

## The Wet, Dark, Dusty Seam (A Miner's Reflection on Reap'ng The Coal)

Lyrics and Music © By W.A. Gallant

*This song is dedicated to my dad, Daniel Arther Simon Gallant, and reflects my perception of his life in the mines of Cape Breton and the admiration*

*I hold for him, his values and his commitment to family life, community and the environment. —W.A. Gallant*

1 Bright D G D G

It's ear-ly in the morning, be - fore the break of  
With lost my soul - mate bro - ther Joe to a tim - ber, coal - slime  
bea-tenbrow, there's ho - nour and much more "mi - ner

5 A A7 D

dawn, our chil - dren snug - gled warm - ly their blan ketts tight - ly  
fall, my fa - ther's heart was bro - ken his backcrushed and  
pride". Our dreams are in our chil - dren, who take life in it's

9 A A7 D G A7

drawn. Each day be - neath the o - cean, down the cold steel  
all. Yet still I'm called to dig the coal, 'midst pe - rils yet un -  
stride. Trough the halls of high - er learn - ing. with chil - dren of their

13 D G A7 D A7

road, were dri - ven like our fa - ther's were, the pick - spade coal to  
told, where the rake - car takes me on my way to the wet, dark dus - ty  
own, we. pray that God not lead them down that dark, black, dus - ty

17 D G D

load. As mi - ner - men, we're bro - thers strong, so  
hole. My mo - ther knew the ha - zards her  
stone. I would not trade this mi - ner's life for

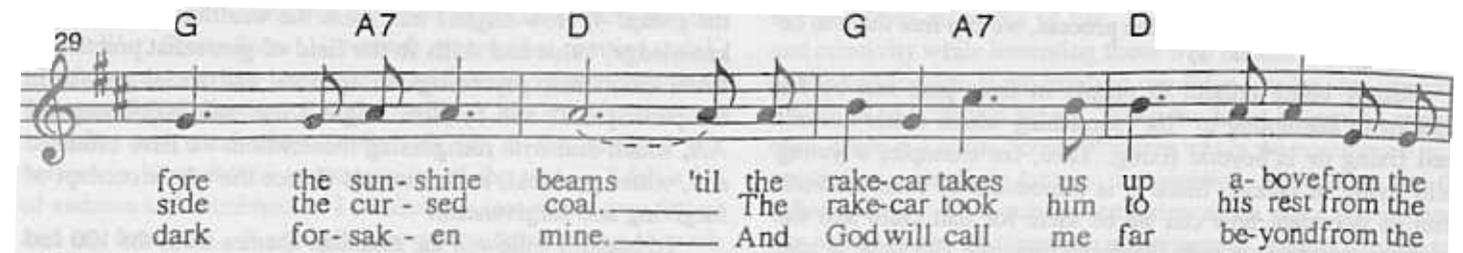
21 G A A7 D

fond and close - ly tied. In the frostchilled dar - kened coalmine, there are  
faith was firm and sound. She could not hide the heartaches of  
for tuneywealth or fame. Just leave me with my mi - ner friends 'til my

25 E-7 A A7 D

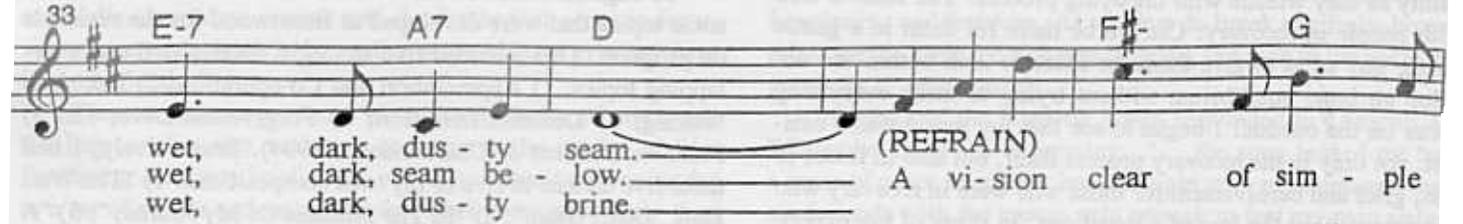
tears we of - ten hide, and cov - ring tales of by - gone days be -  
pain deep un - der - ground. In cou - rage brave she laid her son be -  
light has lost it's flame. We gave our lives in ser - vice in the

