



# *The Squires*

*From Chattanooga, Tennessee  
An Early History from 1959 to 1962*

An Early History of  
*The Squires*  
1959 - 1962

Written by Larry Blanks (a founding member)  
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In 1958, I transferred from Hixson High School for the 1958-1959 year and had only been at Red Bank for one year. Not being one to make a lot of quick friendships, there were very few in my class that I really knew. During registration day for my junior year at Red Bank High School in 1959, my path continued to cross that of Ted Ledford, a fellow junior and member of the Red Bank High School Band. As we attempted to move from class to class, trying to fill up our schedule and at the same time, minimizing the amount of difficult subjects, we agreed to team up and schedule classes together. Up until this time, we had only passed one another in the hallways and seen each other in band practice the year before. (We signed up for Mrs. Cofers typing class because she was the best looking teacher at Red Bank.)

It was refreshing to have finally teamed up with someone from my class.

Ted and I became best friends. He played drums in the high school band and I played trumpet (and not very well). I found out that Ted played guitar and I had an old Stella that I received for Christmas when I was about 7 year old. It was one of those disappointments since I was expecting a BB gun and got the guitar instead. Anyway, Ted began showing me some chords. This was around September of 1959.

As we progressed and began to actually put songs together for fun, we started talking to others. Butch Hamill, one of the varsity cheerleaders at Red Bank, also played guitar and had a pretty good,

Ricky Nelson style singing voice. Another drummer in the high school band, Buddy Spann, had a full trap drum set so we began formulating plans to start a band.

We began practicing around November of 1959 and in early December, our chemistry teacher, Mrs. Caballero asked us to play for her homeroom Christmas party, which we agreed to do. She asked what we called ourselves, and we had no idea what to say. Back in Hixson, there had been a rock and roll group in the mid 1950's called "The Five Squares". It consisted of Ralph Fairchild on sax, James Minyard on guitar, James Burfett on trombone, Butch Hunter on clarinet and I don't remember the drummer. They had played around Hixson and had appeared on Larry "The Legend" Johnson's TV program, 'Night Train" which use to run on WDEF TV at around 11:00 PM on Saturday night.

Anyway, I suggested using "The Squares" as our first name. Since no one else had a suggestion and nobody really cared, that was it. The Squares made their debut at Mrs. Caballero's homeroom Christmas party at Red Bank High School Chemistry lab in December 1959.

That original group consisted of :

Ted Ledford, lead guitar,  
Larry Blanks, rhythm guitar,  
Buddy Spann, drums, and  
Butch Hamill, vocal and rhythm guitar.

Someone heard of our group and offered us a real "Paying" gig at the Highland Plaza Winn Dixie Christmas Party that year. We performed before a "crowd" of about 50 persons and were paid a total of \$10 for the night (\$2.00 each), not exactly union scale. That was it, we were hooked! We could do something we enjoyed and get paid for it too. WOW, what a concept!

Going into the New Year of 1960, we decided to build onto the group. We needed a sax player and someone needed to play bass. Three guitars were nice, but a little much. Allen Lutes played the tuba in the high school band and began telling us about him playing in a group back in his old hometown in Ken-

tucky. Billy Shelton played tenor sax in the high school band and we asked him to join us. After a few gigs, Butch Hamill dropped out of the group and Bill Shelton decided he didn't want to continue either. One of the other varsity cheerleaders was a pretty good singer and asked that we perform with her at a couple of gigs she had scheduled. Her name was Frankie Davis and we did several performances with Frankie. I thought it worked out great but Frankie was strictly a single and didn't want to be associated with a group unless she was the headliner. I couldn't argue with her because she was good and we were just beginning to get it together. So, we stopped performing together. By now we had made several variations of our name. One of my favorite movies at the time was "The Black Shield of Falsworth" with Tony Curtis. All the young guys in the movie were Squires, training to be Knights. So, I suggested us using this name since it was close to what we had been using (the Squares), and there were no objections. Hence was born "*The Squires*".

