



The United States Army Field Band

The Musical Ambassadors of the Army
Washington, D.C.

75th ANNIVERSARY HISTORICAL SNAPSHOTS

by MSG Brian Eldridge, unit historian

edited by MSG Phillip Johnson

The 75th anniversary of The United States Army Field Band provided a perfect opportunity to reflect on what made the unit so effective at its unique mission since 1946. The following historical mini-features were published on our social media channels during 2021, the anniversary year. They offer touchpoints on people, events, and key aspects of the Army Field Band, as well as remembrances of two of our former commanding officers who recently passed.



1946 - 2021: The Unofficial Lineage of The United States Army Field Band:

- 1924-1940: 110th Mounted Cavalry Band, Massachusetts National Guard (During WWII, redesignated as 180th Field Artillery Band, 200th F.A. Band, and Americal Division Artillery Band)
- 1943: Americal Division Band, South Pacific
- 1944: 1st Combat Infantry Band activated at Ft. Meade, MD
- 1946: Army Ground Forces Band organized at Ft. Meade, MD and given its mission statement by General Devers
- 1950: Army Ground Forces Band redesignated as The United States Army Field Band
- 2021: 75th Anniversary celebrated

Chester E. Whiting
as commander and
conductor

1948: The Field Band
receives a Table
of Organization
and Equipment,
beginning its official
Army Lineage

Decorated World War II Veterans of the Army Field Band: Chester E. Whiting & Lynn M. Kloster

The Army Field Band has its roots in the 1st Combat Infantry Band, an ensemble made up entirely of combat veterans from World War II. The band's commander, Chester E. Whiting, served for three years in the South Pacific Theater, primarily as commander of the Americal Division Band.

Whiting received the Bronze Star Medal for his band's actions on Guadalcanal, Bougainville, and the Fiji Islands. From his Bronze Star citation:

During the battle of Guadalcanal, Chief Warrant Officer Whiting organized his band to operate as signalmen, litter bearers, survey personnel and carrying parties. Through his leadership and perseverance, the bandsmen, without specialized training, performed their tasks in a superior manner and aided materially in the success of the combat operations of the Division... In the Fiji Islands, CWO Whiting again performed outstandingly by reorganizing two unit bands into the present Americal Division Band, and developing it into a high state of perfection. Though the Division was deployed over the entire island of Viti Levu, CWO Whiting, despite great handicaps of distance and location, maintained a continuous schedule that provided the Division with a maximum of musical entertainment... On Bougainville, Solomon Islands, CWO Whiting has energetically pursued a policy of providing first class entertainment not only to units of the Division but also to other units on the island. As a result of CWO Whiting's efforts the Americal Division Band is considered the greatest single factor contributing to the morale of the troops of the Americal Division.

After they returned to the United States in 1944, Chester Whiting and many of those same bandsmen were founding members of the 1st Combat Infantry Band, which toured the United States to help raise money for the continuing war effort.

(continued)



The 1st Combat Infantry Band's performances featured banners listing the campaigns its members served in during World War II.



Whiting with the recently formed 1st Combat Infantry Band. Note the overseas service bars on the uniform sleeves and Army Ground Forces shoulder insignia. The helmets were infantry blue.



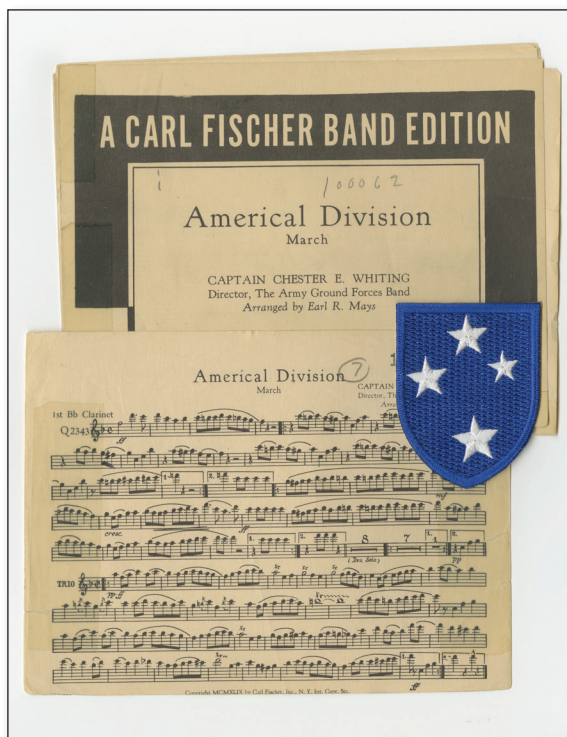
Whiting conducts on Viti Levu, Fiji. The band entertained the troops on makeshift stages with a combination of music and variety shows.