29 G A7 D G A7 D



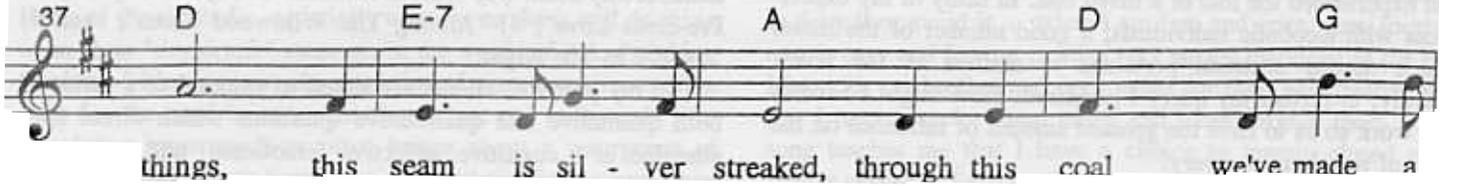
fore the sun-shine beams 'til the rake-car takes us up a-bove (from the  
side dark the cur-sed coal. The rake-car took him to his rest from the  
dark for-sak-en mine. And God will call me far be-yond from the

33 E-7 A7 D F#- G



wet, dark, dus-ty seam. (REFRAIN) A vi-sion clear of sim-ple  
wet, dark, seam be-low.  
wet, dark, dus-ty brine.

37 D E-7 A D G



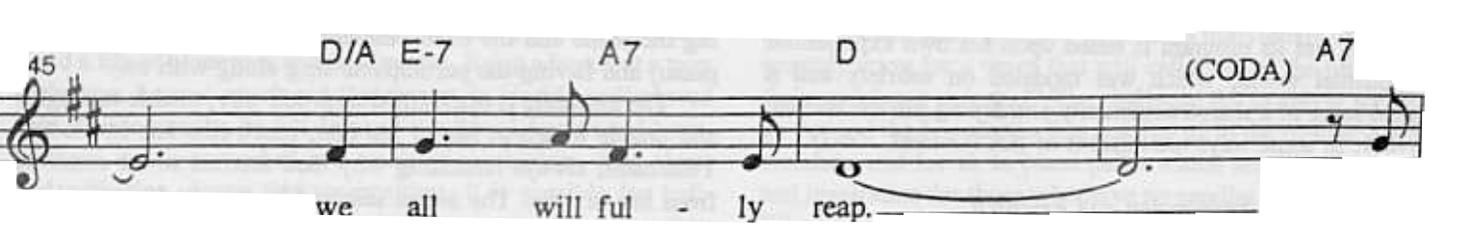
things, this seam is sil-ver streaked, through this coal we've made a

41 D G A7 D E-7 A



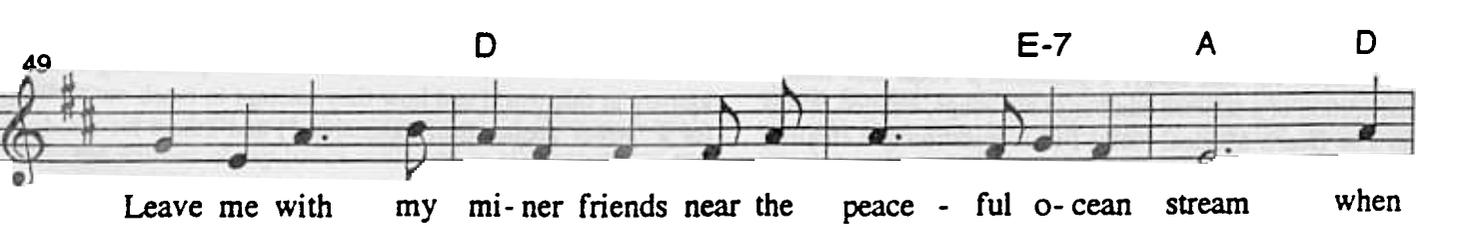
li-ving. it's pure dia-mond gold to me for what we've sown.

