

IN COUNTRY
SONGS OF AMERICANS IN THE VIETNAM WAR

Notes by Lydia Fish

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This recording is part of an ongoing undertaking by the Vietnam Veterans Oral History and Folklore Project to collect, preserve, and make more widely known the folksongs of the Vietnam War. We hope that it will encourage the men and women who served in Southeast Asia in the military or as civilians to remember and to share with the Project songs from their own experience: songs which they sang or collected in the form of manuscripts, books, records, or tapes. If you do not have facilities for playing your open reel tapes, the Project will be happy to make studio-quality cassette copies for you. Your original tapes will, of course, be returned to you.

VIETNAM VETERANS ORAL HISTORY AND FOLKLORE PROJECT
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IN COUNTRY 2

Fan blades/helicopter blades rotating slowly above a troubled dreamer, Jim Morrison's voice singing "The End"...

Young soldiers, on their way to Vietnam in the summer of Woodstock, marching on board their plane at Ft. Dix singing "Fixing To Die"...

Correspondent Michael Herr catching helicopter rides out to the firebases, "cassette rock and roll in one ear and door-gun fire in the other," or crouched under fire in a rice paddy while Jimi Hendrix' music blares from the recorder held by the soldier next to him...

Grunts linking arms in a beery E.M. club and screaming out the lyrics to the Animals' "We Gotta Get Out of This Place"...

The rock and roll war...

To most of us, the Vietnam War has a rock and roll soundtrack. Almost every novel, memoir or oral history of the war by a veteran mentions the music that the author listened to in country. All the songs of the sixties were part of life in the combat zone; troops listened to music in the bush and in the bunkers (Perry 1968). Sony radios, Akai stereos and Teac tape decks were easily available, American music was performed live by the ubiquitous Filipino rock bands, AFVN Radio broadcast round the clock, and new troops arrived weekly with the latest records from the states. GI-operated underground radio stations, playing mostly hard acid rock, were part of the in-country counterculture of the war. Even the enemy contributed to the sound of American music on the airwaves; Radio Hanoi played rock and soul music, while a series of soft-voiced, Oxford-accented women announcers known collectively to the troops as Hanoi Hannah competed with AFVN disk jockey Chris Noel for the hearts and minds of the American soldiers. The troops had their own top forty, of songs about going home, like "Five Hundred Miles," or "Leaving on a Jet Plane," or of darker or more cynical album cuts which reflected their experiences: "Run Through the Jungle," "Bad Moon," "Paint it Black," or "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down." References to popular music are an integral part of the language of the war: "Puff the Magic Dragon" or "Spooky" meant a cargo plane outfitted with machine guns, "rock and roll" fire from an M-16 on full automatic. But there were other songs in Vietnam, too--the songs made by the American men and women, civilians and military, who served there, for themselves.

Some of these were part of the traditional occupational folklore of the military. The pilots who flew off the carriers and out of Thailand sang songs that were sung by the men who flew in the two World Wars and the Korean War: "Give Me Operations," "Save A Fighter Pilot's Ass," "There Are No Fighter Pilots Down in Hell." Captain Kris Kristofferson rewrote one of the most popular of all Korean War songs, "Itazuke Tower" in Germany and his helicopter pilot buddies carried it to Vietnam where it was sung as "Phan Rang Tower" and reworked again by Phantom Jock Dick Jonas as "Ubon Tower." They learned RAF songs like "Stand to Your Glasses" and

British Army songs like "I Don't Want to Join the Army" from the Australians who served in Vietnam.

Other songs grew directly out of the Vietnam experience: songs about flying at night along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, defoliating triple-canopy jungle, engaging in firefights with an unseen enemy, or counting the days left in a 365-day tour. In the spring of 1970 the men of the second battalion of the 502nd brigade of the 101st Airborne Division created one of the most powerful songs of the war, "The Boonie Rat Song," and appointed a keeper of the company song (Del Vecchio 1983 :i, 100-101; Rosenberg 1988). In some cases both the words and music were original, usually new lyrics were set to folk, country or popular tunes. Barry Sadler's "Ballad of the Green Berets" alone spawned dozens of parodies.

These songs served as a strategy for survival, as a means of unit bonding and definition, as entertainment, and as a way of expressing emotion. All of the traditional themes of military folksong can be found in these songs: praise of the great leader, celebration of heroic deeds, laments for the death of comrades, disparagement of other units, and complaints about incompetent officers and vainglorious rear-echelon personnel. Like soldiers from time immemorial they sang of epic drinking bouts and encounters with exotic young women. Songs provided a means for the expression of protest, fear and frustration, of grief and of longing for home. Some of the songs show empathy with the enemy; Chip Dockery, who served with the 13th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Udorn, wrote a superb series of songs from the point of the North Vietnamese truck drivers on the Ho Chi Minh trail. Others display a kind of black humor mixed with violence, in which, in the words of Les Cleveland, the thing most abhorred is embraced with a kind of lunatic enthusiasm: "Strafe the Town and Kill the People," "As We Came Around and Tried To Get Some More," and "Napalm Sticks to Kids" (1988).

Civilians serving with civilian agencies such as AID (Agency for International Development), CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support), the State Department, and the CIA had their own songs. Jim Bullington, who was working for AID in Quang Tri in 1968, wrote "Yes, We Are Winning" while he was in hiding in Hue during the Tet Offensive of that year (Bullington 1985). In Dong Tam Emily Strange, (Red Cross), with her friend Barbara Hagar (USO), wrote "Incoming," complaining about having to go the bunkers every night, and sang it for enthusiastic grunts on the firebases (Strange 1988). Employees of OCO (Office of Civil Operations) and JUSPAO (Joint United States Public Affairs Office) contributed "Where Have All the Field Reps Gone" and "God Smite Thee, Barry Zorthian." They griped about the unpunctuality of Air America flights ("Damn Air America, You're Always Late") and the futility of pacification efforts ("We Have Pacified This Land One Hundred Times"). The Cosmos Tabernacle Choir was composed of CIA personnel who used to meet in the Cosmos Bar near the American Embassy. Their songs tended to be both cynical and humorous: "Counting Geckos on the Wall," "Deck the Halls with Victor Charlie" and "I Feel Like a Coup is Coming On." The group even had a Cosmos Command patch made, showing crossed Bau Muoi Ba bottles over an explosion, which can still be seen on the walls of bars in McLean and Langley

IN COUNTRY 4

(Allen 1988). Early in the war concerts were organized as benefits for orphanages and other charities; informal groups performed musical skits and Christmas pageants.

All the streams of American musical tradition meet in the songs of the Vietnam War. The influence of the folksong revival was strong, especially in the early or advisor period of the war. Many of the soldiers, especially the young officers who had been exposed to the revival in college, were already experienced musicians when they arrived in Vietnam. A few brought instruments with them, others ordered them from the United States (Lem Genovese remembers buying a mail-order autoharp from Sears Roebuck) or purchased Japanese guitars from the PX or on the local economy. Many of them sang together in Kingston-Trio-style trios or quartets: the Merry-men, the Blue Stars, the Intruders, the Four Blades. Country music groups were also formed in Vietnam and many songs are based on country favorites: "I Fly the Line," "Short Fat Sky," and "Ghost Advisors." One of the great song writers of the war, Dick Jonas, wrote almost entirely in this tradition. Later in the war, many of the young soldiers had played in rock bands before being drafted and this, too, is reflected in the music. Some of the songs of the anti-war movement at home were also sung in Vietnam; one night at Khe Sanh Michael Herr saw a group of grunts sitting in a circle with a guitar singing "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" (1977:148). I was recently sent a tape of in-country anti-war songs, some of them recorded against a background of mortar fire, by Hospital Corpsman Ken Wright.

