



THE CAVALIERS (1956-1964)

Although a stepping-stone to fame, for some, The Cavaliers were basically a weekend band from it's beginning to the present. The 45 record "Last Kiss" Josie 923 did reach #1 on The Cashbox Singles Charts, #1 Music World, #1 American Bandstand, and #2 on The Billboard Singles Charts in 1964 and then later released on compilation CD Collectables The History Of Rock The 60's, One Hit Wonders Of The 60's, Dick Bartley's Rock & Roll Oldies Show, Time-Life 60's Hits, The Best Of Tragedy, Billboard Top Rock' N' Roll Hits and Senior Prom 50 Great Golden Oldies. The "Last Kiss" LP reached #29 on The Cashbox Album Charts and #51 on The Billboard Album Charts in 1964. The 45 record follow-up "Hey, Little One" Josie 926 reached #85 on The Billboard Singles Charts in 1964. The 45 record "Last Kiss" released on Virgo 506 reached #80 in Cashbox and #90 in Billboard in 1973. The 45 record "Crazy Guitar" Jane 107, recorded in 1956, was distributed nationally by Jay-Gee Records in New York City in 1959 and in Europe on compilation Knoxville LP "Rock & Roll" Vol 2 in 1975, compilation White Label LP 8924 "Rock Moon Rock" in 1980 with "I've Decided" released on Cat CD 1035 "Calling All Rock N' Roll Collectors" Vol 3 in 1994. The Last Kiss Sessions CD from 1964 was released in 1998 on Collectables 0712. Books and magazines with related stories or references to The Cavaliers include: The Billboard Book of One Hit Wonders by Wayne Jancik, The 2002 revised addition of Who's Who Of West Texas Rock N' Roll Music by Bill Griggs, Song Hits Magazine April Edition 1965, The Billboard Book of Top 40 Hits 1955-2000 by Joel Whitburn, Roy Orbison Life & Legacy by Alan Clayson, Texas Music Magazine 2001, The Texas Monthly Magazine February 1992, The New Yorker Magazine August 1999, Time Magazine 1999, Movie Life Yearbook 1964, Music World (J. Frank Wilson) Most Promising New

Artist 1964 and The Billboard Book of No. 2 Singles by Chris Fieldman 2000. In 2001 "Last Kiss" Pearl Jam/Cavaliers were voted #3 in the VH1 All-Time Cover Song category. Pearl Jam was the world's top rock group in the nineties. In 2004, the Cavaliers as a group were inducted into the Rockabilly Hall of Fame.

JERRY NAYLOR JACKSON

Elvis, Scotty and Bill's performances at the San Angelo Municipal City Auditorium on January 5th and February 17th 1955 prompted the formation of "The Cavaliers". It all began in 1956 when Jerry Jackson was a San Angelo Lake View High School senior and decided to enter the citywide talent show sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. Since many of the local radio stations and the San Angelo Standard Times had been advertising the talent show, to be held at the city auditorium, it had taken on some measure of importance for local talent. Although Jerry had performed on this same stage a year earlier, on a program entitled "Stage Review" that was designed to showcase local talent, he had signed up as a solo singer and needed a rock band to play behind him. Prizes to be awarded for 1st, 2nd, 3rd Place plus an additional award for the fiddle champion. The prestige of winning could make a person an over-night local celebrity. On the night of the talent show, with time running out, Jerry noticed a 3-piece group wearing tux jackets making their way through the back stage entrance. Jerry learned that this group had formed recently, after seeing Elvis, Scotty & Bill perform on this very same stage to a sold out crowd of 1500 screaming girls, and had been practicing daily at the San Angelo Junior College band barracks. Jerry quickly made his way across the stage introducing him self and after a short exchange the group agreed to play behind him. At 8:00 PM the curtain was drawn and the show was on. The crowd numbered around 800 with the majority being teen girls. When Jerry walked out on stage he looked more like a movie star in Hollywood than a talent contestant in San Angelo, Texas. When he went into his first number "Long Tall Sally" the girls began screaming. When he left the stage, after his second number, there were more ear-piercing screams. The announcer then introduced the very last act, the group who had accompanied Jerry, who were already on stage. When Alton Baird started singing "Blue Suede Shoes" the auditorium erupts again with young girls screaming becoming apparent Alton and Jerry would be the winners. When the announcer stepped up to the microphone in order to introduce the winners he hesitated for a moment then walked to the side of the stage requesting a band name from Alton Baird, Carroll Smith & Sid Holmes. After a short discussion Alton came up with the name "Cavaliers". They were then introduced as "The Cigarette Boys"