45 D/A E-7 A7 D (CODA) A7



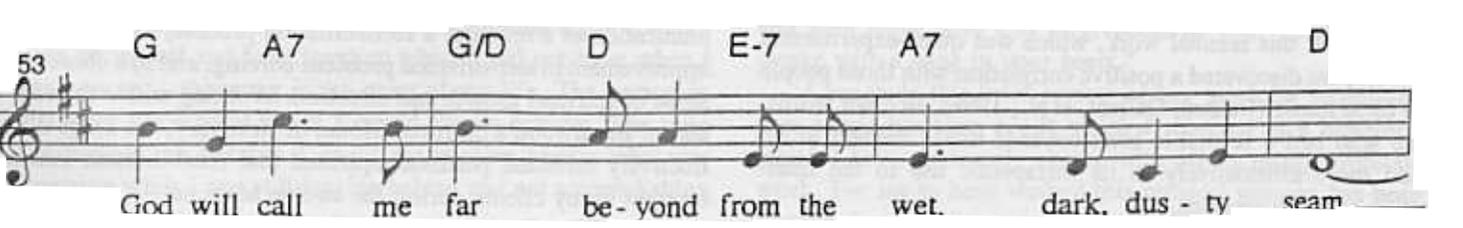
we all will ful-ly reap.

49 D E-7 A D



Leave me with my mi-ner friends near the peace-ful o-cean stream when

53 G A7 G/D D E-7 A7 D



God will call me far be-yond from the wet. dark, dus-ty seam

57



we can join with others in the painful human condition in which they find themselves and in which they present themselves to us, we liberate ourselves, and in the process, we can free them to be more "real."

Simply being present to people in their pain can be far superior to attempting to "fix" something which either doesn't need fixing or is beyond fixing. Take, for example, a young child dying of cancer. Since it is impossible to remove death from its doorstep, how can we be there for that child and the family as they wrestle with the dying process? The same is true with people in recovery: Can we be there for them in a gentle caring way so as to give them the space to look within and develop an inner equilibrium without trying to make everything better on the outside? I began to see that my music was a catalyst, not only in the recovery process itself, but also in issues of loss, grief and bereavement for those who were in recovery who had experienced the loss of a loved one. In many of my experiences with alcoholic individuals, a good number of the issues which needed attention pertained to matters of the heart. Thirdly, to further my query I pondered: How might I harness this work so as to have the greatest amount of influence on the lives of people in recovery?

Subsequent to this, I had the opportunity to begin using music as a form of intervention with my clients in my private practice as well as counseling clients and couples who were involved in a self-help oriented recovery program at Brentwood. The Brentwood Recovery Home, located in southwestern Ontario, was founded in 1964. It originated as a rehabilitation centre for the treatment of people with alcohol- and drug-related problems. Brentwood is unique because it was founded by a clergyman and its program is based upon his own experiential and spiritual world, which was modeled on sobriety and a genuine sense of a shared community journeying toward holistic recovery, in some ways reminiscent of AA (Gallant, 1992).

### *Combining Music Intervention and Research*

Finally, I asked myself: How might I develop a sound research base by which my work could be empirically validated? In preparation for this study, I produced a vocal and instrumental edition of a selected number of my songs, entitled *Songs From The Heart: Musical Notes For Inspiration and Healing* (Gallant, 1996; Plowman & Gallant, 1996). I subsequently embarked on a professional "crusade" to solicit the response of clients by means of a more formal research endeavor. Through the results of this seminal work, which was quasi-experimental in nature, we discovered a positive correlation with those people who liked music (Gallant, Gallant, et al., 1998). In other words, those who had a favorable bend towards music seemed to respond more affirmatively to its therapeutic use in the interventive research sessions.

While gaining momentum with this innovative discovery, I contemplated five more basic questions: 1) How might the combined social group work/music intervention approach blend best with the Brentwood self-help model, using its key talks (over 100 such topics) based on major topical themes? 2) What musical selections would be most appropriate for this group of people and would they connect with each theme? 3) How might

I best intensify the 'educational moment' or the 'window of opportunity' to expand the resources available to the members of the group? 4) How might I maximize the wealth of professional knowledge, value and skills in the field of generalist practice to foster emotional, psychological, spiritual and social growth in the participants? and 5) How might I use two major steps of AA, which deal with recognizing those whom we have offended and, where practical, make amends (hence the whole concept of forgiving and forgiveness)?