Joseph Treaster, a member of the *New York Times* Saigon bureau, wrote in 1966:

Almost every club has a resident musician, usually a guitar player, whom the men crowd around, singing songs about their lives in a strange country and the war they are fighting. The songs are laced with cynicism and political innuendoes and they echo the frustrations of the "dirty little war" which has become a dirty big one. Above all, the songs reflect the wartime Yank's ability to laugh at himself in a difficult situation. The songs grow fast as first one man, then another, throws in a line while the guitar player searches for chords. The tunes are usually old favorites (1966:104).

Photographs in the National Archives and paintings in the Army and Marine art collections show soldiers playing guitars in bars, in bunkers or while sitting in the sun at base camp. One Navy photograph shows a group called the Westwinds playing for wounded Marines aboard the assault landing ship *Iwo Jima*. Three members of the Merry-men met and first played together on a troopship bound for Vietnam. Joseph Tusso gives a vivid description of formal parties at an Air Force Officers' Club in Thailand; solitary singers or groups provided entertainment during the meal and broadsides were sometimes distributed so everyone could join in (1971:1-2). In my own collection I have tapes of performances at farewell parties and concerts, in officers' clubs and bars, hootches and bunkers.

The same technology which made it possible for the troops to listen to rock music "from the Delta to the DMZ" provided ideal conditions for the transmission of folklore. The widespread

availability of inexpensive portable tape recorders meant that concerts, music nights at the mess, or informal bar performances could be recorded, copied and passed along to friends. Toby Hughes writes:

Just before leaving Southeast Asia and as a favor to some friends I recorded (three songs) on tape, leaving them with instructions not to let the tape be copied, as I planned to include the songs in a book. One has to understand fighter pilots and their love of fighter pilot songs to know that I was neither surprised nor upset to find that copies of the tape were all over Southeast Asia within thirty days. One copy actually beat me back to the States and I was subjected to the strange sensation of hearing my own voice, recorded half-way around the world, singing the songs over the speakers in the casual bar just after arriving at my stateside assignment (1989).

Some especially popular groups made tapes for their fans and several singers had records cut. We know that these songs were occasionally played on AFVN Radio and they were probably also played on the "bullshit net" which the troops operated illegally on field radios. The extremely high rate of troop mobility meant that these songs spread rapidly.

Some of this music even had official sponsorship. In the early 1960s the USIS (United States Information Service) sponsored tours of Vietnam by American folk groups, although these mostly played for Vietnamese villagers rather than American troops. Especially talented performers and groups often gave concerts or entertained visiting dignitaries. In 1965 Hershel Gober formed a band called the Black Patches and was sent on tour to sing for the troops, including a "command performance" for General Westmoreland. (Gober 1987) Later in the war Bill Ellis, who wrote songs about the First Cavalry Division, was taken out of combat and sent around to sing for men on the remote firebases, where USO performers couldn't go. He also cut a record, a copy of which was given to each member of the division on his return to the United States. Colonel Joe Starker (11 CAB) arranged to have Mike Staggs transferred so he could sing with the Merryman. In 1966-1967 General Seneff, Commander of the First Aviation Brigade instituted the custom of monthly meetings of commanders from Battalion level or higher and solicited singing groups to provide entertainment. The proliferation of singing groups among Army aviators during this period--Bite and the Strikers, the Beach Bums, the Intruders, the Blue Stars, the Four Blades, the Merryman and Three Majors and a Minor--was probably due to the interest stimulated by these contests. When Ike Pappas put together a broadcast entitled *Songs of War* for CBS in 1967, he used material sent to him by the public information officers of various units. A few of these performers were filmed or recorded for radio or television release over the Armed Forces Network or in the United States.

The most important collection of the folksongs of the Vietnam War was made by U.S. Air Force Major General Edward Lansdale. The collection is in two parts, the first made during the period 1965-1967, while Lansdale was serving as head of the Senior Liaison Office of the U.S. Mission in Saigon. The songs were recorded at Lansdale's house by singer, composer and

musician friends, both American and Vietnamese: Saigon government officials, soldiers serving as advisors to the Vietnamese, and civilians employed by USAID, the Foreign Service, CORDS, and the CIA.

In 1976 Lansdale put together a tape of 51 of these songs, with a narration explaining the circumstances of their composition and performance, and sent copies tapes to Lyndon Johnson and members of his cabinet and to several officials in Saigon, including Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge and General Westmoreland, in an effort "to impart a greater understanding of the political and psychological nature of the war to those making decisions." This is perhaps the only example known to military history of folklore being used as a device for the transmission of intelligence. He deposited a copy of this first collection, *In the Midst of War*, in the Music Division of the Library of Congress in 1975.

Lansdale returned to the United States in 1968, but friends and comrades continued to send him recordings from Vietnam and Thailand, and to drop by his house in Virginia to sing new songs they had written or collected. In 1977 he deposited a superb second collection of 160 songs, *Songs by Americans in the Vietnam War*, in the Music Division of the Library of Congress. Both these collections were edited and provided with excellent notes by Lansdale. It is to him, as well as to collectors like Colonel C. W. Getz, Colonel Joseph Tusso and Colonel James Durham, all of the U.S. Air Force, that we owe most of our knowledge of the folksong of the Vietnam War.

These songs can give the historian a unique perspective on the war. "The Battle of Long Khanh," sung by the men of the 6th Royal Australian Regiment, "The Battle for the Ia Drang Valley," written by James Multon of the First Cavalry, or "The Ballad of Ap Bac," which was sung in the clubs at Soc Trang and Tan Son Nhut and which Captain Richard Ziegler included in his detailed notes on the battle, include information which is never found in the official after-action reports. As Neil Sheehan has argued, ballads of battles composed by the men who fight them often suffer from factual inaccuracies because of the confusion of war, but the inaccuracies do not detract from the truth (Sheehan 1988:305-307). The songs made by American men and women who served in Vietnam vary as widely in theme as in circumstances of performance, from anti-war to intensely patriotic, from laments for dead friends to ribald descriptions of encounters with pretty girls on Tu Do Street. What they have in common is that they helped those who sang them and those who listened to survive. For this reason they are an integral part of the history of the Vietnam War.

EPILOGUE

Less than sixteen years after the last helicopter lifted off the roof of the American Embassy in Saigon, American troops were again in combat. Again, they took their music with them--they carried Walkman recorders and radios and asked friends to send tapes. Interestingly enough, it was the recordings of sixties music which they especially prized--somehow Jimi Hendrix "sounded right for a war." And, again, they made their own music. Television news showed us soldiers

singing rap songs in praise of their units, humorous songs in Spanish about Saddam Hussein, reggae, gospel songs, and blues. One impromptu desert concert featured a young tenor singing "Danny Boy"--a song that has been sung by soldiers far away from their homes for a hundred years. Greg Wilson, a superb singer who flew as a forward air controller in the secret war in Laos, took his Vietnam War songs to Saudi Arabia where he flew an A-10 in Operation Desert Storm. In the midst of high-tech weapons and satellite communications, an ancient military tradition has been handed on and renewed.

