



DESERT TRAGEDY

by Richard (Rick) Mealey

Gather round me little children and a story I will tell,
about young Keith Riley,
one you should remember well.

Now I don't mean to tell this story to make you sad or cry,
but no one here would blame you
if a tear comes to your eye.

Keith had gone to church that Sunday and after it was through,
they went on a little picnic
and some of his friends came along, too.

They went out to our desert for this picnic they had planned,
so Keith and his little buddies
could play in the rocks and pretty sand.

Off to the south stood Mount Signal so cold and dark and high,
and to a little boy Keith's age
it must have reached up to the sky.

"I'm going to climb that mountain," were his last words to his friends,
and not long after that
the search for him began.

They only looked for a little while and they knew they'd need some aid
so they called the sheriff's office
to help find where he had strayed.

The response to that call was tremendous, two hundred folks and more
gathered there that evening
to help search the desert floor.

But as the shadows began to lengthen and the sun sank in the west,
not one clue had they uncovered
in their frantic quest.

Now some stayed up on that mountain and looked the whole night through,
brave men risked their lives that night
for they had children, too.

But when the first long night was over and the sun rose in the east,
that mountain stood there mocking them
like some ungodly beast.

Well, the way the people gathered then was a wondrous sight to see,
enough to search the whole wide world
or so it seemed to me.

They came from larger cities and all of our small towns,
for they had heard that Keith was lost
and knew he must be found.

And they just kept coming, they came from here and there,
with blood hounds and expert trackers
planes and choppers in the air.

Well the way they combed that mountain was like a sight you've never seen,
they looked beneath each rock and bush
and canvassed each ravine.

Men came off that mountain (looked like they were all done in,
but a drink of water and a few quick words
and back they went again.

Three days and nights, that search went on but all to no avail,
they slowly came to realize
that mountain was Keith's jail.

And when on the fatal day found him on the south side of that hill,
his little soul had gone to heaven
and Keith was lying still.

Now I believe in God and heaven and I know my faith is strong,
and you would never hear me say
that God did anything wrong.

But He's been a lot busier lately without wars and troubled ways,
and maybe just for an instant
He looked the other way.

Say, what's the matter Sonny; there's a teardrop in your eye,
I just meant to teach a lesson
didn't mean to make you cry.

The thing you kids must remember about our desert there,
even though it's a thing of beauty
in the eyes of those who care.

You should never under-estimate the dangers in this God forsaken land,
for death just lies there waiting
(in the rocks and pretty sand).