

**From Sing Out!, July 1965 p38-47 (less illus and musical notation example of Preachin' The Blues)**

*Until Father's Day, 1964, Son House was a legendary Mississippi delta blues singer who had recorded for Paramount Records in the 1930s and the Library of Congress in 1942 -and then promptly disappeared. But, on the basis of these few record lags, Son House's name was as revered as those of Robert Johnson and Charlie Patton. Knowledge about all three men was sparse. Robert Johnson and Charlie Patton were known to be dead. It was also reported that Son House had known and played with these two men and had influenced Robert Johnson. Beyond that, knowledge about Son House was limited to these facts: His name was Eugene House. (His name is really Eddie.) He was a part-time preacher who sometimes wore a white cowboy hat. He was born in Lyons, Mississippi.*

*Now we know that even that little bit of information was in the main, inaccurate. Son House's rediscovery by Phil Spiro, Nick Perls, and Dick Waterman marks the return of one of the greatest of the Mississippi bluesmen. It has become a habit, it seems, to compare a newly-discovered blues singer with his recordings of thirty or forty years ago. In this instance, the comparison is all in Son House's favor. As he plays and sings "Death Letter Blues," "The Great Empire State Express," "Pearline," and other of his songs, one realizes that Son House is an intense experience that no one who has the opportunity can afford to miss. He is the greatest blues singer living today, and as Dick Waterman expresses it, "When Son House dies, so will the country blues." Son House demonstrates that what is within the man is the essence of the blues. He is an older man now, and he is a different blues singer. The "preaching blues" of 1930 is not the same one he sings today (he has made up totally new verses, excluding the first one). As a young man, he illuminated his experiences and ours with an intensity that few had. Now, as a man of sixty-three he can sing the same songs with equal intensity and give us a wholly different illumination. As he himself says, "The Bible says 'once a man and twice a child' and this old man, Son House, is feeling young again" I hope when SING OUT readers get to Heaven and the Lord asks them "Did you hear Son House play and sing", they can give the correct answer. I tremble to imagine the punishment those who never heard Son House will receive.*

*I wish to thank Son House and Dick Waterman (or giving so graciously of their time and (or Permitting me to tape-record and edit Son's own words for the following article. **Julius Lester***

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*"We'd all play for the Saturday night  
balls and there'd be this  
little boy standing around  
That was Robert Johnson. "*

**"I Can Make My Own Songs" by Son House**

I was born in Clarksville, Mississippi, about two miles across the Sunflower River. They called it Riverton, and right down the road a little past Riverton -- about two miles—is where I was born. After I got up around seven- or eight-years-old, my mother took me to Louisiana, and that's mostly where I grew up to call myself a man. We moved to a place called Tallulah, Louisiana. That's up in the north part of Louisiana, across the river from Vicksburg.

My mother and my father they separated, and when I got up to be some size, I started working. One while, I was gathering moss down in Algiers, Louisiana. That was in 1916, '17, and on up to about '20. I wasn't big enough to occupy a heavy job. I was gathering that grey moss out of trees. Did it near about like they do cotton. Bale it up and ship it away and they would make mattresses and things out of it. I was quite young then -- twenty, twenty one -- along in that category.

I wasn't playing guitar then. I was mostly a church man. Brought up in church and didn't believe in anything else but church, and it always made me mad to see a man with a guitar and singing these blues and things. Just wasn't brought up to it. Brought up to sing in choirs. That's all I believed in, then.

My father, though, was kind of ratty along then. He had seven brothers and they had a little band that played music all the time for the Saturday night balls. He played a bass horn. He had been a church man, but he had gotten out. Finally, he went back to church and laid it all down, quit drinking, and became a deacon. He went pretty straight from then on.

After my mother died, I left and came back up in Mississippi where the rest of my people was. So I was just to and fro then. I wouldn't stay anywhere too long after I got to be called myself a man, you know. I just wanted to ramble. I wouldn't get too far away from home, though. I'd get up around Memphis, over in Arkansas, back through Louisiana, and on back to Mississippi. And I'd make a living by working in the cotton fields. I could plow, pick, and chop cotton. One while, I worked for a man who was in the cattle business. That was down in Louisiana and that was when I started wearing a cowboy hat. I got that style from the other guys. The hat I wore was a big brown with a white band around the crown, and when I went to playing guitar, I was still wearing it. I liked it. But something happened and I got rid of it. It got too old or something, so by the time I was making records, I wasn't wearing it.

