

1ST AVIATION BRIGADE COMMANDERS CONFERENCE SONG CONTEST

13 August 1966 - Nha Trang, Republic of Vietnam

The tape being analyzed is a copy of the 1st Aviation Brigade (1st AB) Song Contest recorded live in Nha Trang, Republic of Vietnam on 13 August 1966.

A copy of the original recording was provided to the author by Colonel John W. Marr, U.S. Army, Retired, a well-known Army aviator who served in Vietnam as the commanding officer of the 17th Combat Aviation Group (CAG) during the period May 1966 to June 1967. The 17th CAG was headquartered in Nha Trang, where the first recorded contest was held. Colonel Marr truly enjoyed the song contests and that is why he treasured the seven-inch reel-to-reel tapes he was given in Vietnam, usually in the month following each contest. He was able to preserve a copy of five of the contests; August and September 1966 and January, April and May 1967. In addition, he was given one reel that contained songs from all of these five contests and some songs excerpted from other contest tapes. A heartfelt thanks to Colonel Marr for preserving the tapes and providing future generations with this unique piece of music history from the U.S. Army in Vietnam.

However, as research continued, additional copies were provided by other retired Army officers who had been involved with the contests during this period: Colonel Samuel P. Kalagian, who then commanded the 14th Combat Aviation Battalion at Lane Army Heliport, Lieutenant Colonel Dwight L. Lorenz, G-1 of the 1st AB, Lieutenant Colonel Harvey C. Mayse, G-4 of the 1st AB, and Captain Gerald P. Carson, Jr., a pilot/singer with the 183rd Aviation Company. Each tape was analyzed to determine if any contained additional information. Two were near duplicates of the Colonel Marr tape, but those from Lieutenant Colonel Mayse and Captain Carson were more complete, containing larger portions of the master of ceremonies' remarks and identification of the participants. Our thanks also go to all of these officers for their willingness to assist in this preservation project.

The tape that accompanies this report is a compilation from the tapes provided by all those named above with the Lieutenant Colonel Harvey C. Mayse tape being the primary source as it was the most complete and had the best sound quality.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

During the early years of the build-up of United States forces in Vietnam, from 1962 to 1965, U.S. Army Aviation and Special Forces units were among the first to be sent. The Green Berets were assigned to advise and train the South Vietnamese Army. Army aviators developed the tactics for the deployment of the trained force into combat. There were other "special" units, like the U.S. Navy Seals, the U.S. Air Force Special Operations units and even the U.S. Coast Guard. Every U.S. service sent military advisors to their Vietnamese counterparts with the mission: bring the level of command, control and training within the South Vietnam forces to higher levels. Most of the advisors were very experienced officers and non-commissioned officers in the higher grades.

Except for large military units, like Army aviation companies, usually billeted in larger city strongholds for the security of aircraft and personnel, the U.S. serviceman was conspicuous among the local populace by physical stature, but certainly not by the number of them. The advisors, both special and unit, were spread throughout South Vietnam and had little unit integrity, which they probably relished. Some surely entertained themselves by playing guitar, or other string instruments, and singing, but these individuals would have been rare.

Conversely, aviation companies were large units with hundreds of personnel, all in an encampment like stateside, but here they were surrounded by wire, trip flares, mines, sand bagged bunkers with interlocking fields of fire for their machine guns, the enemy – and loneliness. They may have thought about how nice it would be to have a USO show with "round eyed girls" but understood that was a remote possibility because few Americans even knew they were in Vietnam. So, those that could play an instrument procured one locally and began entertaining themselves and their "hootch" mates. It wasn't long before these entertainers composed songs of their own, with some borrowed from previous wars and conflicts, and amused larger groups in the officers, non-commissioned officers and enlisted men's clubs. Every unit had one of each of these clubs because the local gathering places were generally off-limits, especially after sunset.

13 August 1966

As time passed, the number and size of the aviation units increased dramatically. In 1965, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) arrived complete with hundreds of helicopters and thousands of soldiers. The war, already simmering at a high tempo, with personnel and aircraft losses becoming headlines in stateside newspapers, would soon escalate a couple more notches.

At the same time, there were so many separate Army aviation units assigned here and attached there, it became very clear some order had to be restored. In the early months of 1966, General George P. Seneff was selected to form the 1st Aviation Brigade (1st AB) to which all of the non-divisional aviation assets would be assigned. General Seneff, then a colonel, activated and commanded the 11th Aviation Group, 11th Air Assault Division at Fort Benning, Georgia in 1963 – the beginning of new airmobile tactics. The headquarters of the brigade was located in Saigon. The brigade was officially activated on 25 May 1966 but had been functioning since late February.

The 12th CAG and 17th CAG were the major subordinate units, with most of the combat aviation battalions and subordinate companies assigned to those groups. Some separate units remained, but they too were assigned directly to the brigade. It was a very large organization. By July 1968, the 1st AB would have a strength of 25,181 men.

Musical talents, as one of the notable attributes of army aviation personnel of all ranks, became apparent during the early stages of the brigade formation. General Seneff and his staff decided to recognize the musicians at his commander's conferences by creating a song/ballad contest. The brigade adjutant, then Major Dwight L. Lorenz, was assigned the responsibility of organizing the conferences and the contests.

Each month, all unit commanders of the brigade from battalion level and above, met with the brigade commander at various locations throughout the southern half of Vietnam. At the end of the one-day meeting, usually a Saturday, a song contest was held in the dining facility, or in the host units' officers club following the evening meal.

Starting in June 1966, there were 14 contests over the next 16-month period held at various locations as follows:

Date	Location	Where Held	Name Of Facility
11 June '66	Saigon *	1 st Aviation Brigade Officers club	Red Bull Inn
09 July '66	Saigon *	1 st Aviation Brigade Officers club	Red Bull Inn
13 August '66	Nha Trang **	17 th Aviation Group Commanders Villa	None
24 September '66	Vung Tau **	Vung Tau Airfield Commanders Villa	None
29 October '66	Soc Trang	13 th Aviation Battalion Officers club	Tiger Club
12 November '66	Saigon	Postponed to 03 December '66	N/A
03 December '66	Saigon **	1 st Aviation Brigade Officers club	Red Bull Inn
07 January '67	Nha Trang **	17 th Aviation Group Officers club	Cockpit Club
18 February '67	Vung Tau	Postponed to 04 March '67	N/A
04 March '67	Vung Tau	222 nd Combat Aviation Battalion Mess	None
15 April '67	Soc Trang **	13 th Aviation Battalion Officers club	Tiger Club
27 May '67	Long Binh **	11 th Aviation Battalion Officers Mess	None
?? June '67	Unknown location	Conference and contest were held	Unknown
?? July '67	Phu Loi	? Officers club	?
?? August '67	Unknown location	Conference and contest were held	Unknown
15 September '67	Long Binh	11 th Aviation Battalion Officers Mess	None

Note: * Indicates those contests not recorded. ** Contests for which the recording has been found.

General Seneff encouraged the unit commanders to challenge the musically talented soldiers in their units to enter the monthly contest. There were many individuals and groups who were already providing entertainment in their units, so the contest became the catalyst for the creation of original songs and provided the forum for them to be heard and recorded.

The only rule of the contest was that the words to the song be original and if the music was original also, it was okay but not absolutely necessary. Many of the contest songs were melodies you'd recognize immediately, but the words were changed to tell a story about an individual, a unit, an aircraft, a combat assault, the enemy or just about

anything in Vietnam. Some songs were a combination of all of these. The talents of these ordinary, everyday soldiers was truly amazing.

The contests of June and July 1966 were not recorded. Beginning with the August 1966 contest, it and each succeeding song fest was taped. However, the recording of the August contest remains the most complete of those recovered thus far. Subsequent recordings were severely edited to erase the "chatter" of the MC to create a compilation of only the songs. The original, complete recordings have never been found. When you listen to the recordings, you will no doubt conclude the person who accomplished the mission had to contend with a lot of noisy distractions and the variance in each individual or group sound levels. Some of the songs were cut off at the beginning and at the end. Also, because of this haphazard recording method, some contest entrants were partially introduced and some were not. It is rare when performers' names are mentioned, or even their unit or the chosen name of their singing group. If the recording technician did record everything continuously, as it happened, those originals would be a treasure trove of vital information. Unfortunately, edited copies were immediately made from the master copy and those are what remain today. Much of the flavor of these events has been lost as a result.

After the contest was completed and while the votes of the commanders were being tallied, some of the contestants were invited back to the microphones to provide musical entertainment on an alternating basis. Again, many of these songs were not recorded.

The first, second, and third place winners of the contest were announced and congratulated by General Seneff. The winning group or individual was presented a plaque at the following month's contest. It was a tradition for the winners to perform the winning song again and to sing a couple of their original songs if they had any.

Following this, many of the individuals and groups alternated singing for the entertainment of the audience well past midnight. Unfortunately, the recording equipment had been dismantled and packed before this session got started. The best performances of the evening rarely were recorded. No one then ever thought we'd be interested in listening to those songs years later.

THE RECORDING

Colonel Marr graciously loaned to me all of the seven-inch reels he had preserved since 1967. I initially transferred each of them to cassette. I used my mint-condition, AKAI GX-365D tape deck, purchased in Vietnam in 1970 during my second tour, and recorded on a JVC KD-W7 double-cassette deck. The tapes were played only once in the recording process to preserve them. The cassette copy was then used to research the content, including transcribing the words of the songs as performed. The reel boxes, containing hand written comments, were also copied.

