

# So Near, So Far

By Arthur Davenport

Came rolling down the highway, with a goal jammed in my mind.  
Looking for some old friends, and a chance to just unwind.  
Down the road and over the valley, to the mountain far behind.  
My life has played I've wandered there, through the misty shrouds of time.

The fields of corn and clover, harsh scream the old black crows.  
I feel the land so green beneath me start to climb and rise away,  
I got a feeling deep within me that I'm going home today.  
Yea, I'm going home today.

And the house it still stands beautiful, not too fancy, not too plain.  
I go inside, and ghosts surround me, it's a funny sort of pain.  
Coming back to a place that's made me, I done a lot to make it too.  
But now it belongs to all those people, so near, yet so far from you,  
so near, yet so far from you.

And the ghosts fly all around me, leaving memories on my mind.  
I let the spirits of the old days bring my soul with them through time.  
And I see the sights of summer haven't changed while I'm away.  
But the people there, they're all the same, and it's only me that's changed.  
Yes, it's only me that's changed.

Coming back to a place that's made me, I done a lot to make it too...  
But now it belongs to all those people,  
so near yet so far from you, so near yet so far from you,  
so near yet so far from you, so near, so far, from you.

© 2002 Arthur Davenport, Good Read Music LLC, from the album  
"Reality Bends" ([www.arthurdavenport.com](http://www.arthurdavenport.com))

# Thanks for the Support

By Roy Zimmerman

You've got that yellow ribbon stuck on your H2 - Thanks for the support.  
Memorial Day weekend you threw a barbeque - Thanks for the support.

I can feel the love seven thousand miles away,  
And I'm a patriot, as I was trying to say,  
When you cut me short - Thanks for the support

I was gunning for Osama, and you sent me for Saddam - Thanks for the support.  
Now I'm sitting down to dinner; it's another can of Spam - Thanks for the support.

You say: "Complete the mission", and I say: "Count on me!"  
'Cause I don't even know what mission there might be  
To abort - Thanks for the support.

You sent me here a third time, and my house was repossessed - Thanks for the support.  
Now my wife is in a trailer, but she sent a Kevlar vest - Thanks for the support.

And I think of her only every time I bleed,  
Someday we will meet again at Walter Reed;  
The resort of last resort - Thanks for the support

And you hired those mercenaries who make eight times what I do - Thanks for that.  
And you dropped in on Thanksgiving with a turkey and a camera crew - Thanks-giving.

Now you're giving guns to the ones who shot at me.  
The tank is full, but the strategy might be  
Down a quart - Thanks for the support

I appreciate the stopgap, and I appreciate the Surge - Thanks for the support.  
Another twenty thousand voices to harmonize this dirge - Thanks for the support.

To the Democratic Congress who could have brought me home  
must have come down with a new Gulf War Syndrome  
Of some sort - Thanks for the support.

And if I die tomorrow, won't you ship me home at night - Thanks for the support.  
And if I have a funeral, make sure it's outta sight - Thanks for the support.

In the final seconds you've got a plan to win;  
Cut those taxes and let Jesus put one in  
From half-court - Thanks for the support.

© 2008 Roy Zimmerman, from the album  
"Thanks for the Support" ([www.royzimmerman.com](http://www.royzimmerman.com))

# The Letters of Florence Hemphill

By Joe Crookston

I came back home to Wilson County  
In the gold Kansas Plains  
From the gutted hills of France  
And the cold muddy rain

I still think about the sisters  
Cigarettes and English tea  
And the barbed wire and trenches  
Things we never thought we'd see

And in the rumbling battle noise  
We took care of the boys  
So they wouldn't die alone  
And we could send them back home  
When the midnight whistle blew  
I donned my boots and navy blue  
But anyhow  
That's all over now

Jimmy Clellan was a piper  
They brought him in from No Man's Land  
And I fed him the ripest berries  
And I saved his one good hand  
And that red-head with the photograph  
As I wrapped up his eyes  
If he got home to West Virginia  
I knew he'd never see his bride