(Source: The Chet and Helen Whiting Scrapbook)

They were joined by soldier-musicians from all combat theatres – including Lynn M. Kloster (right), who was awarded the Silver Star for his actions during the battle of Guadalcanal. Kloster worked alone for three days, under enemy fire, to treat and evacuate casualties when every other member of his squad was wounded.

In 1946, all members of the 1st Combat Infantry Band were transferred to the newly-created Army Ground Forces Band, which would later be redesignated The United States Army Field Band. General Jacob Devers, commander of the Army Ground Forces, personally chose Chester Whiting to command this new Army Special Band. Whiting would serve as the Army Field Band's commander and conductor until his retirement in 1960.

For more information about the World War II experiences of the Americal Division band, see “Origins, Vol. I: Finding the Wartime Roots of The United States Army Field Band” on the history page of our website.



(Above) Chester Whiting composed several marches while living in a foxhole on Bougainville, Solomon Islands, where they endured 46 bombings by Japanese aircraft. After the war, “Americal Division” was arranged by Earl Mays and published. It was later recorded on “Heritage of the March, Vol. 69” by the Army Field Band under the direction of William E. Clark, along with Whiting’s other 5 marches.



On 29 March 1943, the Harrisburg Telegraph reported on Kloster’s Silver Star ceremony on Guadalcanal: “Twenty Five men of a North Dakota Regiment stood upon soil sprinkled with their blood... The ceremony was cast against a background of the blunt crests of Guadalcanal as four Silver Stars and twenty-two Purple Hearts were pinned in place... Major General Alexander Patch awarded the Silver Star to a member of the regimental band, Private Lynn M. Kloster. During the height of the action, Private Kloster was pressed into service in the medical detachment. Again and again he worked his way forward under hot and raking fire and bore the wounded off to safety. Again and again his comrades begged him to take cover. And Private Kloster’s reply was: ‘I’ve got a job to do.’”

In an interview on “The Army Hour,” 10 Dec 1944, Kloster summarized: “A bandsman has a lot of other duties in combat besides music. I was a stretcher bearer. I was awarded the Silver Star for caring for our wounded when we were attacking a ridge and ran into some heavy crossfire. Three others in my litter crew were wounded, and that left me alone to carry on. In three days I cared for about thirty wounded men.” Interviewer: “There wasn’t much time, then, to practice your trumpet?” Kloster: “Not much!”

Teofilo de la Cruz of the Philippine Scouts

Master Sergeant Teofilo de la Cruz was another of the World War II veterans who made up the 1st Combat Infantry Band from 1944-1946. He was then transferred to the Army Ground Forces Band at Ft. Meade upon its organization in 1946.

On 20 February 1945, the Gaffney Ledger described Soldiers of the Combat Infantry Band: "Another began his Army career in the Philippine Scouts 24 years ago. This man is Technician fourth grade Teofilo de la Cruz of Fayetteville, NC. He is known as the "daddy" of the band, beginning as a member of the 45th Infantry Regiment Band in the Philippine Scouts. An E-flat clarinet player and trumpet player, he has been a musician for 29 years. His overseas service includes duty in England, North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. He played with the 17th Field Artillery Band and later with the 245th Army Ground Forces Band."

Several newspapers featured the following photo of de la Cruz holding the newspaper that announced the landing of the US Army on Bataan. On 17 February 1945, the Charlotte Observer wrote: "Liberation of the Philippines from Japanese rule means a great deal to Technician Fourth Grade Teofilo de la Cruz... the sergeant was born on Luzon and has many relatives there." De la Cruz retired from the Army as a Master Sergeant on 31 March 1950, the last Soldier to retire before the band was redesignated The United States Army Field Band in April of the same year.



Shoulder Sleeve Insignia of the Philippine Scouts (right) and Distinctive Unit Insignia of the 45th Infantry Regiment of the Philippine Scouts (left).



Teofilo de la Cruz is pictured in the center of the first row in this early photograph of the 1st Combat Infantry Band. (Source: Scrapbook by Cyrus Baylor, french horn player in the 1st Combat Infantry Band and Army Ground Forces Band)

“The Kings of the Highway”

What makes the Army Field Band unique? The directive given by its founder, General Jacob Devers, “to organize a band that will carry into the grass roots of our Country the story of our magnificent Army” gave the band a focused mission that shaped its culture and priorities.

Another simple reminder comes in a rare set of color photographs from the 1950s. They show buses and trucks of The United States Army Field Band in bright infantry blue, a color that represented the founding members of the organization. Sergeant Major (retired) Frank Granofsky explained: “After the Second World War when the band was being organized, we got a lot of good musicians that were very happy to be here—a lot of combat people who had slept in foxholes during their tenure in the Second World War...It was a good professional organization and they were very content.”