Colonel Marr's reels were then sent to Doctor Lydia Fish, Director, Vietnam Veterans Oral History and Folklore Project (VVOHFP) at Buffalo State College, Buffalo, New York. Lydia cataloged the tapes and then sent them to Gary G. Lee, owner of Wild Cat Studio, also in Buffalo.

Later, when additional copies were received from those named above, the same process was followed.

Gary Lee is an audio technician, a tape restoration specialist and a member of the VVOHFP. In the process of restoring taped historical material Gary accomplished many tasks, the most important of which was to do no harm in the transfer process. He could, in most cases, make a direct transfer from the original to digital audio tape (DAT) using a Roberts 771 to a Panasonic SV3700 digital recorder. The DAT copy was used to "clean up" the recording and then transferred to another DAT. In some cases, the DAT copy was transferred to a two-track analog tape machine, one section at a time, to correct speed fluctuations by using various signal processing devices such as mixing board, graphic equalizers or whatever was needed to make the material more listenable.

All of these processes were used to remove tape hiss from recordings that were originally made at too low a volume; remove rumble, alternating current hum, speed fluctuations and other problems. The equalization was also changed to bring out certain frequencies making the lyrics clearer and more understandable. All of these deficiencies were corrected to the extent possible.

The last step in the restoration process was to transfer the newly enhanced version to cassette, and most recently to CDs. The original reels were returned to Colonel Marr and other providers along with a cassette or CD copy of the material. Lieutenant Colonel Harvey C. Mayse chose to donate his reels to be archived. The DAT Master or CD, along with the donated reels, was then labeled and archived. Doctor Fish and I both received a cassette or CD copy. There is a tremendous difference between the original and DAT or CD copy, attesting to Gary's skills at restoration. It would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible in some cases, to accurately transcribe the words of the songs without the outstanding restoration work accomplished by Gary Lee.

THE CONTEST

There were eight participants in this contest. The individuals or groups have been identified to the extent possible, after considerable research.

There was another singing group from the 117th Assault Helicopter Company (AHC), which was to perform in this contest. They called themselves "The Beach Bums" and sometimes "The Vagabonds." It was the first commander's conference they were to attend and it was also the first time The Beach Bums had been "out of the boondocks" since arriving in Vietnam. The group went to the contest to observe and determine what to expect at these conferences. They arrived in Nha Trang early that day, celebrated a little too much and not much was learned, except what *not* to do. The "old man," their company commander, had to bail them all out of jail! The song they were going to sing was *Dong Ba Thin*. Members of the group were First Lieutenant Gerald L. "Jerry" Johnson, Warrant Officer One Jimmy D. Allen, Specialist Fourth Class Herman Trent, and Specialist Fourth Class James Blankenship.

This contest was held in the villa of Colonel John Marr, the commanding officer of the 17th CAG in Nha Trang. There were no glass windows, only screens, which is why you'll hear the growl of military vehicles as they pass the villa throughout the evening.

The audience assembled at 1845 while the contestants tuned their instruments and sang together in the kitchen or along the wall outside the building. The audience filled the room. General Seneff, with his middle-aged female Department of the Army secretary, Mrs. Ann Kaplan, sat centered in front of the microphones and the group commanders flanked them on either side. Their chairs were only four feet from where the microphones stood. The microphone stands were only a few feet from the back wall. It was not that big a room or a comfortable arrangement.

The Master of Ceremonies was Captain Donald R. "Don" Kelsey, an aviator-singer from the 48th AHC "Blue Stars." He had been the MC of the previous contest in July at the 1st AB headquarters in Saigon held at the "Red Bull Inn."

The contest entrants and the order they performed are listed on the following separate pages. Research is continuing to identify more of the singers.

1st AVIATION BRIGADE COMMANDERS CONFERENCE SONG CONTEST

13 August 1966 - Nha Trang, Republic of Vietnam
Master of Ceremonies: Captain Donald R. Kelsey – 48th AHC

Unit	Station*	"Call Sign"	Singing Group/Individual	Song
173 rd AHC (11 th CAB)	Lai Khe	Robin Hood (Company & Slicks) Crossbow (Guns)	"The Merry Men" Captain Joseph E. "Joe" Drew, Captain Gregory E. "Greg" Chapman and First Lieutenant Jerome W. "Jerry" Thomas	<i>Saigon Girls</i>
116 th AHC (11 th CAB)	Phu Loi (moving to Cu Chi)	Hornet (Company) Yellow Jacket – 1 st Platoon – (Slicks) Stinger – 2 nd Platoon – (Guns) Wasp – 3 rd Platoon – (Slicks)	First Lieutenant Michael E. "Mike" Staggs **	<i>Cu Chi Blues</i>
183 rd Avn Co. (10 th CAB)	Dong Ba Thin	Sea Horse	"The Fighting Bird Dog Hunters" Captain Gerald P. "Gerry" Carson, Captain Marshall Fayard, First Lieutenant Richard L. "Dick" Kloppenburger, and First Lieutenant John Swarthout. (Flew O-1s – Fixed Wing)	<i>The Fighting Bird Dogs</i>
170 th AHC (52 nd CAB)	Pleiku	Buccaneer (Company & Guns) Bikini (Slicks)	Captain Emmitt Conrow, First Lieutenant Charles T. "Charlie" Heberle, First Lieutenant Stewart, and Specialist Fifth Class Verdecki	<i>Peter Pilot</i>
219 th Avn Co. (52 nd CAB)	Pleiku	Head Hunter	Captain Langley and Specialist Fifth Class Verdecki (Flew O-1s – Fixed Wing)	<i>Head Hunter</i>
174 th AHC (14 th CAB)	Phu Tai (Lane Army Heliport)	Dolphin (Company & Slicks) Shark (Guns)	"The High Priced Help" Major Martin F. "Marty" Heuer, Major Orville W. "Scat" McNatt, Major Earle J. "Jack" Westlake, and Captain Charles V. "Chinch" Wollerton	<i>Fare Thee Well</i>
129 th AHC (10 th CAB)	Dong Ba Thin	Bulldog (Company) Bite (Guns) Strike (Slicks)	"The Bites & Strikers" Specialist Fifth Class Gidrey, Specialist Fifth Class Tucker, & Specialist Fourth Class Fleming	<i>The Ballad Of The Huey</i>
48 th AHC (10 th CAB)	Phan Rang	Blue Star (Company & Slicks) Joker (Guns)	"The Blue Stars" Captain Donald R. "Don" Kelsey, Captain George Day, and First Lieutenant Ronald K. "Ron" Damron	<i>Army Aviation</i>

* As of 13 August 1966

** In September 1966, First Lieutenant Mike Staggs transferred to the 173rd AHC and sang with The Merry Men until they departed in February 1967.

Winners: 1st Place - *Saigon Girls*
2nd Place - *Fare Thee Well*
3rd Place - *Peter Pilot*

After the contest, the following groups or individuals performed and were recorded. There were other groups or individuals in attendance who sang but they were not recorded or were edited out of the original tape.

173 rd AHC	The Merry Men	<i>Army Aviation *</i>
116 th AHC	First Lieutenant Michael E. "Mike" Staggs	<i>The Hornets Will Be There</i>
174 th AHC	Major Earle J. "Jack" Westlake (The High Priced Help)	<i>Alexis From Texas</i>
48 th AHC	The Blue Stars	<i>Green Flight Pay</i> (Parody of <i>Ballad Of The Green Berets</i>)**
173 rd AHC	The Merry Men	<i>You Are My Sunshine</i>

(*Although these songs titled *Army Aviation* written by the 48th and 173rd have the same name, they are distinctly different in words and music.)

(***Green Flight Pay*, so named in the 48th AHC song book, is also known as *The Ballard Of The Green Flight Pay* and *Green Berets*. The words vary slightly from artist to artist. I believe The Blue Stars used the words of the original song written by Major John C. Tobias, an Army Aviator of A Company, 501st Aviation Battalion "Rattlers" which, on 2 September 1966, became the 71st AHC and retained the call sign – Rattlers.)

Researched and written by:

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174th AHC and 14th CAB 1966-1967
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The contest started promptly at 1900 when Captain Don Kelsey, the MC, took the floor and said:

"Tonight we have a whole bunch of people and the judges, I'm sure, are going to be real pressed to come up with those who are the best and then to pick out the very one of all that are the best. So, before we get really going here, I would like to say that quite different from our last little get-together when we were all in one group down in Saigon in the old Red Bull Inn down there, where we had to call upon just about everything, and we were grasping at straws in order to make the program last long enough to keep everybody entertained for quite a while.

Tonight we have got a group of people back in the back room right now that are just thick – they're just thick as flies back there – and before you'all came down tonight it sounded like a real "hootenanny." We had about 15 or 16 little groups of folks back there all pickin' and a grinnin' and having the biggest darn time you ever saw. And I think that maybe, time permitting and all that business, in keeping with the tradition that we set up back about three months ago when we had our first get-together – and I lost, and the next time I lost, and this time I'll probably damn-well lose too. But anyway, you know, you can't compete with some of the competition like we have in the 1st Brigade. It is really tremendous and the 17th Group, of course, they put out some real tremendous talent. The 10th Aviation Group, there he is, (nodding at Lieutenant Colonel Ben Harrison) they put out some – the 10th Aviation Battalion, I'm sorry – they put out some tremendous talents, and the 48th Aviation Company, puts out some of the most tremendous talent, but we keep losing. I can't understand it.

