

Feature Article
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WHO KNEW: SP
 See Mary Corbit Warner's collection of 200 souvenir spoons from around the world, including the Salem Witch Spoon, right, which started the collecting craze in the 1900s. See [page 31](#).

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 The News Journal
 WILMINGTON, DE
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Count on songwriter John Flynn to sing his 'Dover' at Sunday's Cooldog concert

Honoring the fallen



Jim Graham

"Dover," by John Flynn

*Elijah was a sergeant, 42 years old/
 From Mesa, Arizona, Elijah won't grow old*

*Patrick was with C Troop, Second Armored Cav/
 His buddies all remember how Patrick loved to laugh*

*Seth was from East Brunswick, just a newlywed/
 Somewhere in New Jersey Seth's young widow bows her head*

*Daniel was from Boston, shipped out from Fort Bragg/
 His mother got back Daniel with a folded flag*

*Oh big airplane, bring 'em down easy/
 Out of the Delaware skies*

*Oh big airplane, Dover is waiting/
 To welcome the fallen you fly*

*William served in Anbar, combat engineer/
 1st Marine Division, William is not here*

*Alan rebuilt bridges for Battalion B/
 Next to cause of death they wrote the letters I.E.D.*

*Gussie was a scrub nurse, hailing from Fort Bliss/
 Gussie had a spirit this world's gonna miss*

*Jeremiah's son cries on his momma's knee/
 There was no armor plating on his dad's Humvee*

*Oh big airplane, bring 'em down easy/
 Out of the Delaware skies*

*Oh big airplane, Dover is waiting/
 To welcome the fallen you fly*

*Scrubbed wooden pallets with white straps cinched over/
 Long boxes of flag draped aluminum*

*The C-5 is crowded when it lands in Dover/
 The honor guard comes to make room again and again and again*

*Making straight for Nineveh, just like Jonah's whale/
 Holy truth you swallow, overseas you sail*

*Precious is your cargo, sacred was their gift/
 Offered in a sandstorm from which your wings lift*

*Those should take notice, can't watch you set down/
 Behind barbed wire fences miles from their town*

*No one breathes to question this silent parade/
 Except for the anguished loved ones left to say*

*Oh big airplane, bring 'em down easy/
 Out of the Delaware skies*

*Oh big airplane, Dover is waiting/
 To welcome the heroes you fly ... home*

John Flynn will perform Sunday near Dover as part of the Cooldog Concert Series.

By RYAN CORMIER
 The News Journal

It's been nearly two years since John Flynn released a song simply titled "Dover."

The powerful homage to the arrival and transfer ceremonies held for fallen U.S. soldiers at Dover Air Force Base is a moving portrait of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

The song, which mostly avoids the politics of the war in Iraq, still packs a powerful punch — something that helped it eventually find its way onto radio while becoming Flynn's most successful and, possibly, most touching song.

But it wasn't always like that. The song was initially released in July 2006, and the response to the song by radio stations was timid.

"There were only a handful of disc jockeys nationally that even

went near the song," says Flynn, 50, of Brandywine Hundred. "There was definitely a climate where folks weren't sure how this would be taken."

The DJs who immediately supported the song included Sonny Ochs — sister of the late topical singer Phil Ochs — on WRPI 91.5 FM in Troy, N.Y., and Helen Leicht of WXPB 88.5 FM in Philadelphia.

But more recently, as public support for the war has waned and the death toll has risen, Clear Channel-owned Delaware stations such as The River 92.9 FM in Wilmington and Dover's 94.7 FM WDSB have aired the song as well.

And just this week, if you were listening to XM Satellite Radio, you would have heard "Dover" receiving national airplay.

In addition, the song has been heard more than 30,000 times

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IF YOU GO

WHO: John Flynn
WHEN: 3 p.m. Sunday

WHERE: Cooldog Concert Series near Dover. (The location is given when a reservation is made.)

COST: \$15; ages 10-18 and active military \$10; 9 and younger free.

BRING: A lawn chair and a covered dish to share. Cooldog provides beer, wine and soft drinks.

RESERVATIONS AND OTHER INFORMATION: www.cooldogconcerts.com

BOOKING INFORMATION:

Cathy Woolsey TshirtCathy@johnflynn.net (772) 528-1534 8625 70th Ave. Vero Beach, FL 32967

Flynn: Will be on 'The Green Train'

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on YouTube and nearly 3,000 times on Flynn's MySpace page. (The song can be heard at www.myspace.com/johnflynn-folksinger.)

