

## Empty Stringer

(summer 94 at Clear Lake Camp near Restoule, Ontario. This was a big hit around the campfire that week)

You leave the dock anticipating  
The catch that is a-waiting,  
But after four, five hours of baiting,  
The waiting's wearing thin.  
So you curse the gods you're fearing,  
But the fish are hard of hearing,  
So you think about cold beer and  
You steer your way back in.

Now another day is breaking  
And no other fool has awoken,  
But you've had your eggs and bacon.  
On the lake is where you'll be.  
As the day drags on you're dreading  
That the fish aren't where you're heading  
And all your hooks been setting,  
You're letting all go free.

There is no sight that is sadder,  
Not much can make you madder  
Than coming back to camp for dinner  
With another empty stringer.

You see other boats returning  
With full stringers that you're yearning,  
And your stomach starts a-churning  
As you're learning where to try.  
You hope on this days mission,  
You'll have luck where they're fishing,  
But by nightfall you're just wishing  
That the damn fish all would die.

There is no sight that is sadder,  
Not much can make you madder  
Than coming back to camp for dinner  
With another empty stringer.

There is no sight that is sadder,  
Not much can make you madder

Than coming back with your empty stringer,  
And your wife has caught your dinner.

12 String Guitar and Vocals: Mike  
Acoustic and Steel Guitar: Jason  
Congas and Percussion: Howie  
Mandolin: Chris Banjo: James  
Bass: David

## The Monarch

(written in Chicago, Feb 96. I had just finished watching a special television news item about the plight of the Monarch butterfly. I picked up the guitar and wrote this song in its entirety in about an hour. I rarely write songs this way. I usually find lyrics tougher and write them independent of the song. Not this time.)

It's snowing in a valley, down in Mexico,  
In a forest now smaller than just decades ago.  
The butterflies are wintering in the trees,  
I hear they're falling, falling, falling . . . like leaves.

Now some folks are sayin', "Why complain or cry?"  
"Why all the fussing over a damned butterfly?"  
"For we can turn the last trees to wood,  
When they're gone, gone, gone . . . for good."

When summer warmth is bringing life to northern lawn,  
To the fields and the trails that we walk upon,  
The Monarch might be nowhere to be found,  
Because they're lying, lying, they're dying on the ground.

While local men with hatchets are praying hard for snow,  
I'll pray harder for the way that it was years ago,  
When the valley wasn't harmed by writer's breeze,  
For it was filled, filled, filled . . . with trees.

Vocals: Mike  
Mandolin: Chris  
Bass: David  
Acoustic Guitar: Jason  
Additional Vocals: Jude  
Violin: Marion

## The Watch

(late 1994 in Chicago. I had recently purchased Stan Rogers' Home in Halifax . This was my first introduction to Stan's music and it was, and still is, having a profound influence on me. One night I was playing a melody idea with my friend, George Hutchinson. At the very end of the fragment he belted out the line "And I'll watch over you". We both agreed that another beer was needed to debate where to go with that idea. I wrote the song the next day at work, sending George completed verses throughout the day via e-mail. The "Home in Halifax" influence is obvious. The beer influenced debate less so. George's inspirational line, however, survived.)

While supper's served in homes across the bay,  
The lighthouse sends a beacon 'cross the waves.  
By the setting of the sun, my watch has just begun,  
And I'll watch th' boats safely home.

The lighthouse beam's not needed much tonight.  
The weather's clear, the moon is shining bright.  
So tonight I'll watch the stars, spotting Jupiter and Mars,  
And I will watch time go by.

And the light shines on, thru the watch and into dawn.  
Many lives are saved, but some stay with the waves.  
In the fury of a storm, a harbour hearth is warm,  
While a woman waits and worries by the door.

The boats are gone for longer than before.  
The catch does not come easy anymore.  
I watch fishermen grow old, in boats with empty holds,  
And I'll watch a village slowly die.

And the light shines on...

My love lies sleeping safe from harm,  
And if I could I'd be there in her arms.  
So when my watch is done, to my home I'll run,  
And I will watch over you, my love.  
I will watch over you.