We were now:

Ted Ledford, lead  
Larry Blanks, rhythm  
Buddy Spann, drums  
Allen Lutes, bass

In the spring of 1960, we met a woman named Louise Shields who owned a small recording studio on South Broad Street. Small is an understatement since it consisted of one Wallensak tape deck and two microphones. She asked us to "audition" for her by coming out to a school in Tiftonia one Saturday and play. As it turned out, she was being paid by a local politician to furnish entertainment for an election campaign barbecue he was having. Louise was getting us for free and calling it an audition (typical for Louise we eventually learned). At the same rally was a 15-year-old piano player and singer that was performing solo. He was rough, his timing was off, but he could sing and beat out that piano like no one I had ever met. I talked with Ted and we approached him to join our

little band and he agreed. That was our first introduction to Jimmy Harris.

Jimmy had learned to play the piano by listening to Jerry Lee Lewis records in his room. This was because his girl friend had fallen for a musician and Jimmy wanted to win her back by learning to play too. (He did the same thing when she later fell for a guitar player and then a sax player, learning to play all three).

Now The Squires had settled, after about four months in existence, to the following:

Ted Ledford, lead guitar;  
Larry Blanks, rhythm guitar;  
Buddy Spann, drums;  
Allan Lutes, bass and  
Jimmy Harris, piano.

Toward the end of our junior year at Red Bank, we met a disc jockey from WRIP radio name Sterling Bright at one of the sock hops at school. We talked with him about our group and he wanted to hear us so we set up a time to get together. Sterling decided he liked us and wanted to help. Just after that, he left WRIP and joined WDXB using his real first and middle name, reversed... Allen Dennis.

Coca Cola was sponsoring a contest as part of their "Coca Cola Hi Fi Club" and we were finalists. The contest was judged by Eddie Arnold and eventually won by another group from Red Bank that formed just to perform in the contest. They were Carole Waller, singer; Ted Swingle, guitar; and Billy Clements, drums. Carole was a very cute and a talented singer that went on to become a successful nightclub performer settling in the New York City area.

We played at small gigs around Chattanooga such as the Stuart Heights swimming pool, the Lions Club in Red Bank, skating rinks and bowling alleys, and a couple of other places including

“Ox Biggs Chickamore Barndance” out on highway 58 (I’m not kidding, I couldn’t make up a name like that). At some point, Ted, Buddy and I got into a silly argument just at the end of the school year and we broke up. That was the spring of 1960. We had done a lot in a short period of time.

It wasn’t long before Ted and I patched up our friendship and by that time, he had met, through Louise Shields, a young singer from Central High School, named George Peele (Byrd). Louise had asked if Ted could get some musicians together to back a recording at her studio, so we met there and helped Louise out. I don’t remember the girls name that sang, but we did the track and decided to put the band back together. I remember the song was “As I look Through My Window”. Turned out Louise was charging her and her husband quite a bit of money to do this session and, once again, she got us for free.

There was another drummer in the Red Bank High school band named Butch Thomas. Ted, who was now the head drummer in the high school band, was impressed with Butch and we asked him to join us. Our first gathering was at a little recording studio that was in the basement of the Dome Building where WDXB was located. A guy with “pink hair” by the name of Carl Allen was running the studio and several of us met there for the reforming of the group. This consisted of Ted Ledford, Allen Lutes, myself, Butch Thomas and George Peele (Byrd). Allen Dennis had put this together for us and I still have the record we made that day. Jimmy couldn’t make it so Ted played piano and Allen Lutes “faked” lead. In all, it was pretty pitiful and the recording I have of that day confirms it.

We still didn’t have a saxophone player but probably the best one in the state of Tennessee was right there in the Red Bank Band. That was Don Jackson, an “All State” musician and the past Drum Major for the Red Bank Band. The only problem was that Don was going off to college in

the fall.

Allen Dennis had lined us up with a record salesman from Southern Distributors in Nashville, named Don Hodge that was looking for talent for a new record company. The company was Chan Records and one of the owners, Lloyd Linville, was a record promoter for United Artist Records. Lloyd was based in the New Orleans area and Don was based in Nashville. Don came down to Chattanooga and listened to us play. This audition took place at Ronnie Rothwells home in Red Bank during the summer of 1960. Don asked us to make a demo tape and give it to him so he could send it to Linville. We made the tape right there at Ronnie's house and he took it with him. He wanted other talent too, and Dennis introduced him to E. White "Yogi" Patton III who managed a local singing quartet called "The Cupids". One night, we got together down at WDXB and recorded a demo of the Cupids back in the sales office. I brought my old "Voice of Music" tape deck and we recorded three songs back in the sales room. One was the Cupids version of "I'm Looking Over A Four Leaf Clover" and another was one they said they wrote called "What's Your Name?" and the third was "Mardi Gras". We sent the tape to Linville and didn't think any more about it.

