L. C. WILLIAMS
An Obituary
by PAUL OLIVER and MACK McCORMICK

There have been many greater blues singers than L. C. Williams whose death is reported by Mack McCormick, but similarly there have been all too many whose reputations far exceeded his, though their talents were inferior to those of the young Texas Negro. Only some ten weeks before his death we were idling away the afternoon hours on the porch of Lightnin Hopkins's home, commenting on the stream of passing figures, the playing children, the continuously chirping locusts in the trees and the trains that passed on the nearby tracks. Jiving lazily with his friends Lightnin, Luke "Long Gone" Miles and Spider Kilpatrick, passing the ever-present bottle and explaining carefully that a persistent and somewhat aggressive Negro nearby had suffered permanent damage to his brain during the War, L. C. Williams gave no hint of his weak condition. He was genial, generous, lazy perhaps, and he drank. In his steady amber eyes there was a certain blankness which betrayed his addiction and during the day his slow movements were regrettably, those of the 'wine-o". But at night he was different.

"L. C."— he once declared the initials stood for "Love Crazy" — played drums for Lightnin Hopkins when Spider had another engagement. He had not Kilpatrick's incredible battery of sound but he swung easily and he played with great sympathy for Lightnin's changing moods. We caught them one night playing at a newly opened club in Houston's Third Ward. That time Lightnin was unusually introspective, his eyes fixed on his guitar and his thoughts entirely on his playing. From outside one could hear the powerful blues vocals and one would assume that these were Lightnin's. But once inside we found that it was L. C. Williams who was singing: intensely, heatedly and with a marked vibrato. The audience stopped their dancing to stand and listen to the dramatic guitar and the excellent blues singing. This was L. C. Williams at his best, a Williams hardly represented on record, and we were fortunate to hear him, though then we did not know how fortunate. But we did know why he was admired and why he was so popular, and why he will be so missed in the blues world of Houston, Texas now that he has passed away. Mack McCormick knew him well and sends the following obituary:

36-year old Texas blues singer L. C. Williams died in the Houston Tuberculosis Hospital, of a haemorrhage from an abscessed lung, on October 18, 1960. He had been hospitalized for four months the previous winter during which the tuberculosis was arrested, but his persistent drinking and refusal to follow doctor's orders led to the fatal progress of the disease.

A slight, yellow-eyed and extraordinarily amiable young man, L. C. was one of a group of bluesmen who enjoyed moderate success in the post-war era but remained in his native state among family and friends. He was one of several proteges of Lightnin Hopkins who brought about L. C.'s first recording session and accompanied him on those sides made for the Gold Star label in 1947. The records were made under the name "Lightning Jr." His later records, with Lightnin and with small jump combos, appeared on Imperial, Freedom, and Jax.

L. C. was born March 12, 1924, in Millican, Texas, and since his teen years had worked as a singer and dancer, appearing on stage shows and in dance halls in and around Houston. Always a heavy drinker, he spent most of his time in recent years hanging around the corner of Holman and Dowling with wine-drinking buddies among whom he was known for being able to consume 55 worth of sweet wine — at 75c. for 4/5ths of a quart — on any given day he happened to have $5. Since the onset of the tuberculosis he had pretty much given up singing and earned his casual living by playing drums for Lightnin and other dance hall groups.
Although he had not recorded for some years, coincidentally, a few weeks before his death, L.C. played drums on a recording session featuring his close friend (and another of Lightnin's proteges) Luke "Long Gone" Miles. On this occasion he sang on several verse-swapping tracks with Long Gone and Lightnin and contributed a very moving selection When Mother's Dead and Cone. At the time it was evident that his throbbing, crylike style of singing put him under a great deal of strain and he was unable to complete one of the songs Long Gone wanted him to do.

Two days before his death he insisted on getting out of his bed and singing for his common-law wife, Maggie Washington. On his knees and with his head buried in her lap he sang You Done Lost Your Good Thing Now. She tried to prevent him from exerting himself and told him, "Some other time I may want to hear you sing and you won't be here to sing for me." Next day he collapsed on Holman and Dowling, and was taken to the hospital where he died the following day.

L. C. was buried near his family home near Navasota, Texas. Neither of his closest friends, Lightnin who was in New York for concert appearances and Long Gone who was visiting his family in Louisiana, were able to attend the funeral and in fact word did not reach them until some days later.