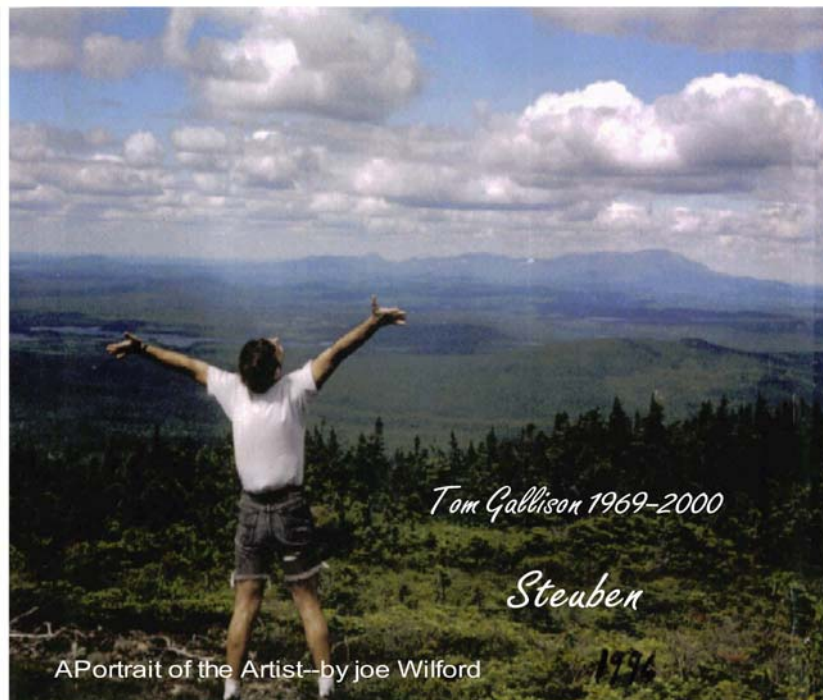


# A Portrait of the Artist

A tribute to Tom Gallison 1969–2000

◆ Steuben ◆



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## **Intro-Exeunt**

*(Instrumental)*

## **Curtain Falls**

Well there's a picture I can see it clearly in my minds eye  
It's of you standing on a cliff with your arms spread wide  
And it makes me smile 'cause I can remember the look on your face

You went away so suddenly, we feel cheated inside  
Listened to the rumors, the conjecture, the falsehoods and lies  
And there's just no explanation that is going to make it all okay

So the mystery intrigues us since we'll never know  
Whether it was something deep inside that you tried not to show  
It's not like the answer is on a paper in a cardboard shoebox  
Labeled with a piece of tape marked, "Why"

Still your notes and journals they don't offer a clue  
Sure there's frustration and depression and the dark side of you  
But we all have our own demons frothing at the mouth  
Trying to rake and claw their way into our lives

And why, why I don't really understand  
Sound and fury signify nothing  
You hear the curtain call  
And then the curtain falls

## **You were Like That**

Well there were shots in the Jersey night  
It was J.D. bathed in the dim lamplight  
Of a barren apartment over the dentist's office and shoe store

A scrabble board lies on the trunk  
And we were 3 notches past drunk  
We laughed so hard and loud when I scored 23 points with "plowed"

You were my strength  
You kept me sane  
From a life that threatened to be so plain  
You were the best protection, using a magician-like misdirection

A diner on Route 22  
The perfect place to write a song or two  
On the back of a place-mat or even a napkin will do

There was Elvis, BBAC, The Big Book, Platinum Blonde  
And I Died In Line At Bradley's  
Not to mention Deli Trek and the Dan Tanna Show  
And driving round till the sun in our rear-view mirror started to glow

Tom—You were like that  
Nobody else was quite like that  
Stubborn, passionate, uncompromising  
Always saw your love for life within  
Can't believe I'll never see you again  
No memory can fill the void of a lost friend...

