

Ray Stevens

"The Ballad Of Jake McClusky"

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Every Friday evening 'bout suppertime
When Jake McCloskey had finished eating,
He'd excuse himself and hurry down
To his weekly Lodge hall meeting.
'Till Ethel Mae, his wife, found out what no one could
dispute;
That that Lodge hall was no Lodge at all,
But a house of ill repute!

I don't think I've ever seen a woman
Quite that mad before.
She marched right down to that evil place
And started kicking in the door!
She yelled, "I know you're in there, Jake McCloskey,
You low-down, philanderin' liar!"
And then she soaked 'er down in kerosene
And set the whole darned place on fire!

Well, a crowd had gathered up outside,
But no one moved or spoke.
'Til a tremblin' voice from deep inside cried,
(cough, cough) "I smell smoke!"
Then that old house started shaking,
Folks began to scream and shout,
And then the door flew off the hinges;
Lord, and folks came spewing out!

(Chorus)
Oh, the flames (yes, the flames) of retribution
Could be seen (could be seen) from miles around.
And you never saw so much confusion
In our little Georgia town,
As the day that Ethel Mae McCloskey
Burned the Lodge hall down!

First, Judge Oliver Wendell Justice
Came out running for his life.
But he turned and ran back in the flames
When he caught sight of his wife!
And self-ordained Elijah Payne,
An evangelist of sorts,

Claimed he was down there saving souls.
(In his pin-striped jockey shorts? Uh-huh!)

Then out came the mayor
And a banker we all knew.
Then the po-lice chief, and the sheriff,
And a deputy or two.
And when we asked the sheriff what he was doing
In that den of degradation,
He answered, "Why, me 'n the boys
Was just carrying out a little, 'undercover'
investigation!"

And then the "Ladies of the Evening,"
Clad in just their lingerie,
Were crying, "We've lost everything!"
"How will we live?" "Where will we stay?"
And then a lawyer spoke and said,
"I'll help you file for welfare so you can eat,
And... You can all stay out at my place,
'Till you can get back off your feet. (Hee, hee, hee!)

(Chorus)
Oh, the flames (yes, the flames) of retribution
Could be seen (could be seen) from miles around.
And you never saw so much confusion
In our little Georgia town,
As the day that Ethel Mae McCloskey
Burned the Lodge hall down!

What happened next to Jake McCloskey
Is anybody's guess.
He came smokin' out that back door
In a state of complete undress.
He went streaking off into the night
And no one's seen him since -
But I'll always recall how he mooned us all
When he cleared the backyard fence!

(Chorus)
Oh, the flames (yes, the flames) of retribution
Could be seen (could be seen) from miles around.
And you never saw so much confusion
In our little Georgia town,
As the day that Ethel Mae McCloskey
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