

Pichan sings blues for Eddie Slovik

By CRAIG PIECHURA

A bar is not a place known for expanding people's social consciousness. But a Canton Township watering hole is the place singer-guitar player Steve Pichan has chosen to sing his heartfelt song to Eddie Slovik's wife.

If you haven't kept up with the national news this summer, Mrs. Antoinette Slovik of Detroit was just denied an appeal for her husband's G.I. life insurance benefits. In dismissing Mrs. Slovik's appeal, the U.S. Army released the following statement on the only American ever to be executed for treason:

"The record clearly reflects that Pvt. Slovik deserted to avoid combat duty. The law covering the payment of National Service Life Insurance benefits precludes payment in the case of individuals who are convicted of desertion."

That terse dismissal "bummed me right out," said Pichan, an entertainer at the Rusty Nail on Ford Road in Canton. Pichan has also performed at the Side Street in Plymouth.

"I've been keeping up with the Eddie Slovik case ever since the TV movie a couple years back," he said. "So, instead of just getting mad, I decided to put it all down in a song. I think if middle class people hear it, it will go."

"I guess what gripped me the most was that a complex moral issue could be neatly decided by an army regulation."

PICHAN IS PROMOTING his new song through the news media but he says his intention is to attract the attention of President Jimmy Carter, not to make the hit parade.

"If I could play it to Carter, that'd just be great," said Pichan. "Or if that can't happen, I'd love for him just to read the lyrics. That's why I finalized the song with a direct plea to Carter, asking him to intervene."

President Carter's stand on human rights has encouraged Pichan, and he thinks the president's quotes from singer Bob Dylan during the campaign are a good sign.

"People don't really talk to their congressmen," Pichan said. "I honestly haven't given a thought to approaching this issue politically. I'll do it through my music."

Once Pichan got the idea from the morning newspaper, he was finished with the tune and lyrics in less than an hour.

"I don't know about anyone else, but if I've got a song and it's going to be a good song, it's right there. It flows out as you're writing it. There's no meditation."

Pichan would also like to contact Mrs. Slovik, who is confined to a wheelchair and reportedly living in a Detroit nursing home, to sing the song to her.

"The song is just as much for his wife as it is for him."

THE SINGER PLAYS the tune on a beautiful 12-string Guild guitar in a full-bodied voice. The message is strong, but the song is not bitter.

"They called Eddie Slovik the sad soldier because he always wanted to go home to his wife. In the article Mrs. Slovik said Eddie couldn't hurt a bird or bee—that line stuck with me and I used it in the song."

"The most ironic part of the whole affair is that they killed Eddie with the thing he hated most."

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Singer Steve Pichan wishes he could get Jimmy Carter's ear.

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