

Dong Ha Entertainment and Humorous Event

Special Entertainment at Dong Ha By Ron Fogle

Sometime during the Dong Ha deployment a band visited the base to entertain us. As I recall, this was an all-female western music group, I think sponsored by the USO. They set up in the chow hall and soon the place was packed with 'Bees. After playing several songs with everyone clapping and hollering a particularly favorite song was played and the place went wild. The leader knew she had the audience in her hands and began asking for song requests. Several were made and the band seemed to know every song being called out.

At the time, I was particularly fond of the Marty Robbins song, "Out in the West Texas Town of El Paso", so I finally got up the nerve to raise my hand and yell out my request. My bad luck, this was the first request that they didn't know. The band played on including more songs requested by the audience. Figuring that saying that they didn't know the very popular Marty Robbins song and that maybe they were just adding some stage humor when they said that they didn't, I again requested the song. Again, she said they didn't know the lyrics so I let it go for several more songs and then decided I wasn't going to give up. So again, I called out for the El Paso song and received the same reply, this time no doubt with a perplexed but still light tone to her voice. The crowd was starting to get into this act of mine.

Then I remembered out loud to some of the 'Bees around me that if the lyrics were all they needed to sing the song, I just happened to have them back at the hut. Of course, those guys encouraged--maybe even dared me--to just go get the song since my on-going requests had gotten to be somewhat humorous part of the show. Now, it is not clear to me why I had the lyrics but I had been to Japan on R&R where I bought a tape machine and a portable record player and apparently picked up some music for those machines. I had asked my wife to send me some of my favorite songs and I think I had in mind to practice singing. Now granted, I wasn't a singer and, in fact, I remember one Sunday morning before I entered the service when my wife and I were in church singing hymns and two young boys sitting next to us when one looked up at me and said "Sir, you sing like a frog". Well, truer words had probably never been spoken

I literally ran to the hut, retrieved the lyrics and hurried back to the galley. Some may remember that this particular Marty Robbins song had a lot of lyrics. My wife had hand written them at the time and I recall they were on four pages in all. Since the band had been playing a long time I was concerned that they'd be ending their show before I could get back and request the song again. Not too long after getting back to the show they asked for requests and I shouted out "El Paso" for the third or fourth time and the band leader just looked at me. But before she could respond, I shouted that I had the lyrics and waived the papers over my head. The whole place erupted in laughter, including the band members. The leader said to bring them up. I maneuvered through

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the crowd trying to get the sheets forward and finally the leader told me to just come on stage and hold them for her getting more laughs, at my expense. I was more than a bit nervous as this situation was getting serious.

Well, they started playing the music and the leader was singing the lyrics. Once she got through the first page, the band sort of stopped, thinking they were done with the song. But at about the same time, I turned the page and the leader saw there were more lyrics and started back in to sing and play. This got a big roar out of the crowd and the process went on for all four pages getting a bigger laugh at each page turn. This seemed to be a big highlight of the band's performance --I think mainly because of just how impromptu it all came about.

Later that evening, our shop's senior PO came to my hut with the guy who I recall was the manager of the act. They asked if they could have those four pages, saying that this was such a big hit they wanted to incorporate it in their act in future shows. Unfortunately, I had left the papers with the band leader and I guess they had set them aside and/or misplaced them. I explained that I didn't have another copy, to which he asked if I could rewrite them to which I had to respond that I didn't know the lyrics by heart explaining that my wife had sent them to me. They were very disappointed and as I recall I offered the guy some other songs for which I had the lyrics in writing. But no, they only wanted what they wanted and that was the end of my short-lived stint in the entertainment game.

Time in the Navy and Career Since

After the Dong Ha deployment ended in late November and early December 1967 and we arrived back in the states, I took leave and went home. My wife had stayed with her parents while I was gone and she had delivered our first child, a baby girl. Subsequently, I processed out of the service in May 1968 and went on to earn an engineering degree. We have two married daughters and one grandson. We are fortunate to live near our grandson and we thoroughly enjoy spending time with him, watching him grow up and participate in sports.

I've had the opportunity to work in many different types of industries and in various capacities. With all the organizations that I've worked with through the years, the Seabees were the best organization that I was ever associated with. When I went to join the Navy, I had never heard of the Seabees. But I'm forever grateful that things worked out as they did. The "Can Do" attitude has served me well over the years.

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