NOTES

The songs mentioned in the text are from my own collection or from the Lansdale tapes in the Library of Congress. For information about radio in Vietnam I am indebted to Roger Steffens, Adrian Cronauer, Larry Suid and Alexis Muellner. Dick Jonas, Lem Genovese, Emily Strange, Joseph Tusso, Bull Durham, Hershel Gober, Mike Staggs, Saul Broudy, Toby Hughes, Chip Dockery, Bill Ellis and General Tom Bowen told me about making and performing songs in Vietnam. Bill Getz, Les Cleveland, and Frank Smith have been unfailingly helpful, in supplying material from their own Vietnam collections and comparative texts from other wars. John Clark Pratt, Mark Berent, Ray McCleery, Chad Swedberg, Jim Gunter, Al Salzman, Craig Morrison, Dick Koeteeuw, Don Schmenk, Bill Geloneck and Tuck Boys found superb in-country tapes for me. Cynthia Johnston and Steve Brown graciously made copies of their own interview tapes for me and introduced me to singers and to members of Lansdale's Saigon SLO team. Baird Straughan, of Radio Smithsonian, also gave me copies of his interviews with singers. Chuck Rosenberg tracked down songs and references and patiently translated military terms. Cecil Currey, Lansdale's biographer, has been extraordinarily generous in giving me access to the material he has amassed. Marylou Gjernes, Army Art Curator of the US Army Center of Military History found three wonderful paintings of soldiers making music in Vietnam and made my visit to the Army Art Collection delightful. Les Waffin and David James have shared their vast knowledge of the popular music of the Vietnam War. Elena Danielson, associate Archivist at the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University, treated me like visiting royalty and guided me through the intricacies of the Lansdale manuscript and tape collections there. Pat Lansdale gave me the tapes which were still in her husband's possession at the time of his death and has been a gracious hostess on my trips to Washington. Joseph Baker, George Allen, Bernard Yoh, General Sam Wilson, Lucien Conein, Dolf Droge, James Bullington, and Dr. Joseph Johnston shared their memories of Lansdale in Saigon and Washington, parties at his villa at 194 Cong Ly, and singing at the Cosmos Bar. Joseph Baker also gave me his tapes of Lansdale's Saigon parties and of the two edited collections, which have been invaluable. The Ravens have welcomed me to their reunions and have let me hear these songs as a living tradition. To all of these people, and to Michael Licht, who first brought the Lansdale tapes to my attention, I am deeply grateful.

THE SINGERS AND THE SONGS

SAUL BROUDY (guitar and harmonica)

Saul Broudy served as a laundry and bath platoon leader, 96th Quartermaster Battalion, 1st Logistical Command, at Phan Rang, 1966-1967, but learned many of his songs from members of the 48th Assault Helicopter Company ("Blue Stars") stationed just down the road.

CHIP DOCKERY (guitar)

Chip Dockery did two tours with the 13th Tactical Fighter Squadron, ("Panther Pack"), 432nd Tactical Fighter Wing, at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base between 1968 and 1971 and returned in 1972 during Linebacker II with the 308th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 31st Tactical Fighter Wing. He flew almost 400 missions into all target areas in the war theater with the majority being against interdiction targets in Barrel Roll and Steel Tiger (northern and southern Laos).

JAMES PATTERSON ("BULL") DURHAM (guitar)

Bull Durham, a veteran of the Korean War, served with the 362nd Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron at Pleiku, 1969-1970, and, in his own words, "flew 175 missions in a magnificent Gooney Bird (EC-47)--1942 vintage--older than my co-pilot." He toured Army camps in the central highlands with a GI country band, singing and collecting songs, and assembled one of the largest manuscript collections of songs of the war.

BILL ELLIS (guitar)

Bill Ellis, who was drafted out of a rock band in San Francisco in 1968, became known as the "singing rifleman" of the First Cavalry Division. In March, 1969, he was pulled from field duty as a rifleman with A Company, 1st Battalion, Fifth Cavalry, and reassigned to Special Services. He toured the Cav area of operations, performing for grunts on the fire support bases.

TOBY HUGHES (guitar)

Toby Hughes, the balladeer of the in-country air war, was a F4-C Aircraft Commander with the 557th Tactical Fighter Squadron, stationed at Cam Ranh Bay, in 1968. Most of his 204 missions involved armed reconnaissance, close air support of troops and interdiction of trucks on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. He flew in support of Khe Sanh during the Tet Offensive of 1968.

DICK JONAS (guitar)

Dick Jonas, the best-known song writer of the air war, flew 125 missions with the 433rd Tactical Fighter Squadron ("Satan's Angels"), 8th Tactical Fighter Wing ("Wolf Pack"), Ubon Rachitani Royal Thai Air Force Base, 1967-1968. He participated in Rolling Thunder (the code name for U.S. air operations over North Vietnam at that time), took part in Steel Tiger missions, and flew in support of Khe Sahn.

CHUCK ROSENBERG (guitar and dobro)

Chuck Rosenberg served with as an A-Team Communications Supervisor in Company C, Sixth Special Forces Group (Airborne), at Fort Bragg from 1965 to 1968.

TOM PRICE (guitar and back up vocals)

ROBIN THOMAS (electric bass)

LISA ELLIS, SHERRY HUGHES, KATHY JONAS (back up vocals)

1. GREEN T-SHIRT BLUES (Saul Broudy)

A wry comment by Saul Broudy about life in the rear in an army that expected a man to dye his underwear green. Saul wrote the lyrics in Vietnam to a tune loosely based on Roy Acuff's "Freight Train Blues." After he returned to the United States he forgot the lyrics, which were provided years later by his army buddy 1st Lt. Lary Bloom, presently editor of *Northeast Magazine*.

I got the green t-shirt blues,
'Way down at the bottom of my com-com-combat boots.
And if ever I get out of this place,
Goin' back to join the human race,
Lord, Lord, Lord, I've got the green t-shirt blues.

Well, I got my shoes all polished up,
And my hair all combed down,
My belt buckle all shiny,
And I goin' into town.
Well, when I got there, the policeman said,
It was full of Viet Cong.
Well, then I got out my old guitar,
And I began to sing this song.

IN COUNTRY 10

I got the green t-shirt blues,
'Way down at the bottom of my com-com-combat boots.
And if ever I get out of this place,
Goin' back to join the human race,
Lord, Lord, Lord, I've got the green t-shirt blues.

2. GRUNT (Bill Ellis)

This detailed description of the "little things that mean a lot" in the daily life of the combat infantryman--mail from home, a drink of cool water, sharing what you have with your buddies--was written by Bill Ellis.

Sure is hot,
I raise my hand,
To wipe the sweat that's dripping in my eyes.
Sure does burn.

Humped a click,
My shoulders ache,
Wish we'd get the word to break for chow.
It's almost time.

What I'd give for an ice cold beer,
An ice-cold coke,
Or just a piece of ice,
To cool the water.
It's getting hotter.

CHORUS: Little things mean a lot,
When they're things you haven't got.
Being a grunt you learn to live,
Without the little things,
That really mean a lot.
Share between you what you have,
Learn to live with what you've got.

Every day,
Is like the last,
Nothing ever changes, just the time.
It moves too slow.

All I own,
Is on my back,
Rifle in my hand, I'm always ready.
For things to happen.

Hope we get some mail tonight,
With the C's and water,
On the logbird,
It's been a while.
Can't find a smile.

CHORUS

3. SIX CLICKS (Chuck Rosenberg)

"Six Clicks" was written in 1966 by Captain Hershel Gober, MACV, who was at that time serving as a sub-sector adviser in Rach Gia in IV Corps. It was recorded the same year in Saigon by General Edward Lansdale (USAF) and can be found, along with many other songs by Gober, in the superb taped collections of Vietnam War songs which were given by the general to the Library of Congress.

Six clicks is a mighty short walk,
When you march behind a band.
But six clicks can seem like a hundred miles,
When you're walking in Charlie's land.

With a pack upon your back,
A rifle in your hand.
Every step you take,
Death is holding your hand.
This is Charlie's land.

Up before the crack of dawn,
Out in the brush.
Every clump of trees,
Can hide an ambush.

You must not relax,
Don't lay your rifle down.
Remember, buddy, you're trespassing,
On Charlie's ground.

There's mud, mosquitoes and snakes,
 Mines and punji stakes.
 Some of our boys found out too late,
 Just who owns this real estate.
 This is Charlie's land.

Six clicks is a mighty short walk,
 When you march behind a band.
 But six clicks can seem like a hundred miles,
 When you're walking in Charlie's land.

4. SAIGON WARRIOR (Saul Broudy)

Tune: "Sweet Betsy from Pike"

There are many military folksongs about rear echelon personnel. This one is descended from a British Army World War I song entitled "The Lousy Lance-Corporal." It was sung by British and American soldiers in World War II, turned up in Air Force tradition in Korea as "Here's to Old Kunsan," and circulated widely in Southeast Asia among Army and Air Force personnel. Saul Broudy included in his MA thesis a version from the Blue Stars of the 48th Assault Helicopter Company, "Ol' Phan Rang." A similar text, "Here's to Old Udorn" was published in *The "Raven"*, and Bull Durham included two other Air Force variants, "Sydney Leave" and "Saigon City" in his *Songs of SEA*. The Music Division of the Library of Congress has a manuscript version entitled "The Medic," which was submitted for copyright in 1968. (For an excellent discussion of the variants of this song that circulated during the Vietnam war see Cleveland, *Dark Laughter*, pages 131-134.)