And in the rumbling battle noise  
We took care of the boys  
So they wouldn't die alone  
And we could send them back home  
When the midnight whistle blew  
I donned my boots and navy blue  
But anyhow  
That's all over now

All the sleepless nights we spent  
And all the letters came and went  
And all the British girls and I  
We lost some but we tried

We lay down in the bracken fern  
To make it through we had to learn  
About the broken and the torn  
Mending lives and staying warm

Coming home to the prairie gold  
With a story that I told  
In the rumbling battle noise  
We took care of the boys

I came back home to Wilson County  
In the gold Kansas Plains  
From the gutted hills of France  
And the cold muddy rain

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*A 2016 collaboration between Joe Crookston and the National World War I Museum  
in Kansas City, Missouri.*

# Was It You?

(By Robert W. Service, recited by U. Utah Phillips)

"Hullo, young Jones! with your tie so gay  
And your pen behind your ear;  
Will you mark my cheque in the usual way?  
For I'm overdrawn, I fear."  
Then you look at me in a manner bland,  
As you turn your ledger's leaves,  
And you hand it back with a soft white hand,  
And the air of a man who grieves. . . .

"Was it you, young Jones, was it you I saw  
(And I think I see you yet)  
With a live bomb gripped in your grimy paw  
And your face to the parapet?  
With your lips asnarl and your eyes gone mad  
With a fury that thrilled you through. . . .  
Oh, I look at you now and I think, my lad,  
Was it you, young Jones, was it you?

"Hullo, young Smith, with your well-fed look  
And your coat of dapper fit,  
Will you recommend me a decent book  
With nothing of War in it?"  
Then you smile as you polish a finger-nail,  
And your eyes serenely roam,  
And you suavely hand me a thrilling tale  
By a man who stayed at home.

"Was it you, young Smith, was it you I saw  
In the battle's storm and stench,  
With a roar of rage and a wound red-raw  
Leap into the reeking trench?  
As you stood like a fiend on the firing-shelf  
And you stabbed and hacked and slew. . . .  
Oh, I look at you and I ask myself,  
Was it you, young Smith, was it you?

"Hullo, old Brown, with your ruddy cheek  
And your tummy's rounded swell,  
Your garden's looking jolly chic  
And your kiddies awf'ly well.  
Then you beam at me in your cheery way  
As you swing your water-can;  
And you mop your brow and you blithely say:  
'What about golf, old man?'

"Was it you, old Brown, was it you I saw  
Like a bull-dog stick to your gun,  
A cursing devil of fang and claw  
When the rest were on the run?  
Your eyes aflame with the battle-hate. . . .  
As you sit in the family pew,  
And I see you rising to pass the plate,  
I ask: Old Brown, was it you?"

"Was it me and you? Was it you and me?  
(Is that grammar, or is it not?)  
Who groveled in filth and misery,  
Who gloried and groused and fought?  
Which is the wrong and which is the right?  
Which is the false and the true?  
The man of peace or the man of fight?  
Which is the ME and the YOU?"

From the album "I've Got to Know" ([www.utahphillips.com](http://www.utahphillips.com))

# Johnnie's Coming Home

By George Mann

He went off to serve in Vietnam, so many years since he's been gone  
And I waited, I waited all of this time  
I stayed at home, fought against that war  
Once on the news I thought I saw him marching  
Marching in the Anzac lines

And I cried, Johnnie's coming home

Tossed into an American war, they drew marbles from a Tattersalls barrel  
Then they went off to fight, and some went off to die  
We tried hard just to save our sons, but for all of those boys it had just begun  
And it lingered, and hung like dead fruit on the vine

Still I cried, Johnnie's coming home  
And I prayed, Johnnie's coming home

Next I knew it was '73, a letter came, said "Forget about me  
I am not the man that you'd want me to be..."  
For forty years I kept hoping we'd meet  
I'd see so many ghosts shuffling down the street  
I kept turning my head for a glimpse of that face so sweet

And I cried, Johnnie won't you come home?  
And I prayed, Johnnie won't you come home?