Hal J. Gibson, the 4th commander of the Army Field Band, remembered his first assignment to the unit in 1961: “The band had evolved from the 1st Combat Infantry Band, then becoming the Army Ground Forces Band, and much of that psyche and history still pervaded the band's developing tradition. There still remained many elements of the band's infantry heritage and its accompanying folklore. Buses were painted infantry blue and Colonel Whiting had insisted that he be commissioned in the infantry. Thus it was that a march composed for the infantry foot soldiers, who were known as ‘The Kings of the Highway,’ would find its way to the Field Band. This march with the same name, by R. J. Burt, became the band's theme song and was used in its entirety on virtually every concert. I know that in later years some newer members of the band assumed that ‘Kings of the Highway’ referred to the many road miles that the band traveled every year, and they were totally unaware that the reference was actually to the foot soldiers.”



(Top) Master Sergeant Earl Mays' arrangement of “The Kings of the Highway” was used as a concert opener for many years.
(Above) Chester Whiting wearing the infantry branch insignia, Combat Infantryman Badge, and Bronze Star ribbon.




Support for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm Earns the Army Field Band its Second Army Superior Unit Award

At 9pm EST on 27 February 1991, President George H.W. Bush announced a ceasefire for Operation Desert Storm.

The Concert Band and Soldiers' Chorus were on tour in Oklahoma, performing in the Elk City High School Gymnasium, at 7:30pm CST on 27 February 1991. The audience gave standing ovations when the Soldiers entered the building, when they conducted their pre-concert soundcheck, and when they took the stage. During the concert, Colonel (retired) Jack Grogan received a call from the Army Chief of Public Affairs

informing him that he could let the audience know the good news of the ceasefire before they learned about it via radio or television. Master Sergeant Orvel Lee, narrator, made the announcement, and the result was one of the most enthusiastic outpourings of patriotism the unit had ever witnessed, as Americans learned their loved ones would soon be coming home. Many more ovations followed throughout the evening.

The Army Field Band received its second Superior Unit Award for its efforts to connect Americans to their Army during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. During 1990 and 1991, the Concert Band, Soldiers' Chorus, Jazz Ambassadors, and The Volunteers toured 124 cities and 40 states, reaching 492,000 live audience members and 700 million via radio and television.

 WASHINGTON, DC

"MUSICAL AMBASSADORS OF THE ARMY"

Eik City, Oklahoma
February 27, 1991

Lieutenant Colonel Jack H. Grogan Jr., Executive Officer and Associate Conductor
Maj. Finley R. Hamilton, Director, The Soldiers' Chorus and Associate Conductor
Sergeant Major Kenneth W. Stoppelbein Band Sergeant Major
Master Sergeant Orvel H. Lee Narrator

PROGRAM

PATRIOTIC PROLOGUE arranged by
David Wolfe**, Keith Laurent** and SGM Ken McCoy*

MANHATTAN BEACH March John Philip Sousa
edited by Frederick Fennell

COWBOY OVERTURE John Williams
arranged by John Holcomb

QUANDO M'EN VO from the opera "La Bohème" Giacomo Puccini
transcribed by SFC Robert Lichtenberger*
Staff Sergeant Janet L. Hjeltnen, Vocal Soloist

SYMPHONIC DANCE #3 "Fiesta" Clifton Williams

INFONIA CONCERTANTE Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
transcribed by SFC Roy Carson
Sergeant First Class Thomas S. Powski, Clarinet
Sergeant First Class Roy D. Carson, Bassoon

LEROY ANDERSON FAVORITES arranged and adapted by Keith Laurent**

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*** INTERMISSION ***

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THE SOLDIERS' CHORUS

VOICES OF FREEDOM arranged/adapted by SFC Beth Hough*
compiled by SFC Douglas Cox and SSG Janet Hjeltnen

JOYCE'S 71ST NEW YORK REGIMENT March... T. B. Royer and M. L. Lake

BIG BAND SALUTE arranged by SGM Ken McCoy*

ARMED FORCES MEDLEY arranged by Ken Whitcomb** and SFC Robert Lichtenberger*

THE STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER John Philip Sousa
THE NATIONAL MARSHAL OF THE ARMY of America

*Army Field Band Staff Arranger **Former Field Band Staff Arranger

We invite your comments on our program. Please address your correspondence to:

Department of the Army
Chief of Public Affairs
Attention: SAPA-CR
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-1508

The United States Army Field Band and Soldiers' Chorus have produced a recording entitled "We the People" to commemorate the bicentennial of our nation's Constitution. This commemorative package is available through the National Archives for production costs and shipping only. If interested, please send your request and a check for \$7.50 to:

The National Archives Trust Fund Board
Department 722
Post Office Box 100793
Atlanta, Georgia 30384

The men and women of the United States Army Field Band invite you to join with us in supporting those members of the Armed Forces who are involved in Operation Desert Storm. You may participate by addressing correspondence to:

Any Service Member
Operation Desert Storm
APO, NY 09668-0006

Any Service Member
Operation Desert Storm
APO, NY 09666-0006
(for service members aboard ship)

— Program Subject to Change —



The Southwest Asia Service Medal was awarded to those who served in the Persian Gulf War.

