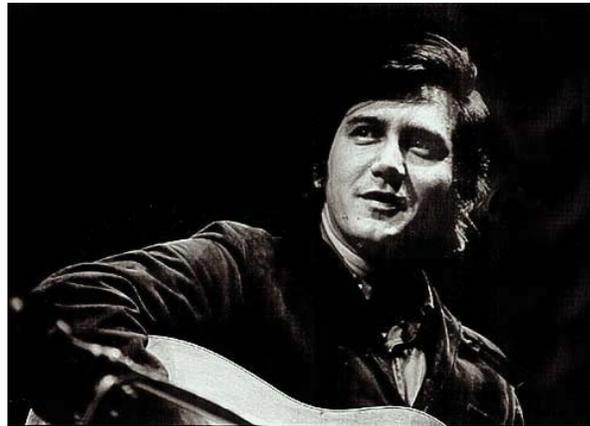




**Philip David Ochs, SMA '58
(1940 – 1976)**



Phil was born in El Paso, TX, on December 19, 1940 and entered Staunton Military Academy (SMA) in the fall of 1956 graduating as a sergeant in the Corps Band in 1958. He loved music and may have started his singing career when he sang as a member of the *U.S.S. North Sputniks* in the 1958 SMA quartet contest with cadets James Lowe, James Ross, Robert Myers, and William Sneed.

After graduating from SMA, Phil attended Ohio State University where he met Jim Glover who became his roommate. Jim's father was Phil's political teacher. It was during this time, while he was majoring in journalism, that Phil formed his political beliefs. He started putting them to music in the three years before dropping out and going to New York where he started out singing at open mikes and passing the hat. Phil is best remembered for the protest songs on war and civil rights he wrote in the 1960's. He typically wrote about the topics of the day - civil rights, Viet Nam, hungry miners, and personalities such as Billy Sol Estes, William Worthy and Lou Marsh. By 1964 he was well enough established to release his first album, "All the News That's Fit To Sing". His second album, "I Ain't Marching Anymore," was released in 1965, and by 1966 he was able to sell out Carnegie Hall for his solo concert. In 1967 he signed with A&M Records where his first release was "Pleasures of the Harbor" in which he used heavily orchestrated arrangements for the first time. Some fans criticized this change, while others accepted it. Phil was a contemporary (and friend) of Bob Dylan (who said: "I just can't keep up with Phil. And he's getting better and better and better.").

Phil performed at numerous political events, including civil rights rallies and organized labor events. Phil also sang at locations around the world, but, while in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, he was mugged and lost the top three notes of his vocal range. This event seemed to send him on a downward spiral. His last years were troubled ones. He suffered from manic depression plus an affinity for the bottle. He committed suicide on April 9, 1976 at the age of 35.

Phil Ochs continues to influence musicians today with his haunting voice, and many of his songs have been covered by other artists. Some of his best-remembered songs are: "Changes", "There But For Fortune", "I Ain't Marching Anymore", "Draft Dodger", "Small Circle of Friends", "Crucifixion" and "When I'm Gone".

There have been 2 biographies written about Phil Ochs. [Death of a Rebel](#) by Marc Elliot was written in 1977, and [There But For Fortune - The Life of Phil Ochs](#) by Michael Schumacher was published in 1996. Rhino Records released a 3-cd compilation titled [Farewells and Fantasies](#) in 1997 which includes all of his best known works plus some previously unreleased tracks. For more on Phil, visit the [Phil Ochs Web Page](#) and [Hugh Blumenfeld's Phil Ochs Page](#). A [Phil Ochs Movie](#) is provided here for those who would like to watch.

*www.sonnyochs.com/philbio.html, and www.biography.com/people/phil-ochs-38092.
Edits by Kelly McGavock, SMA '59.*