The version on this record probably comes from Australian army tradition. It was sung by an Australian woman named Maggie as part of a song competition which provided the entertainment at a commanders' conference held at the Nha Trang headquarters of the 17th Aviation Group, in April, 1967. A tape of the concert was given to Saul Broudy by helicopter pilot and singer Gene Easley, who was later killed in action. A very similar text was recorded by Colonel David Watt at a party given by members of MACV Team #1 at Chu Lai in 1971. He comments that "it was a unique group in that it had Australians and Marines assigned to it."

Saigon, oh, Saigon's a wonderful place,
 But the organization's a goddamn disgrace.
 There are captains and majors and light colonels too,
 With their hands in their pockets and nothing to do.

IN COUNTRY 13

CHORUS: Singing dinky dau, dinky dau, dinky dau, doo,
With their hands in their pockets and nothing to do.

Oh, they sit at their desks and they scream and they shout,
And they talk of the war they know nothing about.
Against the VC they're not doing too well,
But if paper were cordite we'd be blown to hell.

CHORUS

Oh, a Saigon commando's an unusual sight,
He wears his fatigues though he's not in the fight.
A knife and a pistol his daily motif,
But you'll find him for lunch at the Cercle Sportif.

CHORUS

Well, if you go to Saigon to visit this crew,
They'll be all upset 'cause your brass isn't new.
If you ask for more weapons they'll think you're in fun,
They know that advisors should not need a gun.

CHORUS

Most Saigon commandos now wear a bronze star,
They got it for writing reports on the war.
They've never been shot at or seen a VC,
But they know they deserve it, they work for MACV.

CHORUS

When this war is over and you all go home,
You'll meet Saigon warriors wherever you roam.
You'll know them by sight and they're not in your class,
They don't have diarrhea, just a big chairborne ass.

CHORUS

5. FIRST CAV (Bill Ellis)

IN COUNTRY 14

"First Cav," written by Bill Ellis in a bunker at LZ Eleanor, rapidly became the "unofficial fight song" of the First Cavalry Division. The division's Public Information Office had a record made of this and other songs by Ellis and distributed 30,000 of them to the troops.

CHORUS: First Team, First Cav,
Black and yellow patch.
It's the greatest fighting team there is,
No other one can match.
First Team, First Cav,
Always number one.
No matter what the job may be,
The Cav will get it done.

In 1861 that's when the Cav began to be,
Fighting in the south they put an end to slavery.
Soon they fought the Indians to make history all the way,
Later joined the First and remained until this day.

CHORUS

They lost their use of horses back in 1943,
Training for a war which was 'way across the sea.
Landing first in Manila and then first in Japan,
The Cav proved itself to be the greatest in the land.

CHORUS

Next was Korea where they'd land in Pohang Dong,
There they fought the Reds whose aggression was so strong.
The Reds kept a'comin' with their human waves of hell,
Soon the Cav pushed them back to the 48th parallel.

CHORUS

Now the Cav's in Nam fighting every single day,
On the ground, in the air, airmobile all the way.
Where the action is, that's where the cavalry will be,
Kickin' tail and bringin' hell on top the enemy.

CHORUS

6. HO CHI MINH TRAIL (Toby Hughes)

Tune: "Billy the Kid"

The Ho Chi Minh Trail was a major supply route about three hundred miles long, just inside and parallel to the eastern Laotian border. It started near Vinh in North Vietnam, entered Laos through mountain passes such as Mu Gia or Ban Karai, and ended near Kontum in South Vietnam. In the daytime it was a series of sleepy rural roads and small trails, at night it was, in the words of one pilot who flew there, the Los Angeles Freeway without lights. As Toby Hughes describes in this song, the trail was heavily defended with anti-aircraft guns, automatic weapons (ZPU) and, in the latter days of the war, shoulder fired heat-seeking missiles. The pilots who flew there at night ran the additional risk of flying into unseen mountains or succumbing to vertigo.

Come along, boys, and I'll tell you a tale,
Of the pilots who fly on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.
Of Covey and Moonbeam and Nimrod you've heard,
Of Hobo and Spad and of old Yellow Bird.

The trucks load in Hanoi and Haiphong by day,
In singles and convoys they start on their way.
South by southwest in an unending stream,
Reaching the border at day's fading gleam.

They stop at Mu Gia or at Ban Karai.
And wait for the last of the daylight to die.
Under cover of night through the pass they set sail,
Out on the roads of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

As they roll on through darkness, not stopping to rest,
Miles away are the pilots whose skills they will test.
Who'll soon face the darkness, the karst, and the guns,
In the grim cat and mouse game that no one's yet won.

When you fly on the Trail through the dark and the haze
It's a thing you'll remember the rest of your days.
A nightmare of vertigo, mountains, and flak,
And the cold wind of Death breathing soft at your back.

But the trucks must be stopped, and it's all up to you,
So you fly here each night to this grim rendezvous.
Where your whole world's confined to the light of the flare,
And you fight for your life just to stay in the air.

For there's many a man who there met his fate,
On the dark roads of Hell, where the grim reaper waits.
Where a man must learn quickly the tricks of his trade,
Or die in the dark for mistakes that he's made.

And there's many a lad in the flush of his youth,
Who's still yet to meet with his moment of truth.
With wings on his chest and the world by the tail,
He'll grow up fast on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

7. THE PANTHER PACK IS PROWLING (Chip Dockery)

Tune: "The Cruel War is Raging"

8. LING PO DROVE THE TRUCK AWAY (Chip Dockery)

Tune: "Michael Row the Boat Ashore"

9. KING OF THE TRAIL (Chip Dockery)

Tune: "King of the Road"

These songs are part of a series which Chip Dockery wrote about the North Vietnamese truck drivers on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. He imagines the driver, Ling Po, leaving his home in Quang Khe, about forty miles north of the DMZ, saying goodbye to his girl friend, who wants to go with him, and driving south through the Mu Gia Pass into Laos and on to South Vietnam. Parking in caves during the day and driving by night, he manages to evade the fighter attacks, B-52 strikes and reconnaissance planes, listens over his captured survival radio to American search and rescue efforts, and perhaps even finds another girl.

The Panther Pack is prowling,
Ling Po has to drive.
And I'm afraid he won't make it,
Back to Quang Khe alive.

I'm afraid he won't make it,
And it grieves my heart so.
Won't you let me go with him?
"No," said Uncle Ho.

I'd tie back my hair,
The People's uniform I'd put on.

And I'd pass as his gunner,
As we rode along.

I'd pass as his gunner,
No one would ever know.
Won't you let me go with him?
"No," said Uncle Ho.

Ling Po drove the truck away,
Thoughts of Mao.
Ling Po drove the truck away,
Thoughts of Mao.

Well, I helped him patch the tires,
Thoughts of Mao.
Well, I helped him patch the tires,
Thoughts of Mao.

Mu Gia pass is high and wide,
Thoughts of Mao.
Bombs and rockets on the other side,
Thoughts of Mao.

First six-by, number three,
Destination: DMZ.
Hand on the wheel and foot on the gas,
About three miles out of Mu Gia pass.

Chorus: I keep a little extra rice,
And with a little bit of luck,
Get a girl from a road crew,
To ride in my truck.
I'm a man of means by no means,
King of the Trail.

I know every by-pass around Ban Laboy,
Watching them waste bombs fills me with joy.
Every gunner in every town,
That hoses off a few clips when Spectre's around.

I sing "Truck parks for sale or rent,
Cave spaces, fifty cents.
Survival radio's on two-four-three,
So you can listen to the back seater,
Hanging in the tree."