(Above) Program from the concert in Elk City Oklahoma on 27 February 1991, the night the Desert Storm ceasefire was announced.

(Right) This concert in Vancouver, WA in 1991 was representative of the Field Band's many extra performances designed to keep public support behind the military.



The Evolution of the Soldiers' Chorus and Vocal Music in the Army Field Band

Lyrics and the human voice have played a key role in connecting with audiences throughout the Army Field Band's history.

In the 1950s the Soldiers' Chorus became a separate musical component of the Army Field Band, when professional vocalists were hired for that specific duty. However, the chorus was present from the very beginning of the unit's existence. Vocal music was consistently included in the band's performances dating back to 1946, and even in 1944 in the 1st Combat Infantry Band. At that time the chorus was made up of instrumentalists from the band who would leave their seats and perform vocal selections during concerts.

Since then, singers have performed with the Jazz Ambassadors and in various small groups, including The Volunteers and Six String Soldiers. For many years, the Soldiers' Chorus has toured and performed alongside the Concert Band in addition to executing its own recitals and concert tours.

For a more in-depth look at the men of the early Soldiers' Chorus, the amazing stories of their directors, the transition to a separate professional choral ensemble, and the integration of women and transition to a mixed chorus, please see "Origins, Volume II: The Soldiers' Chorus" on the history page of our website.



(Above) Choral groups of the 1st Combat Infantry Band and Army Ground Forces Band were made up of instrumentalists. Arthur V. Donofrio conducts the AGF Band chorus in the bottom photo.



(Above) Sergeant Major Eugene Coughlin conducts the professional men's chorus in the late 1960s. In 1974, the Soldiers' Chorus began hiring women, beginning the transition to the mixed chorus we know today.



Three of the excellent vocalists of the Jazz Ambassadors (Left to Right): Delores King Williams, Marva Lewis, and Randy Wight.

Sing Out for America

2021 marked the 50th anniversary of “Sing Out for America,” a four-year production by The United States Army Field Band that combined the talents of the Soldiers’ Chorus with the Studio Band, the unit’s touring jazz big band that was founded in 1969 and was later renamed the Jazz Ambassadors.

Designed by commander and conductor Hal Gibson to reach out to young audiences and heal some of the wounds of a tumultuous time in our nation’s history, “Sing Out” was by all accounts successful and extremely well received. During concert tours from 1971-1974, it connected to audiences with classical, jazz, popular, and patriotic music.

(continued)



(Above) The original Volunteers (L to R): Dennis Green, Dennis Blanchard, and Tom Walrond.

(Right) The first women to tour with the Army Field Band traveled on the 1971 and 1972 Sing Out tours. From the Women’s Army Corps (L to R): Cynthia Stephens, Marianne Donnelly, Ann Sanburn, and Mildred Christian, in 1972.

**IN
CONCERT**

**THE STUDIO BAND
and
THE SOLDIERS’ CHORUS**
of the
U.S. ARMY FIELD BAND

“SING OUT FOR AMERICA”







**MEMORIAL
HALL**
MAY 22
8:00 P.M.
University of Akron

Lieutenant Colonel
Hal J. Gibson, Director

“Sing out for America” is for us a totally new concept. It is our desire to communicate with the youth of America and to share with them the deep-seated pride, respect and love that we have for our nation.

It is exciting music— dynamic, vital and adventuresome. And it speaks more eloquently than words, perhaps, of the vastness of this land, the limitless resourcefulness of its people and the extent of its aspirations.

This show is for you — the young Americans who so very soon will take your places as the leaders of tomorrow. We hope that you enjoy seeing and hearing it — as much as we enjoy performing it for you.



Presented By the...
(Reserve Officers’ Training Corps)

NO ADMISSION CHARGE

The Akron Beacon Journal, 18 May 1972.



From a historical perspective, “Sing Out” was important for a number of reasons. Its initial tour in 1971 featured the first female Soldiers to tour with the Army Field Band. The Studio Band, a culmination of groundwork laid in the 1960s, was able to further establish itself by displaying outstanding musicianship and arrangements as well as the ability to accompany both chorus and vocal soloists. In addition, the development of small ensembles during the 1960s

continued with the feature of the folk-pop trio The Volunteers. The Volunteers performed until 1973, then reformed in 1981 as an official touring component with Dennis Blanchard, one of the original members, at the helm. The “Vols,” as they were affectionately known within the Army Field Band, went on to record albums and tour for more than 30 years, and were the forerunners of the current Six String Soldiers.



