

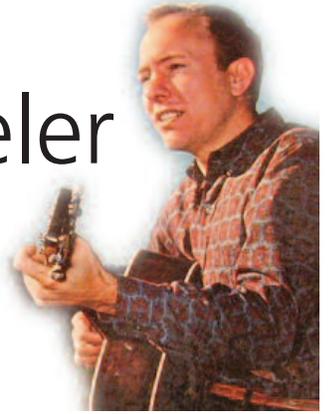
**WEST VIRGINIA
MUSIC
HALL OF FAME**



**Song
Lyrics**

In this song, people misjudge Tommy. In Billy Edd's story, "Trying to earn a nickel," Billy Edd misjudges the doctor's wife. Have you ever misjudged a person? Read Billy Edd's story, "An honorable man." What did Tommy learn from his dad? What did Billy Edd learn from Mr. Hudson?

Billy Edd Wheeler



Coward of the County

by Billy Edd Wheeler

Ev'ryone considered him the coward of the county.
He'd never stood one single time to prove the county wrong.
His mama named him Tommy, but folks just called him yellow,
But something always told me they were reading Tommy wrong.

He was only ten years old when his daddy died in prison.
I took care of Tommy 'cause he was my brother's son.
I still recall the final words my brother said to Tommy:
"Son, my life is over, but yours has just begun.

"Promise me, son, not to do the things I've done.
Walk away from trouble if you can.
Now it don't mean you're weak if you turn the other cheek.
I hope you're old enough to understand:
Son, you don't have to fight to be a man."

There's someone for ev'ryone, and Tommy's love was Becky.
In her arms he didn't have to prove he was a man.
One day, while he was working, the Gatlin boys came calling.
They took turns at Becky. And there were three of them!

Tommy opened up the door and saw his Becky crying.
The torn dress, the shattered look was more than he could stand.
He reached above the fireplace, took down his daddy's picture.
As his tears fell on his daddy's face, I heard these words again:

"Promise me, son, not to do the things I've done.
Walk away from trouble if you can.
Now it don't mean you're weak if you turn the other cheek.
I hope you're old enough to understand:
Son, you don't have to fight to be a man."

The Gatlin boys just laughed at him when he walked into the barroom.
One got up and met him, halfway 'cross the floor.
When Tommy turned around, they said, "Hey look! Ol' Yeller's leavin'."
But you coulda heard a pin drop when Tommy locked the door.

(continued)

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Twenty years of crawlin' was bottled up inside him.
He wasn't holdin' nothin' back. He let 'em have it all.
When Tommy left the barroom, not a Gatlin boy was standing.

He said, "This one's for Becky," as he watched the last one fall.
And I heard him say:

"I promised you, Dad, not to do the things you've done.
I've walked away from trouble when I can.
Now please don't think I'm weak. I couldn't turn the other cheek,
Papa, I sure hope you understand:
Sometimes you got to fight when you're a man."

Ev'ryone considered him the coward of the county.