We became good friends with The Cupids and did a number of gigs with them including backing them one day at Howard High School for an assembly program. If I'm not mistaken, that was the first "mixed" appearance on the stage at Howard, an all black High School during the final days of segregation.

One day Allen Dennis called me in a panic and asked me to come down to WDXB right away. On the way, I went by and picked up Ted. When we arrived, Allen played a demo record they had just received at the station by a new duet named Don and Juan. The song was "What's Your Name" and was identical to the one the Cupids had recorded as a demo with the exception of the added bridge in the Don and Juan's version. I never found out the truth about the song and don't know to this day if the Cupids actually were the original writers or not.

After a while, we heard from Lloyd Linville and were both invited to come to Memphis, Tennessee to record our first record, under contract to Chan Records.

We entered our senior year at Red Bank and began playing all around Chattanooga, North Georgia and even traveling up to Nashville to the Noel Ball TV show on WSIX TV. George Peele (Byrd) became our lead singer and, off and on, joined by female singer by the name of Jane Nobles, also known as Jana DeOra.

George had recorded a session that was released on "Briar Records", one of Paul Cohn's labels in Nashville. "Number One Doll" and "These Things I Remember". Everyone just knew this was going to be a big hit. I still think so today. As we all know, if you don't have promotion, even the best ones don't make it. That was what happened to George's record. George's Mom had paid for the session with all the top session guys in Nashville; Hank Garland on guitar, Floyd Cramer on piano, Buddy Harmon on drums and Kelso Hurston on bass. The background singers were none other than "The Jordanairs" who regularly sang behind Elvis Presley on his RCA sessions. You just couldn't lose with talent like this behind you. RCA had made George an offer to take the session and release it. But someone counseled George and his Mother into holding out for more royalties than RCA offered. They did and that's how the record ended up being released on Briar label instead of RCA.

At this point, Allen Dennis became our manager. The Squires was now complete with:

Ted Ledford, lead;  
Larry Blanks, rhythm;  
Butch Thomas, drums;  
Jimmy Harris, piano;  
Don Jackson, sax; and  
George Peele (Byrd), lead singer.

This was about the best-rounded group we had up to that point.

The balance and timing was there and we could all anticipate one another. We were developing our own sound and we were going great!

We were regular performers at the YM/YW Youth Center on Friday nights and we gave dances on our own at the St. Elmo American Legion hall across from the Incline Railway at the foot of Lookout Mountain. These were profitable for us, but keep in mind, \$100 for a gig was big money, even after we split it six ways.

In Memphis, we recorded our first record at Fernwood Studios and together with the Cupids, whom we backed in their session, spent over twelve hours in the studio. That was the same studio that Thomas Wayne recorded his hit, "Tragedy" a few years earlier. The Squires recorded two songs, "Movin' Out" (actually named by Cortez "Winky" Greer of the Cupids when I asked him what he thought would be a good name) backed by "Our Theme" which was written by Jimmy Harris, originally as a joke, but turned out to be a very good melody.

The Cupids recorded an upbeat song called "Goin' to New Orleans" backed by a great slow song called "Wanda". The bass singer for the Cupids, Bobby, had a tremendous range and sang both the bass part as well as the tenor lead on "Wanda". Winky, or "Tez" as he became known later, sang lead on "New Orleans". Winky was both a super singer and a fantastic performer as well as a really nice person. He later became very well known as a single performer and toured the Playboy Club circuit as well as performed at the Sahara Tahoe.

Our record was released in the spring of 1961 and got a lot of airplay in the southeast and southwest. We sold approximately 50,000 copies and received absolutely zero dollars in royalties. However, The Squires enjoyed success in and around Chattanooga for that summer and into the fall when Ted Ledford, our lead guitarist, decided to join the U.S. Marine Corps.

When Ted left in September of 1961, we needed someone else for lead guitar. Tommy Parnell was a good friend of Jimmy Harris and we asked him to join The Squires.