(Above) The Volunteers reformed in 1981, around Dennis Blanchard (far left), one of its founders.

(Right) The “VOLs” in 1999.



Four from state in touring Army band

Four of the featured performers with the U.S. Army Field Band and Soldier's Chorus who will present a concert at 8 p.m. Saturday in W.K. Kellogg Auditorium are Michigan natives.

And three of them, all bachelors from the Detroit area, joined the group when they realized that the “draft numbers were coming up.”

Tom Walrond, Dennis Blanchard and Dennis Green, a folk group who had sung together as the Lost Flavor while at Wayne State Un-

iversity, renamed themselves the Volunteers after auditioning for the Band Chorus. After completing basic training, they came to Washington, D.C., to join the chorus at the trio who could represent the modern Army to the youth of America.

The fourth state native on the tour is WAC Pvt. Ann E. Sanburn of Flint. A performer with 10 years professional experience, Pvt. Sanburn performed at military hospitals and clubs in San Antonio,

Tex., while she was stationed at Ft. Sam Houston prior to being selected for the “Sing Out For America” program.

The appearance here of the Army band and chorus is being sponsored by the Enquirer and News, the Battle Creek Public Schools and the Western Michigan Chapter of the Association of the U.S. Army. The concert will kick off the local celebration of Armed Forces Day Preparedness Week Saturday through Friday, May 19.

(Above) The Battle Creek Inquirer, 7 May 1972, describes the journey of the original three members of The Volunteers to the Army. They were in a trio together called “The Lost Flavor” at Wayne State University. The article also features Ann Sanburn, who was attached for the 1972 Sing Out tours, and later married Master Sergeant James Grab from the Soldiers’ Chorus.

(Right) The Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph, 8 April 1972, describes how Blanchard, Walrond, and Green auditioned at the same time and were accepted into the Army Field Band.

Providing an added dimension to the review is the appearance of the Volunteers — a pop-folk trio that has been singing together since its members were undergraduates at Wayne State University in Detroit.

In the Spring of 1970, when the Field Band and Soldiers’ Chorus were touring the North Central states, Tom Walrond, tenor, Dennis Blanchard, baritone, and Dennis Green, bass, auditioned for the director of the chorus, Sgt. Maj. Gene Coughlin.

Sgt. Coughlin had felt the need for a small, mobile group which could represent the modern Army to the youth of America and was so impressed by the blend of contemporary and traditional music with a folk flavor provided by the Wayne State Students that he recommended the trio become a part of the Soldiers’ Chorus.

Soon after, the three Detroiters enlisted in the Army and after completing basic training were transferred to Washington to join the army’s most traveled musical-organization.

The Concert Band & Soldiers' Chorus Commemorate the 40th Anniversary of D-Day in Normandy, France

In June 1984, The United States Army Field Band had the honor of performing in Europe on the 40th anniversary of D-Day.

The Soldiers' Chorus performed several engagements near Paris, including at the American Cemetery in Suresnes, while the band spent June 6th on the beaches of Normandy. The band performed at numerous locations, including the 1st Infantry Division Monument, the Normandy American Cemetery at Omaha Beach, and at Pointe du Hoc, where President Ronald Reagan gave his speech "The Boys of Pointe du Hoc" to honor the Soldiers of the 2d Ranger Battalion who scaled the cliffs



(Above) The Soldiers' Chorus at the American Cemetery in Suresnes.



(Above) The band performs at the Normandy American Cemetery at Omaha Beach.

(Source: Master Sergeant retired Sue Kelley)

on D-Day. Many of those men were in attendance on June 6th, 1984.

Enthusiastic receptions from the French people, and the presence of many veterans of D-Day, made for an experience that had a profound impact on all involved.

Master Sergeant (retired) Tedd Griepentrog remembered:

"It was just such a striking moment to be there, to be on top of the cliffs and look down on the beaches and see what those young men went through, and to realize how brave they had to be to even come out of those boats. Then to meet some of those folks who were there for the anniversary. I remember Sergeant Dan Nevius being off on one side of the cemetery playing taps, and seeing those veterans, sitting in chairs, some of them still suffering from the wounds that they had from D-Day, and the tears just streaming down their cheeks...it was a memory I'll never forget."