At that time, there was mostly farm work, and sometimes it got pretty critical. Low wages and -- well, people kind of suffered a little during some of those years. Suffered right smart. In some places, they got along a little better than they did in others. But they stayed up against it mostly. Bad housing and all that kind of stuff. Of course, they'd get plenty of just old common food, but they didn't make enough money to do any good. Some of those that grew crops—if they paid their debts for the food they ate during the year, why, if they came out and cleared as much as forty or fifty dollars for a year, they were satisfied. Out of a whole year's work! Of course, along then, they didn't see into it too much because they'd been used to it for so long. They didn't worry over it because they always knew if they

didn't have the money, they was still going to eat and have a place to stay, such as it was. So they didn't complain and worry too much about it.

After they commenced waking up, some started going different places and came back with the news that they were doing so much better. "Up in such-and-such-a-place, they pay so-much-and-so-much. That's what I make." Well, that wakes the other guys up. He sees his old buddy all dressed up and looking so nice, and 50 they comment from one to another and commence to easing out to these different places. If they get far as St. Louis, oh, Jesus! They thought they was way somewhere.

I did it myself! I had a friend who was up there working in the Commonwealth Steel Plant in St. Louis. He came back and was telling me about it, and the first thing you know, I'd sneaked out and gone to St. Louis. We were getting a dollar an hour along then. That was big money, you know. That was way back yonder. A dollar an hour! Whooo! That was along in 1922 or 23. The Commonwealth Steel Plant. We lived in St. Louis, and the plant was in East St. Louis, just across the river. Making that dollar an hour. I was a big shot then. I stayed up there about six or eight months and got the hotfoot again and came on back down in Mississippi. I wasn't contented anywhere long. I was young and just loved to ramble.

I was just ramblified, you know. Especially after I started playing music. That was one thing gave it to me. People wanting us to come over in Arkansas to play for picnics, and we just didn't want to be stationary, to be obligated to anybody. We figured we could make it better without plowing so much.

I started playing guitar in 1928, but I got the idea around about 1927. I saw a guy named Willie Wilson and another one named Reuben Lacy. All before then, I just hated to see a guy with a guitar. I was so churchy I came along to a little place they call Matson, a little below Clarksdale. It was on a Saturday and these guys were sitting out front of a place and they were playing. Well, I stopped, because the people were all crowded around. This boy, Willie Wilson, had a thing on his finger like a small medicine bottle, and he was zinging it, you know. I said, "Jesus! Wonder what's that he's playing?" I knew that guitars hadn't usually been sounding like that. So I eases up close enough to look and I see what he has on his finger. "Sounds good!" I said. "Jesus! I like that!" And from there, I got the idea and said, "I believe I want to play one of them things." So I bought an old piece of guitar from a fella named Frank Hopkins. I gave him a dollar-and-a-half for it. It was nearly all to pieces, but I didn't know the difference. The back was all broken in, but I got it from him and began to try to play. It didn't have but five strings on it, though. So I showed it to Willie Wilson and explained to him what I wanted to do. I wanted to learn to play. He said, "Well, you'll never learn this way. You need another string. Takes six strings. It's all busted in the back, too. Tell you what I'll do. Ill see if I can fix it up for you." So he got some tape and stuff and taped it all up and got a string and put that on and then he tuned it. He tuned it in Spanish to make it easier for me to start. Then he showed me a couple of chords. I got me an old bottle. Cut my finger a couple of times trying to fix the thing like his, but finally I started to zinging, too. Finally, I got the idea about how to tune it myself. I

used to be a leader in the choir and they were singing the old vocal music at that time, you know, like the "do-re-mi's", so I got the idea to make the guitar go like that, and in a couple of weeks time, I was able to play a little tune. It was a little tune I'd heard Willie Wilson play called, "Hold Up, Sally, Take Your Big Legs Offa Mine." So the next time he came by, I showed him I could play it. He said, "Come on and play with me tonight." It was Saturday night. I said, "I aint good enough for that." He said, "Oh, yes, you is. You just play that. I'll back you up." So I started with him just like that. Finally, he left from around there, but I kept on playing and got better and better, you know. I'd set up and concentrate on songs, and then went to concentrating on me rhyming words, rhyming my own words. "I can make my own songs," I said. And that's the way I started.

