

Smell the Roses

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The old man stood at the lock, watching the boat go through
There was lots of cursing and complaining from the boat's exhausted crew.
One crewman stopped and asked, "What're you smilin' at, old man?"
He said, "When I was captain of my own canal boat, I was ornery as an old wet hen.

He said, "cannalin's not an easy life," and took a draw on his old clay pipe.
"There was bone-weary work, hard drinkin' and gamblin' and I did it for most of my life.
But as I got older, the fightin' got harder and I lost more than I won.
Then one day the boat passed a field of flowers and I knew my days of fightin' were done."

Chorus: You gotta be thankful for the roses you pass along the way
 And the lilacs and the wild flowers the boat passes every day.
 You'll smell mule apples and dead fish as life's canal boat moseys on,
 But remember those lovely roses will once again come along.

The old captain stood there puffin on his pipe. "Canallin's a great life," he said.
"There are lots of hardships but it all evens out, and you have to get that into your head.
This Ohio country is beautiful, with forests and flowers and fields of grain
And you want to try to remember the good. You may never see it again."

The crewman said, "Thanks, Old Timer, I'll see you the next time through."
And he hopped on the boat as the mules started pullin', and he gave the old man a salute.
A short time later, they passed a field where the flowers were in full bloom.
And he picked up his banjo and after a while, he'd written this little tune.