1st place, a popular brand cigarette at the time, Jerry Jackson 2nd place and Alton Baird 1st place in the fiddle contest. In early spring of 1957 Jerry Jackson became the lead singer for The Cavaliers as Alton Baird would serve a tour of duty in the U.S. Air Force. In 1957 The Cavaliers, Jerry Jackson (vocal), Toby Yeager (rhythm guitar/vocals), Carroll Smith (up-right bass), Ron Stovall (drums) and Sid Holmes (lead guitar) played 15 minute radio shows on KPEP 6 days a week, Taylor's Night Spot (formally Club 67) 3 nights a week and alternated with Dean Beard & The Crew Cats on Friday nights at the San Angelo Youth Center. Although no studio recordings were ever made with Jerry Jackson one reel tape, recorded on a portable, survived. In late 1957 Jerry was inducted into the U.S. Army Signal Corp being stationed in Germany assigned as a disc jockey on American Forces Radio Service. After being discharged Jerry Naylor Jackson went on to have an award winning syndicated radio show, was a regular on the network TV music variety show "Shindig", replaced Earl Sinks becoming a member recording and performing with the 1961-65 Crickets, hosting the national syndicated TV show from Nashville "Music City U.S.A.", was the co-host with Loretta Lynn, at the 1976 Academy Of Country Music Awards, a solo artist recording one national charted pop number reaching #42 and two top 40 country records, a member of the Rockabilly Hall of Fame plus qualifying for The West Texas Music Hall Of Fame Honor Roll. For the record another "Cavalier" group had already existed in West Texas in Midland in 1956 lead by Joe Melson (lead guitar) who would later co-write hits with Roy Orbison in the sixties.



The San Angelo Municipal Auditorium. This is where Elvis played on February 17, 1955. This is the view he saw, although the building has since been renovated as seen in this photo. Thanks to Lori Russel, staff coordinator for San Angelo Public Facilities for the photographs.

ALTON BAIRD

After winning 1st, 2nd plus 1st Place in the Fiddle Contest at the citywide talent show The Cavaliers hooked up with local promoter Frank White and decided to tour small towns across the remote southern part of West Texas. Frank White not only acted as the road manager and M.C. for two separate tours but also brought along his own opening act Dr. Murco and His Mad House Of Magic Show. A friend of the band, Billy Brown, went on the very first tour furnishing additional transportation in his 1955 Chevy. Sid Holmes, a full time student at San Angelo Junior College, had first met Alton Baird and Carroll Smith in 1955 while playing rhythm guitar with Wayland Chandler at the Dip N Vat Club. Crossing paths once again, when Wayland Chandler (vocalist/rhythm guitar), Daniel Dusek (lead guitar) and Sid Holmes (rhythm guitar) began playing Saturday morning KPEP Radio Jamborees. In 1956-57 The Cavaliers played radio shows on KWFR and KTXL, local TV, The Miss Wool Of America Street Dance, Club 67, Mannings Bar, San Angelo and Lake View High School assembly programs, the Green Mountain Opry, The Louisiana Hayride show in Ballinger and Alpine with Johnny Horton plus making one historical recording in Dallas. After hearing about The Cavaliers a wealthy Dallas banker came to San Angelo offering the band an all expense paid recording session at Sellers Studio. He and his investors had been drawing up plans for a national talent show to be sold to network TV and The Cavaliers were to be the regional winners (a large bundle of pre-printed color posters had been seen in the back seat of the banker's Cadillac which listed the band as regional winners). The following week the band drove to Dallas with the up-right bass tied to the top of the car taking along piano player Lou Ann Meadows, one small Fender amp, a Gibson Les Paul gold top guitar, a Martin flat top guitar, one original song "I Had My Heart Set On You", one original instrumental "Crazy Guitar" and one song written by KPEP radio personality Johnny Thurman entitled: "Undecided Heart" (later mistakenly released as "I've Decided"). With no time to rehearse beforehand, no musical arrangements and limited studio time with each number being recorded only once. Alton Baird, Carroll Smith, Ron Stovall and Sid Holmes then loaded up the band equipment returning 270 miles back to San Angelo. This would be the first and the last recording ever made by the original group and the very last time they would ever see or hear again from the Dallas banker. Three years later a 45 single was released on Jane Records by Dallas promoter Tom Fleeger. (More on the Billy The Kidd page). In 1956 and 1957 the two West Texas tours included the small towns of Ballinger, Big Lake, Rankin, Ft. Davis, Sanderson, Marfa, Robert Lee, Alpine and Colorado City playing theater stage shows, drive-in theaters, colleges and high

school auditoriums.. The Cavaliers shared billing plus backed local country singer Larry Butler at the Colorado City theater stage show. After contacting the small town theater owners Frank White would drive up and down the street advertising with a P.A. horn: "Come on down to the big rock and roll show tonight". Every show was a sell-out with hundreds of ear-piercing screaming girls. On February 2nd 1957 approximately 900 teens packed the Texas Theater in Ballinger where a portable Wollensak reel tape recorder captured the crowd's response with Alton Baird singing "Poor Boy" a song taken from the 1956 Elvis movie, Love Me Tender. When the Louisiana Hayride show, starring Johnny Horton, offered the band a guest spot on the Sul Ross College Show in Alpine drummer Ron Stovall, a student at Sul Ross from Kermit, was added. Band members had been anxious to talk with Johnny Horton, who was married to Hank Williams widow at the time, but his only interest seemed to be the Marfa lights phenomenon. The Cavaliers opened the show for Johnny Horton in Alpine that included singer/songwriter Carl Belew, "Country" Johnny Mathis plus others from the Louisiana Hayride. Johnny Horton went on to record numerous country and pop hits plus winning 3 Grammy Awards. After spending 3 years in the U.S. Air Force Alton Baird made the decision to hang up his Rock & Roll shoes organizing Country & Western swing bands making recordings and playing locally for the next 40 years. Promoter and road manager Frank White, a graduate of Lakeview High School in San Angelo, became a teacher. Alton Baird received The West Texas Music Hall Of Fame "Pioneer Award" in 1996 and recognition as Best Of The West Texas Century in the category of "Lesser-Known Country-Rock Performers".

