

'THE FOLK SAMPLER'

# Music Knows No Boundaries

## AREA RESIDENT HOSTS NATIONAL RADIO SHOW

By Bettina Lehovec

THE MORNING NEWS • BLEHOVEC@NWAONLINE.NET

When Mike Flynn was a boy, he sat in his bedroom on the Kansas prairie, turning the dial on his radio and marveling that a voice from Chicago could reach so far.

Now it is Flynn's voice that reaches listeners across the nation. His syndicated weekly radio show, "The Folk Sampler," is heard on stations from West Virginia to Alaska.

"From the foothills of the Ozarks," the show starts out, "this is the 'Folk Sampler.' I'm Mike Flynn."

The Siloam Springs resident has been broadcasting his show for 23 years. Before that, the retired John Brown University professor worked in television, anchoring a news show for a Tulsa, Okla., station for 15 years.

Flynn knew from the time he was a seventh-grader that broadcasting was the career for him, he said. A supportive teacher in the ninth grade cemented that goal. Flynn studied a year at John Brown University, another two at the University of Tulsa and then moved to Chicago, where he encountered ethnic culture for the first time.

He met ethnic people, ate ethnic food and heard ethnic music. The radio stations there were full of it — gospel, Puerto Rican, Polish, Irish, Jewish and German.

"All of this stuff seemed so fascinating to me. And I loved it," Flynn said. Then a friend brought him a recording of bluegrass greats Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs. Flynn was hooked.

He began playing the guitar, attending classes at the Old Town School of Folk Music.

"Chicago was the place to discover traditional roots music," Flynn said. This was during the late 1950s, before such music was heard on mainstream radio. Then Pete Seeger and the Kingston Trio hit the airwaves, along with groups such as Odetta and The

Weavers. Folk music entered the public domain.

Flynn started the original version of "The Folk Sampler" — and it had that name — as a 15-minute feature on the more traditional radio station he worked on at the time. Station owners and the audience hated the show, Flynn said. It was canceled after 13 programs.

Flynn returned to Tulsa, which he considers his home base, a year or so later. He completed his broadcasting degree at the University of Tulsa and went to work for KOTV, reporting the news and working as an anchorman.

Those were turbulent years, encompassing the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War and a decade of economic and social upheaval. He liked the excitement and challenge of television news, Flynn said, but slowly the long hours, demanding pace and constant public recognition began to wear on him.

Another old dream resurfaced in his mind, the dream of being a teacher. Flynn wondered if there weren't a different way to make an impact on the world, a way that would "make me feel better at the end of the day."

"Teaching was a lifestyle that appealed to me a great deal — aesthetically, emotionally, spiritually, in every way." He remembered the influence Mrs. Finney had on him in the ninth grade and decided to try to pass that on.

He met the president of JBU while working on a news story and mentioned his desire to teach. A year later, John Brown Jr. called him. Flynn went to work in the JBU communications department, which he eventually chaired.

"I loved every minute of it," Flynn said. He stayed at JBU 22 years, until his retirement in 1999. "It was as satisfying to me as I had hoped it would be ... Watching 20-year-old kids figure things out was just great fun."

In 1978, Flynn decided to revive his interest in folk music. He started The Folk Sampler again, syndicating the



Mike Flynn sits in his studio in Siloam Springs where he records his syndicated weekly radio show, "The Folk Sampler," heard on stations from West Virginia to Alaska.

CHARLES BICKFORD • THE MORNING NEWS

show four years later. Today it is heard on about 100 stations nationwide, including KUAF out of Fayetteville.

The Folk Sampler plays a mix of traditional music, folk, bluegrass and blues. Each program revolves around a theme, anything from trains to holidays to the anguish of love. Generating themes is easy, Flynn said. He uses the themes as a way to explore ideas in his own mind.

Much of folk music is social or political, Flynn said. As a young man, he heard musicians such as Bob Dylan grating out protests to war.

"I happen to feel that the

music (of the 1960s) had a great impact," Flynn said. He wants to help that tradition of social activism continue. Many of the issues he explores have serious overtones, such as child abuse, ecology and tolerance.

"What I really use this platform for is to espouse my own social and cultural views ... I don't want to preach outright, but I have political and social feelings and I'm not afraid to play songs that address some of those issues.

"One thing I've always loved about this music is that it deals with real issues. Very earthy, strong gut issues that we deal with on a daily basis ... I hope

that if nothing else, this music helps people to think seriously about these issues."

Flynn also hosts a Siloam Springs local access television show, in which he spotlights local people and events. Flynn is drawn to exploring the nuances in everyday folks, he said, rather than focusing on public figures.

"I think it plugs into the same curiosity I have that makes me do 'The Folk Sampler,'" Flynn said. "These are 'roots' stories — the cowboy who works at the sales barn instead of the president of Arvest Bank.

"These things are fun for me to do. They're about interesting

people who don't usually get much exposure."