Acoustic Guitar and Vocals: Mike  
Additional Vocals: Jude  
Bass: David Congas: Joel  
Violin: Marion

## Restoule

(fall 95. Restoule is just south of Lake Nipissing. We used to go fishing there with my cousin and her family)

Late August, early morn,  
Another day is born,  
And the mist slowly rises,  
As the sun warms the sky.  
In our cabin by the lake,  
No one is awake.  
I smile as I slowly paddle by

I toil and earn my pay,  
In a city far away,  
Right now it seems so distant,  
Like a land that I once knew.  
On the lake if I wish  
I can ponder life and fish,  
And maybe I might even catch one too

The nights are growing longer  
in Restoule,  
Pretty soon the kids  
will be heading back to school,  
And I'll be working overtime,  
cursing some damn tool,  
And wishin' I were fishin'  
in Restoule

On a run into town,  
I'll stop at the Crowbar Lounge,  
To hear of 'keepers' caught  
and sighted,  
And just where they might  
be found.  
Over pickled eggs and beer,  
You will find a friendly ear,  
And hear the tall tales from  
those who've been around.

Later on at night,  
By a campfire's light,  
We'll sing 'Barrett's Privateers',  
Beneath a pale harvest moon.  
The temperature might drop,  
but we don't really want to stop,  
While there's an audience of  
appreciative loons.

The nights are growing longer  
in Restoule,  
Pretty soon the kids  
will be heading back to school,  
And I'll be working overtime,  
cursing some damn tool,  
And wishin' I were fishin'  
in Restoule

The nights are growing longer  
in Restoule,  
And the kids are complaining,  
they're stuck in their school,  
And me I work my overtime,  
I'm cursing like a fool,  
I wish I were fishin' in Restoule

I wish I were fishin' in Restoule

Acoustic Guitar and Vocals: Mike  
Acoustic Guitar: Jason  
Additional Vocals: Jude  
Tin Whistle: James  
Mandolin: Chris  
Wooden Frog: Joel

## Oskee Legion Hall (G. Booth)

(I heard Geoff Booth play this song at the Free Times Cafe in Toronto. It has become one of my favourite songs.)

The barmaids here will tell ya, I'm not much one for words.  
This legion hall's so far away from where it all occurred.  
I come here now most evenings to face the mural behind the bar,  
Remembering all the laughter and forgetting all the scars.

I guess you're with that cycling tour, they've been through  
here before,  
Don't usually let civilians in but times have been so poor,  
And the legion don't attract the younger soldiers anymore.  
I sit and watch at closing time as Katie sweeps the floor.

Now Annie's gone and my daughter is  
somewhere living on the coast.  
Ain't it funny how God takes away  
the things you love the most.  
I've got another family now and  
they're with me 'til last call,  
And they wave good-bye each time I leave  
the Oskee Legion Hall.

I never had a reason for going over there.  
I was just a cook for the Engineers who did the bridge repairs.  
And some you'd seen at the latrine or drunk the night before,  
There'd be one less plate at mealtime, wouldn't see them  
anymore.

Outside behind the mess tent, sharing cigarettes,  
We'd lie about our escapades and swear we'd not forget  
The unlikely camaraderie that bound us all as one,  
And I'd pray at night that I'd get home before the war was  
done.

Now Annie's gone...

The mayor thanked us servicemen at the victory parade.  
I can still see Annie smiling and sitting in the shade.  
But I lost that world to cancer in the spring of '63,  
And our little girl and the love we knew was all she left to me.

Now Floyd and Craig and Katie, they're always waiting here.  
They wave and grin when I come in and draw myself a beer.  
And they'll drop by at closing time and I'll have just one more.  
Always asking how I'm feeling and never asking about the war.  
Now Annie's gone...

12 String Guitar and Vocals: Mike  
Additional Vocals: Jude  
Bass: David Dhoubek: Joel  
Violin: Marion Mandolin: Chris

## Dedicated Love

(I married Ruth on October 8, 1983 and wrote this song for our wedding)

Lay your head down on my shoulder  
Don't worry 'bout when we're older  
I'll have you and you will have me  
See the old man and his wife  
They've been happy with their life  
You and I can be just the same

So place your hand in mine  
We'll explore the sands of time  
And I'll care for you with dedicated love

We both draw from different pasts  
Separate molds formed and cast  
Strengths and weakness seen and still  
unknown

This mystery as if by magic  
Joined together forms the fabric  
Of a lifetime shared as if one

So place your hand in mine  
We'll explore the sands of time  
And I'll care for you with dedicated love

Vocals: Mike  
Additional Vocals: Jude  
Piano: James Violin: Marion

## Empty Hat

(summer of 96 after a lunch time stroll down Queen St. West in Toronto)

His upturned hat lies on his mat  
He hopes to catch a coin  
Folks walk on by, they 'tsk' and sigh  
Some tell him he's annoying  
Other souls with similar goals  
Are up and down the street  
With untidy hair and a bloodshot stare  
Its getting harder to compete

His empty hat is taunting him  
While an empty belly's haunting him  
No one is wanting him...  
Not anymore

## Skeletons and Bones

(1995 on a flight home from Chicago. After reading an American Way magazine article, I pulled out some scrap paper and started writing. By the time we landed in Toronto, most of the lyrics were written)

I stand by the ferry rail and search the fog for signs,  
Of our island destination in this cold forbidding clime,  
Reflecting on the reasons we return here once again,  
To Superior's Isle Royale; the wolf's wild domain.