ROCKABILLY HEAVEN

The tiny town of Ft. Davis is nestled at the edge of the beautiful and remote Davis Mountains in far West Texas. On this particular Friday night in 1956 The Cavaliers Alton Baird, Carroll Smith & Sid Holmes along with road manager Frank White are sitting in the only theater in Ft. Davis waiting for the movie to end. This tiny theater, owned by a Mr. Kats, is packed with teen girls who are not there for the movie but for a 10:00 P.M. Rock & Roll stage show. The girls have come from far and wide with many from the surrounding ranches. This is a big night for area teen girls as they know Elvis will never play Ft. Davis but who needs Elvis when you have Alton Baird & The Cavaliers? Road manager Frank White's afternoon efforts of driving up and down the streets of Ft. Davis advertising with a P.A. horn has not been in vain. A packed house meant enough money for food and gas for the 25 mile trip from Ft. Davis to Alpine for their Saturday night guest appearance on the Louisiana Hayride Show starring Johnny Horton. After being stopped

and then questioned by the local sheriff for driving up and down the streets blasting neighbors with a P.A. horn Frank explains getting the go-ahead. Some of the girls in the theater giggle and flirt but the band had learned early on to be somewhat cautious in order to maintain a good image with parents plus staying on the best terms possible with the many jealous boyfriends. When the movie finally ends the dim theater lights came on exposing the old wooden theater being much older than first realized. Beautiful smiling faces greet the band as they make the short trip down the isle to the tiny stage. Dressed in a black sport jacket 20 year-old Alton Baird holds the attention of the girls. After a mic test and a short introduction by Frank White Alton strums an open chord on his Martin D-45 and goes into an Elvis rockabilly number "Oh baby baby baby" (Baby, Let's Play House) followed by the beat of Carroll's upright bass and then the unmistakable sound of Sid's Gibson Les Paul and Fender amp. The years of 1956 and 1957 were special times in America. Ike was president, Elvis was the King, Buddy Holly & The Cricket were on Ed Sullivan, Roy Orbison & The Teen Kings had "Ooby Dooby", the 57 Chevy Bel Air was the car and James Dean was the movie star. Playing small town theaters and high schools in far West Texas The Cavaliers encountered some of Texas most beautiful and remote areas. Dust devils could be seen moving across the vast lands and an occasional thunderhead could be seen forming over great distances. Gazing into the heavens on a cold clear night could take a person's breath away and one more reason the McDonald Observatory is located in the Davis Mountains. 4-Star movies have been filmed here "Giant" in 1956 and "Dancer, Texas Population 81" in 1996 the story of four graduating high school boys having to decide whether to leave their tiny remote town in far West Texas for a new life in the big city. The bonus tracks Rockabilly Heaven West Texas In The Fifties was taken from a live theater show recorded on a portable reel tape at an afternoon performance at The Princess Theater in Sanderson, Texas in 1956.

WAYLAND CHANDLER & RONNIE BLACKWELL

In 1958, Buck Trent (banjo/guitar) and Ronnie Blackwell (vocalist/rhythm/bass) moved to San Angelo as Buck had been hired to play 6 nights a week with Shorty Boyd & The Show Stoppers at the famous Dixie Club on North Bell Street. Ronnie Blackwell became a member of The Cavaliers, who were playing 6 nights a week a few blocks down the street at Guys & Dots Club, sharing the lead vocalist spot with Wayland Chandler. Other members included multi-talented Freddie Salas (sax/piano), Ron Stovall (drums), Carroll Smith (electric bass) and Sid Holmes (lead guitar). Wayland Chandler had just returned from California where he had recorded "Play Boy" b/w "Little

Lover' for 4 Star Records. While at 4-Star Wayland and his sister, Elaine, appeared on stage with Patsy Cline plus writing two songs she would record "If I Could Only Stay Asleep" and a pure rockabilly number "Ain't No Wheels On This Ship". These two numbers eventually ended up on CD's and LP's RIAA certified gold in the nineties. When Ron Stovall and Sid Holmes drove to Kermit, from San Angelo, in order to pick up some additional drums, they learned Roy Orbison was playing at the convention center. Roy then invited Sid and Ron to play a couple of numbers. Sid played instrumentals "Honky Tonk" & "Raunchy" on Roy's Gibson Les Paul gold top guitar while Ron played the drums. When The Cavaliers left Guys & Dots for a larger club, the Boots & Saddle, the new line-up included: Ronnie Blackwell (vocals/guitar/bass), Tommy Ruble (vocals) from New Orleans, Bobby Rountree (bass/vocals), Ray Smith (drums), Sid Holmes (lead guitar) with Johnny Shoemaker alternating with Marilyn Massey on piano. While at the Boots & Saddle Club one studio recording, "That's You" written by Sid Holmes, featuring Tommy Ruble (vocalist) and financed by club owner Helen Goode, was made at Ben Hall Studio in Big Spring. The whereabouts of this master tape is unknown. Both Buck Trent and Ronnie Blackwell would later leave San Angelo joining Porter Wagoner's band with Buck later winning a Grammy for a banjo duet with Roy Clark. In 1977 Ronnie Blackwell became the featured singer for Ernest Tubb & The Texas Troubadours. In 1996 Wayland Chandler received a special songwriter's award from the West Texas Music Hall Of Fame for writing the two songs recorded by country music legend Patsy Cline.