And I know you still feel ashamed  
But I know that you boys aren't to blame

Just yesterday I was sweeping the floor, a soft knock came on my front door  
An old man standing there as I opened it wide  
Well he fell in my arms as the tears rolled down  
And he held on so tight as he swung me around  
And I said "Welcome home, won't you please come inside?"

And I cried, "Johnnie you have come home  
After all this time, Johnnie you have come home..."

© 2016 George Mann, from the album

"For the Road and the Sky" ([www.georgemann.org](http://www.georgemann.org))

*For John and Shelley, Thirroul, Australia (2/18/16)*

# He Called Me Dad

By David Rovics

I grew up in Lawrence, there by the water  
In the shadow of a textile mill  
Sometimes I feel just like that building  
Empty but standing there still  
I liked the President, I liked the union  
I believed in the Rights of Man  
So I signed up when it was time to fight Hitler  
And they sent me off to Japan

I couldn't describe it, it was all just so bad  
I kept my head down, tried to stay alive  
I got shot in the leg, took me out of the action  
So I was lucky enough to survive  
I came home from the war, met a good woman named Maria  
We had ourselves a son  
When I first saw Jim's face, the first thing I thought  
I hope he never has to carry a gun

It was a long time ago, another life that I had  
A little boy who called me dad

I'd have terrible dreams of my time overseas  
But otherwise life was alright  
I had a job and a wife and a fine little lad  
With eyes so cheery and bright  
When his number came up I said let's move up north  
To Halifax, what do you say?  
But my Jim wouldn't have it, he said if I'm gonna be drafted  
I don't want to run away

Chorus

After just a few months the letters stopped coming  
And one morning a knock on the door  
Two nervous young men handed me a flag  
Said your son died in the war  
He gave his life for his country was what the man said  
He didn't believe it and neither did I  
I closed the front door, dropped the flag on the floor  
And I sat down in Jim's room and cried

Chorus



It was less than a year when my wife said to me  
You look so much like our little Jim  
She had to go, I don't blame her, you know  
I also remind me of him  
Now it's been forty years, I'd be a grandpa by now  
But instead I just sit here alone  
No one calls much these days, but anytime the phone rings  
I think maybe the boy's coming back home

Chorus

© 2011 David Rovics, from the album  
"Meanwhile in Afghanistan" ([www.davidrovics.com](http://www.davidrovics.com))

# Kigali

By Jon Brooks  
(For Sen. Romeo Dallaire)

Grandpa was a Vandoo in '25.  
He left Groesbeek in '45.  
Grandma was a Dutch girl and a war bride.  
And my dad, like his dad, came home quiet.  
He loved us with few words.  
To know him I had to become him.  
I left Somalia for a new 'Chapter Six.'  
Was discharged in '94 from Amahoro barracks  
but I don't know the way.  
I don't know the way  
home from Kigali.  
Does your heart know the way?  
Does any heart know the way home from Kigali?'

Ecstasy and Zolofit helped turn  
landmine rings back to cell phones  
and Linda back home to her parents.  
I tripped up the '12 Steps' to fall back down.  
I joined a prayer group  
though I know I cannot be found.  
One night I asked Jesus if He knew the way.  
I was drunk at last call but I swore I heard Him say:  
'I don't know the way  
I don't know the way  
home from Kigali.'  
Does your heart know the way?  
Does any heart know the way home from Kigali?'

In black light, in back rooms, down Ste. Catharine  
into that soft abyss  
under the weight of a naked stranger.  
Between dances she lies back on me,  
I smell her hair and her unknown skin  
I brush dry lips along.  
Then she smiles that sad smile  
of all souls astray;  
I want to ask her  
but I know she'd say:  
'No, I don't know the way  
I don't know the way  
home from Kigali.'  
Does your heart know the way?  
Does any heart know the way home from Kigali?'

