



MASS SINGING IS ONE OF FEW RELAXATIONS FOR HOMESICK U. S. SOLDIERS IN

OVERSEAS OUTPOSTS. THESE GUADALCANAL YANKS LIKE LUSTY LYRICS BEST

# SOLDIERS STILL SING

Each month the Army's hard-working Special Services Division distributes 2,000,000 *Hit Kits* to encourage soldiers to sing at home and overseas. These gay little brochures contain words and music to the Army's latest selection of popular songs, including *Blue Skies*, *Dinah*, *For Me and My Gal*, *Sweet Sue* and *Margie*. Soldiers don't sing them.

Tin Pan Alley has worked itself into a lather trying to produce a song that will strike the soldier's fancy. They brought forth *Goodby, Mama, I'm Off to Yokohama*, *You're a Sap, Mr. Jap*, *We'll Be Singing Hallelujah Marching Thru Berlin* and *Let's Put the Axe to the Axis*. Soldiers don't sing these either.

Soldiers sing songs just as they did in World War I. The songs are equally bawdy and they are sung with the same gusto. When the 9th Division followed U. S. tanks in hot pursuit after Rommel down the road from El Guettar, its men were chanting that unprintable ditty, *The Fly Flew in the Grocery Store*. And when the infantry was thrown into the breach at Kasserine Pass, they were singing the equally unmentionable words to *The Old Flannel Drawers That Maggie Wore*.

This trend toward mass vocal scatology is evidenced by the fact that most soldiers will agree that of all the songs sung on the African front, *Dirty Gertie from Bizerte* is the most popular. That unwashed bit of femininity from the North African town has not yet been discarded in favor of such newcomers as *Stella, the Belle of Fidella* or *Dirty Gertie's* Sicilian rival, *Filthy Annie from Trapani*. She has held her own against the aging *Mademoiselle from Armentières*, revived in innumerable parodies. Over "Mademoiselle" she has the advantage, not perhaps of tuneful charm, but at least of originality. For "Mademoiselle" was a direct steal from the British Tommy's *Skiboo, Skiboo* which inquired anxiously of the landlord whether he had "a daughter fair, with lily-white arms and golden hair."

Since "Dirty Gertie" is this war's most popular soldier song, an inquiry into its origins becomes a matter of historical necessity. According to one story, a bunch of the boys went on liberty in Bizerte. They combed the town in vain for female companionship. Bizerte's fathers and husbands had inhospitably placed their women under lock and key. Full of good brandy and frustrated goodwill, the soldiers came across the only visible representative of the gentler sex in all the town of Bizerte languishing in the bombed-out display

## THEY LIKE BAWDY PARODIES, OLD FAVORITES AND NEW SONGS WITH A BARBER SHOP FLAVOR

by LILIAN RIXEY

window of a lingerie shop. She was lying on her side, completely unclothed. The soldiers rescued the wax dummy from the window, christened her "Dirty Gertie" and gently placed her in their jeep. For several days thereafter, Dirty Gertie rode like a queen through the streets of Bizerte. The C. O. put a stop to it with five days' bread and water for the offenders, but not before she had inspired an unknown songwriter to concoct the great song of World War II.

History's perverters have actually produced photographs of the wax dummy to prove this tender tale. It is, however, untrue. "Dirty Gertie" sprang virginal from the brow of a private at Camp Lee, Va., one cold, blustery November morning. Picking up the morning paper, Private William L. Russell, late of Cornell, was impressed by the fact that the Yanks were trying to take Bizerte. Private Russell couldn't seem to get Bizerte out of his head. The original verse of this now-famed ditty was practically spontaneous. The Russell version, telling how Bizerte's mischievous siren lured her boy friends to their undoing with fleur-de-flirte and a mousetrap, was first printed in "The Poets Cornered" of the Army magazine *Yank*.

Gertie really began to get around when she was picked up by the Algerian edition of *Stars and Stripes*. Next, Sergeant Paul Reif set her to a simple, four-four fox-trot melody. And when Josephine Baker, the dusky chanteuse who left Paris for the comparative safety of Algiers, introduced her at an Army show, "Dirty Gertie" was in solid.