BILLY (THE) KIDD & TOMMY RUBLE

In July of 1959 Jay-Gee Records, New York, unexpectedly released a 45 single on the Jane label of the 1956 recording session in Dallas. Sometime between 1956 and 1959 the Dallas banker had evidently sold the master tape without giving the record promoter any information on the band. After repeatedly calling San Angelo by phone and talking to different people Tom Fleeger, the Jane record rep, eventually learned Alton Baird was in the service and Sid Holmes was in New Orleans. Unable to get much factual information beforehand on who the group was Tom Fleeger decided to release "Crazy Guitar" b/w "I've Decided" under the name Billy (The) Kidd and in the process gave incorrect writing credits on the instrumental and an incorrect title on the vocal side. This strange twist of fate forced the band to promote the record using the name Billy Kidd & The Cavaliers. "Crazy Guitar", Jane 107, arranged/performed by Sid Holmes was given a 3 Star rating by Billboard: "A wild guitar solo features this exciting instrumental side and it has sound and could grab some loot". "I've

Decided" Jane 107, featuring Alton Baird (vocals) and written by radio personality Johnny "Flop" Thurman was given a 2 Star rating "The vocalist comes thru with an attractive styled medium-tempo ballad which he sells with feeling...includes some tricky guitar work and could get spins in both Pop & Country". Two years earlier Tom Fleeger had been instrumental in putting future Rock & Roll Hall Of Famer, Gene Vincent, with a song he had published entitled "Lotta Lovin" written by Bernice Bedwell of Dallas and released on Capital reaching #13. The 1959 Cavaliers consisted of Tommy Ruble (vocals), Carroll Smith (electric bass), Raymond Castro (drums), Sid Holmes (lead guitar) with Bob Story, stationed at Goodfellow AFB, and Charles Dalton alternating on rhythm guitar. In May 1959, before the record was released, the band entered an area talent contest sponsored by San Angelo College and held in their auditorium. Bob Story, of The Cavaliers, won 1st Place playing a Chet Atkins-styled instrumental with The Cavaliers, as a group, winning 3rd Place. The 3rd Place prize consisted of \$300 worth of food donated by local merchants. This unexpected windfall supplied the band, who were living in a rent house on Veck Street, with food for a few months. The Cavaliers then entered and won the KTXL Radio sponsored Stan Skelton (dj) "Battle Of The Bands" contest, held at The Knights Of Columbus Hall in San Angelo that drew 500 people. During the month of July 1959, and while playing 5 nights a week at The Cherokee Club on North Bell, "Crazy Guitar" sold an estimated 300 copies plus received over 400 airplays on local radio stations in San Angelo pushing it to #1 for 2 weeks. Billboard music trade magazine reported it was a top sales item in New York City at Cosnat Distributors. In order to better promote the record Tommy Ruble and Sid Holmes headed out to New Orleans in Sid's black 1959 Ford Galaxy where his sister, Sylvia Holmes, was a radio personality on an all-girl radio station. A short time later Carroll Smith (bass) and Ron Stovall (drums) joined them. It was here the group backed Frankie Ford "Sea Cruise" (#13), Thomas Wayne, "Tragedy" (#5) and Scotty Moore, Elvis guitar legend and future R&R Hall of Fame inductee at WNOE Radio sponsored record hops. When Sylvia was offered a job on radio station WHBQ in Memphis Tommy and Sid decided to move their headquarters there whereas Carroll Smith decided to return back to West Texas eventually joining up with Alton Baird & The Moonlighters. Ron Stovall returned back to Texas where he would graduate from Sul Ross College at Alpine. The 1961 Cavaliers in Memphis consisted of Tommy Ruble (vocals), Bobby Stewart (bass), Ed Logan (sax), Lee Pruitt (sax), Sid Holmes (guitar) Johnny Will Hunter (drums) with Tommy Bennett and Charles Eldred alternating on piano. Charles Eldred, who can be heard playing piano on the instrumentals "Detour" & "Loving You" was tragically killed in a car