The song chronicles the lives lost in war, whether it be Gussie the scrub nurse, William the combat engineer or Seth, an East Brunswick, N.J., man who had married just before shipping out.

Flynn, who has sung with such artists as Willie Nelson and Kris Kristofferson during his career, says he was opposed to the war from the beginning, but he maintains that's not the point of the song.

"I tried to keep myself out of the discussion. I wanted to paint this picture the best I could so people would pay attention to the sacrifice," says Flynn, who will sing the song Sunday afternoon near Dover as part of the Cooldog Concert Series. (Go to www.cooldogconcerts.com to make reservations for the concert, which appropriately coincides with the Memorial Day weekend.)

WXPN's Leicht says she was drawn to the song immediately and that, when she plays it, she regularly receives phone calls from listeners wanting to know the singer's identity and where they can buy the song.

"The feelings he shares in the song are so strong, you could just feel how people would connect to it because so many people, unfortunately, have family members who have lost their children, brothers or sisters," she says. "So, when I heard it, I thought that this song needed to be heard. It's speaking to a generation and for a generation in a very special way."

At the Dover country station 94.7 FM, "Dover" has been played 80 times since it first aired at the end of February. Program director Andy Harris says the response to the song has been "100 percent positive" from listeners who call the station once they hear it.

"Mostly, we play it because it's about Dover and the Dover Air Force Base, but if it were not a good song, we wouldn't have played it," Harris says.

There was no concern at the station about playing the song, he says, "primarily because the song is not pro-war or anti-war. It's not about that. It's about the sacrifice. You can support people in a war without being pro- or anti-war and, I think, basically that's what the song does."



Heddy Bergsman

John Flynn performs at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia at a Phillies game in October 2007.

Flynn grew up in Ridley Park, Pa., and worked for a music publishing company in Nashville for a short time before returning to the Wilmington area, where he cut his teeth in the city's thriving bar scene of the '80s, playing clubs like The Barn Door and the Copper Kettle.

"Dover," which appears on his seventh album, "Two Wolves," was written after the death count for U.S. soldiers hit 1,000 in September 2004.

He says he was inspired after watching ABC's "Nightline," which silently and solemnly aired photos of the dead without any commentary.

"I felt like, 'I have to sit here and watch this,'" he remembers. "It was incredibly powerful and moving to me."

He also went online and looked at The Washington Post's special online presentation called "Faces of the Fallen," reading about each of the dead. He used those profiles and actual soldiers' stories in his song, and says the stories of Gussie, William and Seth are real. The verse about a man he named Jeremiah is a composite of several soldiers' lives.

Flynn says he also was inspired by a more local source.

Ralph Begleiter, a former CNN correspondent and Distinguished Journalist in Residence at the University of Delaware, sued the U.S. Department of Defense and Air Force in October

2004 for the release of military photos of the arrival and transfer ceremonies at Dover Air Force Base for the bodies of troops killed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Begleiter won, and the images became public.

Even before Begleiter's victory, Flynn thought his song could be a vessel for the then-unreleased images of flag-draped coffins being unloaded at the base in Dover.

"I figured I could paint these pictures with my song," he says.

In addition to the buzz over "Dover" and his busy touring schedule, Flynn has snagged a coveted spot as one of the few unsigned artists to partake in a six-week train tour and concert starting in April 2009 with Willie Nelson, John Mayer, Merle Haggard, Vince Gill and Kris Kristofferson to promote environmental awareness.

"The Green Train" will include a stop in Wilmington, although a schedule has not been released and it is not known whether the city will be a concert site during the stop, says Bob Wolf, president and co-founder of the tour.

Flynn also appears and has four songs in the Danny Glover-narrated documentary "Tiny Tears," shown earlier this week at the Cannes film festival.

The film focuses on AIDS and its impact on children. Flynn was filmed performing at Camp Dreamcatcher, a summer camp in Chester County, Pa., for children affected by HIV and AIDS, a group with which he has been active for more than a decade.

Even with those new opportunities, "Dover" just might be the song that has given his unique voice its widest reach.

"I remember really thinking when I wrote this song that it would be a piece of history," he says, "and it is really heartbreaking that this song continues to be relevant."

Contact Ryan Cormier at 324-2863 or rcormier@delawareonline.com. Read his pop culture blog at www.delawareonline.com/pulpculture.

Booking Information:

Cathy Woolsey TshirtCathy@johnflynn.net (772) 528-1534 8625 70th Ave. Vero Beach, FL 32967