Well, I'm a Ho Chi truck driver, Number One,
Hauling my load and having my fun.
Old worn out tires and tubes,
From rolling over too many CBU's.

Well, I've been driving Night Owl,
All over these parts.
Putting up with Arc Lights,
And damned Recce carts.
But thank God for them,
They've saved my load,
Without the extra light,
I'd have run off the road.

Chorus

10. TCHEPONE (Toby Hughes)

Tune: "The Strawberry Roan"

"Tchepone", written by Toby Hughes in 1968, rapidly became the most popular song of the air war; it was sung in every fighter pilots' bar in Southeast Asia, taped copies circulated widely, and it was recorded by many Air Force singers. Chip Dockery remembers singing it with his back-seater while on a mission over the town itself. Tchepone was a Laotian village strategically located at a major highway junction on the Ho Chi Minh Trail which was taken over by the North Vietnamese as a barracks, storage and staging area for troops and supplies being infiltrated into South Vietnam. The town and its environs were extremely well defended and several pilots were lost there.

I was hangin' 'round Ops, just spendin' my time,
Off of the schedule, not earnin' a dime.
A colonel comes up and he says, "I suppose
You fly a fighter, from the cut of your clothes."

He figures me right; I'm a good one, I say,
"Do you happen to have me a target today?"

Says yes he does, a real easy one.
"No sweat, my boy, it's an old-time milk run."

I gets all excited and asks where it's at;
He gives me a wink and a tip of his hat.
"It's three-fifty miles to the northwest of home,
A small peaceful hamlet that's known as Tchepone."
(Ah, you'll sure love Tchepone.)

I go get my g-suit and strap on my gun,
Helmet and gloves, out the door on the run.
Fire up my Phantom and take to the air.
Two's tucked in tight and we haven't a care.

In forty-five minutes we're over the town,
From twenty-eight thousand we're screamin' on down.
Arm up the switches and dial in the mils,
Rack up the wings and roll in for the kill.

We feel a bit sorry for folks down below,
Of destruction that's coming they surely don't know.
The thought passes quickly; we know a war's on,
As on down we scream toward peaceful Tchepone.
(Unsuspecting, peaceful Tchepone.)

Release altitude, and the pipper's not right;
I'll press just a little and lay 'em in tight.
Pickle those beauties at two-point-five grand,
Startin' my pull when it all hits the fan.

A black puff in front and then two off the right,
Then six or eight more and I suck it up tight.
There's small arms and tracers and heavy ack-ack,
It's scattered-to-broken with all kinds of flak.

I jink hard to left and head out for the blue.
My wingman says, "Lead! They're shooting at you!"
"No bull!" I cry as I point it toward home,
Still comes the fire from the town of Tchepone.
(Dirty, deadly Tchepone.)

I make it back home with six holes in my bird.
With the colonel who sent me I'd sure like a word.

But he's nowhere around, though I look near and far;
He's gone back to Saigon, to help run the war.

I've been 'round this country for many a day.
I've seen the things that they're throwin' my way.
I know that there's places I don't like to go,
Down in the Delta and in Tally-Ho.

But I'll bet all my flight pay the jock ain't been born
Who can keep all his cool when he's over Tchepone.
(Oh, don't go to Tchepone.)

11. SITTING IN THE CAB OF MY TRUCK (Chip Dockery)

Tune: "Dock of the Bay"

Another song by Chip Dockery about the North Vietnamese truck drivers on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Sometimes, especially late in the war, the drivers were chained to the steering wheel of their trucks, thus linking the fate of the vehicle and the driver.

Hiding in the morning sun,
I'll be driving in the evening calm.
Watching the Phantoms roll in,
And I watch them pull away again,

Well, I'm just sitting in the cab of my truck,
Thinking this life ain't such a game.
Sitting in the cab of my truck,
Filing my chains.

I left my home in Dong Hoi,
Headed for the DMZ.
Well, I had something to live for,
A Peoples' Hero I was gonna be.

Now I'm just sitting in the cab of my truck,
Looking through the windshield at flare-lighted rain.
Sitting in the cab of my truck,
Yanking my chains.

Here I sit having a nicotine fit,
But, God, I'm too scared to get a cigarette lit.

'Cause that might just blow my only hope,
Of not showing up on a starlight scope.

Well, sitting here with britches so tight,
'Cause I think that Specter's due back tonight.
Bleeding from my ears and my nose,
From a sky-spot that finally came close.

Now I'm just sitting in the cab of my truck,
Watching the bombs fall through the rain.
Sitting in the cab of my truck,
Pulling my chain.

12. BA MUOI BA (Chuck Rosenberg)

This account of a Montagnard striker's encounter with Vietnam's most popular beer was written by Barry Sadler, better known as the composer of "Ballad of the Green Berets."

CHORUS: Ba Muoi Ba, Ba Muoi Ba, Ba Muoi Ba, wah-oh.
Ba Muoi Ba, Ba Muoi Ba, Ba Muoi Ba, wah-oh.

Oh, won't you help me, Sergeant,
Get me out of Pleiku Jail.
I don't know how I got here,
I was drunk from the Ho Chi Trail.

CHORUS

I didn't mean to be fighting,
And bringing you all of this shame.
But I got in a fight with a cyclo girl,
Down in old Nha Trang.

CHORUS

Now this Danang Jail has rats and fleas,
The snakes crawl on the floor.
Take me back to camp, Sarge,
And I won't get drunk no more.

CHORUS

There's VC all around us,
It's looking bad, I think.

We can't do our thing, Sarge,
So let's have a little drink.

CHORUS

13. PULL THE BOOM FROM THE GAS HOLE (Dick Jonas)

The speaker in this song by Dick Jonas is a fighter pilot who is refueling ("on the boom") from a flying tanker in preparation for flying back to North Vietnam to take part in a search and rescue mission for a friend, Wolf Pack Two, whose plane has been shot down. With the help of "Sandy" (A1-E aircraft used to suppress enemy groundfire during a rescue operation) and the "Jolly Green Giant," rescue helicopter the downed pilot is rescued and flown to Nakhon Phanom ("NKP") in Thailand, where he spends the evening with a tall beer and a pretty girl.

CHORUS: Pull that boom from the gashole, tanker, let me go,
Clear me out of the anchor track before the sun sinks low.
I got a buddy on the ground up north in Route Pack Four,
Pull that pipe from the gashole, boomer, let me go.

We rolled in on a bridge up north about daylight,
And the guns on the ground were looking for a fight.
Pullin' out we got hosed pretty good with ZPU,
And they shot off the starboard wing of Wolf Pack Two.

CHORUS

Well, ol' Wolf Pack Two was on the beeper when he hit the ground,
I told him don't go nowhere, just hang around.
I got a Jolly Green Giant coming in a little while,
So hang loose, old buddy, we'll bring you home in style.

CHORUS

Well, ol' Sandy came in first with nape and fifty cal,
And that super Jolly Green looked good as a big-eyed gal.
Wolf Pack Two spent the night down south at NKP,
With a tall Singhi and a poo-yeng on his knee.

CHORUS

14. JOLLY GREEN (Bull Durham)

Tune: "Abilene"

This song about the "Jolly Green Giant" or Sikorsky HH-3E/HH-53E, a large reconnaissance helicopter used to pick up downed American flyers, circulated widely among Air Force personnel in Vietnam and Thailand throughout the war. It was recorded on January 25, 1967, by Fred Wozniak, Al Tischner, Dave Post and Davie Biermeyer, A-26 pilots at Nakhon Phanom, and was probably written by one of the group. Fred Wozniak was shot down two days after this song was recorded.

CHORUS: Jolly Green, Jolly Green,
It's all painted brown and green.
Well, the prettiest sight that I've ever seen,
Is Jolly Green, my Jolly Green.

Got shot down late last night,
Flack and the missiles were hitting just right.
Got on the horn and with all my might,
Called "Jolly Green, my Jolly Green."

