

Burl Ives

"The Sailor's Grave"

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Our barque was far, far from the land
When the fairest of our gallant band
Grew deadly pale, and pined away
Like the twilight dawn of an autumn day.

We watched him through long hours of pain.
Our fears were great, our hopes in vain.
Death's call he heard; made no alarm.
He smiled and died in his messmate's arms.

We had no costly winding sheet.
We placed two round shot at his feet
And in his hammock, snug and sound:
A kingly shroud like marble bound.

We proudly decked his funeral vest
With a starry flag upon his breast.
We gave him this as a badge so brave,
Then he was fit for a sailor's grave.

Our voices broke, our hearts turned weak
And tears were seen on the brownest cheek.
A quiver played on the lip of pride
As we lowered him down our ship's dark side.

A splash, a plunge and our task was o'er
And the billows rolled as they rolled before,
And many a prayer said to the wave
That lowered him in a sailor's grave.

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