wreck while returning home after playing a one night booking with Ace Cannon in 1961. After The Cavaliers opened for Jerry Lee Lewis, at the Starlight Club in Memphis, Sid was offered the lead guitar spot left open by Roland Janes. Sid had no choice but to decline thanking Jerry Lee Lewis along with Roland Janes for the honor as he had already signed The Cavaliers to 6 nights a week at a popular Memphis private club. After a Stax Records and a Bill Black Combo audition failed to materialize for Tommy Ruble he ended up recording 4 songs for an independent producer, which included "Day Before My Wedding", written by Sid. The masters were then leased to Kapp Records out of New York City but no record was ever released. Four years later J. Frank Wilson would record this song for the "Last Kiss" album. In 1999 the original written version of this song would be a track on the J. Frank Wilson previously un-released masters entitled The Last Kiss Sessions CD produced by Ron Newdell, former owner of Accurate Sounds in San Angelo, and attorney Michael Greisman of Tucson and owner of Cicadelic Records (www.cicadelic.com). After returning back to San Angelo for a short stay Tommy Ruble boarded a plane for Memphis where he would play local clubs for 30 years recording "Dream Me Home" b/w "It's Time For Me To Go" released nationally in 1973 reaching Billboard's Bubbling Under The Top 100 charts. Tommy received The Memphis Song Of the Year Recording Artist award in 1980 for his performance on "Swinging Down In Memphis Town", The Memphis Press Billy Award for Top Pop Male Artist in 1981 and in 1991 he was selected to be the lead vocalist on "One Last Bridge" the official song of Memphis. Ed Logan (sax) became a member of The Memphis Horns playing trombone on Elvis Presley LP's, Tommy Bennett (piano) became a session musician playing on hits by Carla Thomas "Gee Whiz" & Harold Dorman's "Mountain Of Love", Bobby Stewart (bass) recorded as The Bobby Stewart Combo charting one instrumental, Johnny Will Hunter (drums) would be called to play drums at the Dixie Club in San Angelo and after being the special guest on The Grande Ole Opry , Miss D.J. U.S.A. for 1960, Sylvia Holmes would become one of Elvis Presley's most trusted friends. Sylvia had previously worked for KLBK TV in Lubbock, KNIT Radio in Abilene with Slim Willet, KWFR Radio in San Angelo and eventually K.T.X.S TV in Abilene, Texas. After being offered the lead guitar spot for Tommy Cash (Johnny's brother), Sid Holmes returned back to San Angelo from Memphis discovering, diamond in the rough vocalist, Airman John Frank Wilson.

AIRMAN JOHN FRANK WILSON

When Sid arrived back in San Angelo, in 1962, he met up with Lewis Elliott forming a new group. Lewis had formally been a member of Charlie Dalton's band playing rhythm guitar. After purchasing a used

red Gibson bass and a Fender amp Lewis then spent the next few months practicing runs on the bass. The Cavaliers, after adding Bob Zeller (sax), took a 6 afternoons a week playing job for what was called "Happy Hour" at Tiny's Club and on Friday nights at San Angelo Junior College. The seating capacity of Tiny's Club was around 75 but most afternoons it was standing room only as salesmen in suits, cowboys in boots, and women both young and old made the scene. The new three piece group specialized in Bill Black Combo, Ventures, Duane Eddy and pop instrumentals. After a few weeks, a serviceman stationed at Goodfellow Air Force Base in San Angelo, gave Sid the name and phone number of a service man he had heard sing and who was soon to be discharged. After contacting Airman Frank Wilson by phone the next day Sid made arrangements picking him up for an audition at Tiny's Club. After Frank Wilson became the vocalist stock in The Cavaliers began to climb. Former San Angelo Central High School band drummer and former Cavalier member, from 1958, Ray Smith rejoined the group with sax player Bob Zeller, a Coca Cola employee, dropping out. In order to handle the now ever-increasing band bookings and business affairs a Cavalier Enterprise office was opened at 1312 North Chadbourne that included Rick Macci (radio dj), Lewis Elliott, Frank Wilson, Sid Holmes and part time secretary Miss Kasey Williams. In 1962 & 63 the band played live radio shows on KTXL and KWFR, local television, the Ballinger Jr/Sr Prom, Lakeview HS and Robert Lee Jr. High assemblies, San Angelo Jr. College dances, The Miss Wool of America Street Dance, the 13th Annual D.E.A. Day at San Angelo College, the Ballinger Teen Club, the Lions Club 4th of July Crowning of Miss San Angelo, the San Angelo Central District Champs Football Banquet, the San Angelo Police Officers Assoc Dance, the Lakeview Jr/Sr Banquet, the Teen Jubilee at the San Angelo Coliseum featuring Bruce Channel, Goodfellow AFB dances, the Rock & Roll Club in Midland, The Blue Note Club in Big Spring, San Angelo Country Club dances, the Eldorado Jr/Sr Prom, the O.D.H.S. Hall in Rowena with other offers coming in from as far as Odessa. Through Cavalier Enterprises the band was booked at the Blue Note Club in Big Spring 80 miles away by, a 25 year old independent record promoter from Midland named, Sonley Roush. This would prove to be a music history-making event as Sonley would be the brainchild, in 1964, for The Cavaliers covering Wayne Cochran's second 45 release of "Last Kiss". Frank Wilson's very first performance at the Blue Note, singing "Bring It On Home To Me" made a lasting impression on Sonley Roush. When the new dance craze, The Twist, finally arrived in San Angelo The Cavaliers were offered a 6 months contract for 6 nights a week at The Dixie Club. Operated, at the time, by KPEP radio personality Johnny "Flop" Thurman and located in the stockyards, it was one of the largest