To begin, I followed the mainline themes from the 100 and some topics that were developed at Brentwood for the residents on program. This included five strategic, interrelated and overlapping topics: 1) Appreciation and Co-operation; 2) Decision-Making; 3) Decision/Direction; 4) Forgiveness/Love; and 5) Freedom (Gallant & Charbonneau, 1994). Respectively, I tied these five themes to five of my own compositions: 1) "The Wet, Dark, Dusty Seam"; 2) "In The Stillness Of My Journey"; 3) "A Precious Love"; 4) "Among The Wildwood Trees"; and 5) "Candle In The Night."

In my practice, clients are asked to respond to a series of both qualitative and quantitative questions which direct their attention at a cognitive, affective (emotional) and behavioral level. The music/topical theme content provides the foundation for further therapeutic intervention. The music and the lyrics are presented in a variety of ways: 1) playing the musical selection from the CD player and inviting clients to participate, 2) playing the music via piano or guitar and inviting the clients to sing along with me by following the written sheet music provided, or 3) having a music therapist who is also a musician play the piano with my guitar accompaniment or vice versa (myself playing the piano and the music therapist accompanying me on the piano) and having the participants sing along with us.

The alcoholic is often filled with self-pity, unable to forgive and unable to accept her or his fate, much like Job in the Old Testament, always lamenting why God seemed so far removed from her or him. The songs selected in this study invited the respondents to trust in a power greater than themselves and to go beyond their own narrow limitations. The songs, with their gentle and mellow tones, allowed for a deliberate pondering of their journey in this world and how they attempt to reach out to God (or a "power greater than themselves") and others for freedom and security.

This second study showed empirically that the music intervention had positive results on the basis of: 1) enhanced communication as a result of a reconciliation process, 2) heightened improvement in self-oriented problem-solving, and 3) a deepened sense of spiritual growth and direction. Working within the context of Brentwood's Spiritual Model of Recovery, the songs distinctively reflected pertinent spiritual and rehabilitation issues brought up by clients during the twelve sessions.

The "Wet, Dark Dusty Seam" was one of the arrangements used in the research effort. Alcoholics can experience a feeling of pride regarding their recovery when there is a sense of appreciation and gratitude for the steps they have taken and recognition that they are choosing to live fully and actively in the present. This song is dedicated to my dad, who was a Cape Breton coal miner, and reflects my perception of his life in the mines

and the admiration and affection I hold for him, his values and his commitment to family life, community and the environment.

Members of the research group responded by saying that the "The Wet, Dusty Seam"... reminds me of what remains unfulfilled in my own life ... my own selfishness in comparison to the unselfish dedication of a miner's life ... the song is relaxing, soothing and comforting ... reminds me of the family I left behind in Nova Scotia and memories of the past ... I felt a lot of sadness and numbness as I recalled the loss of my own father and my brother.... It reminded me of my father going to work at Ford's seven days a week and the deaths that occur in factories where workers die before retirement and leave grieving family and friends."

There are numerous times when the alcoholic refuses to get the help or direction necessary to improve the quality of life. Receiving direction implies the ability to submit and surrender to a set of values and principles that work more effectively than those of the alcoholic, especially when he or she is still drinking or in their "dry drunk" stage or, in the words of AA, "stinking thinking." Moving toward a resolution of unresolved issues often calls for the need to move ahead and "get on" with one's life. Resolving inner conflicts often brings about a resurgence of love. Alcoholics have been in spiritual hibernation because they have used alcohol as a self-defeating solution to a spiritual problem which, as an obstacle, requires a spiritual solution. (Gallant, 1992). Music can bring to awareness an often ossified and sterile form of existence and make a person conscious of the limitations we impose on our own freedom, thus depleting the very energy we require to live and sustain life.

"A Precious Love" speaks of the devastating feeling of a young man who believed that he had no roots, and consequently lived a life of aloneness and deprivation. Being adopted at a very early age, he was convinced that no one in his life really loved him. Consequently, he felt doomed to a life of despair and hopelessness, while enmeshed in a world of alcoholism, drug abuse and addiction. From this composition, it is possible for individuals to choose a word which is the opposite to the way they want to treat themselves, like "tolerant," "gentle," "sensitive," "soft," "open," "kind," &c., that can help to "tone" their inner climate.

