

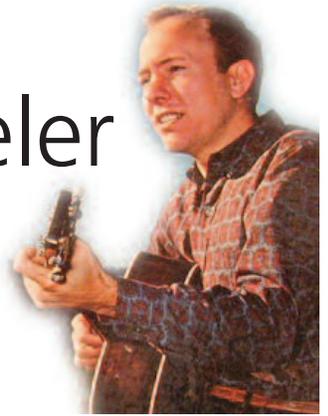
**WEST VIRGINIA  
MUSIC  
HALL OF FAME**



**Song  
Lyrics**

*This song is mentioned in Billy Edd's story, "The company owned everything," about life in a coal camp. A coal tattoo is a blue mark left on a miner's skin when a piece of coal hits him.*

# Billy Edd Wheeler



## **Coal Tattoo**

by Billy Edd Wheeler

Travelin' down that coal town road. Listen to my rubber tires whine.  
Goodbye to buckeye and white sycamore. I'm leaving you behind.  
I've been a coal man all of my life, laying down track in the hole.  
Got a back like an iron wood, bent by the wind.  
Blood veins blue as the coal. Blood veins blue as the coal.

Somebody said, "That's a strange tattoo you have on the side of your head."

I said, "That's a blueprint left by the number nine coal. A little more and I'd have been dead.

Oh, but I love the rumble and I love the dark. I love the cool of the slate,  
But it's on down a new road, looking for a job. Traveling and looking, I hate.

I stood for the union and walked in the line. I fought against the company.  
I stood for the U. M. W. of A. Now, who's gonna stand for me?  
'Cause I got no house and I got no pay. Just got a worrying soul  
And a blue tattoo on the side of my head  
Left by the number nine coal. Left by the number nine coal.

Someday when I die and go to heaven, the land of my dreams.  
I won't have to worry about losing my job to bad times or big machines.  
And I ain't gonna pay my money away or lose my hospital plans.  
I'm gonna dig that coal while the blue heavens roll.  
Singing with the angel band. Singing with the angel band.