

San Francisco Mabel Joy

Mickey Newbury

Oh, his daddy was an honest man,
Red-dirt, Georgia farmer.
His mama lived her short life,
Havin' kids and balin' hay.
He had fifteen years,
And an ache inside to wander,
Hopped a freight in Waycross,
Wound up in L.A.

Oh, the cold nights had no pity,
On that Waycross, Georgia farm boy.
Most days he went hungry,
Then the summer came.
He met a girl known on the Strip,
As San Francisco Mabel Joy.
Destitution's child,
Born on an L.A. street called shame.

Growing up came quietly,
In the arms of Mabel Joy.
And laughter found their mornings,
It brought a meaning to his life.
On the night before she left,
Sleep came, left that Waycross country boy,
With dreams of Georgia cotton,
And a California wife.

Sunday mornin' found him standin' 'neath,
The red light at her door.
When a right cross sent him reelin',
Put him face down on the floor.
Lord, in place of Mabel Joy he found.
A merchant man marine.
Who growled, "Your Georgia neck is red,
But, sonny, you're still green."

He turned twenty-one,
In a Gray Rock federal prison.
Ol' judge had no mercy,
On that Waycross, Georgia boy.
Starin' at those four gray walls,
In silence he would listen,
To that midnight freight,
He knew could take him back to Mabel Joy.

Sunday mornin' found him lyin' 'neath
The red light at her door,
With a bullet in his side he cried,
"Have you seen Mabel Joy?"
Stunned and shaken, someone said,
"Son, she don't live here no more.
No, she left this house four years today,
They say she's looking for some Georgia farm boy."