CHORUS

I sit alone, here in this tree,
'Fraid of Charlie as I can be.
Wish to the Lord that I could see,
That Jolly Green, my Jolly Green.

Sounds of rotors now I've heard,
Here comes that great big whirly bird.
PJ's cable now I've seen,
On Jolly Green, my Jolly Green.

CHORUS

15. COBRA SEVEN (Toby Hughes)

Tune: "Utah Carroll"

Forward air controllers were the airborne directors of strikes against ground targets; they spotted targets and then helped attacking aircraft locate them. Flying low and slow in their tiny planes, the FACs were the eyes and ears of the fighter pilots. This song by Toby Hughes tells the story of a FAC with the call sign Cobra Seven who, while flying his daily patrol in Three Corps, sees a Huey (UH-1 helicopter) shot down. He gives his life standing off the Viet Cong with white phosphorus rockets and M-16 fire while another helicopter rescues the crew of the downed chopper.

Fill your mugs and glasses
And I'll sing to you a song
Of a FAC called COBRA Seven,
And his fight against the Cong.

We flew Three Corps together,
We worked it night and day,
From the dusty strip at Cu Chi
To the main street of Song Be.

He was flying late one evening
'Round the mountain near Tay Ninh,
When he heard the chopper's Mayday,
"We're hit and goin' in."

At the base of Tay Ninh Mountain
He saw the Huey fall;
Started for the crash site
And made a Mayday call.

He heard the voice on Guard, then,
A survivor on the ground,
"There's three of us alive here
And bad guys all around."

He looked down at the clearing,
Saw VC all about.
Help was on the way, now,
But time was running out.

He armed his willy peter,
He still had two full racks,
Hosed two off at the VC
And stopped them in their tracks.

Then he saw the Cong regrouping,
And once more moving in.
He fired his last two rockets
And turned them back again.

A Huey out of Tay Ninh
Then arrived upon the scene.
To cover for the rescue
He grabbed his M-16.

He was firing out the window,
Flying low across the trees
With bullets swarming 'round him
Like a hive of deadly bees.

The friendlies watched in wonder
At this pilot, bold and brave,
One man holding back twenty
While the Huey made the save.

As they climbed aboard the chopper
Saw the VC find the range,
And they cried for Cobra Seven
As he went down in flames.

In the dusty heat of Three Corps
When the Army's long day ends,
They speak in silent voices
Of the FAC who saved their friends.

From Lai Khe up to Bu Dop,
From Cu Chi to Phuoc Long,
They remember COBRA Seven
And his fight against the Cong.

16. GREEN BERET AND FRIENDLY FAC (Chuck Rosenberg)

Tune: "The Wabash Cannon Ball"

A recording of this song was made in Nha Trang on March 9, 1966 by members of the 1st Air Commando Squadron. According to Lt. Col. "Bucky" Burruss, USA Special Forces (Ret.), who remembers singing it in the Mike Force bar at Nha Trang in 1968, it was

written by Capt. Jon Myer, 21st Tactical Air Support Squadron. Burruss included a text of this song in his book *Mike Force*. This dialogue between the Army Special Forces trooper on the ground and the Air Force FAC and fighter pilots in the air is closely related to a group of songs about an air traffic controller and a pilot which was sung in Korea as "Itazuke Tower" and in Vietnam as "Phan Rang Tower," "A Shau Tower" and, in a variant by Dick Jonas, "Ubon Tower." It is, of course, also part of a long tradition of songs about inter-service rivalry.

Friendly FAC, oh, friendly FAC, this is Green Beret,
We see you flying high above, out of danger's way.
If you can spare a moment to help your fellow man,
I wish you'd try to find me, and tell me where I am.

Green Beret, oh, Green Beret, this is your friendly FAC,
You see me flying overhead while you're still in the sack.
Still, I'll try to find you, and set you people straight,
But hurry, 'cause it's steak night, and I don't want to be late.

Friendly FAC, oh, friendly FAC, this is Green Beret,
We appreciate your helping, and you'll send us on our way.
But I really wish you'd think about our danger on the ground,
Tromping through the jungle, while you just "fac" around.

Green Beret, oh, Green Beret, this is your friendly FAC,
If you no longer need me, I'm going to head on back.
I'll settle for a souvenir--whatever you can bag,
An AK forty-seven, or a bloodstained VC flag.

Oh friendly FAC, oh, friendly FAC, we've just come under fire!
And if you cannot help us, we'll join the angels' choir.
It's automatic weapons, we're really getting hit,
So hurry with the fighters, 'cause we are in deep shit!

Green Beret, you were cut out--I read you "numbah ten,"
The C Team's telling dirty jokes, so please transmit again.
If you've got Charlie cornered, please don't let him get away.
I've sent a call for fighters--though it may take all day.

Friendly FAC, oh, friendly FAC, please get your finger out,
We've tangled with a regiment, of that there is no doubt.
If you can get us out of Charlie's fierce and dreadful grip,
We'll give you FACs a grateful square in our comic strip.

Green Beret, oh, Green Beret, this is your friendly FAC.
 Let me take some photos, in case you don't get back.
 Turn this way a little. Hold it. That's the style!
 You're on *Candid Camera*, so let me see you smile.

Green Beret! Hey, Green Beret! They're shooting at this FAC!
 I hear the bullets whistling by, I hear the rifles' crack.
 I'm missing my siesta, and I need a taste of rum,
 If you no longer need me, I think I'll head for home!

Oh, thank God; our fighters now are circling overhead!
 Charlie's going to wish that he had stayed at home in bed.
 He's going to meet his maker in the Land that is to be,
 We're going to blow his body up, and set his spirit free.

Friendly FAC and fighters, I hope you see our smoke,
 That first strike came too close to us; it really was no joke!
 Green Beret, we're holding high--the FAC, he got it wrong,
 He thought that you were marking the position of the Cong!

Fighters, this is friendly FAC, please hold it high and dry.
 We can get this straightened out, if we all really try.
 It really doesn't matter if I mark the friend or foe,
 'Cause you can't hit a cow's rear end, no matter where you go.

Fighters, you're cleared in again, just do the best you can.
 The situation's all fouled up, beyond the help of man.
 Just bomb the general area, and when the smoke clears out,
 Well, we'll just count the bodies, and let God sort 'em out!

Now most of us are safe at home; we beat the dreaded Cong,
 We simply let it all hang out to help the war along.
 The friendly FAC and fighters will always save the day,
 Killing off the Charlies, to the last damned Green Beret.

17. FIREFIGHT (Bill Ellis)

"One time I was at LZ Jake and I had a really touching thing happen. The guys tell me they relate to my songs because it really puts the war into words. Well, some of these guys were broken up by 'Firefight' because they were in one the day before and lost some buddies." (Bill Ellis, 1969)

CHORUS: Firefight, firefight,
Just had another firefight.
Lead was flyin', men were dyin',
War is hell and full of fright,
Just had another firefight.

You never know when it's gonna happen,
You might hear an AK snappin'.
You hit the dirt and start a'prayin',
And hope that someone hears what you're sayin'.

CHORUS

You flip your iron to rock and roll,
Squeeze the trigger to let her go.
She gets so hot you can't hold on,
But by that time, Charlie's gone.

CHORUS

18. WILL THERE BE A TOMORROW? (Dick Jonas)

This song by Dick Jonas was extremely popular with pilots during the war. Its haunting sadness is reminiscent of many of the songs of World War I.

Can you say will the sun rise tomorrow?
Will there be any time left to borrow?
Will the poet make a rhyme, will there be any time?
Can you say will there be a tomorrow?

Seems to me I have been here forever,
Will this war ever end? Maybe never.
Will the dawn still arrive, will I still be alive,
Or will I sleep alone here forever?

There's someone who I'm sure loves me only,
She's the one on my mind when I'm lonely.
Does she know, can she see, is she still true to me?
Does she know what it's like to be lonely?

From the sea comes the sun, dawn is breaking,
Soon the fight for my life I'll be making.

If I die over here, will they know, will they care?
Will there be joy, or hearts that are breaking?