Anyhow, before we go on here and I get all wound-up let me get my piece of paper out of my pocket. I can't remember who all's in this thing – we got so cotton-pickin' many people back there. (Don taps the bottom of his guitar on the floor) This sounds good when you bang it on the floor. When I play it, it don't sound that good.

All righty, we're going to kick this thing off with, believe it or not – now I've got to say something about this group before they come out here, I really do. These guys had a little song called *Army Aviation*, and waaaay back yonder about – what was it, three years ago sir? Yeah, it was at least three years ago, these people came down to Saigon, and by the way, this is their barrel, that is a half a barrel, or a quarter of a barrel, but it serves as a bass fiddle for these cats. These guys are good. They've got a song called *Saigon Girl*. They are from the 173rd, Captain Chapman, Captain Drew, and Lieutenant Thomas. This is a folk song and like I say, these guys won the first contest, so let's spread it out a little bit. Okay, the guys from the 173rd with *Saigon Girl*."

SAIGON GIRLS

(Performed by The Merry Men – Captain Joseph E. "Joe" Drew, Captain Gregory E. "Greg" Chapman
and First Lieutenant Jerome W. "Jerry" Thomas – 173rd Robin Hoods)
(Words by First Lieutenant Jerome W. "Jerry" Thomas)
(Tune: *New York Girls*)

(Strumming) (Spoken) "We're going to tell you a story about an older Pilot. Yes, and he thought he knew all the ropes, going to Saigon on his three-day R&R. Ah Men. He goes down to Saigon and he picks him up one of these Saigon lovely's. Yeah. And this Saigon lovely's name was "Chu Yen." Chu Yen? Yeah, that's Mother Nature spelled backwards. Oh, come on. Well, Chu Yen got him in a lot of trouble. He was trying to satisfy that constant urge. Constant urge? Yes! To dance the polka! To dance the polka?"

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

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

As I walked down old 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 to come with me and you can have a treat,
You can have a glass of Saigon tea or Bau Muoi Ba Thirty-three.

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

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

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

When I awoke next morning, I had an aching head,
My pocketbook was empty and my lady friend had fled.
Now looking around 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's 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, don't be a sinner,
Stop going down to Saigon, try the Red Cross Recreation Center.

CHORUS: Good-bye 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 and I want to dance the polka.
Oh, you U.S. girls, can't you dance the polka, Cha-Cha-Cha.

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. The spoken introduction changed slightly each time The Merry Men performed this song until they established the routine they wanted. The Merry Men had participated in the earlier two contests in Saigon, winning the first one in June with the song *Army Aviation*, written by First Lieutenant Jerry Thomas. The Merry Men had made it a favorite and popular song in and around the Saigon area. The Merry Men were still a trio at this performance. *New York Girls* was written by John Renfro Davis and there are several versions. It is a traditional American sailing song. It may also be known as *Can't You Dance The Polka?*

After the applause died down, Captain Kelsey said:

"You may have thought I was kidding you when I said you're going to be hard-pressed. That was number one, we've got seven more to go. Like I said, they won the first time. Now, you know, we planned this all out. We figured that the first and the second, the last people that won, you see, they ought to be first and second on the show. You'll forget about them. I'm last. You won't forget me. But, nevertheless, I'll get my piece of paper out again and we'll see who's next. We've got so many; I can't remember them. If we had two, I probably couldn't remember them either.

Our next one – I don't know who wrote this but I can't read it – anyway, this is a folk rock type song. Now can you believe that, folk rock? You either got rock and roll or you got folk music and I guess somebody has decided to inter-marry the two and you come up with folk rock. Well, nevertheless, most of you will remember down at the Red Bull last time we had an old boy, a great big guy – oh, he huge – and, you know I called him on out there, you know, and I thought, heh, heh, I got no competition from this guy, he's all by himself. But, lo and behold, he crawled up on that cotton-picking bar stool I had out there and he began to beat on that guitar, and he began to just throw back his head and sing like any good American boy would do. And Lieutenant Staggs is probably one of the finest talents that we've got in the 1st Brigade. And we're going to call Lieutenant Staggs out here to sing the *Chu* (sic) *Lai Blues*.

A number of voices were heard from both the audience and offstage saying "Cu Chi."

Don responded with: "*Cho* (sic) *Lai Blues*, and then *Hu-Chi* (sic), *Hu Chi*. What? (All the while the audience attempted to correct him) Okay. Well that's not what this spells. *Hu Chi*, is that right Staggs?"

Lieutenant Staggs responded with the correct name: "*Cu Chi*."

Don finally got it right and said: "Okay, *Cu Chi Blues*. Okay, from the 116th Aviation Company, Lieutenant Staggs."

CU CHI BLUES

(Performed by First Lieutenant Michael E. "Mike" Staggs – 116th AHC Hornets)
(Words by First Lieutenant Michael E. "Mike" Staggs)
(Tune: *Mule Skinner Blues*)

First Lieutenant Mike Staggs: "Thank you Lady, and Gentlemen, I think we are singular here tonight. To begin with, they asked how long this was going to take and I said, well, approximately three minutes and then I forgot I've got about a two-minute narrative here. To begin with, we're up north now and the captain over there didn't know what Cu Chi was. I'd like to tell you about Cu Chi. Cu Chi is an area west of Phu Loi, or actually northwest, and it's made up of three areas – the Iron Triangle, Hobo Woods, and Cu Chi proper – and we've got the two rural areas and then we have the urban area. And any given day, 24 hours, you can get shot at, and we do it all the time. So we thought that since the 116th was located at Phu Loi, right now, we got word about eight weeks ago that we were going to move to Cu Chi, and so we've got our hootches built. Now we don't know whether we're going to move or not. The people that are getting short were a little sad about this because they built the Phu Loi area up from nothing when they first got here. So, to keep us all at ease and with a happy heart, I decided that I would write a song called the "Cu Chi Blues." At this time, I would like to attempt it. The 116th is made up of three platoons, the first platoon being the "Yellow Jackets", airlift, the second platoon being the "Stingers," the gunships, and the third platoon, the "Wasps," and the name of the company is the "Hornets."

Well good morning Major, good morning son.
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.
Well, you need to know the Hornets,
And on your Cu Chi run.
He, he, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.
Hay, hay, he, he, he, he, he, he,
Ha, ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Well, I'm an old Yellow Jacket, yah boy,
And I'm up Cu Chi way.
He, he, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.
And we'll make old Charlie listen,
Or we won't accept our pay.
He, he, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.
Hay, hay, he, he, he, he, he, he,
Ha, ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Well, hey there Hornet Six, hey there boy,
Send those Stingers down below.
He, he, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.
Well, it's tail its mighty hollow,
And would love to share the show.
He, he, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.
Hay, hay, he, he, he, he, he, he,
Ha, ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Well, down came the Stingers,
Like the birds of prey.
He, he, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.
And the Wasp platoon was airborne,
With an Eagle Flight upon its way.
He, he, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.
Hay, hay, he, he, he, he, he, he,
Ha, ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Well, hey there Clipper, yah you Clipper Control,
I got a word for you.
He, he, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.
Well, this song's about the Hornets,
And it's called the Cu Chi Blues.
He, he, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.
Hay, hay, he, he, he, he, he, he,
Ha, ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.
He, he, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. Jimmy Rodgers' called this song *Blue Yodel #8* when he recorded it on 11 July 1930, but the title of the original song was *Blue Yodel #9*. Since then, there have numerous other versions by other artists, one of them being The Fendermen.

Don stepped to the microphone and said:

"You see what I talk about being hard now, huh? That's just two. We've got about six more to go. I'll get my little paper out of my pocket. Okay, the next group that we've got is the 183rd. Now these guys, as far as I can remember, are more or less new to the game. One Seventy-Third, (sic) where you are? You ready?"

Captain Gerald P. "Gerry" Carson, Jr., leader of the 183rd contingent spoke up from back stage:

"We're out here having a drink. We'll be ready when you're ready."

"Okay, they're having a drink right now, they'll be right with us. Is it good?"

"No, but it's clean."

"It's clean. Are you enjoying it?"

"No, but (Garbled)."

"These guys are – civilian clothes, can you believe that? Heh, bring them in out of the woods and put them in the big city and they wear civilian clothes. Okay, these guys from the 183rd we've got a – hey fellas, if I mispronounce your name will you forgive me?"

"No."

"Okay, cause there's one in here that's going to be a "Bugger Tooter." Oww Lord. We got Captain Carson, is that right? Okay, come on out here. Captain Carson, would you come help me please? Captain Carson?"

Captain Carson came out and at first they were talking over each other's words with Don still trying to announce the members of the group and then they had this conversation. Captain Carson:

"Okay, I know the one you're talking about. Okay, just a second, I can understand, most people have trouble with this word, and the name is Fayard."

"Fayard? What's that other one?" (Don)

"Are you talking about Kloppenburg and Swarthout?" (Gerry)

"Klock – What?" (Don)

"Ahk. I'll tell you the daggum truth. All you – if you've ever been to Germany you know these German Jewish people, they're all the same. I mean, in German it's Kloppenburger!" (Gerry)

"Yeah, Kloppenburger?" (Don)

"That's like a frankfurter!" (Gerry)

"Frank, frankfurter." (Don)

"Oh, it's no problem a'tall, just look, you can just turn it right around (Referring to the paper) and see, no problem, that's him. Right?"