# If Jimmy Didn't Have to Go

By Charlie King

Got married in a hurry and we had us a son back in 1973  
I was drafted at the end of the Vietnam War, though I never did go overseas  
But I remember the look on the ones who came back  
Their faces still haunt me so  
And I made myself a promise I would do what it takes  
So Jimmy didn't have to go

Chorus:

If Jimmy didn't have to go  
There's nothing I wouldn't do  
That boy means the world to me  
He ought to mean the world to you  
I don't know why we throw lives away  
And come home with nothing to show  
I only know I would sell me soul  
If Jimmy didn't have to go

I went from the Army to the Army reserves  
There's nothing that moves I can't fix  
I didn't think much about it just a weekend warrior  
Then I turned 36  
And they called me in and they shipped me out  
I'm thinking now I could have said no  
But I whispered to Cathy we would finish it early  
So Jimmy didn't have to go (Repeat Chorus)

They said it wouldn't come to hand to hand  
Though the border's just a mile away  
But the enemy surprised us from behind  
Guess they were running back the other way  
Guess they were looking for a place to hide  
Guess they were looking a place they'd know  
Wondering what they hell they were doing there  
And why they ever had to go (Repeat Chorus)

I killed a soldier with a silent knife  
I pulled him down on top of me  
I looked into the eyes looking back into mine  
He couldn't have been 17  
I held him as he died so quiet  
I held him as he died so slow  
I held him 'til I knew that it wasn't enough  
That Jimmy didn't have to go

They sent me up for court martial  
'Cause I wouldn't do a thing I was told  
Their lawyer said I was a coward  
Mine said I was just too old  
But it wasn't the fear of the bombs above  
Or the fear of the gas below  
I'm afraid to meet the eyes of the Iraqi father  
Whose Jimmy had to go.

If his Jimmy didn't have to go  
There's nothing I wouldn't do  
That boy means the world to me now  
He ought to mean the world to you  
I don't know why we throw lives away  
And come home with nothing to show  
I only know there's a time to say no  
And Jimmy didn't have to go

© 1991 Charlie King, Pied Asp Music, BMI, from the album  
"So Far, So Good" ([www.charlieking.org](http://www.charlieking.org))

# One Piece At A Time

By Joe Jencks

## **Verse 1**

Hoping for a new start  
Trying to find my way  
A little bit of rebellion mixed with  
Adventure far away  
A family tradition  
To honor and to serve  
The call of duty  
Now I'm down to my last nerve

## **Chorus**

Does anybody see me  
Does anybody know what I've been through  
Some folks gave their lives all at once  
But I've given up my life  
One piece at a time

## **Verse 2**

I had a job, I did it well  
Tried to trust the chain of command  
What in the world was I thinking  
Now I walk among the damned  
Living on the edge of life and death  
You know it takes it's toll  
The loss of innocence  
No stability, no control

## **Chorus**

Does anybody see me  
Does anybody know what I've been through  
Some folks gave their lives all at once  
But I've given up my life  
One piece at a time

## **Bridge**

Well I second-guess my choices  
I "woulda, coulda, shoulda" all the time  
But on sleepless nights, that doesn't help  
To find a reason or a rhyme

## **Verse 3**

Picking up the pieces  
Honoring the dead  
Not much here I understand  
And there's a war inside my head

But I am not expendable  
I'm still living with the pain  
Yes, there are ways that I survived  
But I'm dying every day

**Chorus**

Does anybody see me  
Does anybody know what I've been through  
Some folks gave their lives all at once  
But I've given up my life  
One piece at a time

**Verse 4**

Believing that the future  
Holds more power than the past  
I reach with forgiveness  
For a new life I hope will last  
So put a candle in the window  
Help me see I'm not alone  
Though I have changed, I need to know  
I'm finally welcome home

**Chorus x 2**

Does anybody see me  
Does anybody know what I've been through  
Step by step and day by day I find  
I'm taking back my life  
One piece at a time

© 2014, 2016 Joe Jencks – Turtle Bear Music, ASCAP, from the upcoming album  
"Poets, Philosophers, Workers, & Wanderers" ([www.joejencks.com](http://www.joejencks.com))  
Words written for and with the Spokane "Warrior's Heart to Art" participants.  
Music by Joe Jencks.

