

Where in keen strike to accumulate riches,
All friendship's forgotten, and hardened all hearts.

'Tis the land of false swearing, of cursing, blaspheming,
Where the sharper by poker or monte gain wealth,
Where he who is cute can live easy in scheming,
While the miner's soon bankrupt in pocket and health.
It is here that the almighty dollar is rated
A god in this Anglo-American land,
Where the greatest of blackguards, if lucky, is fe[as]ted,
While the poor man, though honest, may starve and be damned.

Know ye the land where the bare rocks and old pines
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime,
Where the last hopes of thousands dissolved by the gold mines
To many bring sorrow, drive others to crime?
Oh, how happy I'll be when on board of the steamer!
How joyful I cannot find language to tell,
When wishing each miner and loafer and schemer,
Cariboo and its horrors a final farewell!

[Words by J. Lawrence, MS in Public Archives of British Columbia. Tune adapted by P.J. Thomas from a German hymn tune first printed 1835.]

“The Last Battle” © Bill Gallaher (SOCAN). “Jerry Potts” © Richard Harrow (SOCAN)

John Worrall, 1945-2004

When I arrived in Calgary in 1974, I soon found the Calgary Folk Club, which was already two years old. Amazingly, 30 years later the club still thrives. Even more amazingly, until February 23 of this year, four original members of the houseband, The Wild Colonial Boys (more recently The Wild Colonials), were still part of the group. Now only three remain, as John Worrall passed away suddenly on that date.

John was the front man of the band, the entertainer who could rouse any audience. A fine singer and rhythm guitar player, he played off against percussionist Gordie Black, bassist John Martland and multi-instrumentalist and singer Mansell Davies, all of whom played straight man in their own ways. Together with various other group members over the years, they warmed up audiences for the top folk music performers of the era.

Mansell Davies says of Johnny, "Behind the facade, there was a real, huge talent... he had the ability to touch people." Johnny would do whatever it took to sell a song, donning costumes, gyrating in his famous Elvis impersonation, drawing on his drama background to mimic accents, even once riding a horse into the folk club premises. He was "the spark and sparkle of the Calgary Folk Club," said the club's newsletter. "He loved an audience and loved to perform, and the audience loved him back."

Born in Sheffield, England, John was a teacher and assistant principal in Calgary for 33 years; after retirement, his love of children prompted him to drive a school bus for his last years.

St. Pius X Church in Calgary overflowed for the funeral. A slide show of various stages of John's life was followed by some of his favourite songs and tunes played by friends. Afterward, musical friends took part in a session/reception at the club.

The Wild Colonials' future is uncertain, but the Calgary Folk Club carries on into the future; however, the void where Johnny Worrall used to be will not be easily filled.

John Leeder, Calgary, Alberta

Lost Soul

The member listed below has moved without sending us a new address. If you know of her new whereabouts, please inform us at <prescotj@telusplanet.net> and/or <leeders@nucleus.com>.

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