"Oh Lord, my mother – your mother should have named you Joe, I'll tell you. Give me my paper. It's not your paper, my paper. Okay, Kloppenburger." (Don)

"Burg!" (Demanded Lieutenant Kloppenburg, standing nearby.)

"Burg." (Don Kelsey responding.)

"Burg. (Again demanded Lieutenant Kloppenburg.)

"Burg. Okay, Kloppen..." (Responded Don before being interrupted by Gerry.)

"Who's – who's the funny man with the funny ears?" (Here referring to the audio technician wearing headphones.)

"He's listening." (Don)

"Oh, okay." (Gerry)

"He's checking us out to make sure it's all nice, clean, proper, and all that." (Don)

"Okay." (Gerry)

"And we have a Lieutenant Swarthout?" (Don)

"That's right." (Gerry)

"Lieutenant Swarthout." (Don)

"Yes sir!" (Gerry)

"Okay. Now this group is from the 183rd. They're singing a song called *The Fighting Bird Dogs*." (Don)

THE FIGHTING BIRD DOGS

(Performed by Captain Gerald P. "Gerry" Carson, Jr., Captain Marshall Fayard,
First Lieutenant Richard L. "Dick" Kloppenburg, and First Lieutenant John
Swarthout – 183rd Aviation Company (Surveillance) (Sea Horses))
(Words by Captain Gerald P. Carson, Jr.)
(Tune: *Ballad Of The Green Berets*)

Captain Carson had this to say after the group was introduced with the wrong inflection on the words "Bird Dog" in this mostly helicopter pilot audience:

"I resent the way you said that, Bird Dogs. It's Bird Dog, dammit! Well gaa-dog – ahhh all right, first of all, we'd like to apologize for the lack of professionalism here (referring here to the earlier remarks about them showing up in civilian clothes). Our CO (Major William L. Buck) last night came up to us and said, 'Guess what?' We said, 'Yes sir,' as we were laying on the bar. And he says, 'Tomorrow you have the extra duty of going to Nha Trang and singing a song. And I said, 'Sir, you're (Pause) me!' (Laughter) I'm sorry, but I wanted to tell you the full story. And I said, 'I honestly don't believe this.' And he says, 'You're right, by God.' He says, 'Tomorrow, you'll get in the three-quarter, sand bag it, take your Thompson, and go to Nha Trang (More laughter) – and sing a cotton-picking song.' And I said, 'Well sir, gaa-dog, we come over here every night and we have a good time – we get drunk, we raise hell and all that sort of stuff but, ah, – you couldn't be serious.' He said, 'I'm serious.' He says, 'You're gonna' be on Ed Sullivan. He said, 'Do you realize that here in 1966 they're going to reenact the whole Vietnam War with all the people, and everything else, you know, with all the VC, the Vietnamese, and the whole bit.' So knowing this we couldn't turn it down. We said, 'Gul'darn, that's a good deal, all right.' So I policed up the three guys that were laying on the bar (More laughter) – and I figured that, more than likely, anybody that was still in that bar would come over here with me, you know. And so this afternoon, after I finally got 'em to Nha Trang I said, 'Now look fellows, I hope you won't be mad at me but in the process of the evening after this big lobster dinner we got to go sing a song – yeahhh.' They said, 'Where?' I said, 'For General Seneff and crew.' They said, 'You're (Pause).' Same word. (More laughter) And I said – I said, 'I'm serious.' (Carson laughs, followed by more laughter from the audience). So that's the reason we don't know the song – we had to write it down. But nevertheless, with all these professionals, gaa-dog, and I love them all, they sound tremendous, let a couple amateurs slip in here. But there's only one purpose we're up here for, besides the direct order. Other than that, we're up here to advertise the Bird Dogs. Now, gaa-dog it all you fling-wingers– you know everybody thinks the Army is so fling-wing oriented – you know everything, you think that a machine just doesn't go unless it turns in circles. But there's certain machines, and if you'll think back to your flight school days, there's certain machines that stay still. Believe it or not, they get off the ground and the wings don't move around in circles or anything else and by God, they're aerodynamically stable. Really! If God intended you to fly, he'd have put fixed-wings on you. That's the truth. All right, we're going to give it a big try anyway – and our song is *The Fighting Bird Dogs*."

CHORUS

Fighting Bird Dogs in the sky,
Over gross, we're bound to die.
Biggest mess, you've ever seen,
Crash and burn in an L-19.

Four-fifty mag drop, mixture lean,
Oil pressure low and nothing green.
Poor excuse, for a flying machine,
One Eighty-Third, in their L-19s.

Drink all night, from dusk till dawn,
Time to put, our flight suits on.
Pilot drunk, and crew chief too,
Uncle Sam, says, "I got you."

Cross wind blowing, from the right,
Monsoon hit us, late last night.
Overcast, can't see the sky,
We don't care, we want to fly.

CHORUS: (After this chorus - a spoken Interlude)

Captain Carson: "Now there's one thing we realize; that all you folks don't know what an L-19 is. And they told us this was supposed to encompass the whole scope of Army Aviation. Therefore, we decided that we had to supplement our own little company song with something that would encompass fling-wings as well as stiff-boards. Therefore, the rest of this song is dedicated to you, you mixed up people that fly little wings that go around in circles!"

CHORUS:

Flying soldiers, from the sky,
Fearless men, who fly and die.
They don't fight, for the green berets,
They just fight, for green flight pay.

Put silver wings, upon their chest,
These are men, above the best.
One hundred men, get paid today,
All of them, get green flight pay.

Trained to live, in hostile lands,
From Playboy Club, to Las Vegas Sands.
Spending money, every day,
And still earning, the green flight pay.

Back at home, a young girl waits,
Her flight soldier, has met his fate.
It has happened, this terrible day,
He didn't draw, his green flight pay.

A Green Beret, made this song a hit.
This version will, put an end to it.
We have butchered, the Green Beret,
But we still draw, our green flight pay.

CHORUS:

Flying Bird Dogs, in the sky.
Fearless men, who fly and die.
Biggest mess, you've ever seen,
Crash and burn, in an L-19.

We just took, a fifty round,
Viet Cong, can't shoot us down.
L-19s, are built to last,
Viet Cong, can kiss our ass.

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. Captain Carson, the leader of the group, states midway through the song that the first part was "the company song" and then relates the competitive spirit that prevailed between fixed- and rotary-wing pilots. First Lieutenant John Swarthout accompanied the group with a guitar. This group may have spent some hard-earned cash at the bar, in an effort to relax before performing. *Ballad Of The Green Berets* was written by Staff Sergeant Barry Sadler with the music composed by Robin Moore. Needless to say, this version caused some ruffled feathers among the Green Berets, until they learned they could rely on their brethren aviators to support them without fail.

Don Kelsey returned to the microphone and said:

"How about that! Yeah! You know, the longer you stay over here in this crazy country the more you can appreciate these people. Really! You know, these guys get out there in that silly little wing, you know, that sticks out

like he said, you know, it don't go around, it just sticks out there. And out in front of this thing, it's got a crazy little thing that goes around – I don't know how to fly one of them, I never learned how. But they go down there, you know, and the gunships go down, and we shoot, and the Air Force comes down, and they shoot, and these damn idiots go down there and see how much damage you did. You know, you call up and you say, 'Hey, would you go down there and get me a body count?' And the ground troops say, 'Hell no, I ain't going in there.' And you hear one of these guys, 'Hey, just a minute, I'll get it for you.' And he goes and gets it, the damned fool. You talk about getting hit with fifty rounds. I've been hit with a couple of those myself and it's no fun and I know these L-19s, they do their share, and like I say, you can't appreciate these guys until you've been out there and looked at 'em. These guys do a job that's unbelievable and they come up here at night and they sing a song and it's darn fine too.

Okay, next one. Oh boy, we got a whole line of people here whose names I can't read too good. This is the – it's a folk song, by the way. This is an old familiar faces here, at least two of them will be. The other two are going to be new. But the first two that I'm going to mention is Captain Conrow, and you will not be able to forget Captain Conrow, and Specialist Verdecki, I believe is right. You'll remember them from the *Bikini's Red And Bikini's Blue* and some of the songs that they sang for us. Well, tonight they've got with them a Lieutenant Stewart and a Lieutenant Heberle, I believe. And I was asked before this whole thing started, you see, we've got a problem. A very serious, serious problem. It seems that one member of this group has been transferred. Yeah, believe it or not, over here in Vietnam, he got transferred. But he didn't move too far, he kind of moved across the runway from the 170th over to the 119th. And this is Specialist Verdecki. And he made a point – he caught me back in the back corner over here and he said, 'Pssst! Pssst! Pssst!' I said, 'What do you want?' He says, 'I just got transferred.' I said, 'Yeah, so what?' 'I'm afraid if you don't say something about it, I'll get in trouble.' I said, 'Okay, I'll mention it buddy!' 'Okay, make sure you do.' So I did. Hey, there he is right there. He's got on a blue shirt. He plays the guitar. I don't want you to miss this guy. All right, these guys have got a song called, of all things, *Peter Pilot*. Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater, *Peter Pilot*. Okay, here they are, from the 170th, with *Peter Pilot*."

