

**The following interview with
ARLO GUTHRIE
was conducted by the Library of Congress
on March 25, 2021**



Library of Congress: Without having to go line by line through the lyrics, how much of the Song, “Alice’s Restaurant,” is true-to-life and how much did you take creative license with?

Arlo Guthrie: The 8x10 photos weren’t in color. They were black and white. The rest is accurately true.

LOC: How long did the song, originally, take to write--was there a stream of consciousness method to it?

AG: It was essentially not written, but memorized from ongoing performances. I’d keep the lines and nuances that worked well, and discarded the lines that fell flat. With that in mind, it took about a year to complete.

LOC: I read that the album version of “Alice” was recorded in the studio but with a live audience—is this true? If so, why did you choose to record it in that manner? And who were the audience members?

AG: The studio recording had a live audience. They were invited by my manager, Harold Leventhal and my producer, Fred Hellerman. It really wasn’t a good idea, as all of the audience Participants were already well aware of the song, and unlike an audience of new victims, the ones familiar with the song did not respond as well. Laughter was added to the live audience later.

LOC: At just over 18 minutes in length, did you ever think that “Alice” might have a commercial viability or was that just not part of your thinking at the time?

AG: I never expected or even thought about commercial viability, as commercial in those days conveyed a “selling out” of purpose. I knew it wasn’t going to get commercial radio play as nothing over two minutes was played back then.

LOC: At the time of the song's release, did you receive any blowback from people who saw the song as too political and anti-draft?

AG: I assume there were some who didn't find it amusing, but most of the people I was performing for probably shared my views.