By now, Don Jackson had dropped out of college for a while and had perfected his "jamming" style on the sax, which he had learned from a fellow sax player, Ed Lehman. We had a great sound. Tommy was way ahead of the time in his lead guitar style and audiences didn't really know how to take him. Ted was very professional and played a set lead part to most songs. Tommy, on the other hand, just let it all go, with the volume turned up and him on his knees with his head back on the floor. Unbelievable for the time, and maybe not appreciated.

Chan Records asked us to come out to Oklahoma City to record our second record, which we did in late September of 1961. Just before leaving on the trip, Chan Records had sold the rights and the master of our first recording to MGM records, which they released on their MGM label. Don Jackson's mother wasn't thrilled about his going with us to Oklahoma City and it took all the convincing power we could muster to convince her to allow him to come. We had gotten one advanced copy of our recording on MGM's "DJ Demo" label and had given it to Mrs. Jackson to convince her we were really doing something positive. She consented and we headed west.

We recorded at Hi Fi Recording Studios and were produced by a fellow named Gene Sullivan, a seasoned performer in country music in the 1930's and 1940's and the writer of "When My Blue Moon Turns To Gold Again". The studio was interesting in that it had apparently been used as an old garage. It was open for two stories and had long curtains hanging from the ceiling to absorb the sound. There was a 1957 Cadillac parked on one side and the control room was on the second floor with a glass window looking down at us. We spent about five or six hours in the studio laying down several tracks. There was a large organ in the studio and Jimmy was playing around on it. It was the first time he had

really jammed on one. We ended up adding an organ track to the "A" side of the record. We released "Mean Misery" and "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" around November of 1961.

The Squires now consisted of :

Tommy Parnell, lead guitar;  
Larry Blanks, rhythm,  
Allen Lutes, bass;  
Jimmy Harris, piano;  
Don Jackson, sax;  
Butch Thomas, drums and  
George Peele (Byrd), lead singer.

On returning to Chattanooga, we continued to play gigs at the University of Chattanooga, YM/YW Youth Center and many high school and private dances. Including some proms.

I remember one such gig at the Baylor Senior Prom when one of the faculty asked us to play a waltz. Now you were talking to a bunch of rock and rollers and remember my comment on Jimmy Harris' timing. The only thing I could think of was the Jerry Lee Lewis version of "Good Night Irene" (don't laugh, it was a waltz tempo!). That was an event I will never forget. Butch keeping up with the "boom-chick-chick" beat of a waltz and Jimmy doing his rock and roll version of Good Night Irene.

One other memorable appearance was at the old UC Tennis Courts for a Sorority party. Someone requested we play the Doug Clark and the Hot Nuts favorite, "Hot Nuts". When we did, a number of the UC "jocks" got the mic and started ad-libbing their version of the song. When we finally finished, I was approached by the UC Chaplain who informed me in no uncertain terms that we were no longer welcomed at UC functions. I tried to reason with the Chaplain that it wasn't us doing the singing but rather UC students. It didn't work. We were a hit with the students, but the Chaplain wasn't impressed. Word went out that The Squires were "persona non-grata" at UTC functions from

then on.

We were now members of the Chattanooga Musicians Union and were handling everything right down union guidelines. In the fall of 1961, WFLI had scheduled a Rock and Roll show at the National Guard Armory with Dion as the lead performer. WFLI asked The Squires to be the lead group, backing Dion in the show.

As WFLI was a non-union radio station and beginning to take top 40 ratings away from WDXB, who was union, WDXB management advised us that if we played the WFLI show, they would see to it that our record would be placed on the "blackball list" by all union radio stations.

Being concerned about the future of both the group and myself, I went to the business agent of the Musicians Union and told him the problem. He asked if we were being paid union minimum and I assured him it was considerable above. At which point he recommended we go ahead and play. We did, and air-play for our records was indeed blackballed on all union radio stations, including WDXB. Still don't like or trust unions to this day.

Our second recording was not selling like the first, and quite frankly, I wasn't enjoying myself as much without Ted in the group. Tommy was good, you could call him a great guitarist, but very different. In my opinion, without Ted, we had lost our unique sound.

In February of 1962, I left the group and joined the U.S. Marine Corps. I was fortunate to be stationed with Ted where we formed another group in November, 1962 called "The Mark V". This, of course, is a totally different story.