PETER PILOT

(Performed by Captain Emmit Conrow, First Lieutenant Charles T. "Charlie" Heberle, First Lieutenant Stewart, and Specialist Fifth Class Verdecki – 170th AHC Buccaneers)
(Words by Captain Emmit Conrow)
(Tune: Unknown)

Captain Conrow: "As I look into the faces out here, I see many a gentleman with a distinguished and illustrious aviation career. I'm sure that many of you, during this long and illustrious career, have run into the fellow that we are about to sing. He's a pilot and his name is Peter, particularly over here he seems to be referred to as a slick pilot, something that's not sung about often in these songs, usually its gun pilots or going to Saigon. We thought we'd sing the saga of the slicks so we sing about our pilot Peter – Peter Pilot."

Peter was a pilot trim and neat,
The ladies all called him, "Pilot Pete."
Peter got orders for Vietnam,
He said, "Good-bye ladies and good-bye Mom."

Peter left the states in a big jet plane,
Told the first pilot all about his fame.
The pilot told Peter to, "Go sit down."
"I'm sixty years old son and I've been around."

CHORUS

Peter, Peter Pilot watch where you go,
You're flying over Charlie low and slow.
Peter, Peter Pilot you'd better learn,
That Charlie's tracers have an awful burn.

Peter arrived at old Pleiku,
There was nobody there that Peter knew.
Told to report to Bikini flight,
He was looking for the beach the live-long night.

The operations officer found old Pete,
Sitting in a Huey in the ACs seat.
He asked him what he was doing there,
“That’s a pilot’s seat not a rocking chair.”

CHORUS:

The old stan pilot told our Pete,
To fly at fifteen hundred feet.
“If you got to fly low, don’t fly slow,
Pull out some pitch and go man go.”

Early next morning Peter got a flight,
A CA near the Chu Pong with Bikini flight.
It was a very hot CA,
They flew into a regiment of NVA.

CHORUS:

Peter didn’t follow like he should,
He flew a hundred feet above the jungle’s hood.
Charlie saw Peter flying low and slow,
Hit his chopper, stopped his oil flow.

Peter said, “I’m hit, I’m going in.”
The leader said, “Peter’s goofed again.”
As we flew over old Peter’s ship,
We could see him giving Charlie lots of lip.

CHORUS:

A few days later back at old Pleiku,
We were having a drink and feeling blue.
Peter walked in and he ordered a drink,
He said, “Boy old Charlie’s women stink.”

We asked him how he got away,
He said he told Charlie how he flew CA.
Charlie looked at him and said, “You numba ten.”
In fact, you do more harm to them.

CHORUS: (With additional ending)

Charlie’s tracers have an awful burn.
Charlie’s tracers have an awful burn.
Charlie’s tracers have an awful burn.

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. Captain Conrow, Lieutenant Heberle, and Specialist Verdecki had performed at the June and July contests with songs they’d written, one of them being *Bikini Red, Bikini Blue*.

Don Kelsey came back and said:

“Oh, talent, talent, talent! Okay, that’s halfway. That’s halfway and I got to say this is our third one. (Referring to number of contests in which The Blue Stars had participated.) And each time, somewhere during the program I’ve had to interdict. So tonight, at the halfway point – if I may be so bold – I would like to interdict. And we’re gonna have to keep’er – we’re gonna clean it up tonight. We’re gonna sing *Sky King*, if that’s all right with everybody. Everybody want to hear *Sky King*? Okay, uh huh, I like *Sky King*. We’re gonna sing *Sky King*, and of course, the clean version of *Sky King*, so if I could get Lieutenant Damron and Captain Day to bring my guitar and

come on out here – Damron, yoo hoo, it’s the one with the black strap – there we go. (Lieutenant Damron and Captain Day join Kelsey on the stage.) Okay, we’re going to sing a little bit about old *Sky King*.”

SKY KING

(Performed by The Blue Stars – Captain Donald R. “Don” Kelsey, Captain George Day,
and First Lieutenant Ronald K “Ron”. Damron – 48th AHC Blue Stars)
(Words by Captain Kris Kristofferson) *
(Tune: *Big Bad John*)

Every morning on the line, you could see him arrive,
About five-foot-two, and weighed one-eighty-five.
Kind of narrow at the shoulder’s, and broad at the hips,
Everybody knew, he didn’t give a dam – Sky King.

CHORUS

Sky King, Sky King – short, fat Sky.

Some say Sky was born in New Orleans,
Where he put himself a rotor, on a sewing machine.
Cut his teeth on a collective pitch,
Old Sky was a low flying son-of-a-gun – Sky King.

CHORUS:

Then come the day on stage field four,
When his engine quit and wouldn’t run anymore.
Brave men sighed and hearts beat fast,
Everybody thought he’d breathed his last – except Sky.

Well, he pushed the pitch right down to the floor,
But the damn rotor blade wouldn’t turn anymore.
So his rear puckered up and with a terrible sound,
He just sucked the old chopper right off the ground – Sky King.

CHORUS:

Well, the ship wasn’t hurt but it took half the class,
To get the seat cover out of Sky King’s – Sky King.

They never reopened that worthless strip,
Just put a marble stand on top of it.
On that stand these words are seen,
“Man, there ain’t no butt that can pucker like old Sky King.”

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. The song was not part of the contest; that is what Don Kelsey meant when he said he wanted to “interdict” the program. Since this song was being sung by members of the 48th AHC, the words above are very close to those in the company song book. However, when it was sung by others, many words were changed, which is a mystery because this rarely happened with popular military songs. *The 48th AHC song book shows Captain Kris Kristofferson as the writer, however, Kris has stated publicly he was never in Vietnam. Members of the 48th report he wrote the song while serving with the unit in Germany, before it was transferred to Vietnam in 1965. He is known to have written other material while in Germany. *Big Bad John* was written by Jimmy Dean.

After a nice round of applause, Don Kelsey continued:

“Well enough for *Sky King*. All righty, we just had old *Peter Pilot* here by the 170th. We got a song now by one new man, assisted by one familiar man, and once again, I’ve got to mention the 119th because in this group we do have Specialist Verdecki again. He will be playing along with Captain Langley. Captain Langley is from the 119th. (The audience quickly corrects Don by saying, “219th.”) I’m sorry, oow did I step in it. Oh, I’m sorry. I did – oh;

he's from the 219th. And most of you have heard on Guard (Radio channel monitored by all aircraft.) Head Hunter – that's the 219th – Head Hunter. They're the people that are going out here constantly, once again, with these little old fixed-wing airplanes. They go out here and they go down right on the treetops and they search around and they find Charlie. And the biggest part of the time that they find him, quite unlike the FACs that most of us are used to – the Baron's and the Ra(Garbled) – they cannot just jump on the radio and call for A-IEs or Tac Air on what they find. They've got to go home and they got to say – well I found it, there it is. And ninety-nine percent of the time once they've found it and there it is, nobody does anything about it. You see, and this is kind of discouraging to the average human, you know, you go out here; you're in a war, for Pete's sake. You just got your, your aileron – is that, they have those on fixed, yeah, okay –, you got your aileron shot off. Boom. It fell off. And you got bullet holes all in this poor little L-19 and you go home and you say – hey, they shot me right there. There's a battalion, there's a regiment, there's a North Vietnamese Division right there, I saw them. They say – really? Well, that's fine and dandy, you found them but we're not going to do anything about it. This is some of the problems these guys face, really, they do a tremendous job going out here and supplying us, all of us – every doggone one of us – with some of the finest intelligence and other things that we need to know. We'd never make it without these guys, these Head Hunters from the 219th. So let's give a listen here to Captain Langley, and he is going to be assisted by Spec Five Verdinci (sic) from the 119th on a song called the *Head Hunters*."

HEAD HUNTERS

(Performed by Captain Langley & Specialist Fifth Class Verdecki –
219th Aviation Company (Surveillance) (Head Hunter)
(Words and music by Captain Langley)
(Tune: Original)

Captain Langley: "Why don't we – Ladies – Lady, and Gentlemen, why don't we just continue the applause for Captain Kelsey, who's doing a fine job. I think he's doing a tremendous job. And with that introduction, I think I should quit right now. But we'll go ahead. This is an original song. It's not in the tune of anybody else's song. When I came into the 219th Aviation Company in April, Major Wyatt, I believe who's in the 14th now – I don't know who's in the 14th here – but Major Jim Wyatt asked me to compose a song for the 219th Head Hunters from the time they were organized until present, and I did so. And he wanted it called Head Hunters. And I did and he liked it very much and I'd like to do it for you right now. And we like it – we hope you like it. Don't mind the Vietnamese guitar strings, they're flat."

Now they sailed from Frisco in mid-65,
Head Hunters.
For Vietnam, to help freedom survive.
Head Hunters.
A small nameless unit called up in the whirl,
But before long they'd be known round the world.
Head Hunters.

Holloway Field, at Pleiku was their home,
Head Hunters.
Their mission to fly out and find the Viet Cong.
Head Hunters.
Thousands of hours in combat they've logged,
In obsolete airplanes, the O-1 Bird Dog,
Head Hunters.

Since they came in country, the VC all know,
Head Hunters.
When they hear the Bird Dog, they better keep low.
Head Hunters.
Cause some of them didn't, and now they lie dead,
In a Head Hunter graveyard, minus their head.
Head Hunters.