# Where Have They All Gone?

By Greg Artzner and Terry Leonino

Where have they all gone?  
The ones we sent across the sea  
To do the bidding of powerful  
To kill for you and me

Where are their lonely coffins draped with our country's flag?  
Where are the ones on stretchers and in black body bags?

Can we ever know  
The price that they have paid  
For someone else's barter  
Their loyalty betrayed

Where have they all gone?  
The ones who lost a leg, a hand  
Their young life forever altered  
In a far-off, oil-rich land

And the ones forever haunted by the horrors they have seen  
Is this the price of liberty, just what does freedom mean?

Can we ever know  
The price that they have paid  
For someone else's barter  
Their loyalty betrayed

Why does our lady liberty stand trembling in fear?  
Deaf and blind and silent she won't speak or see or hear  
They hide from us the suffering, the agony, the pain  
They hide from us the violence that they do in our name

Where have they all gone?  
Dying soldiers by the score  
And among the suffering innocent  
Are many thousands more

The widow and the orphan  
Will bear the lifelong toll  
The bloody stain of corporate gain  
Forever scars our soul

Can we ever know  
The price that we have paid  
For someone else's barter  
Our loyalty betrayed  
Our loyalty betrayed

# Poor Richard's Blues

By George Mann

One more drop of water, splashed upon my face  
The days are getting shorter, but they accumulate  
I guess it's time, here today, that I plan my getaway  
For I know I'm going home

One more drop of water, perhaps some saving grace  
Skin's too hard for needles, but my jaw's set firm in place  
I guess it's time, here today, I have planned my getaway  
And I know I'm going home  
Shut it off, shut it down, too much ugliness around  
I can handle this alone

They took away my life and now they're coming for my soul  
They never gave me any chance to choose  
But I remember everything and I'm still in control  
So I will call this warning "Poor Richard's Blues..."  
I'll sing to you  
Poor Richard's Blues

Swooping down to save them, an angel from the sky  
But they choked on the same dust I kicked up that filled my lungs and eyes  
I was loyal, I was true, but they did what powers do  
And they'd do the same to you again  
They could lock me in a cage, take away my finest days  
But they couldn't beat me 'til the end

One more drop of water, and soon I will be free  
Free of all this poison and hatred that they put inside of me  
Guess it's time, here today, I have planned my getaway  
And I know I'm going home  
Shut it off, shut it down, I surrender to the ground  
I have always gone down alone  
I have always gone alone

© 2013 George Mann, from the album

"Portraits" ([www.georgemann.org](http://www.georgemann.org))

*For C. Richard Bauer, Ithaca, NY (11/14/13)*



# Korea

## A story by Utah Phillips

© 1996 words by Utah Phillips, music by Ani DiFranco, from the album  
“The Past Didn’t Go Anywhere” ([www.righteousbabe.com](http://www.righteousbabe.com))

# Let Them In

By John Gorka

Let them in, Peter  
They are very tired  
Give them couches where the angels sleep  
And light those fires  
Let them wake whole again  
To brand new dawns  
Fired by the sun not wartime's  
bloody guns  
May their peace be deep  
Remember where the broken bodies lie  
God knows how young they were  
To have to die  
God knows how young they were  
To have to die

Give them things they like  
Let them make some noise  
Give roadhouse bands not golden harps  
To these our boys  
And let them love, Peter  
For they've had no time  
They should have trees and bird songs  
And hills to climb  
The taste of summer in a ripened pear  
And girls sweet as meadow wind  
With flowing hair  
Tell them how they are missed  
and say not to fear  
It's gonna be alright  
With us down here

Let them in, Peter

© 1997 John Gorka, from the album  
"The Company You Keep" ([www.johngorka.com](http://www.johngorka.com))  
*Based on a poem by Elma Dean*