Country & Western clubs in West Texas having booked numerous country legends such as Bob Wills, Buck Trent, Lefty Frizzell, Marty Robbins, Hank Thompson, Hoyle Nix, Jimmie Fletcher, Larry Butler, Buck Owens, and Ray Price. The mold was broken when The Cavaliers, featuring Frank Wilson, became the new house band. The Cavaliers lineup included: Jim Wynne (sax/piano) playing on week-ends from college in Abilene, Johnny Will Hunter (drummer from Memphis), Lewis Elliott (electric bass), Frank Wilson (vocals/piano), Sid Holmes (guitar) and Grady Clark (trumpet) who was featured on week-ends playing the bull fight song. When Frank Wilson would visit his home in Lufkin Willie Luedecke (vocal/guitar) would front the band. The following year Frank Wilson would move back to Lufkin and Johnny Will Hunter returned back to Memphis eventually touring with Ronnie's Datonas, hit G.T.O. A few years later Johnny formed his own rock group, The Hombres, having a national charted novelty hit "Let It Out" (Let It All Hang Out) reaching #12 on The Billboard Hot 100 in 1967. Sadly, in 1976, Johnny Will Hunter, only 36 years old, took his own life in Memphis. Sid Holmes moved to Corpus Christi, Jim Wynne graduated from college becoming a teacher plus staying active in music. Lewis Elliott re-organized The Cavaliers that would feature black soul singer John Maberry. Although one reel tape, made with a small portable recorder, survived no studio recordings were made with Frank Wilson during the period from 1962-1963.

JOHN MABERRY & FRANK WILSON

When John Maberry became the new vocalist he changed his image from a wild R&B singer to a tame country/rock singer. Although The Cavaliers continued to be popular in San Angelo Lewis had, at some point in time, agreed to let Frank Wilson return. With Frank now residing in Lufkin and Sid in Corpus Christi new song writing ideas were being exchanged back and forth between the two with talk of Sid and Frank getting bookings in the popular tourist area of the coast. When Lewis Elliott made the decision to replace John Maberry as the lead singer he consulted Sid Holmes by mail in Corpus Christi. Frank Wilson was then re-instated with John Maberry going back to doing what he always did best and that was singing with the popular San Angelo based soul group "The Sirs". The Cavaliers, featuring John Maberry, recorded and released locally one 45 record "Love Of A Lifetime (written by L. Elliott)" b/w "Crazy Guitar" (Roland Atkinson on guitar) both produced by Ron Newdoll and recorded at Accurate Sound Studio. A new line-up would include Gene "Buddy" Croyle (guitar), Lewis "Lu Lu" Elliott (bass) Roland "Snake" Atkinson (drums/guitar) and Frank Wilson (vocals). It was back in 1956 when white soul singer Wayne Cochran had gotten an inspiration, from the many car wrecks

on the highway where he lived, to write a song. Wayne had been recording, performing in clubs in and around Miami plus making appearances on network TV that included The Jackie Gleason Show. After reading about a car wreck, that involved teens on highway 341 near Barnsville, Georgia, Wayne put the finishing touches on a song he had started in 1956. This wreck, involving a flat bed trailer-truck and a 1954 Chevy at 10:00 P.M. on December 22nd 1962, took the lives of Jeannette Clark 16, Wayne Cooper 17, J.L. Hancock 16, seriously injuring Jewel Emerson and Ed Shockley all from a nearby military academy. Wayne completed the song, recording it in Vidalia, Georgia calling it "Last Kiss", he then dedicated it to the memory of Jeannette Clark and her friends. Wayne had previously known Jeannette Clark as his drummer had been dating her older sister. First recorded in a small studio and released on the Gala 117 by owner Ed Perry who would later sell Wayne's contract, along with the publishing rights, to Starday-King Records in Macon, Georgia. The next recording would be made at the King studio along with more professional musicians. Both Wayne Cochran and the studio up-right bass player would later make claims to having originated the catchy bass riff on "Last Kiss". Released on King 5856 this record caught the attention of record promoter and former high school coach Sonley Roush of Midland, Texas. After hearing this new up-dated release of "Last Kiss", and the local teen girls positive response on an Odessa radio station, Sonley thought the song could be a hit with Frank Wilson as the vocalist. After obtaining a copy of Wayne's new release Sonley, with limited funds, drove to San Angelo making arrangements with a new recording studio owner, Ron Newdoll, to lay down a sound track. In the beginning Sonley Roush lead the band to believe some song demos were to be recorded in order to obtain bookings. In time it became apparent a plan had been worked out between Sonley Roush, Ron Newdoll and Frank Wilson to make a professional recording copying the King soundtrack of "Last Kiss" #5856. Four girls from church were brought in to sing back-up but it is unknown who ended up as the lone supporting vocal behind Frank with former Cavalier member, from 1962, Jim Wynne on piano. Roland "Snake" Atkinson, formally with The Regents on drums, Gene "Buddy" Croyle, a recent graduate from San Angelo Central H.S. and formally with The Regents on guitar and Lewis Elliott on electric bass. All of the above, with the exception of Gwen Coleman and Jim Wynne, signed a small percentage deal with Sonley Roush. A year earlier, on January 22nd 1963, J. Frank Wilson had signed an exclusive three year contract with Sid Holmes that required written permission for him to do any type studio recordings. Although the contract J. Frank Wilson signed stated that Sid Holmes was his sole and exclusive manager and representative with respect to