It was a couple of years after that that I met Willie Brown and Charlie Patton. 1930, it was. Charlie Patton, he was living at a place they call Lula, Mississippi. I went up to Lula to see my aunt, and being up there, I heard that that was where Charlie Patton lived. I'd heard of him, heard a lot of his records, so I made myself acquainted with him. I knew a little more about him than he did me. Now Willie Brown, he was living up in Robinsonville, and he and Charlie Patton had known one another for years. They'd gotten together out on a white man's place they call the Dockery Plantation. It's way down and out from Ruleville -- somewhere down in there.

There was this man, A. C. Laibley, who was Charlie's manager at that time. He was in Grafton, Wisconsin. That's where the Paramount Record laboratory was. He came down on a little tour hunting talent, and he stopped by and told Charlie they wanted him to come up for recordings again. Well, Charlie had been recording for them and he told them about me. So they said, "Bring him along with you and bring Willie Brown." So he left a hundred dollars for expenses. He got another fella that had a car. This other fella had a group, a gospel group, and they called themselves the Delta Big Four. They made themselves famous with a song called "Four and Twenty Elders on Their Knees". His name was Will Ford and he had a good car, so A.C. Laibley left the money for him to drive us up there. There was a girl named Louise Johnson who came along with us. She and Willie were both from Robinsonville. So we went up there and made our recordings separately, except for about two songs Willie and I played together. I recorded "Preachin' Blues", "Black Mama", "Mississippi County Farm", and "Clarksdale Moan". Willie Brown and I played that last one together. I think that's about all. Close as I can get to it. It's been so long.

The girl playing the piano, Louise, well, we'd spike in and help her a little bit. She was a good piano player, but being up there and being among a lot of people, well, you know, some people get nervous. So we'd cheer her up by yelling to her and saying funny things and we'd hit a lick or two with the guitars. Just to give her more spirit.

I got paid forty dollars for making those records. At that time, I just had the big eyes. Forty dollars Making it that easy and that quick It'd take me near about a whole year to make forty dollars in the cotton patch. I was perfectly satisfied. I showed off a whole lot with that when I got back to Lula, Mississippi.

When we came back from recording, I went back down to Lula and stayed about a couple of weeks, and then I came right back to Robinsonville where Willie was. So we got to staying together and got pretty good playing together. He was my commentor. He like to comment. He never liked to sing much. He was a good commentor. So we played around at those old plantation balls, you know. That wouldn't t be until Saturday night. We'd be up there in Robinsonville and some guy would come around and want us to play a piece or two. Some other guy would want us to play for him because he figured that would be a help for him to draw a bigger crowd to his place. You know, one guy would say, "I'll give you a dollar-and-a-half, plenty of food, and all you can drink." Some other guy would come up and overbid the other one and say, "Ill give you two dollars." Of course, you couldn't make any kind of living off that kind of money, so I went to driving a tractor for mine. Willie would make little crops. Charlie wouldn't do either one. He'd try to be slick. He'd take up with the white folks, cook. He'd fool them up and play to them like he was so much in love with them and she toting them pans from the white folks, kitchen. He was a slicker, you know.

