

Larry Bonko



Moonlight, romance... and Norfolk?

Is Norfolk a city to sing about? Tom Farley thinks so.

He recently wrote and recorded a song about Ocean View's sandy beaches and sailors looking for love. "Norfolk Days."

More than 50 years ago, composer Sam Simmons and lyricist Fred Ayers also found inspiration in Ocean View and on Granby Street. They merged their talents to write "Norfolk, I'm Coming Back to You."

Neither song is as singable as "New York, New York" or "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." But even a corny song like "Norfolk, I'm Coming Back to You" is better than no Norfolk song at all.

These tunes were brought to my attention after I wrote a column comparing our Norfolk to the one in Nebraska. I pointed out that Norfolk, Neb., has only two things going for it — Johnny Carson was born there and in Norfolk, Neb., they have an official city song.

Norfolk, Va., doesn't even have an official jingle.

Farley is upset about that. In the past, he has approached the mayor and the Harborfest committee and volunteered to write a song that Norfolknians can sing with pride. They told him to get lost.

The way Farley sees it, Norfolk has enough parking garages and bus stops. What the city needs now is a song all its own. "Its very own theme song," said Farley, a native of this area who teaches history at Indian River Junior High School in Chesapeake.

He is not proposing "Norfolk Days" as that theme. Farley suspects that it is a bit too country-rock to be an official city song.

Not only that. The city fathers are not about to endorse a song that has a line in it about passing sailors looking for love "among the bars and dives." Dives? What dives? There are no dives in Norfolk.

Farley volunteers to write another song about Norfolk. He promises a tune to lift the spirits.

The second verse of "Norfolk Days" soars a little. "Good old Norfolk days. A shoreline stroll at noon. The gentle waves come splashing from the Bay. A bridge that spans the tide. The ships that sailed too soon."

Said Farley, "The city needs to have its

He recorded "Norfolk Days" in an album that includes another tune, "Joy Lee Carroll," with references to Norfolk. He brought the old Monticello Hotel into that one. Farley's wife, Tania, and musicians Mike Gosey, Denny Smith, Donny Satterwhite, Todd and Steve Gallagher, Cam Head, Jim Cummins, Steve Ihlenburg and Tom Lavin supported him on the LP.

If anyone can give Norfolk a corking good song, they can.

Are you listening, Mr. Mayor?

Rozalia K. Carpenter of West 37th Street in Norfolk has been holding on to the sheet music of "Norfolk, I'm Coming Home to You" since before she was a bride. That was 52 years ago. Her brother, a piano player, gave her the sheet music.

The song has images of a silvery Chesapeake Bay in it. It's about a traveling Norfolknian who is far from home, where a girl waits for him. He can't wait to get aboard a southbound train for the City by the Sea.

Like Farley, Carpenter endorses the idea of having an official Norfolk song.

Farley would be happy if not honored to write a Norfolk song in time for Harborfest 1985. If not a song, how about a jingle, Farley asks?

"The citizens of Norfolk need a song they can relate to," the singer-songwriter said. Galveston has a song. Chicago, too. And Los Angeles. Why not Norfolk?

Farley is nostalgic about the past in Norfolk, when the trolleys ran to Ocean View and sailors turned lower Granby Street into a sea of white hats. "Good old Norfolk days. A downtown stroll at five..."

Beautiful.

Let's do something about giving Norfolk an official song.

NORFOLK
I'M COMING BACK TO YOU

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1000 N. 10th St.
Norfolk, Va. 23510

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An old Norfolk song