

# Having beaten cancer, Michael Troy is back and ready to play

By Sean McCarthy

Staff Writer, The Fall River Spirit, Fall River MA

Thursday, January 4, 2007

**Michael Troy** is an area treasure. So when the popular folk singer was stricken with cancer – not once, but twice – there was a great outpouring of support from the local community about which he so often sings.

When Troy was receiving treatment for lymphoma at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston in August 2005, the donations poured in from family, friends and other musicians. Coffeehouses and venues from Rhode Island to Boston held fund raisers. **Bob Gould**, owner of Café Arpeggio in Fall River and New Bedford, named an ice cream after Michael with all of the proceeds going to a bank account Gould had established while Troy was in the hospital. When Troy's first tests came back negative, prominent Boston folk radio station WUMB-FM announced the good news over the air.

In this time of struggle Michael Troy was learning how much he means to the many people who love his music.

"The support we received was a silver lining on a very dark cloud," says Troy's wife, **Mary Lou Manuels**. "I sent out more than 80 thank you cards."

At age 54, Troy required a stem-cell bone marrow transplant and chemotherapy to treat a relapse from a bout of lymphoma he originally had in 1998. The treatments are done without donors and there is no rejection. He was in the hospital for three weeks.

"His music and writing touched a lot of people, and consequently they turned around and helped our family in a time of need," says 25-year old **Sarah Manuels**, one of Troy's four daughters. His other daughters are **Rachel**, **Rebecca** and **Hannah**. His wife Mary Lou has worked as a nurse at the Catholic Memorial Home in Fall River for 30 years.

"I was humbled by all the support I received," Troy says. "Folk music is a small genre but what they have done for me is mind boggling. They gave me what I needed to keep going. I've got a great family and a great fan base."

Since he began to get serious about becoming a performer at age 47, Troy has done what it takes to make himself heard. He began making weekly trips to the esteemed Club Passim in Cambridge to showcase his songs on Open Mic nights. The club eventually rewarded Michael with better billings, including a show with the legendary **Bill Stains**. Troy would go on to share billings with **Janis Ian** and **Richie Havens**.

Troy was about to become a national figure in folk music circles, leaving behind demanding jobs in mills, and on fishing boats, as well as working as a carpenter and a laborer. His work was so demanding on his hands that he often could not play guitar.

"I never thought I'd be doing this as a career," he says. "I was always a back-porch picker, someone who played for his own enjoyment. But I eventually realized that if you want to get recognized you have to write and perform your own music.

And so he did. In 1998 he put together a collection of songs known as "Whispers in the Wind." That was followed by "Romancing the Moon" in 2004.

Troy's touring has extended as far as Florida and Texas. He will be making a special appearance at the Narrows Center for the Arts on Saturday, January 6 with **John Botelho** opening.

"I love the Narrows. It's my hometown," Troy says. "They do great things for artists. The ambiance of that room is incredible. They've got a good stage and a great sound system."

For Troy, the greatest part about being a musician is the performance.

"Performing is the icing on the cake," he says. "It takes a long time to put the music together with the lyrics. With me, I want the lyrics and the music to suit each other. I grew up in the 1960's and 70's, but I've learned that performing is one of the best highs you can ever get.

And it is Troy's musical skill and compelling lyrics that have made him so popular.

"I write about people I know from this city. In my travels I've made connections with people. There are mill towns all around the country, so my songs can elicit people to have the same emotions even if they are based in a different city.

"The things I have to say are important to me. I don't like playing in bars, I'd rather play to listening audiences."

Troy talks about the importance of being genuine in song writing.

"If you're try to be honest and you let it come from your heart you'll learn a lot about yourself," he says. "A lot of things can come out of you when you write a song."

One thing Troy isn't writing about are his life-threatening cancer experiences.

"I don't try to write about something I'm trying to forget," he says.

One of Troy's songs can be heard on a CD entitled, "I'm Too Young For This," a compilation of songs by 21 young adult musicians who have been diagnosed with cancer. Troy's song is "The Love Song," a number he wrote for his wife that appears on "Romancing the Moon." "I'm Too Young For This" can be bought through the website [www.stepsforliving.org](http://www.stepsforliving.org).

Troy's music can be bought at shows or through CD Baby.

And as serious as he is about his past, Troy gives a chuckle when he talks about what he'd like to get from the future.

"I don't want to grow up, but I want to die of old age."