Although Russell, now a second lieutenant hospitalized at Walter Reed, has tried to keep tabs on Gertie by having the original verse copyrighted, the scores of unprintable versions that have filtered back from the African front indicate that Gertie has become every soldier's song. One soldier's printable version:

*Dirty Gertie from Bizerte  
Saw ze capitaine, made ze flirty.  
Captain think she verree purty;  
Lose his watch and lose his shirty;  
Call ze general alerte.  
Ze gendarmes look for Dirty Gertie  
From Casablanc' to Gulf of Serte.  
Has anyone seen Dirty Gertie?*

# Give Out!

SONGS OF, FOR *and* BY  
the MEN in the SERVICE



Expurgated soldier songs in this collection (Arrowhead Press) were still too ripe for the Post Office. Though banned from mails, it is now sold at Army post exchanges (25¢).

**WAR SONGS** (continued)

## WAR SONGS (continued)

Second only to "Dirty Gertie" as favorite vocal selection when good U. S. soldiers get together over a beer or so is *Bless 'em All*, which dates back to World War I. This song really belongs to the British. They sing it in waltz time with these words:

*Bless 'em all, bless 'em all  
The long, the short and the tall  
Bless all the sergeants and double-u o ones\*  
Bless all the corp'rals and their blinkin' sons.*

When the Yanks stopped over in England enroute to Africa, they quickly made *Bless 'em All* their own by giving it some sex appeal. The following is one considerably bowdlerized version of the song they took to Africa:

*Bless all the blondies and all the brunettes.  
Each lad is happy to take what he gets.  
Cause we're giving the eye to them all,  
The ones that attract or appall.  
Maud, Maggie or Susie;  
You can't be too choosy.  
When you're in camp, bless 'em all.*

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Occasionally soldiers will exhort their fellows to "Bless all the Germans, the sourpuss ones," or "Bless all Italians and their dopey sons," but, in general, they prefer the ladies, Maud, Maggie and Susie.

The repertoire of the U. S. soldier in both Africa and India allows for a considerable divergence in tastes. There is *I Dream of Jeannie with the Light Brown Skin*, and there is *I'm Dreaming of a White Mistress*. There is also an unprintable salute to the boys they left behind them called *Four-F Charlie*, with an anatomically complete catalog of Charlie's physical deficiencies.

Like old soldiers, old favorites never die. In Burma, the Georgia Tech song has become *I'm a rambling wreck from Buddhapore and a hell of a bombardier*. In Sicily the Yanks mournfully intone, "Those 88's are breaking up that old gang of mine." And in Africa, John Brown's

\* Warrant officers.

## WAR SONGS (continued)

*Body* goes, "When the war is over, we will all enlist again—We will, like hell, we will."

In the Southwest Pacific, the U. S. soldier's repertoire of songs has been greatly enriched by contact with Anzacs, whose tastes are surprisingly like his own. The New Zealander has contributed two numbers: one dealing with the amazing and disturbing adventures of three elderly maiden ladies and the other glorifying the charms of Mary Ann Burns, queen of all the acrobats. From the Aussies, they have learned all the complicated words to that hardy perennial, *Waltzing Matilda*, and some may now even know that "billabong," "tuckerbag" and "jumbuck" have not the slightest taint of *double-entendre*. The Anzacs who were with Montgomery in Egypt and Libya have passed on to the Yanks the tune of the Egyptian national anthem and a strange hodgepodge of bad Arabic and slang which begins "King Farouk, let me shake you by the duke. *Inte quaes quaes katea Mungaria*." (You're a nice, nice fellow, but I'm hungry.) But the song that is currently on the upbeat with both Aussies and Yanks is called simply *Darwin* and goes like this:

*This bloody town's a bloody cuss,  
No bloody tram, no bloody bus.  
But nobody cares for bloody us.*

Chorus: *Bloody, Bloody, Bloody.*

*All bloody clouds, no bloody rains.  
All bloody stones and no bloody drains.  
The dust gets in your bloody brains.*

Chorus: *Bloody, Bloody, Bloody.*

**Perhaps because singing helps**

## Perhaps because singing helps

Perhaps because singing helps to ease tension while on alert as well as on liberty, U. S. fliers do most of the singing in the Southwest Pacific. Australians fortunately do not judge our fliers by the songs they sing on liberty. If they did, they would conclude that all they do is gripe about brass hats, hanker for women and liquor, throw off on the accuracy of their navigators, bombardiers and gunners, curse the day they ever got a flier's wings and pine to go home.

