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Wednesday, May 3, 2000

## Johnny Got A Gun

Tom Paxton wrote “*Johnny Got a Gun*,” recorded on his CD *Wearing the Time* ( Sugar Hill Records, SHCD 1045) in 1993. This was before Columbine, Colorado; before Pearl, Mississippi; before Jonesboro, Arkansas, before Edinboro, Pennsylvania, before West Paducah, Kentucky and before Bethel, Alaska. It was written and recorded before gun violence in schools came to national notice. Paxton noted, “An American kid dies by the gun every hour and thirty-six minutes.”

Johnny’s mom and dad both worked long hours  
And they worked on weekends, too.  
Johnny was eleven but they had no notion  
Of what Johnny was going through.  
Johnny got pushed and Johnny got robbed,  
and it made him feel chicken to run.  
Big kids picked on Johnny every day,  
Til Johnny went and got himself a gun.

Johnny got a gun; he didn’t bring it home;  
He covered it with rags and dirt.  
On his way to school he looked both ways,  
Then he slipped it under his shirt.  
Johnny was afraid of going to school;  
There was always trouble in the halls.  
Fights in the boys’ room, guns in the lockers,  
Little kids bouncing off the walls.

Johnny was afraid of dying young;  
Everybody he knew had guns,  
So, Johnny got a gun  
And every little thing looked cool.

First time Johnny flashed his gun,  
Everybody backed off fast.  
Everybody treated him differently then;  
Johnny felt safe at last.  
Johnny had a gun and everybody knew;  
And everybody left him alone,  
Til he bumped a kid who was coming down the stairs,  
And the kid had a gun of his own.

Kid hit Johnny and Johnny went down  
And the kid had something to say,  
Pulled his gun but Johnny shot first  
And he blew the other kid away.  
Police came and they took away the gun -  
Said he wouldn’t need a gun any more.  
Took him to the station, sat him on a chair,  
And his feet didn’t touch the floor.

Johnny was afraid of dying young;  
Everybody he knew had guns.  
So Johnny got a gun  
And every little thing looked cool.

Johnny went to trial - pled self-defense,  
But the prosecutor said, no way.  
Judge said, “You’re eleven, but you killed a man,  
And you’re gonna have a long, long stay.”  
Johnny’s mom and dad still work long hours,  
Then they knock on the prison door,  
They sit with Johnny in the visitor’s room  
And his feet don’t reach the floor.

Johnny was afraid of dying young;  
Everybody he knew had guns,  
So Johnny got a gun  
And every little thing looked cool.  
And his feet don’t reach the floor.

*written by Tom Paxton*  
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**MORE**

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On Mother's Day, Sunday, May 14, mothers across the United States are mobilizing, this time to halt the senseless slaughter of children by guns. The main march, in Washington, D.C., is expected to draw more than 100,000 people.

The San Antonio Million Mom March will begin on Sunday, May 14th at 3:30 p.m. at San Fernando Cathedral with a short concert by the San Antonio Vocal Arts Ensemble. At approximately 4:00, marchers will turn onto Commerce Street and walk at their own pace a short six blocks to Milam Park. Along the route they will interact with storytellers, poets and musicians to learn more about what gun violence is doing to our children. Activities will continue at the park until 6:00 p.m.

More information about the San Antonio March can be obtained from the peaceCENTER, 210/224-HOPE or [www.salsa.net/peace](http://www.salsa.net/peace).

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