

CHARLIE MAGUIRE

MUSICIAN SONGWRITER



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Shelly Salo

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Shelly Salo was 21 years old when she died while at work in an open-pit mine on Minnesota's Iron Range. A graduate of Hibbing High School, Shelly Salo was the first woman to die in a mining accident on the Range. She was working in the mines in order to earn money for college, and had a special interest in Biology. Shelly was critically injured when an iron pole that keeps the huge electrical cables out of the water and mud on the floor of the pit, toppled and fell on her.

I remember well, being on the road in Idaho and coming home to find the news of her death on the front page of the Minneapolis Star Tribune. I immediately tossed a few clean shirts in my suitcase and headed for Mesaba Park, just outside of Hibbing and rented a cabin there, hoping that I could talk to someone who knew her. It was hard to break through, but I did find people to talk to, and recorded the song a few years later on what is now Long Way To Another Friend/Biography.

Later on, the song was part of a dedication ceremony to Shelly at the Minnesota Discovery Center, in Chisholm, in the form beautiful hand-made quilt that hangs there to this day. More importantly, the family and extended family of Shelly Salo stay in touch, and we remember her together.

#

From the red-legend country
Comes a story told
By both friends and strangers
Of Shelly Salo

She loved the wild and the green
She passed on her way
To work at the pits that the great machines
Make bigger every day

(CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

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She handled heavy cables
That power the great machines
That gather up all of the rock
And the wild and green

With a partner, swing the cables into the "boat"
Skid them down to the great machines
Hang the cables on the pole
And never mind the wild and green

Side by side with the men she'd ride
Close her eyes to the wild and green
Just one of the boys, when in the employ
Of the great machine

One day the cable and the pole
That give life to the great machines
Did fall and cause the death of this one
Who loved the wild and green

At twenty-one she lies broken
In the mud from the great machine
At twenty-one she's gone, she's gone
Along with the wild and the green

Up at the "barn" it does go on
To the din of the great machines
There's lay-offs and firings, sick-days and hirings
And nothing wild and green

And for us in our quiet grief
In a way more felt than seen
We seek her here in all that lives
Wild and green

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Comes a story told
By both friends and strangers
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