From Bong Son to Plei Me, and in Ia Drang,

Head Hunters.
From Con Thum to Du Co, their call sign did ring.
Head Hunters.
Head Hunter, Head Hunter, was most often said,
And then he would answer: "I'm right overhead."
Head Hunters.

Not long ago, on the Ho Chi Minh Trail,
Head Hunters.
The VC had a Head Hunter, hot on their tail.
Head Hunters.
They'd run to the left, and they'd run to the right,
But they couldn't seem, to keep out of his sight.
Head Hunters.

With rockets and grenades, he kept them pinned down,
Head Hunters.
The ruby sea of fire, heaped near the ground.
Head Hunters.
With ammo all gone, he flew till the last,
Then landed at Pleiku, almost out of gas.
Head Hunters.

Their valor is common, they look not for praise,
Head Hunters.
And like everybody, they're counting the days.
Head Hunters.
Till they can go home, to the ones that they love,
Whose freedom they'd fight for, with help from above.
Head Hunters!

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. Captain Langley sang the song and after each line, for those indicated above, Specialist Verdecki sang the haunting words, Head Hunters. Major Jim Wyatt (formally of the 219th) had transferred to Headquarters, 14th CAB at Lane Army Heliport. The names Langley and Verdecki may not be spelled correctly.

Although it was not captured on the tape, Captain Kelsey introduced the quartet representing the 174th Aviation Company as The High Priced Help, having been confused when the group told him their original name and the new one, The Three Majors And A Minor. Captain Chinch Wollerton stepped up to the microphone and explained that the name of the group was really the TMAAM and got a laugh when he told them the logic behind the name change. Then Chinch introduced their song *Fare Thee Well* to the tune *Dink's Song*.

FARE THEE WELL

(Performed by The High Priced Help – Major Martin F. "Marty" Heuer,
Major Orville W. "Scat" McNatt, Major Earle J. "Jack" Westlake, and
Captain Charles V. "Chinch" Wollerton – 174th AHC Dolphins/Sharks)
(Words by Major Martin F. "Marty" Heuer)
(Tune: *Dink's Song*)

Chinch: "Mrs. Kaplan, Gentlemen, this song expresses some of the feelings that units have when they come over from the states as a whole unit, and come to the country of Vietnam. Maybe you've had some of these feelings if you've brought units over or come with them."

Early one morning, in drizzling rain,
Deep in my heart, I felt an aching pain.

CHORUS

Fare thee well, oh my honey,

Fare thee well.

We boarded an aircraft, no looking back,
Our guns were holstered, our gear was in our pack.

CHORUS:

Westward we flew, to meet our ship,
With tears in our eyes, and with trembling lips.

CHORUS:

If I had wings, like Noah's dove,
I'd fly cross the ocean, to the one I love.

CHORUS: (Final)

Fare thee well, oh my honey,
Fare thee well.
Fare thee well.

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. On the above date, the 174th AHC was stationed at Lane Army Heliport (AHP), located 12 miles west of Qui Nhon. Also known as Lane Army Airfield, Lane did not have a runway common to any airfield. (For a short time, there was another airfield named Lane Army Airfield located in Qui Nhon and the two facilities were often confused.) The 161st AHC was also stationed at Lane AHP. Both AHCs were subordinate companies of the 14th Combat Aviation Battalion, headquartered at Lane AHP. *Dink's Song* has a strange genesis. John Lomax recorded a woman known as "Dink" singing this tune in 1908 as she washed clothes for her man working in a levee camp along the Brazos River in Texas. A year later, when he went back to re-record her, she wasn't anywhere to be found. The townspeople pointed him towards the cemetery telling him that's where Dink was now living.

Don Kelsey returned to the microphone and said:

"These guys are tremendous. Hey, did you get your tape changed? (Speaking to the recording technician) You did? Hey, you know I kind of bobbled there a while ago. I got the word – all these hand signals and hand jive and so forth – that I got to change the tape, man. And I cut it a little short at the time and I was afraid we didn't get the tape changed but obviously we did. So I'm glad to hear that. (The entire introduction of *The High Priced Help* had not been recorded.)

This, by the way, is the first time that we've had the benefit of a tape recording to capture all of the talent and so forth that comes out here in front of this microphone. And it is really something, that you go out here in the boondocks and in the various and sundry installations and places around the country and you kind of shake the old tree, you know as a figure of speech, and out falls all of these little gems and fruits and what have you, of talent. It's really amazing, since we've started this song contest bit. The first one we had there was quite a bit of participation – there were four, five, or six people there. The second we had I think there were four people there, and lo and behold we jump up here with eight. This is really great because people are beginning to gain an interest in this thing. And you know, you take a bunch of people and you take them away from home. And you put them into an area where they're constantly in danger. And to get rid of some of the pressure, if you like, strains, and what have you. It does an awful lot for a whole unit to be able to sit down – and sometimes it may sound like hell but you don't really care – because you can blow it off. All the units that are represented here, they do this, you know they really do. I can say this because my unit does it, the 48th Aviation Company. When things begin to get a little bit tight and everybody's flown six, eight, ten hours a day – and we do, we all do, everybody over here – you fly hour after hour after hour on end. A lot of it's pretty darn dull and dry because you go up and you orbit, and around and around you go, and you wait. Or you go into an LZ and nothing happens. You're always expecting to get your hinny shot off, and nothing happens. So you go on to another one, and nothing happens. And this goes on day after day and finally it just gets you right up to here – and you gotta' blow'er off. So how do you blow it off? You can either chew your tent mates tail out, or you can go completely ape and just go berserk. Or you can get absolutely totally blind drunk, which is no fun because you gotta' get up at four the next morning and go fly. Or you can kinda' sit down and some idiot sits down there with a guitar, or a banjo, or whistles – if nothing else – and everybody just kinda' throws their ol' head

back and just blows it off, and it's great. All the units do this, and consequently as a result of this, we get these people in here and we kinda' generate this thing.

Okay, enough about all of this." Let's see, we talked about *Fare Thee Well*. Okay. We've got a new outfit here and this outfit's kind of got a spot for me because my old ex-platoon leader is commanding this outfit now. But, the 129th – and there's a story that goes behind the 129th – and I want you to all understand it and know it. These boys brought up all this beautiful electrical equipment. They brought it up here and they were going to put on a show tonight. And, by golly, they were going to plug in that amplifier, and they were going to tune up their electric guitars, and they were going to blow you right back through the wall. But they had a problem. They blew a tube. You know, when you blow a tube in your amplifier, man, you're out of luck. So what we did, we kind of got together back in the back and we said, well don't cry. Please, please don't cry. We'll loan you some of these guitars that are not amplified. Well, just as luck would have it, they didn't cry and they crawled up on the stairway over here out of the way of all of this hootenanny that was going on before you good folks came down. They got over there kind of by themselves, kind of out of the way where nobody would bother them and they wouldn't bother anybody. And they picked a little bit, and they grinned a little bit, and they talked and they whispered, and they sputtered and spewed and murmured to themselves, and all this jazz, and the first thing you know, they all kind of grinned. So after looking at them grin and all, I figured that they must have pretty well worked out without all of their amplification and what have you. So let's call out the 129th. Before we do, however, I'd like to say that we have a Spec Five Gurdy, a Spec Five..."

A voice was heard off-stage yelling out, "Gidrey!"

"Huh?"

"Gidrey!"

"Gidrey! All right then though, Gidrey! How's that?"

"That's fine."

"All right. Spec Five Gidrey, a Spec Five Tucker, and a Spec Four Fleming. They're going to sing a country and western type song – it's close to my heart – a country and western type song called *The Ballad Of The Huey*. From the 129th Aviation Company, *The Ballad Of The Huey*!"

THE BALLAD OF THE HUEY

(Performed by Specialist Fifth Class Gidrey and Specialist Fifth Class Tucker –

129th AHC Bulldogs)

(Words by Specialist Fifth Class Gidrey)

(Tune: *Gunslinger*)

Specialist Fifth Class Gidrey: "Well, now that you've heard our little story, we've only got two men now, myself and Tucker. And my luck – this is my luck. I mean, if they'd shoot me to the moon right now it'd be a half moon and I'd miss it. (Laughter) I mean; this is my luck. I mean, (Pause-more laughter) we were up in Pleiku knee-deep in mud underneath an aircraft working on it and Major (Robert) Stearns said, I mean Major (Ronald) Merritt said, 'Take this book and do it.' Do what, sir? He said, 'Do a song.' I said, 'Out of all of this?' He said, 'Yeah, we're flying back to Dong Ba Thin right now and get these guys together and work out a number.' So, here we are, blown tube and all, so let's give it a try. It's *The Ballad Of The Huey*, yes sir. Hope you don't mind the paper."

Gunner on the Huey, that's always been my game.
Flying CA missions, and sixty's are my name.
Never have been wounded, never have been scratched,
But I've seen a lot of guys, who'll never make it back,
Never make it back.

Always thought that gunning, was an easy job to pull,
Till that day in April, that went against the rules.
The One-O-First was hurting, down in area twenty-two,
The Cong were all around them, odds were mighty few,
Till someone saw a Huey, chugging into sight,
Chugging into sight.

Our pilots briefed us quickly, my crew chief Dave and I,
And minutes after we'd been called, our slick was in the sky.
The time was thirteen hundred, and our pilots checked their map,
The only thing that they'd been told, was help was needed fast,

Help was needed fast.