services, appearances, making recordings on tape or records and endeavors in all matters and things in any and every capacity he enjoyed as an entertainer Sonley Roush and Ron Newdoll still managed to do a takeover. Since J. Frank Wilson, like all previous lead singers, was just a member of the group Sonley Roush took the first step in gaining control of Frank by insisting his name name, not The Cavaliers name, be featured on the record label. Since Jim Wynne was from a musical family and having a degree he was able to assist some of the others plus playing the only original part on the record. Unknown to the band at the time, studio owner Ron Newdoll, Tamara Records or even the record executives at Jay-Gee in New York, Sonley Roush had taken the million selling country song "That's How Much I Love You", written and recorded by country music legend Eddy Arnold in 1946, presenting it to the group as a song he had written for the flip side of "Last Kiss". Note: The flipside of hit records were paid the exact same royalties as the hit side. This would be the first of many unethical dealings by Sonley Roush. No one was aware, at the time, that Sonley and Ft. Worth record promoter, Major Bill Smith, had music related business ties. After Sonley had sent Colonial Record Manufacturing Company (Tamara label) in Philadelphia one of the master tapes along with all of the label information Major Bill and Jay-Gee Records got wind filing a lawsuit against Tamara. Major Bill had previously pressed a few copies of "Last Kiss" on his Le Cam label #722 from one of the master copies Sonley Roush had sent him. Sonley denied making any oral contract with Tamara. In U.S. District Court of Common Pleas No. 6 Judge Gerald Glewson had little choice but to rule in favor of the written contract that was presented to the court by Jay-Gee Records executives involving Major Bill Smith and Sonley Roush. The Tamara 45 release, being distributed by Quaker City Distributing Company, had already begun making some waves receiving airplay at the time of the lawsuit. Slapped with an injunction Tamara was forced to deliver to Jay-Gee all labels, master recordings, tapes, stamps used in the manufacture of the record taking a huge loss. When Josie 923 arrived on the scene it began to break regionally in Boston showing up on Billboard Bubbling Under The Top 100 at #126. When the "Last Kiss" album was to be recorded Mike Hodges, a San Angelo Central High School student, was brought in to replace Jim Wynne on keyboards along with a new member, Gus Pedigo, assisting on sax and guitar. According to a San Angelo Standard Times article dated August 10th 1964 a recording of "Summertime" had been released as the follow-up single but the official follow-up record ended up being "Hey, Little One". This 1960 Dorsey Burnett cover, was a very slow number showcasing Frank's vocal ability but did little to create any excitement eventually reaching only #85 on the strength of

"Last Kiss". The Cavaliers did get to tour with The Animals but eventually had to come to grips, while on the road, with the fact that they were no longer important as everything had begun revolving around the new star J. Frank with Sonley Roush in control including the lion's share of the gate receipts. When rumors started circulating that the majority of The Cavaliers were going to be dumped Lewis Elliott and Roland Atkinson quit the road returning back to San Angelo. Sonley Roush, now in complete control, picked up two new replacements, Phil Trunzo (bass) and Jerry Graham (drums) in Memphis and continued calling themselves The Cavaliers. Before Sonley Roush had to face the numerous pending lawsuits he died in a car wreck on the morning of October 23rd 1964, near Kenton, Ohio while en route to Lima, Ohio for a scheduled Friday night performance at The Candy Cane Club. When the news of the wreck flashed across the U.S. it pushed the record up one more notch to #2 on Billboard, #1 on Cash Box, #1 on American Bandstand and to #1 on Music World . After attending Sonley Roush's funeral in Midland, Texas a power struggle developed between Major Bill Smith of Ft. Worth and Ron Newdoll of San Angelo over the control of the hot new property J. Frank Wilson. Major Bill apparently won out as he signed J. Frank to yet; another contract recording numerous records in Ft. Worth including "Six Boys" that was performed on American Bandstand. All of the releases stiffed including "Six Boys" as the far majority of radio stations completely ignored this Major Bill produced recording with a waltz beat and all other releases. J. Frank would later complain, in numerous interviews, blaming his record promoters for lack of quality material. The first royalty check from "Last Kiss" and the LP from Josie Records was \$56,000.00 and went directly to Major Bill Smith in Ft. Worth who took \$20,000.00 off the top sending the balance of \$36,000.00 to be divided between Ron Newdoll (\$12,000.00), the Sonley Roush Estate (\$12,000.00) and the band (\$12,000.00) that included J. Frank Wilson's \$3000.00. J. Frank, now a solo act, did receive an additional advance of \$1000.00 from Josie Records while he was in New York with Ron Newdoll and Major Bill Smith, with all three receiving an in-house (non-RIAA certified) gold record award from the Josie Records executives. A photo of this presentation was featured in Billboard magazine in late 1964. The band failed to receive a gold record award or any recognition from the record company or from any of the promoters. J. Frank began performing from coast to coast appearing at some of the top theaters and clubs such as the Cow Palace in San Francisco and The Whisky A Go Go in Hollywood being billed along side enduring acts such as Sonny & Cher, The Supremes, Dionne Warwick, Mickey Gilly, B.J. Thomas, and Jerry Lee Lewis. Making as much as \$500 and up a night buying flashy clothes, rings,