*President Ronald Reagan speaks on the cliffs at Pointe du Hoc, with WWII veterans seated in attendance.
(Photo: Ron Edmonds, Associated Press)*

“From Strauss to Sousa” The 1952 European Tour

Since the beginning of its history, the Army Field Band's varied music selection has been a major part of connecting with audiences. Chester Whiting felt that bands should both educate and entertain, a mindset that led to concert programs that included classical, popular, and patriotic music, as well as vocal selections and jazz. One of the most colorful descriptions of Army Field Band repertoire comes from Ivan H. “Cy” Peterman, who wrote in the Philadelphia Inquirer on 12 September 1952, describing the band's first major overseas tour:

“The band, making a 12,000 mile tour of 54 concerts, charmed Salzburg, although the Austrians declined to provide any public auditorium. They seemed to feel that GI music wasn't up to Mozart's birthplace standards. So the boys played in the Army recreation hall—and packed it with Austrian music lovers who gave them standing ovations. It has been said by certain savants that music is the language of everybody. This truth is being widely demonstrated as Major Chester Whiting

captures audiences with semi-classical programs at London's Festival Hall, Edinburgh's Music Festival, Nuremburg Stadium, Paris Luxembourg Gardens, Amsterdam Opera House, and Berlin's Olympic Field.

The band reached the small citizen who hasn't heard of ECA and understands little about the East-West world struggle. For the first time we ‘talked to the home folks’ in a way they loved and appreciated... People just came, smiling approval at ‘The Magic Flute’ or ‘William Tell Overture.’ After the concert at Passau, several families drove 100 miles across mountains to Salzburg to hear the boys the next night. A Paris audience came to sniff at Gershwin music but forgot their nonchalance to cheer enthusiastically. Amsterdam's audience became a wild cheering throng as Sousa's famed march ended the show.

People here go faffy over military swing. At Passau and Salzburg the boys gave the ‘Blue Danube’ a whirl, with the Rosenkavalier Waltz another hit. When you get away with these in brass at Salzburg, you're good.”

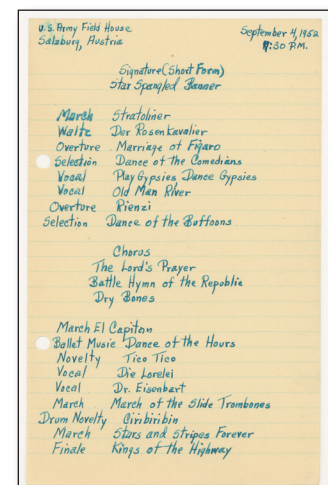


(Above) The band performs at the Luxembourg City band stand on 11 September 1952.



(Top Right) At Edinburgh Castle, for a performance on the Esplanade at the opening ceremonies of the Edinburgh Festival.

(Bottom Right) Handwritten repertoire list for the concert at the US Army Field House in Salzburg, Austria on 4 September 1952.

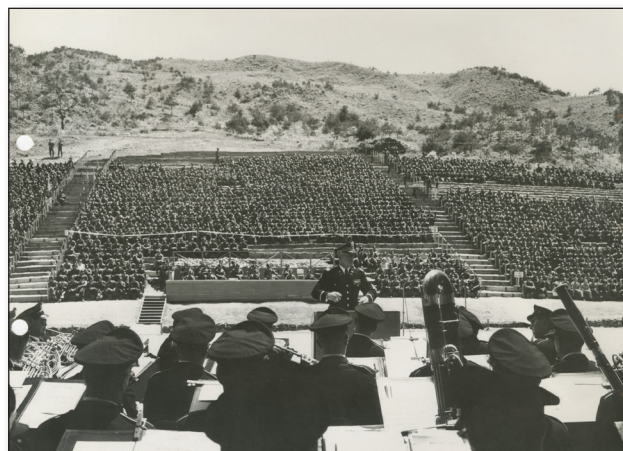


The 1958 Southeast Asia Tour

In addition to fulfilling its mission of connecting Americans to their Army, The United States Army Field Band has conducted significant international tours during its 75-year history, including several historically important ones in the years following World War II (to Europe in 1952 and 1957, and Asia in 1958). The tour of Southeast Asia in 1958 featured 45 performances in 41 days by the Concert Band and Soldiers' Chorus in Hawaii, Korea, and Japan. It was notable for performances on Okinawa, and in Hiroshima, just 13 years after the atomic bombs fell.

Commander and conductor Chester E. Whiting shared a detailed account of the trip in his autobiography. The power of music was in full effect on what Whiting considered one of the most important tours of the band's history. Of their performances for US troops in Korea he remembered "...thousands of soldiers temporarily free from a monotonous alert...stretched out on the side of a mountain, eager for a program that would take them for a brief visit back to their homes and loved ones." Of their concert in Yokohama, Whiting described: "So eager were the people of Yokohama to hear our band that a near riot developed and the police were called to hold back the several thousand who were unable to gain admittance."