The Squires lived on, with wonderful musicians going through the ranks. Allen Lutes developed into one of the best bass players in Chattanooga, playing in both the rock group and the Chattanooga Symphony. Ken Bell along with Ronnie Cass and Coye Reeves, although not part of the Squires alumni, joined

with Allen Lutes and put together a super group, "Playthings Inc.". (Interestingly enough, I had worked at a toy store in Chattanooga during the summers called "Playthings Inc." which Ken and the guys took the name from.) Ken has gone onto being a very successful session player and song writer in Nashville with such hits as, "Touch Me When We're Dancing", "Even The Nights Are Better", "I Just Need You For Tonight" and many more.

I'm very proud to have been one of the founding members of The Squires and to have seen the legacy we started that December day in 1959 in Mrs. Caballero's chemistry homeroom grow into the legend it became around the city. Allen, Jimmy and a couple of other guys even ended up playing a club in Chicago and making a short movie under the name "The Squires".

Any additions/deletions or corrections should be provided to Larry Blanks at Email [gjblanks@bellsouth.net](mailto:gjblanks@bellsouth.net) for comments on this document.





Zee French Station  
w d x b  
FRENCH, INC.  
Chattanooga 3, Tenn.

Top  
"40"

TOP 40 RECORDS

- Look Sharp - Fed Sharp - Be Sharp
- DIXIEY PICK TO CLICK**
- Last Week**
- Michael
  - Take Good Care Of My Baby
  - Candy Man/Crying
  - Little Sister
  - Ya Ya
  - Bless You
  - Without You
  - Years From Now
  - You Don't Know What You've Got
  - The U. I.
  - It's Your World
  - Missing You
  - Let Me Belong To You
  - Big Cold Wind
  - Jeremiah Peabody's Purple Pills
  - Kissin' On The Phone
  - The Mountain's High
  - Ht. The Road Jack
  - Sweet Little You
  - The Great Imposter

- "DREAMBOAT"**
- U. A.
- Liberty
- Monument
- RCA Victor
- Fury
- Epic
- Cadence
- Brunswick
- Gone
- ABC
- Columbia
- Dunes
- ABC
- Dot
- Mercury
- ABC
- Liberty
- ABC
- RCA Victor
- Dolton

- CONNIE FRANCIS**
- M-G-M
- With Gillette Super Blue Blades!
- Last Week**
- I'm A Telling You
  - My True Story
  - Frankie And Johnny
  - You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby
  - Feel It
  - It's Gonna Work Out Fine
  - Sweets For My Sweet
  - Movin' Out
  - I Went Out Of My Way
  - The Way You Look Tonight
  - Movin'
  - Lovers Island
  - Let True Love Begin
  - Hang On Your Last Goodbye
  - Well I Ask Ya
  - Magic Moon
  - Guilty Of Loving You
  - So Long Baby
  - It's Too Late
  - Don't Blame Me

TOP 10 ALBUMS

- M-G-M**
- With Gillette Super Blue Blades!
- Last Week**
- Jerry Butler
  - Jive Five
  - Brook Benton
  - Bobby Darin
  - Sam Cooke
  - Ike and Tina Turner
  - The Drifters
  - The Squires
  - Roy Drusky
  - The Lettermen
  - Bill Black Combo
  - Blue Jays
  - Nat King Cole
  - Floyd Cramer
  - Ray Starr
  - The Rays
  - JERRY FULLER
  - Del Shannon
  - Charlie Rich
  - Everly Bros.

CHATTANOOGA'S TOP 10 ALBUMS

- DIXIEY ALBUM OF WEEK "DANCING IN WONDERLAND" BERT KAEMPFFERT DECCA**
- Ain't That Weird (Brother Dave Gardner)
  - Portrait Of Johnny (Johnny Mathis)
  - Judy At Carnegie Hall (Judy Garland)
  - Great Motion Picture Themes (Various Artists)
  - Something For Everybody (Elvis Presley)

- U. A.
- RCA Victor
- Columbia
- Capitol
- U. A.
- RCA Victor

- U. A.**
- The Highwaymen (The Highwaymen)
- I Love Pats (Patsy Cline)
- Al "He's The King" Hirt (Al Hirt)
- Four Preps On Campus (Four Preps)
- Your Request Sing Along With Mitch (Mitch Miller)
- Coral
- RCA Victor
- Capitol
- Columbia

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Written by a founding member:  
Larry Blanks  
124 Stolen Hours Lane  
Fayetteville, GA 30215  
(770) 460-0752