The list of tuneful complaints intoned by fliers give the impression that they are the most unhappy of men. Typical of the evils with which they have to contend is *The 69th's Lament*, sung by that bombardment squadron to the tune of *Abdul, the Bulbul Ameer*:

*Oh, the pilots all drink  
The airplanes stink  
And the navvies don't know where they are  
The bombardiers couldn't hit  
A target when lit.  
Oh, Colonel, we've been here too long.*

But most such songs have a definite purpose. To take the sting off an unlucky mission, fliers customarily indulge in the following self-derision to the tune of *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow*:

*. . . We dropped our bombs in the ocean  
Which nobody can deny.*

At officers' mess, whenever a flier begins to sound off about his prowess against Mitsubishi or Zero or with the ladies, his friends gather around and begin.

*Hooray for \_\_\_\_\_, he's a damned fine guy.  
He certainly is a daisy  
He drives the women crazy.  
Ein, zwei, drei, vier,  
Who's gonna buy the beer?  
Hooray for \_\_\_\_\_, he's a damned fine guy.*

Whereupon the offender has to buy the evening's drinks. If he continues his boasting, his friends are apt to gang up on him again with a nonbowdlerized version of *One-Eyed Riley*. This ends with the company pointing accusing fingers at him and shouting, "There goes the dirty old so-and-so" who played fast and loose with Riley's daughter.

Wherever airmen gather in the Southwest Pacific, sooner or later they get around to *I Want to Go Home*, a doleful waltz-time plaint revived from World War I. Chorus:

*These B-26's they rattle and roar,  
I don't want to fly over Munda no more.  
Take me back to Brisbane,  
Where the brass hats clamor in vain.  
Oh, ma, I'm too young to die.  
I want to go home.*

When he gets back to Brisbane or Sydney, one of the first things a

## WAR SONGS (continued)

flier likes to do is get pleasantly lit and sing the rollicking song that begins, "Hardships, you —, you don't know what hardships are. With Zeros here and Zeros there and the goddamn ack-ack fills the air." Another brass-hat baiter is *The Man Behind the Armor-Plated Desk* which pokes heavy fun at the high-ranking officer who was personally allergic to ack-ack. If there are any brass hats within hearing, and there generally are, they look the other way.

Marine Corps fliers seem to like parodies. They take the *Road to Mandalay* and put these words to it:

*Take me somewhere east of Ewa  
Where the best ain't like the worst  
Where there ain't no Doug MacArthur  
And a man can drown his thirst.  
Where the Army takes the medals  
And the Navy takes the Queens  
But the boys that take the rooking  
Are the United States Marines.*

Chorus:

*Hit the road to Gizo Bay  
Where the Jap fleet spends the day.  
You can hear the duds a-chunkin'  
From Rabaul to Lunga Quay.  
Pack a load to Gizo Bay  
Where the float-plane Zeros play  
And the bombs come down like thunder  
On the natives 'cross the way.*

By far the favorite of all airmen, however, is the parody on *I Wanted Wings*, written by the Chicago *Daily News* correspondent, Jack Dowling. There are as many verses as there are different types of planes, ranging from "I'm too young to die in a bloody PBY" to "I'd rather dance with a woman than get shot up in a Grumman." Only one verse bears quoting in full:

*I wanted wings till I got the goddamned things.  
Now I don't want them any more.  
They taught me how to fly and sent me here to die.  
I've had a bellyful of war.  
You can leave all the Zeros to the goddamned heroes.  
Distinguished Flying Crosses don't compensate for losses.  
Oh, I wanted wings till I got the goddamned things.  
Now, I don't want them any more.*

These are the songs that World War II soldiers sing. The lugubrious lament, *When This Cruel War Is Over*, became so popular with both Yankees and Rebels in the Civil War that it was banned in the Army of the Potomac for its supposedly depressing effect. Morale officers in this war take a different tack. Whatever the tone of the songs the soldiers sing, they do not jump to the conclusion that the whole Army is about to go A. W. O. L. On the contrary, morale officers in the Southwest Pacific teach their men every new song they pick up. They maintain that such mass singing is a safety valve which helps ease the tension of war.



**Dirty Gertie** was fond name given this dilapidated dummy by Sergeant V. M. Gemell, who rescued her from wreckage of a Bizerte shop. Dummy did not inspire famed song.