Members of the research group said of "A Precious Love": "... the journey of my life is contained in all three verses and sadly reminds me of lost moments, lost decisions and lost chances for change ... I feel that it was written specifically about me ... song reminds me that today I have found a place where I can be myself and have freedom which I did not have when I was young ... this song is the story of my life. The person in this story has a good which I would like to achieve. The song discouraged me because I could see another person who was changing while I was still lagging behind and not accomplishing anything with my life."

When all is said and done, spiritually-oriented folk-like gospel music can often spur a person to ponder the more important questions in life. Those in recovery can benefit by being spiritually connected with other people. While attending a one week retreat in the Wildwood Resort area in California just above the Russian River, two miles from San Francisco, I wrote

"Among The Wildwood Trees" to capture the peace and simplicity of being one with God, with nature, and with fellow journeymen from all walks of life. The song depicts joy, splendor and creativity while lamenting those who choose to remain pessimistic and forlorn. If we can find our Eden Garden, we can have a taste of bliss in this world. When the heart is open to experience, there is a cosmic connectedness where we reverberate with perception, sensation, fantasy, imagination, knowledge and the fullness of life. This outward experience can grace and enhance our whole sense of pleasure, sensuousness, beauty, truth, art, functioning and freedom. As we dare to break our finite boundaries, we discover the richness of being in touch to the value and goodness of other people.

Members of the research group responded to "Among The Wildwood Trees" by expressing: "... the song helped me have a sense of peace inside my heart tonight with my mom and made me feel safe with the group, safe enough to feel my pain and not to deny it or avoid it ... when I am free and open, then forgiveness is easy and freeing ... stirs very strong emotions of the hate I have for my brother and my mother for their past treatment of me. I have love for them today and I can forgive them ... the song teaches me that I have a choice to remain closed or to remain open and I can be the master of my life by acting responsibly in the circumstances which surround me ... This song gave me hope to travel from despair to peace. It strengthened my belief in God."

#### *Concluding Remarks*

Is it possible that we can become awakened to the song which waits to be sung in our own hearts and in our own lives and to let that song resonate with those individuals who so desperately crave for a voice that will call them to the fulfilment of their own inner potential? The challenge for us might well be to go beyond the boundaries that confine us to the ordinary and the mundane and for us to blaze paths which are a source of light and inspiration for those who have no candles to light their way. When we chose to settle for mediocrity, it is easy to relegate science and art to a place of irrelevance and obscurity. Through music, I have attempted in some small way to invite addictive clients to explore deeper levels of insight through music, to alleviate their pain and suffering, to ease the moral outrage which people perpetrate against each other, and thus render a suffering community to be a better place to live, sing and dance. I remember an old adage which I had learned as a child: "Go to bed with hope, love and forgiveness in your heart and you'll awake with a song in your heart."

I conclude this brief review of my work by recapitulating how music has been a gift which I received as a blessing and which I have generously shared with others in my professional work. For me to have walked this musical journey has been an immensely rewarding experience. By tapping one's originality, by getting in touch with one's sense of innovation, and by delving into the unknown, who knows?, we may discover a musical note within that longs to tell its story and yearns to be shared with others. The artist, songwriter and musical performer can offer a timely incentive for creative dialogue and celebration in a unique "window of opportunity." I can only hope that other

artists and composers with a similar musical bent or with creative musical talent will be motivated to expand their own horizons and provide avenues for the "marriage" of science and art in a way which will foster the utilization of hidden potential. The more we converse with each other about the innovative ap-

proaches we have, the more we can generate a dynamo of energy and vitality. May we be continually cognizant of life's combination of "musical torrents" and "melodic streams" which touch the ebb and flow of our lives as we reach out to others in song.

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#### *References*

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- Author's Note: The two CDs: *Songs from the heart: Musical notes for inspiration and healing (Vocal and Instrumental Editions)* and the two books on alcoholism: *Sharing the love that frees us: a spiritual awakening from the struggles of addiction and abuse* and *Alcoholism and Brentwood: A spiritual model of recovery* are available from: Jewel Max Press, 925 Lena, Suite 101, Windsor, Ontario N9C 3K1.