When last we studied East Pack their numbers had declined.  
The reasons are mysterious. The moose on which they dine,  
Are plentiful and healthy. Although not easy prey,  
The wolves successful hunting means full bellies on most days.

Now a wall of spruce approaches, emerging from the rain.  
Soon the ferry's dropped us off and is on its way again.  
We bushwhack through the forest till we reach a cedar bog,  
Where an ancient looking bull moose is stepping over logs.

His antlers broad and mighty now appear to weigh him down,  
And I bet he now grows nervous when the wolf pack circles round.  
As if on cue grey shadows are emerging from the trees,  
While the moose stands oblivious, knee deep in rotting leaves.

But now he's been alerted by some smell or sight or sound.

People stop and jeer at him  
While others show their fear of him  
No one is near to him...  
Not anymore

People stop in the trendy shops  
And spread their wealth around  
But have no time to spare a dime  
And loss it on the ground  
Its not as though they have no dough  
Their manner says they do  
They walk away while he sits and stags  
Begging for a coin or two

Acoustic Guitar and Vocals: Mike  
Additional Vocals: Jude  
Bass: David Drums: Howie  
Accordian: James Violin: Marion

His agitation's growing as he shorts and looks around.  
The circle shrinks and tightens. A signal has been sent.  
This 'pas de deux', this ritual, nears fulfillment of intent.

The bull in panic leaves the bog and heads for surer ground.  
The wolves pursue relentlessly with desire to bring him down.  
Too tired to continue, he turns to face the pack,  
Beset from every angle, attacked on nose, on rump, and back.

The lives of the animals on Royale are intertwined.  
If one should leave, the other would not be far behind.  
So we're glad to see more wolf cub than we tagged the year before.  
The 'circle of life' continues, at least for one year more.

Soon the kill is over. The moose is now a meal.  
Like his ancestors before him bones will whiten in the fields,  
And men will come by ferry to study and then go home,  
But will they study animals, or skeletons and bones.

Will they study animals, or skeletons and bones.

Vocals and Acoustic Guitar: Mike  
Acoustic Guitar: Jason  
Bass: David Drums: Howie  
Mandolin: Chris Accordian: James

## The Unfinished Painting

(SummerSongs 99. David Roth's workshop challenged us to write a story song. I chose this personal experience. Mary Gray was my mother-in-law.)

A family gathers, hugging and weeping,  
Looking for answers where none seem to be.  
There in the corner, guarding the flowers,  
An unfinished painting stands free.  
Next to the easel, the paints and the brushes  
Wait for the hand of the artist to come,  
To pick up the brushes and finish the vision  
Of the ancestral family farm.

The artist is gone, but the art lives on  
In the homes of the family gathered today.  
Covering the wall, a reminder to all  
The paintings of Mary Gray.  
The paintings of Mary Gray.

Working from fingers crippled by calcium,  
Often the pain meant the brushes lay still.  
Progress was made when conditions allowed it.  
Pain retreats from the will.  
The artist's memory, jogged by a photo,  
Shows on the canvas in ochre and green.  
Those now gathered can share the vision  
Of this place where she has been.

The artist is gone...

In a world filled with madness,  
They gather with a sadness,  
But somehow its diminished,  
By a painting... unfinished.

The unfinished painting rests on its easel,  
Waiting for someone to take up the call;  
To pick up the brushes and close the circle  
For a waiting empty wall.

Maybe the artist is one of the gathered,  
Or maybe a child that is yet to be born.  
Paints and brushes are patiently waiting,  
A wall will be adorned.

The artist is gone...

12 String Guitar and Vocals: Mike  
Banjo and Additional Vocals: James  
Drums and Shaker: Howie  
Violin: Marion Bass: David  
Percussion: Joel

## Two Boys

(written late 1994, this song was inspired by a Maclean's magazine cover and news article. Unfortunately, the song is still relevant today.)