Sometimes Flynn thinks back to the adolescent boy he once was, discovering a whole world through his radio. He likes to think that perhaps there are people listening to him who are being similarly influenced, he said.

"I'm still a teacher in that respect," he said. "There is no better compliment than to have impacted somebody favorably. "I am hoping that there are real people out there listening to me and getting the fascination and pleasure I did years ago. I hope this is a circle."

## Teachers' Excellence Recognized

### ACEE AWARDS PUT FOCUS ON ECONOMICS

SPECIAL TO THE MORNING NEWS

A handful of Northwest Arkansas teachers were honored Dec. 7 at the sixth annual Bessie B. Moore Arkansas Awards during a luncheon at Chenal Country Club in Little Rock.

The Arkansas Council on Economic Education awarded first place in the Intermediate Category to Janice Whitmire of Parson Hills Elementary School in Springdale for excellence in teaching economics.

Whitmire's winning project, "Panther Print Shop," gave fifth-graders the opportunity to apply specialization and interdependence as they organized and operated a printing business. Students took pride in having satisfied customers and in earning funds toward an overnight class trip to the Ozark Natural Science Center.

The ACEE also awarded fourth place in the Primary Category to Ann Channell and Tracy Karnes of Greenland Elementary School and Melody Key and Karen Wiggins of George Elementary School in Springdale for excellence in teaching economics.

The team of teachers' winning project, "Ellanomics, How Does Your Garden Grow?" incorporated a gardening theme to cultivate economic knowledge using techniques and strategies of ELLA: Early Literacy Learning in Arkansas. The project motivated kindergarten students to learn about unlimited wants, goods, services, consumers and producers while learning basic reading skills.

The ACEE sponsors the annual awards program to promote creative teaching of economics



PHOTO COURTESY OF ACEE

Janice Whitmire, middle, of Parson Hills Elementary School in Springdale, recently received first place in the Bessie B. Moore Arkansas Awards for excellence in teaching economics. Also pictured are Jim Wooten, left, Arkansas Council on Economic Education chairman of the Board, and Gary Stern, right, chairman of the Board of the National Council on Economic Education and president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, who presented the awards.

and recognize outstanding K-12 educators for incorporating economic concepts and principles into their curriculums. The ACEE is a private, nonprofit organization committed to promoting economic literacy in the state. ACEE provides public, private and parochial teachers with training and materials to teach basic economic principles in grades K-12.

More than 250 Arkansas business and education leaders were

present at the luncheon when Gary Stern, chairman of the Board of the National Council on Economic Education and president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, presented the teachers with their plaques along with ACEE chairman Jim Wooten and president Lee Vent. The annual event honored 38 Arkansas educators who had won awards for excellence in teaching and promoting economic education.

## Fayetteville Man Promoted

### SCHERREY NOW 1ST LIEUTENANT IN U.S. ARMY

SPECIAL TO THE MORNING NEWS

Task Force 2-153 continues to raise the bar for the Multinational Forces and Observers mission as it accomplished platoon level collective tasks, received a visit from Arkansas Civic Leaders and conducted a simulation exercise last month at Fort Carson, Colo.

The "Gunslingers" from TF 2-153 trained for the way they will operate in the Sinai of Egypt by conducting platoon operations. The "Gunslingers" deployed three squads per training site with a squad observing, a squad training for MFO tasks and a squad resting, which replicates how they will conduct their mission.

"Training was good because we had scenarios that replicated some of the real situations we could encounter in the Sinai," said Sgt. Daniel Gifford.

TF 2-153 soldiers then came back from the field to conduct recovery operations and a simulation exercise. The simulation exercise demonstrated the observation sites ability to identify different types of vehicles, vessels and aircraft. Once identified, the observers have five minutes to report their observations to the sector control centers to process information and then pass it on to the higher headquarters.

"The simulation training helped reinforce the squad and platoon training that we have already done," Sgt. Chad Salter said.

During the simulation exercise the "Gunslingers" had visitors from Arkansas. Maj. Gen. Don Morrow hosted the civic leader visit that included employers of TF 2-153 soldiers. The civic leaders came from businesses such as



PHOTO COURTESY OF U.S. ARMY

Capt. Lynn Martin, left, promotes 2nd Lt. Christopher Scherrey of Fayetteville, a platoon leader for Company B in Batesville, to first lieutenant.

White-Rogers, Kroger, Wal-Mart and local city governments.

The civic leaders had the opportunity to eat dinner with their employees, meet the 7th Infantry Division command staff and tour the Olympic Training Center while in Fort Carson.

A platoon leader for Company B in Batesville, 2nd Lt. Christopher Scherrey, of Fayetteville, was promoted to First Lieutenant just before the platoon operations phase.

The "Gunslingers" completed their final certification phase before Christmas for the Multinational Force and Observers mission. The task force occupied "mock-up" observation sites and control centers just like they would operate in the Sinai.

The "Gunslingers" spent 10 days at home in Arkansas around Christmas before coming back to Fort Carson to deploy to Egypt.