## **Freda's House**

*(Instrumental)*

## Tragedy

There were movie posters all over your room  
They're still on the wall  
But the theatre programs, Hawaiian shirts and TV Guides  
They're in boxes down the hall

Shouldn't be left here  
Should've been gone  
Shouldn't be kept here  
With an unfinished song  
Think of all of the people  
Saying God why me?  
Staring into the face of  
Tragedy

Creating brilliance from the bits and pieces  
Of the broken rules and tattered style  
Using channeled aggravation  
And misplaced indignation  
You made it all worthwhile

Should've been left here  
Should've been gone  
Should've been kept here  
To harmonize this song  
I try to find a good reason  
What good would that do  
Should've been left here  
Somebody like you

Flyers litter the streets; the photographs and descriptions  
Wind has set them free  
The hope is gone if it ever even existed  
Crumbled like brittle leaves

Should've been left here  
Should've been gone  
You should've been kept here  
To finish this song  
I think of all of the wonder  
You never lived to see  
On my shoulder I feel it  
Tragedy

Head down in the pouring rain  
Head down on the blackest day

## **Steuben Plays Piano**

It's 4am in Garwood and a basement light is still on  
The Citation is leaking oil in the driveway  
And there are puppets on the lawn  
The videotape is rolling  
As cigar smoke fills the air  
Steuben plays piano  
All sanity beware

His name is written there in chalk  
Sprayed by the hose off the sidewalk  
And there he goes again

Well what will it be this week  
Will the Zeppelin go down in flames?  
Or will the show shoot on location  
At some remote town in Maine?  
There's a song written in tribute  
To the covers of TV Guide  
Steuben plays piano  
The melody of jailhouse pride

What lies in the "Fun-Corner?"  
A clapper hat as the headlines blur-by  
From the New York Post

Aw, Steuben how we miss you  
And your ever-zany ways  
There's no way we could forget you  
Or those Qua-Qua Quality days  
It's time for "Pillow Talk" now  
As the lit cigar explodes  
Steuben plays piano  
In the unfinished episode

The basement lies in darkness now  
A brilliant life cut short somehow  
Why did you have to go?

## **Come up, Kinch**

*(Instrumental)*

## **Faintly Falling**

Thirty-one and it all came undone  
Steuben—My friend  
So young and so spry living on the razor of life  
Of a sudden came the end  
An artist's eye with a spark you cut deep made your mark  
On the stage of men

Served your time in jail never once thought to fail  
You forged ahead  
With your camera you'd find so much quality time  
Only to end up dead  
The coroner said suicide but we all know she lied  
That bitch wasn't in your head

Now some Entenmanns cakes  
And all the video tapes  
Are all that remain  
You've been taken away  
The final scene of this play  
Nothing is the same

Though your spirit soars free  
Off to create in eternity  
You're still not here

Your life wasn't a joke  
There's no doubt about that  
Amongst all the grief we feel for your loss  
I know somewhere out there  
You'd smile and still want us to laugh

## **Curtain Falls (A.M. Dub Mix)**

*(Instrumental)*

About this site:

'Art Never Dies' was inspired by the untimely death of Tom Gallison, who was killed when he was struck by a train on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2000. He had turned 31 on February 12<sup>th</sup>. The Medical examiner ruled his death a suicide, but his family, friends and those who knew him well refuse to believe this. The circumstances surrounding his death have never been properly investigated nor fully explained to this day. It remains a tragic mystery.

Tom expressed his art in a number of ways. Primarily, he was an actor and a musician. What amazed my friends and I about Tom was that while we all had our passions—Tom focused on his 24/7. His creative spirit fired on all cylinders—all the time. Tom and I spent much time together – and it was not simply two friends hanging out for awhile. An evening with Tom was an *event*. Our friendship was always – always – a celebration of the bond we had. It was a friendship that I am thankful to have had—because I have never experienced anything like it before or since.

Those of us who knew Tom are left with a tremendous void in the wake of his death. I personally looked at my life in a completely different light after that fateful February morning. I consider myself an artist—but I saw that I was really not doing all I could. Tom had more creative energy in his pinky toe than I do. When I think of the terrible waste it is that Tom isn't here, I want to shake God himself by the lapels and ask, WHY? WHY, TOM GALLISON?