We landed shortly afterward, in One-O-First Brigade,
And took off seconds later, with a load of men and aid.
Our pilots pulled off all they could, to get us in the air,
And when we reached five hundred feet, our pilots said, "Down there,
Charlie is down there."

We circle high above them, until a smoke grenade was seen,
And after checking out the wind, our ship began to lean.
Seconds later we were starting, on our final run,
And when we reached five hundred feet, our pilot said, "Down there."
Pilot said, "Down there."

Altimeter was one-o-five, airspeed was forty knots,
And suddenly all hell broke loose, and they were throwing rocks.
I opened up and fired back, shooting straight on out,
Making sure I wouldn't hit, our own men on the ground,
Our own men on the ground.

We skidded about twenty feet, and ten men cleared the ship,
And seconds later we were up, and none of them were hit.
The One-O-First was worrying, down in area twenty-two,
The Cong were all around them, odds were mighty few,
Till someone saw a Huey, chugging into sight,
Chugging into sight.

The second trip, the third and fourth, were pretty much the same,
But the fifth, our luck ran out, our ship was hit and lame.
Our servo's took a round or two, and steering was a chore,
But Captain Gross still had control, so back we went for more,
Back we went for more.

Thirteen times we made that trip, still can't believe it yet,
Nineteen rounds our ship sustained, how lucky can you get.
Cong were beating down our dust, as Medevac came in.
One-O-First had proved its might, I'm sure it will again,
Sure it will again.

Ask them how it was before, our ships came on the scene,
I'm sure they'll tell you how it was, grim and mighty lean.
The One-O-First was hurting, down in area twenty-two,
The Cong were all around them, odds were mighty few,
Till someone saw a Huey, chugging into sight,
Chugging into sight.

(Spoken): "That's it! Thank God for Huey's."

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. The introductory narrative given by Specialist Fifth Class Gidrey provides us with his thoughts concerning the selection process for participation in the contest. This group had come to the contest as a trio, the other member being Specialist Fourth Class Larry A. Fleming. They usually performed with amplified guitars but while tuning up for the show, well before the contest started, their amplifier had blown a tube. That meant they were out of the music business because an amplified guitar without an amplifier is nearly worthless. Gidrey and Tucker borrowed acoustic guitars from other performers and put on the show. Gidrey hadn't yet learned the words and used a sheet of paper with the written words to sing from. Fleming, being the bass guitar player had to stand by and watch. The name, "Captain Gross," in the eighth verse refers to then Captain Joseph C. Gross, III, a pilot in the 129th. The last three lines in the ninth verse were taken from a later performance of this song because Specialist Fifth Class Gidrey must have lost his place on the paper for the words and substituted "flubbed a word, my error." as they

continued strumming. *Gunslinger* is a song from the TV series. I have not yet found who wrote or performed the song.

When the applause died down, Kelsey took the stage and said:

“All righty! We’ll get out the paper again here now. Lo and behold, we’re down to me. We’re down to the 48th Aviation Company. But before I say any more, those of you who have been with us at the other two (contests) I’m sure will remember Captain Delius, who sang *Chopper Pilots Day* with me and *Gunship On My Tail* and a couple more. Captain Delius has been medevaced, he got hepatitis and he’s no longer with us. However, we’ve got two people, the guys who came out here and sang old *Sky King* with me a while ago, Lieutenant Damron and Captain Day. These two guys have got an awful lot of talent and we got to cheat on you a little bit tonight; we got to read the words. Lieutenant Damron wrote this song. The whole thing is original. The tune is more or less familiar to you but there’s a little parts of it that are not as they should be. It’s kind of a folk song and it’s one of these things that covers all of Army Aviation. It’s concerning, particularly, Army Aviation. So, if I can get Captain Day and Lieutenant Delius – Delius, oowah – Lieutenant Damron out here, we’ll get with it here on *Army Aviation*. Captain Day is going to hold the words and sing tenor. Let me find my pick. Just a minute, it’s right here in my pocket, somewhere. What key? E? All right.”

ARMY AVIATION

(Performed by The Blue Stars – Captain Donald R. “Don” Kelsey, Captain George Day and
First Lieutenant Ronald K. “Ron” Damron – 48th AHC Blue Stars)
(Words and music by First Lieutenant Ronald K. Damron)
(Tune: Original)

This world is a free world,
The sky is our goal.
Lift your eyes up to the heavens,
The Army’s on the go.

CHORUS

Army Aviation,
Flying above the best.
Army Aviation,
Flies away and leaves the rest.

Never a job too big,
Never one too small,
Army Aviators,
Qualified to do them all.

Any time – day or night
Whether clouds or heavy rain,
They can do the job for you,
That’s the way our men are trained.

CHORUS:

We’ve got the big ones,
Got some little ones too,
Choppers, fixed-wing – you just name it,
Any that you could choose.

We’ve passed the big test,
Now we’re in full stride.
Part of the greatest Army,
And serving it with pride.

CHORUS: (Repeat last line twice)

NOTES: An attempt was made to transcribe this song from the tape. When the song was performed, the trio singing it seemed to each be saying different words for most lines and it was very difficult to “find” the correct ones. However, when I received a copy of Volume I, Number 7, of the 48th Blue Star monthly newsletter, dated 1 September 1966, I reverted (above) to the official words of the song as originally written by First Lieutenant Ronald K. “Ron” Damron. Ron had written an article in the newsletter about the 13 August contest and included the words as he had intended them to be sung. The 48th AHC song book credits First Lieutenant Ronald K. Damron as the song writer.

After finishing the song, Don Kelsey said:

“Okay, that one was kind of thrown together last night. All righty, that completes it. You’ve got eight of them there and it’s time for the judging. Now, as you’re judging, let me run over once again those that we had. I’ll get my paper out. We had the 173rd with *Saigon Girl*, we had the 116th with the one I can’t pronounce, something like *Chu* (sic) *Chi Blues*, that was Lieutenant Staggs. We had the 183rd with *The Fighting Bird Dogs*. We had the 170th with old *Peter Pilot*. We had the 219th with the *Head Hunters*. We had the 174th with *Fare Thee Well*. We had the 129th with *The Ballad Of The Huey*. And then, of course, we had *Army Aviation*. Now as the judging goes along here I know we won’t interfere but I would like to know, General Seneff, do you have anything in particular from the past bunch that you would like to hear? Tell you what, Sir, let’s get the 173rd out here and get our first winner, the other song about Army Aviation. One seventy-third? Where are you?”

The Merry Men brought out their gut-bucket with considerable noise and introduced their song *Army Aviation*.

ARMY AVIATION

(Performed by The Merry Men – Captain Joseph E. “Joe” Drew, Captain Gregory E. “Greg” Chapman, and
First Lieutenant Jerome W. “Jerry” Thomas – 173rd AHC Robin Hoods)
(Words by First Lieutenant Jerome W. “Jerry” Thomas)
(Tune: *Olcana*)

First Lieutenant Jerry Thomas: “We, the aviators of the 173rd Aviation Company, Robin Hood flight, dedicate this song to all those aviators who have gone before us and to those who will follow us here into this conflict here in Vietnam. Clear and untied! Coming through!”

Fly the jungle, fly the mountains,
Fly the whole Vietnam.
Carry cargo, carry troopers,
Carry anything we can.

CHORUS

Army Aviation, Army Aviation,
Haul away, night and day, Army Aviation.

South to Saigon, north to Pleiku,
Back again to eastern shores.
From the Delta to the highlands,
Beating at old Charlie’s door.

CHORUS:

Into combat, out again,
Making infantry mobile,
Doing things we never dreamed of,
Seeking VC to kill.

CHORUS:

Losing some and saving many,

As our missions we perform.
Giving to the ground commander,
Another punch for his right arm.

CHORUS:

Mighty men are our EM,
Fighting gunners in the door.
Taking all of Charlie's best,
And coming back for more and more.

CHORUS:

(Slow, free time, minor mode)
Well, here's to the aviator who's gone before,
Who guides our path of flight.
He has served his country and he gave his all,
Now he's wearing wings of white.

CHORUS:

(Normal speed resumed)
Slicks and Gunships as a team,
Giant Chinooks and the rest,
Caribou's and the Mohawks,
T. O. Fs above the best.

CHORUS: (Repeat twice)

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. The Merry Men were still a trio at this performance but would be joined by First Lieutenant Mike Staggs, who transferred from the 116th to the 173rd in September 1966.

Don Kelsey returned to the stage:

"I don't think there's very much doubt in anybody's mind after that how come them to win the first one, I'll guarantee you. That is tremendous. And while we're on winners, Lieutenant Staggs? Lieutenant Staggs? This young man won our last contest all by himself. Get your guitar, Staggs, don't walk out here without your guitar. I want to ask Lieutenant Staggs to sing his last month's winning song."

"Hope I can remember it," replied Staggs as he got to the microphone. He began strumming and sang *The Hornets Will Be There*.

THE HORNETS WILL BE THERE

(Performed by First Lieutenant Michael E. "Mike" Staggs – 116th AHC Hornets)

(Words by First Lieutenant Michael E. "Mike" Staggs)

(Tune: Unknown)

CHORUS

You can rely on us, you can rely on us,
When there's danger near,
The Hornets, will be there.

It was early in September,
When we got the word to go.
So we kissed our wives and sweethearts,
And met at our APO.