Can you say will the sun rise tomorrow?
Will there be any time left to borrow?
Will the poet make a rhyme, will there be any time?
Can you say will there be a tomorrow?

19. I'VE BEEN EVERYWHERE (Chip Dockery)

Tune: "I've Been Everywhere"

Chip Dockery wrote this "brag song" for a pilot friend's going home party. It lists the places he has been, the people (mostly forward air controllers) and agencies with which he has worked, and the missions he has flown. Lansdale included another version of this song, by Dick Jonas, in *Songs by Americans in the Vietnam War*.

Well, I left the States about a year ago,
And now I'm finally back.
I've been in Southeast Asia,
Flying with the shit-hot Panther Pack.
I've got a tale to tell you like I've never told before,
So, baby, just sit back, let me tell you how I almost won the war....

CHORUS: I've been everywhere, man,
I've been everywhere.
I've bombed the mountains bare, man,
I've breathed the dust-filled air.
Of flak I've had my share, man,
I've been everywhere.

Like Barrel Roll, Steel Tiger, Talley Ho, Tiger Hound,
Barry's Bridge, Rat Fink, Nape Pass, Cricket West,
Brown's Lake, Butterfly, Dong Hoi, Route South,
Duck's Head, Dog's Head, Road Runner, Fish's Mouth,
Black Route, Red Route, Green Route, Quang Khe,
And way down south (where I wasn't supposed to be).

Well, I've worked with everybody, man,
All over this war-torn land.
Guided by the radar's hand,
To dump bombs on a pile of sand.

I've been FAC'd up, I've been FAC'd down,
I've been FAC'd at every turn.

By Invert, Bromo, Teepee, Dressy Lady,
Hillsborough, Moonbeam, Sycamore, Alley Cat,
Nail FAC, Covey FAC, Blind Bat, Raven FAC,
Zorro FAC, Snort FAC, Candlestick, Stormy FAC,
Wolf FAC, Firefly, Lamplighter, Misty FAC,
And now Falcon FAC from the big Panther Pack.

Well, I've done everything, man,
I've done everything.
Any mission you can name, man,
I've flown it in a fighter plane,
I've put ol' Snoopy to shame, man
I've done everything.

Like Day Strike, Night Strike, Interdiction, Truck Kill,
Road Rip, Storage Area, Close Support, Tree Park,
Sky Spot, Nail Run, MIG Cap, Armed Recce,
Low Level, High Drag, Dive Bomb, Wing Gaggle,
Gun Run, Two Ship, Four Ship, Night Owl,
Day Patrol, Night Patrol, Dawn Patrol, Onion Patrol.

CHORUS

20. HERE I SIT (Saul Broudy)

This lament about the trials of wartime life comes from a tape given to Saul Broudy by Ed Almazol. The tape was obtained by Almazol while he was stationed with the 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion of the First Cavalry Division near An Khe in 1967-1968.

Here I sit, full of sorrow,
Got to turn my cot in come tomorrow.
They told me once, they told me twice,
Sleeping cot I'd have to sacrifice.

"Why?" you ask; well, I don't know,
Man just said it's got to go.
Had it now four months or more,
And all at once the man gets sore.

Now I've got the problem of building a bunk,
 I'll need some boxes and other junk.
 I won't cry and mope around.
 Just 'cause the man says, "Sleep on the ground."

Well, I traded my cot for a mattress of rubber,
 I might as well be sleeping on whale blubber.
 I guess it's better than walnut shells,
 I'll work it out come heads or tails.

Punji stakes and a little spaghetti,
 Things are looking bad here at Betty.
 It ain't right, it ain't fair,
 Mattress I got won't hold no air.

Well, I worked all day and I built me a bunk,
 Using boxes and other junk.
 The things a man does to win a war,
 Would piss off the pope and make a preacher sore.

21. DANANG LULLABY (Bull Durham)

Tune: "My Bonny Lies over the Ocean"

Bull Durham collected this song in Vietnam and added a few verses of his own. Getz included a slightly longer version of this song in the first volume of *The Wild Blue Yonder*.

I went off to Southeast Asia,
 To fight my own war in the air.
 I've spent half my tour in a bunker,
 I don't think that it's really fair.

CHORUS: Roll in, roll in,
 My God, how the mortars roll in, roll in.
 Roll in, roll in.
 My God, how the mortars roll in.

Each day I go off to fly combat,
 Then have a beer when I return.
 I usually finish the first one,
 Before incoming rounds are heard.

CHORUS

Each morning we go off to combat,
At dawn in the clouds, fog and rain.
The Gyrenes are up even sooner,
To recapture the ramp at Da Nang.

CHORUS

And now my tour is all over,
I'll resume the life that I led.
My wife thinks that it's rather silly,
To put sandbags around our bed.

CHORUS

22. FIGHTER PILOT'S CHRISTMAS (Dick Jonas)

"But let's face it, fighter pilots are just human and patriotism gets a little watered down now and then...especially if it's Mother's Day, or your wedding anniversary...or if it happens to be your little boy's first day at school and you're 12,000 miles away...And I guess about the toughest thing in any combat tour is not being home for Christmas." Dick Jonas

Merry Christmas, Mom; Merry Christmas, Dad,
Merry Christmas to my love.
Merry Christmas to the sweetest little girls,
That ever came from God above.

CHORUS: Wish I could be home with the ones I love,
It's a long time to be gone.
Santa, take this heart of mine,
And tie it up with bows and twine,
And take it to the folks back home.

A turkey Mom will bake, and Dad will say a prayer,
And someone special thinks of me.
I'd give anything if I could be back home,
But it's so far across the sea.

CHORUS

23. CHU YEN (Saul Broudy)

Tune" "New York Girls"

"Chu Yen" is part of a long tradition of songs about encounters between soldiers and exotic young women. The song was popular with both Army Aviation and Air Force pilots, but it is usually associated with the Merryman, of the 173rd Assault Helicopter Company at Lai Khe. This version was recorded by them at a commanders' conference of the 17th Aviation Group in Nha Trang in 1967.

Now, listen, pilots, unto me, I'll tell you of my song,
When I left the shores of old Nha Trang and landed in Saigon.

CHORUS: Hello, Chu Yen, my dear Chu Yen.
All you Saigon girls, can't you dance the polka.

As I walked down Flower Street, a fair maid I did meet,
She asked me please to see her home, she lived on Tu Do Street.

Now, if you're willing, come with me, and you can have a treat,
You can have a glass of Saigon Tea or Bau Muoi Ba Thirty-Three.

CHORUS

Well, we walked for about an hour or two and finally found her hut,
Papasan was VC, Mamasan chewed betel nut.

CHORUS

When I awoke next morning, I had an aching head,
My pocketbook was empty and my lady friend had fled.

Now looking round this little room, I couldn't see a thing,
But a poster saying, "Yankee, Go Home," and a picture of Ho Chi Minh.

CHORUS: Where is Chu Yen, my dear Chu Yen?
She can do a lot of things, but she can't dance the polka.

Well, I've come to this conclusion, all pilots need a rest,
But if you go to Saigon, your morals it will test.

Well, the moral of this story is, don't be a sinner,
Stop going down to Saigon, try the Red Cross Recreation Center.

CHORUS: Goodbye, Chu Yen, farewell nuoc mam,
I'm trading in my aching head,
I'll try a Doughnut Dolly.

Please pass the cookies, I want a glass of Kool-Aid,
I'm a Red Cross Girl,
I want to dance the polka.

All you U.S. girls, can't you dance the polka?
(Cha Cha Cha)

24. BOONIE RAT SONG (Chuck Rosenberg)

John M. Del Vecchio, who published the text of this song in *The Thirteenth Valley*, says that it was

"allegedly written by an M-60 machine gunner of the 101st under the double-canopy of the Ruong-Ruong Valley in the spring of 1970. He added the music when his unit moved into the Elephant Valley. In late October of that year I received the words from Private First Class Charles E. 'Doc' Bell of Wichita, Kansas, who was 'keeper' of the company song. The composer was allegedly killed in action."