But we'd all play for the Saturday night balls and there'd be this little boy standing around. That was Robert Johnson. He was just a little boy then. He blew a harmonica and he was pretty good with that, but he wanted to play a guitar. When we'd leave at night to go play for the balls, he'd slip off and come over to where we were. His mother and step-father didn't like for him to go out to those Saturday night balls because the guys were so rough. But he'd slip away anyway. Sometimes he'd even wait until his mother went to bed and then he'd get out the window and make it to where we were. He'd get where Willie and I were and sit right down on the floor and watch from one to the other. And when we'd get a break and want to rest some, we'd set the guitars up in the corner and go out in the cool. Robert would watch and see which way we'd gone and he would pick one of them up. And such another racket you never heard! It'd make the people mad, you know. They'd come out and say, Why don't y'all go in there and get that guitar away from that boy! He's running people crazy with it." Pd come back in and Pd scold him about it. "Don't do that, Robert. You drive the people nuts. You can't play nothing. Why don't you blow the harmonica for 'em?" But he didn't want to blow that. Still, he didn't care how Pd get after him about it. He'd do it anyway.

Well, he didn't care anything about working in the fields and his father was so tight on him about slipping out and coming where we were, so he just got the idea he'd run away from home. He was living on a plantation out from Robinsonville. On a man's place called Mr. Richard Lellman. And he ran away. Didn't want to work on any farms.

He stayed, looked like to me, about six months. Willie and I were playing again out at a little place east of Robinsonville called Banks, Mississippi. We were playing there one Saturday night and, all of a sudden, somebody came in through the door. Who but him! He had a guitar swinging on his back. I said, ``Bill! He said, "Huh?" I said, "Look who's coming in the door." He looked and said, "Yeah. Little Robert." I said, "And he's got a guitar." And Willie and I

laughed about it. Robert finally wiggled through the crowd and got to where we were. He spoke, and I said, "Well, boy, you still got a guitar, huh? What do you do with that thing? You can't do nothing with it." He said, "Well, I'll tell you what." I said, "What?" He said, "Let me have your seat a minute." So I said, "All right, and you better do something with it, too," and I winked my eye at Willie. So he sat down there and finally got started. And man! He was so good! When he finished, all our mouths were standing open. I said, "Well, ain't that fast! He's gone now!"

So he hung around about a week or more, and I gave him a little instruction. Said, "Now, Robert. You going around playing for these Saturday night balls. You have to be careful 'cause you mighty crazy about the girls. When you playing for these balls and these girls get full of that corn whiskey and snuff mixed together, and you be playing a good piece and they like it and come up and call you 'Daddy, play it again, Daddy' -- .well, don't let it run you crazy. You liable to get killed." He must not have paid it much attention. He laughed it off, you know. I said, "You gotta be careful about that 'cause a lot of times, they do that; and they got a husband or a boy friend standing right over in the corner. You getting all excited over 'em and you don't know what you doing. You get hurt.", I give him the best instruction. So he said, "Okay." Finally, he left and went somewhere else again with his guitar. We heard a couple of his pieces come out on records. Believe the first one I heard was "Terraplane Blues". Jesus, it was good! We all admired it. Said, "That boy is really going places." So he left and went out there from Greenwood, Mississippi. Somewhere out in there. The next word we heard was from his mother, who told us he was dead. We never did get the straight of it. We first heard that he got stabbed to death. Next, a woman poisoned him, and then we heard something else. I can't remember what it was now, but was three different things. Never did just get the straight of it. Close as I can get to it, he was about twenty-three or four. Very young.

It was just a little while after that that Charlie Patton died. 1932 or '33. It must've been '33 because I was married to the wife I got now in '32. Anyway, it was somewhere along in there. He was living at a place they call Holly Ridge, Mississippi, way down and out from Boils, Mississippi. Out there someplace. He got in touch with another record company -- one in Jackson, Mississippi -- called Spear's Phonograph Company, 111 North Farrow Street. This man wanted Charlie to get Willie and I to come down to Jackson to make some church songs. So Charlie sent his wife, Bertha, up after us in a car. We hung around Holly Ridge two or three days before we cut out for Jackson, and we made the songs. This guy wanted us to make like we were "sanctified" people and make some "sanctified" songs and not use our names. So we made a song for him, "I Had A Dream Last Night Troubled Me," concerning King Nebuchadnezzar. After that, we went on back to Charlie's and we stayed about three more weeks. We went all around through the country playing, all three of us together. So Willie and I went on back to Lake Commorant, where we were living then, and about two weeks after we got back, we got a telegram from Bertha, that was the girl said to be his wife. The telegram said that Charlie was dead. He was taken with the mumps and they went down on him. And that was the way he died.

