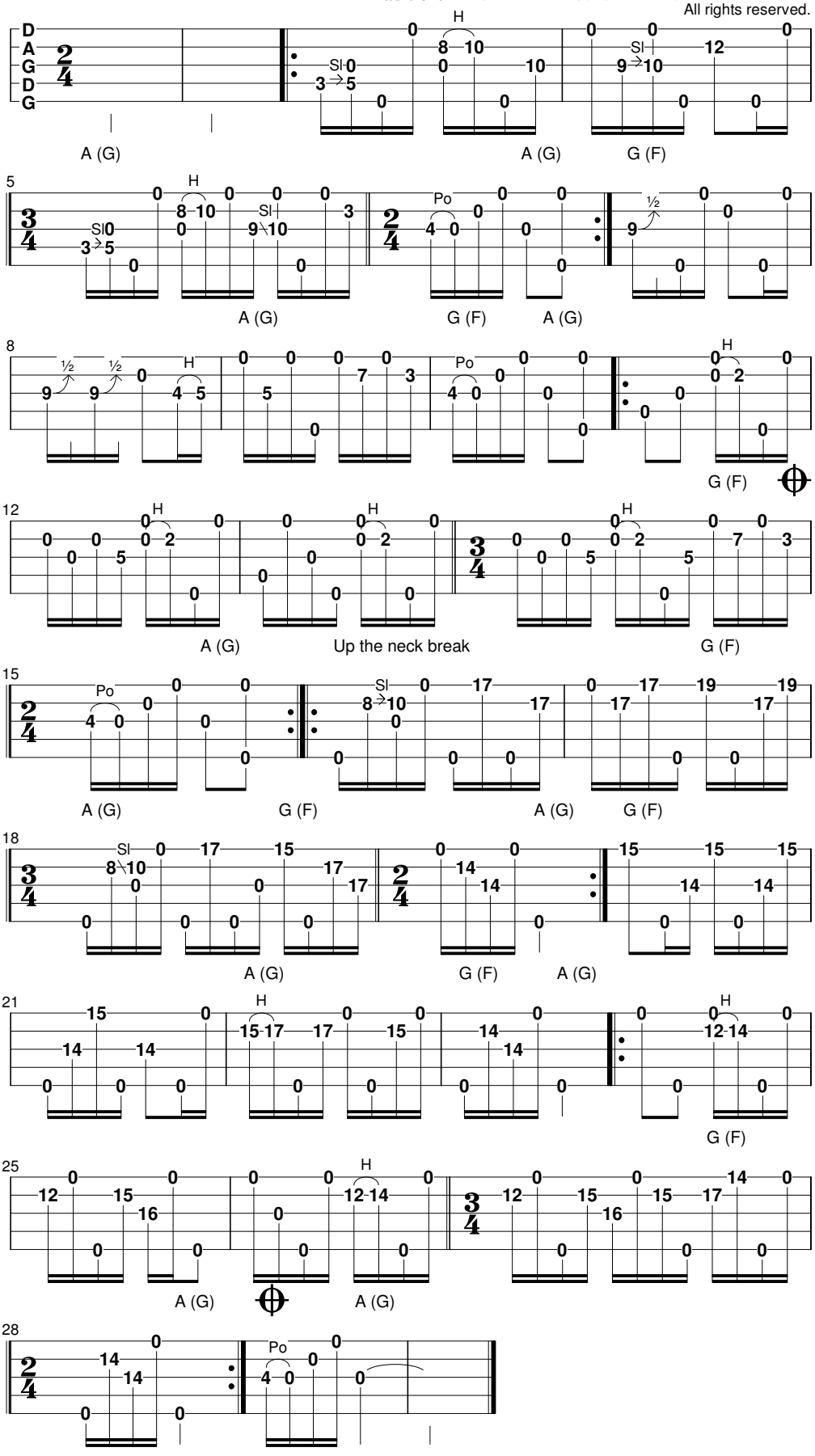
Jeff Sturgeon

A (G) **Tradition:** G (F)

Arrangement (c) Copyright 2009 by Don Borchelt
All rights reserved.



This is generally regarded as a Kentucky tune, coming from the repertoire of oId time fiddler John Sayler. It was transcribed and published in Jeff Titon's landmark book "Old Time Kentucky Fiddle Tunes." According to Titon, Jeff Sturgeon was also a Kentucky fiddler, who taught one of Salyer's contemporaries. The home recording of Salyer that Titon used as his source can be downloaded from the Digital Library of Appalachia (see link section). I first heard this tune at a Monday night old-time jam session at Sandy's Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts, from John Gersh and Kathy Fletcher of the Boston area group, the Dixie Butterhounds. The tune has an unusual structure, with a full A and B part, and an interesting bridge that starts with the sub tonic chord, that connects the two other parts. The tune is more or less in mixolydian mode.

This tune demonstrates the West Virginia does not have a monopoly in crooked tunes. There is an extra beat in both the A and B parts, which you will find in measures 5, 14, 18 and 27. it takes awhile to internalize this timing so that it feels natural, but once you do, it becomes clear that this timing is essential to the charm of the tune.

Note that the chokes in measures 7 and 8 which start out the bridge are full half tone chokes, pushing the F# note all the way up to the G (or E to F, if you don't have a capo on). You have to give the string a real push to reach the note, no room for timidity here. The 3rd string pull-off's in measures 4, 10, 15 and 29 must be crisp and even to sound right. The 2nd string should remain fretted at the 3rd fret while the pull-off is being executed, but once it is done, the 2nd string fret is released. too, so that the string can be noted open.

The up the neck break is melodically sparse, deliberately sacrificing melody for rhythm. The opening 2nd string slide in measure 16, and again in measure 18, happens "on the run," as you are moving up to the 17th fret for to grab the next group of notes. That open 3rd string serves as a drone, and it is allowed to ring as long as piossible without interruption. Remember not to strike that 3rd string too hard, or it will clang. Still, this is one of the few up the neck breaks I generally pick close to the bridge, because I want the melody notes that are played to generally ring with less sustain.