

# Concert Memorializes Folk Singer Proffitt

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The third in a series of nationwide concerts being held in memory of mountain folk singer Frank Proffitt was staged last night in Pierce Hall of All Souls Unitarian Church.

Proffitt, who indirectly is credited with having brought to commercial prominence the folk ballad "Tom Dooley", died last November in the North Carolina hill country he had called home for 43 years.

The concert by four semi-professional area folk singers and the Sacred Harp Singers was sponsored by the Folklore Society of Greater Washington. It attracted about 150 persons to the small hall at 15th and Harvard Streets NW. All net proceeds went to the Proffitt family, which was left almost destitute by the noncommercial singer's fatal heart attack at the age of 52.

John and Virginia Dildine, Chuck and Nan Perdue, Joseph Hickerson and the Sacred Harp group discussed Proffitt, his son, who recently was given a hardship discharge from the Army to return to the family farm in Reece, N.C. and sang many comical and moody songs Proffitt had strummed on his home-made banjos.

After leaving his native Johnson City, Tenn., as a child, Proffitt crossed the mountains to take up residence in Watauga County, N.C. His father taught him how to make banjos of walnut, cherry and other native woods. This later helped him support his wife, Bessie, and five sons while farming.

In 1938, folk singer Frank Warner of New York visited

Proffitt's area, met the mountain man and the two began a long friendship. As a lad, Proffitt had learned the mountain song "Tom Dula" from his father.

Years later the tune found its way into commercial circles, the name was changed and it was recorded by the Kingston Trio and helped to catapult the group into national prominence.

As a result of their friendship, Warner had Proffitt tape some of his songs which were made into three albums and sent him to the University of Chicago Folk Festival in 1961.

However, as well received as this authentic singer was, Proffitt wanted no part of show business. He returned shortly thereafter to his farm because "professional singers don't care about tradition."

Obviously the folklore society does. Thus, last night it joined Chicago and New York's Hunter College in honoring his memory.

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