A few years after Charlie died, I quit playing for the country balls. I decided that if I could make records and play at some decent parties, I would leave the country balls alone. Them country balls were rough! They were critical, man! They'd start off good, you know. Everybody happy, dancing, and some guy would be outside selling his corn whiskey, and they'd be going backwards and forwards getting them a bottle -- you could get a little small bottle for a quarter — and then they'd start to getting louder and louder. The women would be dipping that snuff and swallowing that snuff spit along with that corn whiskey, and they'd start to mixing fast, and oh, brother! They'd start something then. Be some running done! Sometimes we'd almost leave our guitars behind.

I remember one night Willie and I and Charlie were to play at the same place and Willie and I were late, but Charlie had gotten there kind of early. And the guys got off the center kind of early, too. Got to fighting and shooting off those old owl-head pistols. Well, Willie and I got near to the house and we heard such a gruntin' and a rattlin' coming up through the stalks, and I said, "Wait a minute, Willie. Hold it. I hear something coming up through the cotton field. Don't you hear it?" He said, "Yeah. It's something." We were always suspicious, you know, about animals. Out in the country around there, it wouldn't be anything to see a teddy-bear or something. So we got the idea we wanted to hurry up and get to the road where we could see it. Finally, who should pop out to the roadside but Charlie! He looked and saw us and said, "I'll kill 'em all. I'll kill 'em all." Me and Willie started laughing and told him, "How you gon' kill 'em all? We heard you running."

Yeah, the balls were rough in those days. You'd sure have to run before it was over with. They'd get full of that corn whiskey and run you away from there. Lots of times I knew a lot of people to get killed. One guy got shot to death sitting down with his back up against the wall with his knees drawn up, you know. He was sitting not far from where Willie and I were playing. We all called him "Horse". The guy that killed him walked limpified. His name was Zeb Turner. He came in the house and said to me, "Son? Who's that sitting down there?" I said, "That's Horse." He said, "Oh, yeah. That's the so-and-so I want to see." I said, "What's the matter, Zeb?", and commenced to moving my chair over. He said, "Nothing. That's all right." And he took both hands around that pistol and -- Boom! Them owl-head pistols, we called them, didn't have any hammers, you know. Some folks called them lemon squeezers.

Zeb squeezed that thing with both hands and the bullet jumped through Horse so quick and hard that he didn't realize anything happened. So Zeb walked out, and after he walked out, I said, "Horse? Horse!" He raised up. "Huh? Huh?" I say, "Ain't you shot?" He say, "Me? Naw!" I say, "Aw, yes, you is." He say, "Naw, naw." He got up and went on into the kitchen where they were selling. My wife, Evie, was with me that night. He leaned up on the foot of the bed, and Bertha, she was there, too, said, "Yes, you is shot. Listen, if I give you your hat, will you get out of here before Zeb comes back and kills you sure enough?" So he said, "All right. You want me to go." She handed him the hat. He had a black hat, a Stetson hat. He put it on and she said, "Go out the back way." She let him out

and he went on out and stepped over the little old fence and that's where he fell. Stiff dead almost and didn't realize he was shot.

Yeah, the balls were rough. I've seen a lot of them get killed. A lot of that stuff in those days. Those guys were terrible! And there wouldn't be anything to it. Whatever guy did it, if he was a good worker -- well, whatever white man he worked for took care of him. They put him in jail, the white man would get in his car and go down there and tell them., ~I need him. " Put in a good word for him. That's what made them kill them up so much. Guy would figure he stood good with 'the man'. "Mr. Charlie'll get me out." So they didn't mind doing those things -- killing and stabbing folks.

I finally quit that business. Stopped fooling with those country balls long before I quit playing guitar.