An earlier version of this song is credited by Del Vecchio to Randall Jordan. Jordan described to Chuck Rosenberg an all-night rewrite session where, in his words, "I was the guy with the ballpoint pen." Jordan, from the 1st of the 327th, had gone to hang out with "the guys down the road" (from the 2nd of the 502nd) during a standdown prior to going into the Ashau Valley on a major operation.

The text of this recording is based on Del Vecchio's published version of the song; the tune was furnished by Don Lombardi. Mark Leddy, who served in the 2nd of the 502nd in 1969, told Chuck Rosenberg that this version is essentially faithful to his recollections.

I landed in this country, one year of life to give,
My only friend a weapon, my only prayer to live.
I walked away from freedom and the life that I had known,
I passed the weary faces of the others going home.

Boonie Rats, Boonie Rats, scared but not alone,
Three hundred days more or less, then I'm going home.

The first few days were hectic as they psyched my mind for war,
I often got the feeling that they're trying to tie the score.
The first day with my unit, we climbed a two-click hill,
To find an enemy soldier to capture, wound or kill.

Boonie Rats, Boonie Rats, scared but not alone,
Two hundred days more or less, then I'm going home.

The air was hot and humid, the ground was hard and dry,
Ten thousand times I cursed my rucksack and wished that I could die.
I learned to look for danger in the trees and on the ground,
I learned to quake with terror when I heard an AK round.

Boonie Rats, Boonie Rats, scared but not alone,
One hundred days more or less, then I'm going home.

"Strike Force" is our motto, "Airborne" is our cry,
Freedom is our mission, for this we do or die.
Boonie Rats a legend, for now and time to come,
Wherever there are soldiers, they'll talk of what we've done.

Boonie Rats, Boonie Rats, scared but not alone,
Fifty days more or less, then I'm going home.

They say they'll always be a war, I hope they're very wrong,
To the Boonie Rats of Vietnam I dedicate this song.

Boonie Rats, Boonie Rats, scared but not alone,
Today I see my freedom bird, today I'm going home.

25. BATTLE HYMN OF THE RIVER RATS (Dick Jonas)

Dick Jonas wrote this song while flying to the first "practice" stateside reunion of the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots' Association ("Red River Rats") in 1969. The Red River Rats are pilots who flew combat missions across the Red River in North Vietnam. They held "practice" reunions in Thailand and the United States until the POW's came home in 1973, when the first real reunion was held. Other units have adapted this song for themselves, notably the Ravens, who flew forward air control in the secret war in Laos.

The Red River Rats meet again,
 Telling tales, remembering when.
 Battles joined in the skies,
 Shed our blood, gave our lives,
 The Red River Rats meet again.

War is never a beautiful thing,
 But we fought for the right on the wing,
 Dropping bombs, dodging flak,
 Fighting MIGs, we'll be back,
 Shout the Rats' battle cry, let it ring.

Look around there's a few empty chairs,
 Honored comrades should be sitting there.
 Some are dead where they fell,
 Some fought on from a cell,
 Charge your glass, lift it high, drink to them.

I'll tell you a tale that will curl your hair,
 I'll tell you a tale, 'cause I was there,
 About what happened in Ho Chi Minh's back yard.
 Gyrene, sailor, and Air Force type,
 Black smoke pouring from a hot tailpipe,
 Flyin' and fightin' and livin' a life that's hard.

Black smoke, flak smoke, red SAM fire,
 Pressin' your luck right down to the wire,
 Pickle 'em off and boot that mother for home.
 But the battle ain't over 'til you've parked and chocked,
 So if you fight and fly, keep your guns unlocked,
 And don't try to fight and fly if you're all alone.

What's that telltale wisp I see?
 That's a contrail pulled by a Fishbed-C,
 The cards are stacked and it looks like it's time to deal.
 Lead's got bandits twelve o'clock high,
 Let's bend it around and scramble for sky,
 And arm you guns, this ain't no game, it's real.

We flew the Valley and the railroad lines,
 From Dien Bien Phu to the Cam Pho mines,
 But the price was high and measured in rich, red blood.
 When tales are told in the halls of fame,

When warriors meet you'll hear these names,
"Skyhawk, Crusader, Intruder, Phantom, Thud."

The Red River Rats meet again,
Telling tales, remembering when.
Battles joined in the skies,
Shed our blood, gave our lives,
The Red River Rats meet again

26. CRACK WENT THE RIFLE (Bull Durham)

In all wars, it finally comes down to the man with the rifle: the grunt, the ground pounder, the boonie rat. As Toby Hughes says, "It's not over until the grunts run up the flag." This song about the combat infantryman was written by Jack Seldon, Bull Durham's co-pilot.

Well, the poor boy walked the winding jungle trail,
His eyes alert, his mind on the morning mail.
The last sound to reach his ears,
The culmination of all his fears,
Crack went the rifle in his hand.

Mrs. Smith, your son died a hero's death,
Defending the way of life we all love best.
I know it's hard to understand,
How his dying will save this land,
But the statesmen say it's all worth the price.

CHORUS: Crack went the rifle in his hand,
The leaden bullets raced across the land,
Johnny Smith of New Orleans,
A gift from a man-made killing machine,
Crack went the rifle in his hand.

War is such a manly game to play,
Makes heroes out of plain men, so they say.
While cultured men in shirts of lace,
Debate the shape of the meeting place,
The common man plays hide-and-seek with death.

So, come on, boys, don't let your spirits lag,
But beware the man who vows to save the flag.

After all is said and done,
It's you and me that carry the gun,
And walk the road to hell once again.

CHORUS

27. FREEDOM BIRD (Bill Ellis)

Bill Ellis says about singing to the troops on the firebases, "The thing I remember most is a feeling of distance--everyone was thinking about home." He also remembers walking on a jungle patrol, looking up and seeing in the sky a commercial airliner on its way to the United States--the freedom bird.

Well, here I am,
Waiting for the bird,
That will take me home.
It's been a long, long time.

I'm goin' home,
Where I can live again.
All I left behind,
Is waiting for me there.

CHORUS: I hope it still will be the same,
When I get home.
It's been a long, long time and things can change,
Rearrange,
Oh, be so strange to me.

I won't forget,
This place I leave behind.
The pain and misery,
Will never leave my mind.

CHORUS

I hear the sound,
Of that freedom bird,
Comin' down the way.
It won't be long now.

'Til I'm in the world.
It's been a long, long time,
It's been a long, long time,
It's been a long, long time.

28. LAID AROUND AND PLAYED AROUND VIETNAM TOO LONG

Tune: "Laid Around and Played Around This Old Town Too Long"

This song was performed by the Intruders of the 281st Assault Helicopter Company at a commanders' conference of the 17th Aviation Group in Nha Trang in April, 1967. Lansdale included another, seemingly unrelated, version from the singing of the Cosmos Tabernacle Choir, a group of CIA personnel, in *Songs by Americans in the Vietnam War*.

CHORUS: Done laid around and stayed around Vietnam too long,
Summer's almost gone, monsoon's comin' on.
Done laid around and played around Vietnam too long,
And I feel like I really want to go home.

Ho Chi Minh and Johnson, they don't get along,
They don't get along, they don't get along.
Ho Chi Minh and Johnson, they don't get along,
And I feel like I really want to go home.

CHORUS

Johnson's little daughters are getting married off,
Getting married off, getting married off.
Johnson's little daughters are getting married off,
And I feel like I really want to go home.

CHORUS

Well, the black-pajamaed Viet Cong, they're coming after me,
Coming after me, they're everywhere I see.
Well, the black-pajamaed Viet Cong, they're coming after me,
And I feel like I really want to go home.

CHORUS: Done laid around and stayed around Vietnam too long,
 Summer's almost gone, monsoon's comin' on.
 Done laid around and played around Vietnam too long,
 And I feel like I really want to go home.
 And I feel like I really want to go home.

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