Two boys walk together arm in arm  
Strolling through the rubble from the bomb  
Young Samir and David are friends, today  
But who's to say it will remain

Young Palestinian and Jew  
The horrors of history follow you  
But with Nike's and Reebok's on your feet  
You keep hope alive when you meet

Are stones used as weapons or as toys  
In playgrounds of Middle Eastern boys  
If the game is one of 'Peace vs. War'  
Who's ahead when no one's keeping score

While their older brothers fight in the streets  
Patient people hope and pray for peace  
But peace takes a back seat to war  
When two boys walk together no more

For now Samir and David are friends  
Let's hope their parents try to make amends  
The promise of peace will stay in the land  
When two boys walk together hand in hand

Two boys walk together arm in arm  
Strolling through the rubble from the bomb  
Young Samir and David are friends today  
And I hope and pray that friends they stay

I hope and pray that friends they stay

Vocals: Mike Acoustic Guitar: Jason  
Bass: David Percussion: Howie  
Violin: Marion  
Additional Vocals: Jude

## Follow Me Or Lead The Way

(written at SummerSongs 99. I took part in Bob Franke's 'songs from the centre' workshop. My assignment was to write a duet... and play it the next morning. It's amazing what you can do with a deadline.)

When I wish upon a star,  
It doesn't get me very far,  
I just want the best for you,  
Will a wish make it come true?

Follow me, or lead the way,  
I'll be with you every day,  
And where we go, my heart will stay,  
Follow me, or lead the way.

Dream your dreams let them take flight,  
I'll be with your dreams tonight,  
Together we will see things through,  
Just let me be here with you.

Follow me...

Though life's uncertain, one thing's sure,  
When I think of what's behind,  
I'd have nothing without you,  
So join your hand with mine.

Follow me...

Vocals: Mike and Jude  
Acoustic Guitar: Jason  
Accordian, Mandola, Tin Whistle: James



## Retirement Planning

(written in August 99. This song is based on a joke I received thru an Internet e-mail list)

I sleep in late, and when I wake  
I take my boat out on the lake.  
I catch a few and then go home,  
Play with the kids, unplug the phone.  
After my nap I go for a walk  
To the harbour cafe down by the dock  
I play guitar and stay up late.  
Sip wine with my friends. Life is great.

A well dressed man from a larger place  
Stands on the pier with a thoughtful face.  
He watches as the boats return  
And wonders why we just won't learn.  
Why we keep just what dinner needs.  
And send the rest back to the weeds.  
He shakes his head at me once or twice,  
And asks if I will take his advice.

"You look quite smart and very sure.  
Tell me more if you will, kind sir.  
I believe my life is full and free,  
But good advice is good for me."

He says, "Fill the holds and sell the rest,  
And with capital look to invest.  
Do more fishing, increase your take.  
Spend more time out on the lake.  
And when its more than one can do,  
You can well afford to hire a crew.  
Get another boat and hire some more.  
Buy out the monger and run his store."

"This lake that's close by your front door,  
After five or ten years you'll be wanting more.  
More boats. More men and opportunity.  
That's when you'll head out to sea.  
Selling fresh locally is not for you.  
Overhead is high and the profits few.  
You can spend more time out on the sea  
By selling direct to a cannery."

"You sound quite smart and very sure.  
Tell me more if you will, kind sir.  
I thought my life was full and free,  
These new ideas are new to me."

"Think of all the profits you could earn  
By controlling cash flow and managing churn.  
You'll be awfully busy with much to do,  
But soon you'll own a cannery or two.  
After years of such efficiency,  
You'll move to the city where you can be  
Closer to your stocks and bonds,  
And bigger fish in bigger ponds."

"So much work. So much to be done,  
Buying out competitors one by one.  
Going public with an offering or two.  
Making millions, and most for you.  
After years of effort and solid work  
And occasional bribes to the city clerk,  
You'll be a successful businessman  
With three piece suits and a bottled tan."

"You are quite smart and very sure.  
Tell me more if you will, kind sir.  
I want my life to be full and free.  
Please tell me what is next for me."

"Be dedicated to this endeavour.  
Dodge your taxes and fudge your ledger.  
Make investments with a man like me.  
Buy mutual funds and annuities.  
Time to relax, no need to go higher.  
You'll be well and ready to retire  
To a country place that's much like here,  
Where the grass is green and the air is clear."

And then...

"You can sleep in late, and when you wake,  
Take a boat out on the lake.  
Catch a few and then go home.  
Play with the kids, unplug the phone."