Whiting, himself a veteran of combat in the Pacific, wondered how they would be received by the Japanese people in Hiroshima, close to the shrine that marked the detonation of the atomic bomb there. "I found out what I wanted to know, and I learned it from the people themselves, from over 6,000 of them. I have learned that in the field of diplomacy, courteous bows, complimentary phrases, and hand shakes do not always reflect sincerity... but the spontaneous applause, the impeccable attention to every offering by our band, and the final joyous bedlam that continued out onto the sidewalk, where they applauded, bowed when we passed them, and even followed us to the hotels, proved their sincerity."



Whiting leads the Field Band in a performance for US troops in the 7th Infantry Division "Bayonet Bowl" in Korea.



A program from a concert in Japan, featuring (from upper left) Chester Whiting, Executive Officer Robert Bierly, the Drum Act, and the Soldiers' Chorus. Also featured was a vocal quartet known as "The Four Hits."



Whiting (center) and the Field Band at the University of the Ryukyus in Okinawa.

Newspaper Coverage from The 1958 Southeast Asia Tour

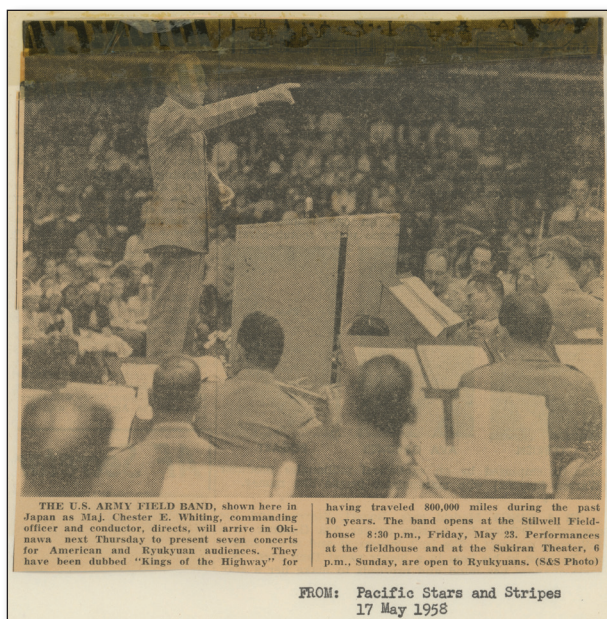


The above clipping from the US Army Field Band's archives was translated to English by Kenji Suzuki after it was posted on our Facebook page in 2021:

“The United States Army Field Band fascinated audiences.

Dynamic performance by The United States Army Field Band.

A concert in Fukuoka by The United States Army Field Band, which has visited Japan at first time, was held at Fukuoka Electrical Hall from 2:00 pm on May 28, supported by USIS Fukuoka American Culture Center, NHK, and Nishi-Nihon Newspaper. The venue was so full that a lot of people were on aisle overflowing even before the opening. The band conducted by Major Whiting, which has over 80 members full on the stage, played a lot of songs one after another by really Army Band brave way of playing, starting from national anthems of both of United States and Japan. It was a stage of variety for 1 hour 10 minutes, including a remarkable drums ensemble like magicians, a chorus by 30 singers, and a quartet ensemble. The evening stage was started from 6:30 pm at the same venue. Today on May 29, another stage will be held at Yahata-City Yahata-Steel-Works Gymnasium from 6:30 pm.”





Fricano (standing, 3rd from left) with the trumpet section in Hawaii in 1958.

In Memoriam: Major Samuel J. Fricano 22 March 1934 - 15 July 2020

The fifth commander of The United States Army Field Band, Major Samuel J. Fricano, is remembered as an excellent musician and former enlisted member of the band. Major Fricano served as the unit's commanding officer from 1974 until 1979.

After graduating from the Eastman School of Music with a Bachelor of Music degree and Performer's Certificate in 1955, Fricano enlisted in the Army Field Band as a trumpeter. He served as principal and assistant principal trumpet under the band's first two Commanders, Chester Whiting and Robert Bierly. In 1961, he attended the bandmaster course at the Naval School of Music, graduating first in his class. As a warrant officer band leader, he served as the commanding officer of the 101st Airborne Division Band, and the 1st Cavalry Division Band in Korea.

In 1964, he was commissioned as a First Lieutenant and reassigned to the Army Field Band, where he served as Executive Officer under both Wilmont Trumbull and Hal Gibson before becoming the band's fifth Commander.



Chester Whiting (center) attends the 1974 change of command ceremony to see Fricano assume command of the Field Band from Hal Gibson.



Listening to a young guitarist during the 1970 tour to South America.



Leading the “Kings of the Road,” precursor to the Studio Band and Jazz Ambassadors.

