

Of hope & honor

Bob Farmer, '95 pens ballad for military and their families

Written by Karen Carlson

BOB FARMER, M.D., '95 opened a Christmas card from a family friend and looked quizzically at the accompanying photo of the children. Despite the message of holiday cheer, the kids weren't smiling. "I called and told her that the kids didn't look happy," Dr. Farmer relates. The friend said her 5-year-old daughter, growing tired of the photography session, said wearily, "Mommy, I'm all out of smiles."

That line immediately resonated with Dr. Farmer, who enjoys writing lyrics in the evenings after his kids are in bed. "It sounded like a good line for a country song," he recalls. Writing is not a new avocation for Bob, a family physician in New Baden, Illinois. In 2007, he published *Lasso the Sunshine*, a book of positive thoughts. He and his wife, Christina, donated 10,000 copies to SIU School of Medicine's SimmonsCooper Cancer Institute.

On that December 2006 evening, Dr. Farmer hung up the phone and wrote out that line "All out of smiles." Twenty minutes later, he had written a song honoring the U.S. military. The song came to him in the unexplainable way that great words come to writers. He's not sure how he made the connection between "all out of smiles" and the military. Maybe it was because he treats a lot of patients from Scott Air Force Base, just five miles from his clinic. He also sees military families. "I once saw two children come in to the clinic with their grandma because both parents were in Iraq. You get to appreciate what the military does every day." Dr. Farmer's father was a navigator in the U.S. Air Force, and his grandfather served in World War II.

The song describes the distress of a wife missing her husband, who is serving overseas:

*"You're half a world away from me
My love spans all the miles
I do my best to hide my pain
But I'm just all out of smiles."*

For Dr. Farmer, this song has the most meaning of the 40 or 50 songs he's penned over the years. He's even copyrighted a few, and he knew there was something special about "All Out of Smiles."

Dr. Farmer's friend and neighbor, Ron Krausz,

a recreational guitarist, put a tune to Bob's "Smiles." The two have spent many Saturday nights in Bob's basement creating country songs. The ballad found its voice from Emily Riesen, an aspiring country singer in Nashville, Tenn., who attended SIU Carbondale.

The trio collaborated on a final version, tweaking a few chords here, a line or two there. Emily invited Bob and Ron to Nashville last October where she recorded the song with more musicians.

"The song is our way to say thank you," Dr. Farmer says. "It pays honor to people who are making the ultimate sacrifice and to their families. We're trying to understand what they're going through, and this song is our way to say thank you for your sacrifice, which is just as big as your deployed spouse's. This is our anthem of hope."

In just a few months, "All Out of Smiles" has received great word-of-mouth support. Available at www.myspace.com/emilyriesen, the song has been played more than 21,000 times on the Internet. Dr. Farmer has gotten a lot of personal thanks for the song. "It's done far more than I ever thought just sitting around my basement writing words." The trio of talent was featured in a spot on Fox 2 News out of St. Louis.

Writing, Dr. Farmer says, is therapeutic for him. "It's a welcome distraction from reality, and a way to not vegetate in front of the TV." In addition to writing lyrics, he currently is penning a medical-legal thriller. ●●●

Below, Dr. Farmer, right, and his friend/music partner, Ron Krausz.



Photo courtesy Dr. Farmer