cars, and houses somehow spending it all. J. Frank Wilson's biggest payday came, not from any record royalties or from personal appearances but from a lawsuit he decided to file against Anita Roush, mother and administrator of the Estate of Sonley C. Roush. Out of desperation for funds J. Frank obtained an attorney, because Sonley had fallen asleep while driving the car in which Frank was riding and was injured, collecting \$19,500.00 in damages. When his ex-wife read the San Angelo official records she got half of what was left after attorney fees for back child support. Frank ended up with enough money to buy a car leaving San Angelo forever. Reliable sources reported that Sonley Roush fell asleep at the wheel because he had been unable to get proper rest as he had been trying desperately to keep up with J. Frank Wilson's fast lifestyle costing him his life. It is very possible a seat belt would have saved Sonley as he was thrown up against the visor while driving a station wagon at a very slow rate of speed veering over into a slow moving truck. Sonley Roush, brainchild for cloning Wayne Cochran's recording of "Last Kiss" was only 27 years old. Pending litigation against J. Frank Wilson, Sonley Roush, Bill Smith and Ron Newdoll for a possible conspiracy and breach of contract in the amount of \$25,000.00, had long been on the table in 1964 but it was eventually dropped by Sid Holmes and his attorney due the tragic death of Sonley Roush and Frank Wilson's inability to pay. After settling numerous lawsuits, including the plagiarism on Eddy Arnold's "That's How Much I Love You", Ron Newdoll and Bill Smith's lawsuit to collect additional royalties along with poor record sales Jay-Gee Records filed for bankruptcy. After appearing on Dick Clark's American Bandstand, in late 1964, with his leg in a cast J. Frank continued to tour successfully through most of 1965. When "Last Kiss" finally drew it's last breath and Frank was unable to get another charted record he sank into depression and eventually alcoholism. In 1974 he turned up on The NBC TV Nightly News showing the nation that his life had followed the all-too-familiar pattern of many other one hit wonders of the past. On food stamps, at the time, blaming his past record producers for lack of hits plus claiming he was not paid royalties for what he claimed to be a 15 million seller. For historical purposes J. Frank Wilson, like all other vocalist before him, was just a member of The Cavaliers. The "Last Kiss" single officially sold 850,000 copies (not RIAA Certified Gold during 1964) and although it reached #20 in Toronto, Canada it was never an international hit. "Last Kiss" 45's could be found in record stores for many years on various labels and later on CD compilations but the official documents J. Frank Wilson had signed, as a member of The Cavaliers with Lewis Elliott as the bandleader and Sid Holmes as his legal manager, did not entitle him to sue for any royalties from

1963 to 1966. J. Frank Wilson's excellent vocal performance on the record did not come from being an overnight singing sensation but from three years of development as the featured singer for The Cavaliers. J. Frank Wilson, in his prime, will be remembered by the band members for his stamina and love of singing, his many imitations that included Brother Dave Gardner and Ray Stevens ("Ahab, The Arab"), his outgoing friendly nature and his vocal performance on "Last Kiss". In 1964 he was voted Most Promising New Male Vocalist by Music World with "Last Kiss" ending up being the #22 song in the U.S.A. for 1964. In late 1973 the group Wednesday, from Oshawa, Canada, recorded "Last Kiss" reaching #34 bringing J. Frank's original version back in at #90 on the Virgo label. It should be noted the Virgo 506 label release had omitted all producer credits listing songwriters only. In 1999 Pearl Jam's recording of "Last Kiss" made the second biggest jump, in the history of The Billboard Hot 100, from #49 to #2 plus reaching #1 on The Billboard Top 100 Sales Charts. Writer Wayne Cochran had to wait until 1999 for his payday as his manager had cashed all of his royalty checks spending them while he was touring in 1964. In 1999 Wayne finally received some much deserved royalty checks for Pearl Jam sales in excess of 600,000 CD singles, an LP plus one million radio airplays. Pearl Jam's version stayed on the Canadian and Australian charts for nearly a year. In 2000 Wayne Cochran, dressed in a black tux, was presented a 2 Million Airplay award by CEO Frances Preston at their annual B.M.I. Music Awards program for writing the all-time teen tragedy song. Ed Perry, who had sold his publishing rights never received a penny from the three hits, died in Houston, Texas. John Frank Wilson qualified for The West Texas Music Hall Of Fame Honor Roll. According to a 1962 conversation with Sid Holmes J. Frank's early musical influence was Buddy Holly. "Last Kiss" Pearl Jam/Cavaliers was voted #3 in the VH1 all-time Cover Song category.