



By: JASON WITZ Staff Writer

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U.S. Marine Eric Hall has become a poster child for the internal war men and women face when the fighting ends. But his tragedy was merely the beginning, according to a national recording artist who will release a song about post-traumatic stress disorder based on Hall's story. Folk singer **John Flynn** highlights Hall's struggles with mental illness, and the veterans who continued the exhaustive search for the 24-year-old Indiana native when others stopped.

The song, "Semper Fi," takes listeners to the filthy drainage pipe in Deep Creek where Hall's body was recovered, as well as the patrol in Iraq that changed his life forever. Above all, Flynn's lyrics serve as a wake-up call to those who turn a deaf ear to the issue, he said. "The song is about love and brotherhood, but basically, it should be a challenge to folks like me to show the same love," Flynn said.

Hall, who served in Afghanistan and Iraq, was severely wounded in June 2005 when a roadside bomb tore through his left leg and killed his best friend. During his recovery, Hall was diagnosed with PTSD, which affects thousands of returning troops.

Flynn, 51, first heard of Hall's death earlier this summer through a friend who works at a naval hospital in Virginia. At the time, Flynn was completing a track called "Soldier's Heart," about a traumatized Civil War soldier. However, the Delaware singer-songwriter thought Hall's story was more relevant.

Eric's mother, Becky Hall, was overwhelmed with emotion when she heard the lyrics. "It's just so moving," she said. "(John) put it together in a way that tells the story so beautifully."

Hall moved to Charlotte County in January to help with his rehabilitation. But he couldn't escape the war within. He disappeared from his aunt's home a month later, following a flashback. The manhunt lasted until March 9, when Gulf Cove resident and Vietnam veteran Charlie Shaughnessy discovered Hall's body 50 yards inside a drainage pipe, near the roadway where his motorcycle had been abandoned. Flynn makes references to the discovery in his song, noting Shaughnessy "found the tip of the iceberg," as the disorder reaches far beyond county lines. "It was pretty touching," Shaughnessy said.

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Flynn began writing in 1980, after graduating from Temple University with a political science degree. He released his first self-titled album in 1997, which hit the Top 20 on the Americana charts. Since 2000, his songs have focused more on social justice issues, such as AIDS.

Flynn will record "Semper Fi" this month for his next album, which is scheduled for a February release.

Becky Hall said the song will have a positive impact on the family's efforts to help veterans with their transition home. She is also pressing Congress to improve the system for treating troops and identifying PTSD. "We're going to reach so many people with this (song)," Hall said. "I think it's going to give us a big push."

## **Semper Fi**

Lyrics by John Flynn

*Charlie found the tip of the iceberg shielded from the Florida sun  
Wedged just like a misfired cartridge ... in the barrel of a large concrete gun  
Charlie laid down his knife and flashlight ... crawled out of the culvert to say  
This mother's son was wounded in action ... but inaction took his life away  
Eric had become agitated ... reliving again and again  
the IED that tore up his body ... the bomb that blew away his best friend  
Men whose war was 40 years older saddled up when they heard the call  
A fellow Marine had gone missing, a former corporal named Eric Hall*

*Semper fi ... always faithful ... Tell me why we lost track  
This Marine served his country then this country turned its back*

*Authorities had called off the manhunt for the skinny kid with the limp  
But Vietnam vets this land gave up on would not give up searching for him  
They found his motorcycle abandoned out where the palm trees and terrain  
looked just like the Euphrates valley ... right next to a large concrete drain*

*Semper fi ... always faithful ... Tell me why we lost track  
This marine served his country then this country turned its back*

*He fought for this land and saluted ...  
The same Stars and Stripes on a pole  
that waved goodbye when that fight left him ...  
with scars and stripes on his soul  
His ashes first went to Indiana ... Brothers that he never had known  
showed up from all over this country making sure Eric got home  
Now he'll rest in Arlington pastures ... but the tale is still left to tell  
How many who have fought for their country are living Eric's nightmare as well  
Because Charlie found the tip of the iceberg ...*

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