They said there was a job to do,
In a war-locked torn land.

So we shrugged our shoulders, shined our wings,
And sailed for Vietnam.

CHORUS:

We started our new mission,
Where no trees or grass had grown.
And when we had it finished,
Phu Loi was our home.

We fought and labored day by day,
And never once gave in.
For the love so countless miles away,
We knew we had to win.

CHORUS:

Missions flown night and day,
Would strike fear in the strongest of hearts.
But the hardest took it in their stride,
All they asked is, "When do we start?"

We've flown into Cu Chi,
From Song Be to Vung Tau.
If at first they didn't know we were here,
By God they know it now.

CHORUS:

There's often times we've asked ourselves,
What the Big Red One would do.
If the Hornets weren't supporting them,
They'd never see it through.

Well, the trail's a-blazing with our name,
Will go down in the annals of time.
For every pass the Hornets made,
We took it to the line.

CHORUS:

Then suddenly new faces,
Appeared from far and near.
And finally it came to us,
Rotation was drawing near.

We set traditions for our name,
We've done the best we can.
The Hornets name will echo high,
For the freedom of every man.

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. First Lieutenant Mike Staggs transferred from the 116th AHC to the 173rd AHC in September 1966. From then on, Mike sang with The Merry Men until the original three members of the group returned to the United States in February 1967.

Kelsey announced:

“Okay, they’re still counting ballots and if I could get Major Jack Westlake out here for just a minute, we’ve got a specialty called *Alexis From Texas*. This kind of hurt my heart, you know, me being from Texas and all that jazz. If he starts downgrading Texas, I may dump him off the stool! Major Westlake!

ALEXIS FROM TEXAS

(Performed by Major Earle J. “Jack” Westlake – 174th AHC Dolphins/Sharks) *

(Words adapted by Major Earle J. Westlake)

(Tune: *Deep In The Heart Of Texas*)

(Spoken) “I thought I’d just like to change the tempo of things a little bit. We’ve been rather restrained in the material that we’ve used this evening. The first song – the only song I’m going to do – well I – originally I was going to do *Liberace In The Men’s Room* or *A Stranger In Paradise*. But I couldn’t remember all the words, so I’ll do *Alexis From Texas*.”

(Strumming) (Spoken) You know, deep in the heart of Texas there was a cowboy named Alexis, and he was a great big strapping fellow about six-foot-six, and all the girls in Texas were simply mad about Alexis, (Singing begins) till they learned that nature played some funny tricks.”

Though he was big and strong,
There was something wrong,
Alexis had no sexus.
Now I’ve seen a few,
But I never knew,
They grew such guys in Texas.

Cause usually, that’s the kind you see,
Deep in the heart of Greenwich Village.
When he roped cattle, he rode side saddle,
Down on his range in Texas.
Yes, home on the range, he was - strange.

When the cowgirls would ask for a kiss,
It was seldom they heard, an encouraging word.
He was a prairie fairy.

Yippee ki aye, I’m the Queen of the May,
Deep in the heart of Texas.
His horse was just swell,
It smelled of Chanel,
Just like our friend Alexis.
He even had a steer, that acted queer,
Just like our friend Alexis.

This prairie flower would sit by the hour,
And all day long, he would sing this song.
“Give me some men, who are stout hearted men,
Who can ride, who can rope,
Who would like to elope”.
Deep in the heart of Texas.

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. Jack Westlake usually performed this solo whenever The High Priced Help entertained the troops. He also usually followed it with a pantomime about a drunk in a restroom, with three different scenarios. The last pantomime was a soldier returning after a year away from home. He did not perform the pantomime at the contest. *Deep In The Heart Of Texas* was written by June Hershey in 1941 and the melody was provided by Don Swander.

* Jack Westlake was actually assigned to the 409th Transportation Corps (TC) Detachment, commanded by Major Orville W. "Scat" McNatt, also a member of The High Priced Help. The 409th was attached to the 174th AHC to provide aircraft maintenance support and both Scat and Jack worked closely with me when I was the service platoon commander. Jack transferred to the 174th and took over the service platoon when I left to become the adjutant of the 14th CAB. Major McNatt later transferred to HQS, 14th CAB to become the maintenance officer. The High Priced Help represented the 174th AHC, and later, the 14th CAB.

Although edited out of the tape, Don Kelsey asked Mike Staggs to join The Blue Stars to sing *Green Beret*. In the process of beginning the song, Don says:

"Where's mine at? There it is. It's close enough, Mike, it don't matter." Mike Staggs questioned Don in the background asking:

"I don't know if we're in tune, (Referring to the guitars.) if not, I'll let you guys play. What key?"

"C," was Don's response, and the group began singing the following version of *Green Beret*.

GREEN BERET

(Performed by The Blue Stars – Captain Donald R. "Don" Kelsey, Captain George Day, First Lieutenant Ronald K. "Ron" Damron – 48th AHC Blue Stars, and First Lieutenant Michael E. "Mike" Staggs – 116th AHC by invitation.)

(Words by Major John C. Tobias, A Company, 501st Aviation Battalion circa 1965)

(Tune: *Ballad Of The Green Berets*)

CHORUS

Silver wings, upon my chest,
I fly my chopper, above the best.
I can make, more dough that way,
But I can't wear, no green beret.

Tennis shoes, upon his feet,
Some people call him, "Sneaky Pete."
He sneaks around, the woods all day,
And wears that funny, little green beret.

CHORUS:

It's no jungle, floor for me,
I've never seen, a rubber tree.
A thousand men, may take the test,
While I fly home, and take a rest.

CHORUS:

When I fly, my chopper home,
I'll leave him out there, all alone.
But that is where, Green Berets belong,
Out in the jungle, writing songs.

CHORUS:

When my little, boy is grown,
Don't leave him out there, all alone.
Just let him fly, and give him pay,
Cause he can't spend, no green beret.

When my little, boy is old,
His silver wings, all lined with gold.
He too may wear, a green beret,
In the big parade on, St. Patrick's Day.

CHORUS:

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. This very popular song was written by Major John C. Tobias, an Army Aviator assigned to A Company, 501st Aviation Battalion – call sign “Rattler.” A Company, 501st was assigned to the 145th CAB from 14 December 1964 to 1 September 1966 and stationed at Bien Hoa. On 2 September 1966, this unit was redesignated as the 71st AHC and retained the “Rattler” call sign. The Merry Men confirmed the genesis of *Green Flight Pay*, also known as the *Ballad Of The Green Flight Pay* and *The Green Beret*, in an introduction of the song at the 24 September 1966 commander’s conference song contest. This song was also included in the 48th AHC song book with some variations in the words from those above. There were various small word changes to this song from performer to performer.

WINNER ANNOUNCED

(Although all of the events in the following paragraph actually happened, it was not on the tape and comes from the author’s notes and memory of the event.)

The votes were tallied and Don Kelsey announced that The Merry Men had won. They were loudly applauded as they took the floor to sing their winning song *Saigon Girls* again. That had become the custom. The second and third places were not announced, but Lieutenant Colonel Hank Rust, a member of the 17th Aviation Group staff told the members of The High Priced Help that they had placed second with *Fare Thee Well*, and that *Peter Pilot*, the entrant of the 170th AHC had been third.

The Merry Men were ordered to stay and they sang their four-version rendition of *You Are My Sunshine*. The tune was the same but The Merry Men had changed the way it was sung considerably – clearly an understatement.

YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE

(Performed by The Merry Men – Captain Joseph E. “Joe” Drew, Captain Gregory E. “Greg” Chapman, and First Lieutenant Jerome W. “Jerry” Thomas – 173rd AHC Robin Hoods)
(Words and music by Jimmie Davis and Charles Mitchell - 1940) *
(Tune: *You Are My Sunshine*)

(Original style)

You are my sunshine, my only sunshine.
You make me happy when skies are gray.
You’ll never know dear, how much I love you,
Please don’t take my sunshine away.

(“Hillbilly” style)
(Same words)

(“New Orleans” style)
(Same words)

(“California style”)

You are my sunshine, high up above.
You are my sunshine, high up above.
Darling, in my dreams last night,
I dreamt you wore my high school ring,
But I, I was mistaken, it was just your referee whistle.
You are my sunshine, high up above.
You are my sunshine, up above.

NOTES: Transcribed from tape. The last verse – “California” style – was written by The Merry Men.

* Published in Department of the Army (DA) Pamphlet 28-101/Air Force Pamphlet (AFP) 34-10-5, 13 June 1957. This was the 3rd Edition of the Army – Air Force Song Book (Melody Edition). It superseded the 2nd Edition of The Army Song Book (Word Edition) 1941. I have a copy!

When The Merry Men finished, Don Kelsey came back to the microphone and said:

“A real pro-sounding outfit! Well, I guess we have just almost and about run out of gas for tonight. It’s getting kind of late, and we’ve got dual winners in that bunch of guys. And I’m sure that next month, if we have another one of these things, that once again we’ll turn out a lot of talent. Now, before I shut this thing down tonight, I want to let everybody here know that we got a banjo picker. And if I can find my piece of paper, I’m going to get that banjo picker out here because I do love to hear a banjo picker.”

Don obviously found his man because the next sound heard on the tape is the unidentified banjo player performing the theme song from the television show “Beverly Hillbillies.” The tape ends abruptly after two verses, an obvious edit.