As an enlisted trumpet player, Fricano traveled on two of the band’s most significant overseas tours: to Europe in 1957, and to Southeast Asia in 1958. In 1970, he was Executive Officer with the band on the Latin American Tour. As an officer, he continued to enjoy playing trumpet, and formed the unit’s first official jazz ensemble in the mid-1960s. Known as “the dance band” or “The Kings of the Road,” they were a big band made up of Soldiers from the Army Field Band’s ceremonial detachment. Their success led Hal Gibson to convert the entire ceremonial detachment, with its vocal, instrumental, and jazz capabilities, into a professional jazz ensemble that would be a separate, official, touring component. The Studio Band, born in 1969, would go on to be renamed the Jazz Ambassadors.

Major Fricano maintained an active interest in the Field Band for many years. In 2005, he commented: “I always felt that the touring itself is why to this day the Field Band personnel are as a group so cohesive and inclined to take care of one another. It is my hope that that continues for many more years, because it’s a wonderful feeling to go back to an organization that you were a part of, and know that it’s better than when you left it, and you’re proud that you were a part of it.”





In Memoriam: Colonel William E. Clark 15 November 1934 - 26 November 2021

Colonel William E. Clark served as the Field Band's sixth commander and conductor from 1979 until 1991, longer than any other commanding officer except the first, Chester E. Whiting.

Originally in the Kentucky National Guard, Clark moved to active duty and served in a number of assignments, including in Vietnam, before coming to the Army Field Band. From 1972 until 1976, he was the commander of the United States Military Academy Band at West Point. His tenure with the Army Field Band was marked by numerous album recordings as well as a return to overseas touring after a decade-long hiatus. Under his leadership the band traveled to Europe, India, Korea, and Japan. Highlights of those tours included performances in Normandy, France commemorating the 40th anniversary of D-Day, and a performance in the Berlin Philharmonie for the combined 750th anniversary of the founding of Berlin and Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution.



*Conducting the band during a ceremony near Omaha Beach on the 40th anniversary of D-Day.
(Source: Master Sergeant retired Sue Kelley)*



*The Army Field Band's 40th anniversary concert at DAR Constitution Hall,
22 March 1986.*



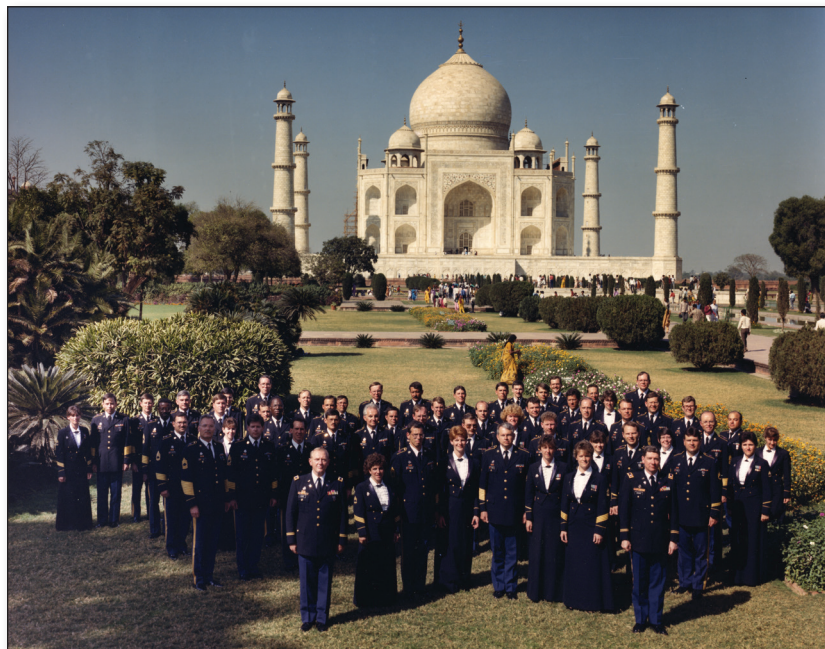
The opening of Harborplace in Baltimore, MD, 4 July 1980.



With Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh and Mrs. Jacob L. Devers at the dedication of the original "Devers Hall" on 19 March 1985.

Stateside highlights included performances at the groundbreaking for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the rededication of the Statue of Liberty, the opening of the Bicentennial Celebration of the Constitution, and the opening of 50th anniversary of WWII commemorations at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, as well as numerous concert tours around the United States.

Colonel Clark helped secure a much-needed upgrade to the band's rehearsal facilities in 1985, when the old Ft. Meade Officer's Club was renovated and dedicated as "Devers Hall," after General Jacob Devers, who directed the founding of the band in 1946. Also under his leadership, The Volunteers were re-formed as a touring component that would perform for the next three decades. The Army Field Band was awarded two Army Superior Unit Awards for actions during his tenure.



At the Taj Mahal during the 1989 India tour.