"This collection of music is the end result of interaction with, and inspiration from, many people over the years. Special thanks to: my parents for insisting on piano lessons and buying me my first guitar (there was always music in our house), my sisters (yes, all five of them), Penny Nichols and everyone else at SummerSongs (I was there first!), Jason Fowler for helping me to finally learn my instrument properly and for the wonderful arrangements on The Monarch, Two Boys, and Follow Me, Jeremiah Budnark and Paul Young for all the work they do at the White Oak Folk Club, ditto for Don and Brenda McGeoch at the Brantford Folk Club, George Hutchinson who helped make Chicago a great experience, Helmuth and Fini at Clear Lake Camp, David and Maureen Kitson for all the campfires over the years, the Trinity United Church choir (they actually have me singing tenor!... well, most of the time), Herbert Gentry, Sister Mary Lawrence, Stan Rogers for setting the standard, Don Ross for a musically important weekend, Bob Taylor for making such great guitars, James Gordon (who went way beyond just being a producer) and all the talented musicians who worked on this project, Mary Gray and the Gray family, Geoff Booth (keep writing, dammit!), and most of all, to my wife Ruth and my sons Joel and Andrew."

"I hope you enjoy this music even a little bit as much as I have enjoyed making it."

Mike

Mike Beauchamp: 6 and 12 string Guitar, Vocals  
Jason Fowler: Acoustic Guitar, Steel Guitar  
David Woodhead: Bass Guitar  
Howie Southwood: Drums and Percussion  
Joel Beauchamp: Drums, Percussion, and Wood Frog  
Marion Linton: Violin  
Jude Vadala: Additional Vocals  
Chris Terhune: Mandolin and Mandola  
James Gordon: Piano, Tin Whistle, Banjo, Accordion, Mandola, Harmonica, Additional Vocals

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Mastered by Andrew McPherson at The Monastereo,  
Guelph, Ontario

Engineered by Nik Tjelios and James Gordon

Produced by James Gordon

Made in Canada



## October

(I wrote this instrumental piece just before our last recording session at Pipe Street Studios. It is an experiment in Open E tuning composed when I probably should have been practicing Jason's 'Spider' exercise. The title is more than just the month I wrote it in. For me, the song reflects a time of harvest and a feeling of thanksgiving.)

Acoustic Guitar: Mike

After a nap, you can go for a walk  
To the harbour cafe down by the dock  
Play your guitar and stay up late.  
Sip wine with your friends. Won't life be great?"

Vocals and Acoustic Guitar: Mike  
Acoustic Guitar: Jason  
Harmonica: James

## Temporary Passenger

(written in the summer of 96. It is a true story)

I don't often pick up 'hikers, why this time, I don't know.  
I felt the need for company on a lonely drive back home.  
Hitchhiking on '400', from Blind River he had come.  
He was just outside of Barrie, heading south to '401'.

He's been living seperated from his wife about a year.  
His baby girl is growing up without her Daddy near.  
Danny's girl is four now and he speaks of her with pride.  
I can tell how much he misses her, his one and only child.

Baby don't you cry now, Daddy's on his way,  
And my temporary passenger will be with you today.  
So smile when you see him, be with him while you can,  
Until my temporary passenger is heading north again.

It's every parents nightmare, a tumble down the stairs.  
A phone call late last evening, then the guilt 'cause he's  
not there,  
Danny's girl is lying in a hospital bed.  
With a broken hip, she's crying. Got a bump on her head.

Baby don't you cry now, Daddy's on his way,  
And my temporary passenger will be with you today.  
So smile when you see him, be with him while you can,  
Until my temporary passenger is heading north again.

I dropped him off at Yorkdale, and as he shook my hand,  
I wished him well, but I could tell he was still a worried man.  
And as my sons lay sleeping, I gently stroked their heads.  
Thought of all I took for granted, and thanked God for what I had.

Don't waken from your slumber, your Daddy's safe at home,  
And my temporary passenger tonight is not alone.  
Danny's girl is smiling, she'll be with him while she can,  
Until my temporary passenger is heading north again.

Until my temporary passenger is heading north again.

Acoustic Guitar and Vocals: Mike  
Bass: David Mandola: Chris  
Violin: Marion Banjo: James  
Drums and Percussion: Howie

"Songs are just layin' out there like fish in the water. When you're ready, you just wade out and bring 'em in. But one thing I've learned: You've got to be real quiet if you want to catch the big ones."

- Tom Waits

# Mike Beauchamp Restoule

