

What Made America Famous?

Harry Chapin

It was the town that made America famous
The churches full and the kids all gone to hell
Six traffic lights and seven cops and all the streets kept clean
The supermarket and the drug store and the bars all doing well

Now they were the folks that made America famous
Our local fire department stocked with short haired volunteers
And on Saturday night while America boozes the fire
Department showed dirty movies, the lawyer and the grocer
Seeing their dreams come to life on the movie screens
While the plumber hopes that he won't be seen
As he tries to hide his fears and he wipes away his tears

But somethings burning somewhere
Does anybody care?

We were the kids that made America famous
The kind of kids that long since drove our parents to despair
We were lazy long hairs dropping out, lost confused, and copping out
Convinced our futures were in doubt and trying not to care

We lived in the house that made America famous
It was a rundown slum, the shame of all the decent
Folks in town, we hippies and some welfare cases
Crowded families of coal black faces, cramped inside
Some cracked old boards, the best that we all could afford
But still to nice for the rich landlord to tear it down

And we could hear the sound of something burning somewhere
Is anybody there?

We all lived the life that made America famous
Our cops would make a point to shadow us around our town
And we love children put a Swastika on the bright red firehouse door
America, the beautiful, it makes a body proud

And then came the night that made America famous
Was it carelessness or someone's sick idea of a joke
In the tinder box trap that we hippies lived in
Someone struck a spark at first I thought that I was dreaming
Then I saw the first flames gleaming and heard
The sound of children screaming coming through the smoke

And somethings burning somewhere
Does anybody care?

Oh it was the fire that made America famous, the sirens wailed
And the firemen stumbled sleepy from their homes and the
Plumber yelled, "Come on let's go?", but they saw what was burning
And said, "Take it slow, let 'em sweat a little, they'll never know?"
And besides, we just cleaned the chrome, said the plumber
"Then I'm going alone?"

Well he rolled on up in the fire truck and raised the
Ladder to the ledge where me and my girl and a couple of kids
Were clinging like bats to the edge, we staggered to salvation
Collapsed on the street and I never thought that a fat man's face

Would ever look so sweet

I shook his hand in the scene that made America famous
And a smile from the heart that made America great
We spent the rest of that night in the home of a man
I'd never known before it's funny when you get that close
It's kind of hard to hate

I went to sleep with the hope that made America famous
I had the kind of a dream that maybe they're still
Trying to teach in school of the America that made America famous
And of the people who just might understand that how together

Yes we can create a country better than the one
We have made of this land, we have a choice to make
Each man who dares to dream reaching out his hand
A prophet or just a crazy god damn dreamer of a fool
Yes a crazy fool

And something burning somewhere
Does anybody care? Is anybody there?
Is anybody there?