It was along about 1943 when I moved to Rochester. A friend of mine had moved up there and was working for a firm they call Simelton and Gold. They were making some kind of war equipment and he wrote and told me about them and what good wages they were paying. So I went on up. I worked on that job for a payday and then I quit. I didn't like it too well. So then I got a job with the New York Central out to East Rochester in the dispatch shop where they make box cars and things like that. I got a job as a rivet-heater and kept that about two or three years. I got a promotion from the railroad company and they sent me over to Buffalo to get signed up for a job as a porter. There was a big fat colored guy over there doing the hiring at that time, so I got right on and stayed with that job ten, eleven years.

It was while I was in Rochester that Willie died. After I started working for the New York Central, I was writing and telling Willie about it and eventually I got him to decide that he wanted to come up. So I sent him a ticket and a little money to ride on and he came to Rochester and I got him a job. After a little bit, he sent for his girl friend, and she came. So one night, we were sitting up talking and she told some things that he didn't think she would. He got mad then and wanted to send her back. He told her to get packed and he told me, "Son, I'm going to leave you the money and I want you to buy her ticket. Not going to trust her. You buy her ticket at the Greyhound and see that she gets on with her suitcase. I don't want to see her when I get off from work and come home.,' He was living with me. So I got the ticket and she left. Well, soon after that, he wanted to go. Back to a little place about twenty miles outside Memphis. That's where he'd been living before he come to Rochester. I said, "Well, Bill, you going to try and find Rosetta now. Ain't you?" "Aw, naw,,," he said. I said, "Cut it out. That's what you're thinking about. " So he left and went on down.

Well, the first part of the next year, I had a two-week vacation so I went down to see him. He had just had an operation for ulcers, and every time he'd eat a meal, he'd have to lay down flat on his back for thirty minutes. Well, after the different guys heard I was there, they all wanted me to come and play for them. "Son House's here!" And they gave extra parties and everything, and Willie would go and play with me. The doctors had told him not to drink any more, but he'd be

with me and the fellas would come around offering me whiskey, you know. Pd turn it up and Willie would look at me drink it. He knew how we used to do and he'd want a drink so bad. He'd say, " Let me taste a little of that.~, I'd say, ``Bill, you know what the doctors said.~, He said,' I'm going to try it anyhow. It look so good.~, So he'd take little nips, you know.

Well, a couple of weeks after I got back to Rochester, I got a telegram from his girl that Willie was dead. I said, "Well, sir. All my boys are gone" That was when I stopped playing. After he died, I just decided I wouldn't fool with playing any more. I don't even know what I did with the guitar.

People wonder a lot about where the blues came from. Well, when I was coming up, people did more singing in the fields than they did any where else. Time they got to the field, they'd start singing some kind of old song. Tell his ol' mule, "Giddup therel", and he'd go off behind the mule, start plowing and start a song. Sang to the mule or anybody. Didn't make any difference. We'd call them old corn songs, old long meter songs. They'd make it sound good, too. You could hear them a half-a-mile off, they'd be singing so loud. Especially just before sundown. They sure would go a long ways. Then they called themselves, "got the blues." That's what they called the blues. Them old long meter songs. You'd hear them talking and one would say, "You know ol' so-and-so really can sing the blues!" They didn't use any instruments. Just natural voice. They could make them rhyme, though, just like the blues do now, but it would just be longer meter. Holler longer before they say the word. They'd sing about their girl friend or about almost anything -mule -- anything. They'd make a song out of it just to be hollering.

The way I figured it out after that, after I started, I got the idea that the blues come from a person having a dissatisfied mind and he wants to do something about it. There's some kind of sorrowness in his heart about being misused by somebody. That's what I figured the blues is based on.

There were other guitar-players around then, too, besides Willie and I and Charlie Patton. There was Frank Stokes. He was playing along time before I was, because he was a much older man. And there was old Jim Jackson. He was the one who made that record "Kansas City Blues". And there was James McCoy, who was kind of famous around there. But you know, guitar-players really weren't too plentiful. Most of them who could play guitar a little, couldn't play more than two songs. If they'd lived two hundred years, they still wouldn't have learned anything but those two songs. Just weren't gifted. You could find right smart of them kind. Before I saw Willie Wilson that time, I'd never seen anybody play like that. Some few of the old-time guys used to have a way of laying the guitar across their lap, and they'd take their pocket knife and they'd play " John Henry" and things like that with a knife.

