the years. They have entertained and educated, thrilled and disgusted, challenged and enchanted people of all ages for many generations. They have reflected attitudes, ideas, and traditions that contribute to our folklore. As we have seen, the art of singing and composing parodies is alive and well. If you pay attention, you will find that almost every day television commercials reveal a new version of some old song, or something appears in the newspaper that is a parody. If you bring up the subject just about anywhere, you will find that everybody knows a parody—or two or ten—and will likely sing for you on the spot!

What would the Texas Folklore Society hoots be without Lu Mitchell’s entertaining parodies? She performs with remarkable skill and talent, writing her own material about timely subjects such as “I Want to Be a White House Intern” (to the tune of “I Want to Be a Cowboy’s Sweetheart”), “Back in the Stirrups Again,” (“Back in the Saddle Again”), “Shall We Gather at the Dumpster?” (‘Shall We Gather at the River’) and many others. My favorite is to the tune of “Bendemeer’s Stream”:

She’s a little ol’ lady with hair snowy white
But the FBI’s hot on her trail tonight.
She’s down in Brazil with the janitor, Hank,
And the loot from the Googlesburg National Bank.44

Enter the Internet! Searching for the keyword “parodies” results in hundreds—even thousands—of opportunities to read, see, and hear parodies varying from humorous children’s verses and funny commercials to raunchy adult parodies—and everything in between! On one website, I found musical parodies in abundance—most very entertaining. The commercials and reverse commercials are pretty funny, too. Gone are the days when parodies had to wait for years to be passed on from one person to another and from one generation to another! I can tell you this, though: They are parodying modern tunes and not “Mademoiselle from Armentiers.”

END NOTES

5. Linda Scudder Payne, e-mail to author, 2000.
9. Texas Folklife Festival Hoot at the barn, June 3, 2000, as sung by Dennis and his brother.
14. Sociability Songs, 125.
17. Bob Reeder, as sung at Bandera, Texas, May, 1999.
20. Lynn, 23.
22. Lomax, 557–70.
25. Acayla and Sierra Haile, recorded at Texas Folklore Society Meeting, 1999.
27. Lynn, 12.
28. *Fireside Book of Folk Songs*.
41. CNN, November 17, 2000.
44. Lu Mitchell, from performances at Texas Folklore Society meetings.