

An Ancestral Son Comes Home

In the gentle, forested mountains of the southern Appalachians, where the sun always seems to shine on the peaks and the mists kiss the valleys, music has been a heritage and tradition of the people living here since antiquity. These mountains have given birth to many fine musicians, and now they have also given us the legacy of Richard Wayne Mullins, a well known and much loved Contemporary Christian Music composer and performing artist.

Pamela Richards, author of the new book, *Singing from Silence*, has chosen to introduce her book to the public at this year's Genealogy Jamboree in Cumberland Gap, Tennessee on June 7th, 8th, and 9th, in honor of Rich Mullins' Appalachian heritage and among the very people of his ancestral homeland.

Love, life and art mesh in *Singing from Silence*, a true story of two eighteen-year-old freshmen who both attended Cincinnati Bible College. In 1974, Rich Mullins, an idealistic musical genius with an admiration for St. Francis of Assisi, and Pamela Richards, an unbelieving artist with a rebellious streak, forged a long-lasting friendship that gave rise to some of the best-loved songs of Contemporary Christian Music.

Rich Mullins was best known for his song "Awesome God," a contemporary Christian praise song. His prolific songwriting was derived from his life experiences. His music was influenced by his classical training, resulting in compositions that appealed to and touched wide audiences from every walk of life as he opened his heart to his listeners. Yet, as talented as he was, he faced the human challenge of needing to be loved despite his weaknesses, not because of his God-given genius. When he performed, he bonded with an audience blind to his flaws. As a result, he was never quite satisfied with their admiration. Instead, he engaged in a personal quest to find the unconditional love of God demonstrated in his own life. In the end, by the grace of God, his own life became an example of God's unfailing love.

The author, Pamela Richards, describes conversations and incidents from their friendship which appeared in many of Rich's songs. She considers their friendship a very special gift. She tells her story to share that gift with others.

Pamela learned from Richard that not only can a creative gift be shared, it can keep on giving. Richard Wayne Mullins was known for his generosity with his talents. He earned millions through his music, but he deliberately limited his personal income and gave the rest to charity. Step by step, the author hopes to follow in the pattern he has set.

Attending the Genealogy Jamboree with Pamela will be Beverly Hall Walker, a genealogist who has researched Rich Mullins' ancestral lines. She discovered that although he was born

in Indiana, he has deep genealogical roots in Letcher County, Kentucky and the surrounding mountains. In the process of her research, she found she shares five of Rich's lines. Many of his ancestors lived and died on the ridges of Pine Mountain in Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee. Rich Mullins' paternal southern Appalachian roots came from his Mullins, Wells, Lewis, Osborne, Whitaker, Kelly, Maggard, Short, Robertson, Boggs, Pennington, Caudill, and Adams ancestors. His cousins are too numerous to mention. They came from hardy stock: explorers, pioneers, war veterans, farmers, preachers and coal miners; all working hard to find their place in the world as they continued to give birth to the next generation of musicians, artists, and craftsman. Such ancestors left us the rich legacy of their majestic mountain home.

Beverly Hall Walker has compiled Rich Mullins' ancestral lines in the spiral bound book, "*Going Home: A Sojourner's Appalachian Roots/ In Remembrance of Richard Wayne Mullins 1955-1997.*" In memory of Rich Mullins' dedication to funding charities for children and his devotion to developing the creative gifts of the next generation, and in honor of his Appalachian ancestors who gifted Rich with hands, feet and wings, she has chosen to donate the profits from her research to the Revelation Ranch Ministries in Letcher County, KY.

Also appearing with Pam and Bev at the Jamboree will be National Hammered Dulcimer Champion Ted Yoder.

Ted, a life-long Indiana native, grew up in a musically inclined family, like a lot of musicians. His whole life has been filled with writing, performing, recording, experimenting with new instruments... but it wasn't until he received his first hammered dulcimer as a wedding gift that he knew he'd found his niche. He knew there was great potential here as he began mastering this versatile traditional instrument.

Ted is currently in the studio finishing up a new CD of acoustic hammered dulcimer music. One of the new tracks is a folk song provoked by Part 2 of Pam's book...come hear Ted play it for you live!

Ted will offer a tribute to Rich Mullins in free concert at the Genealogy Jamboree: June 7th and 8th at 5:00 pm, and June 9th at 1:00 pm.

More details can be found on Pamela Richards' website at www.candletothesun.com