I'm glad to be back playing now. At first, I didn't feel like I should fool with it because my memory of all the old songs had gone from me. It had been sixteen years or more since I'd fooled with it and I felt that nobody wanted to hear that old stuff they used to play. But then I got to thinking about old man Louis Armstrong.

Old Louis is older than I am and he came back with that "Dolly" song. Everybody's talking about " Dolly...Dolly. " You know, he's got a funny voice anyhow. I said, "Jesus! If that old guy can come back, maybe I can. " I haven't got it back perfect like I could then, but I keep getting a little better and better.

Words and Music by Son House. Copyright 1965 by author.

This is a transcription of Son House's "Preachin' the Blues" as he recorded it in 1930 for Paramount Records in Grafton, Wisconsin. It is currently available on the Origin Jazz Library LP, The Mississippi Blues 1927-1940 (OJI,-5).

Son House introduced "Preachin' the Blues" in a November 1964 concert in Wabash, Indiana, this way:

"This is one on me. Just (as) well admit it. This is the truth. 'Course, some of it is a little addition, but the biggest of it is the truth I used to be a preacher, I was brought up in church and I started preaching before I started this junk. Well, I got in a little bad company one time and they said, 'Aw, cmon, take a little nip with us.' I says, 'Naw.' 'Aw, cmon!' So I took a little nip. None of the members were around, so I took the little nip. And that one little nip called for another big nip. So there got to be a rumor around among my members, you know. And I began to wonder, now how can I stand up in the pulpit and preach to them, tell them how to live, and quick as I dismiss the congregation and I see ain't nobody looking and I'm doing the same thing. I says, that's not right. But I kept nipping around there and it got to be a public thing. I says, well, I got to do something, 'cause I Can't hold God in one hand and the Devil in the other one. Them two guys don't get along together too well. I got to turn one of 'em loose. So I got out of the pulpit. So I said the next time I make a record, I'm gon' to name it 'Preachin' Blues.' I'm preaching on this side and the blues on that side. I says, well, I'll just put 'em together and name it 'Preachin' Blues'. " J. L.

Oh, I'm gonna get me a religion,  
I'm gonna join the Baptist Church.  
Oh, I'm gonna get me a religion,  
I'm gonna join the Baptist Church.  
Oh, I'm gonna be a Baptist preacher  
And I sure won't have to work.

Oh, I'm gonna preach these blues and  
I want everybody to shout.  
I want everybody to shout.  
I'm gonna do like a prisoner,  
I'm gonna roll my time on out.

Oh, in my room, I bow down to pray.  
Oh, in my room, I bow down to pray.  
Oh, the blues came along an' blown my baby away.

Oh, I have religion on this very day.  
Oh, I have religion on this very day.  
But the womens and whiskey,  
Well, they would not let me pray.

Oh, well, I wish I had me a heaven of my own.  
Great God Almighty!  
Yes, a heaven of my own.  
Well, I'd give all my women a long, long happy home.

Well, I love my baby just like I love myself.  
Oh, just like I love myself.  
Well, if she don't have me,  
She won't have nobody else.

Oh, I'm a poor man,  
Gonna kneel down in prayer.  
Oh, I'm a poor man,  
Gonna kneel down in prayer.  
Well, I guess I'm gonna do my preachin' to the man's ear.

Well, I met the blues this morning  
walking just like a man.  
Oh, walking just like a man.  
I said, good morning, blues,  
Nothing in your right hand.

Now, there's nothing 'bout my baby, Lord,  
That's gonna worry my mind  
Oh, nothing that's gonna worry my mind.  
Oh, to satisfy, I got the longest knife.

Oh, I got to stay on the job,  
I ain't got no time to lose. I ain't got no time to lose.  
I swear to God, I got to preach these gospel blues.  
Great God Almighty!

Oh, I'm gonna preach these blues  
Until my feet have sat down.  
Oh, I'm gonna preach these blues  
Until my feet have sat down.  
Well, it's very comfortable,  
I want you to jump straight up and down.