I realized that this sort of thinking wasn't going to get me anywhere. God wasn't going to stand for anyone bucking his system. It's been around a few million years. So instead—I asked myself what I could do to A) preserve the memory of Tom and B) get off my arse and start making art a priority in my life.

I started out small. I'm not a landscaper, but I like working with my hands, so one day I took some old bricks and a shovel out in my backyard and dug out a modest memorial to Tom. I made a large square with the bricks and inside of that a distinct capital 'T,' then planted flowers. Tom and I used to play all night games of scrabble, so originally, the 'T' had scrabble pieces glued onto it that spelled out his name and his alias: Steuben. Sadly, the Iowa weather has since taken its toll on those. I found a big rock and placed it above the 'T' with plans to one day bury a sealed time capsule of various Tom Gallison artifacts. (Playbills, performance reviews, song lyrics, etc.) I completed the Gallison memorial by placing an old bench at the foot of it. It is a peaceful place to sit and relax after a long day.

My cats found the site very much to their liking—they were always prowling about over the bricks and lying on the bench. I found it amusing because they had an affinity for Tom that they showed to very few people. That first summer I planted mammoth sunflowers to one side of the memorial and they grew over 7 feet high. They were like sentries standing tall in honor. I remember that fall when they died, the huge dried blossoms of each flower hung down like heads lowered in prayer.

It was a very long time after Tom died before I could write any songs. I didn't even try—didn't have the desire—didn't want to. I knew better than to force something as delicate as that. I sat on the bench of my little Gallison memorial and strummed my guitar all summer long—playing nothing in particular—except maybe a short chord progression that seemed to keep rising to the surface.

At last the words came, slowly and shy, like children emerging from behind furniture when they've broken something valuable. I wrote 'Curtain Falls,' and put it to the chords I'd been playing since the previous summer. It was April 2001. Afterwards there were many versions of this song both lyrically and musically—it was an incredible struggle. I had never written anything quite so personal before. My songs at the time were mainly story-based songs revolving around fictional characters, though their experiences were reflections of my observations of life.

'Curtain Falls' was the beginning of a project that would span well over 3 years and over a dozen songs—dedicated to or written specifically about Tom.

In December 2004 I completed a full-length CD of original songs entitled: "A Portrait of the Artist." I made numerous copies for both the family and friends of Tom as well as others whom I knew could appreciate the tribute.

As the recording of "A Portrait..." was winding down my thoughts turned to what I could do next. I felt a tremendous epiphany at being able to share my personal relationship experiences with Tom. But I was only one person. The very idea came to me as I was writing a letter to Tom's Mother. The letter would contain the first copies of the CD dedicated to her son. Here is an excerpt:

***Tom brought an incredible amount of joy and entertainment into the world. This CD is a celebration of our relationship in particular. I am only one person—and for him to have touched my life in such a way is a gift I will never forget. I can understand the sorrow of each and every one of his friends, because I'm pretty sure they can each say the same thing in regards to their relationship with him. I don't have to tell you how special a person he was. His memories have now become as large as his life was. They are all we have. These lyrics, music, sound-bytes and samples are all a celebration of Tom Gallison—The Artist. May he rest in peace—his memories and his art will never die.***

The seed was planted. I was only one person—what about the rest of Tom's friends? What about my promise to take my own art more seriously?

Thus, artneverdies.com was born. A web-site to house and promote my musical projects past and present as well as a place to remember and share the memories of Tom Gallison. I have posted the lyrics and MP3's of "A Portrait of the Artist" for whoever may be interested in them. Feel free to download, burn and share whatever you find on this site. It is my hope that whomever was touched by Tom will come to this site and share their stories, photos or whatever else they may have to share. Since visiting the brick-landscaped 'T' memorial is probably out of the question for most of Tom's friends, I hope that the online bulletin board will grow with time into a Gallison memorial of its own.

Joe Wilford-2.07.06