

Hello Lyn,

I came across your research piece on the Town & Country Brothers. As you suggest, there has been a profusion of gaps, misinformation and mystery about the "Brothers," so I thought I would take the opportunity to attempt to disperse some of the fog. As your correspondent Kees noted, I provided Canetoad Records with background on the group when they reissued "Sandy Sandy" in 2004 but somehow that too got garbled on its way to the printed page.

Here's how events unfolded: Chip Taylor and I first met in a music class during our senior year of high school. During the four years that we both attended the school, this was the one and only class that we actually shared. At some point, we got talking and Chip mentioned that he was a big country music fan...and sang and played guitar. My immediate reaction was – "Hey, you gotta come down to Mount Vernon and meet my friend Greg (Richards)."

Musically, Greg was into almost anything that was coming out of Nashville and Memphis. So Chip and Greg hit it off immediately.

Greg was studying guitar with a guy named Ray Doherty who played Chet Atkins-style. In January of 1958, Ray (vocals & guitar), Greg (rhythm guitar) and I (snare drum & wire brushes) had begun playing weekends in a small bar on West 1st Street in Mount Vernon, NY, just a few blocks from the Bronx/NYC line. Several weeks in, we asked Ray if he wouldn't mind if Chip joined us. And so we became a country music quartet and were soon wearing embroidered cowboy shirts and silky blue kerchiefs tied around our necks – kinda like Roy Rogers.

In the early spring of '58, Ray left New York to return to his hometown in Pennsylvania.

Our band never really had a designated name and we were determined to change that. When Chip joined, our repertoire broadened from Hank Williams and Eddy Arnold songs to Johnny Cash and George Hamilton IV hits. Eventually it included Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, The Everlys, Jack Scott, Dale Hawkins and so on.

Greg came up with the phrase, "Town & Country," which seemed to resonate perfectly with the musical direction the band was following. However – and here's where the confusion starts to set in – this original trio became known as the Town & Country Boys. The Town & Country Brothers didn't enter the picture until late-1962. But more on this to follow.

Around this time, Chip began bringing in some original songs that we liked, then learned and slipped into our sets. The response was good and we soon elected to make a demonstration record. Greg booked a studio in NYC and we recorded a double-sided disc of "Faded Blue" b/w "I Found Out About Love."

Subsequently, Greg the Motivator began making the rounds of the independent record labels in Manhattan and within a few weeks had a deal for us with King/Deluxe Records via their New York a&r chief, Andy Gibson. Gibson, however, believed the "Town & Country Boys" handle was too provincial so we became The Town Three.

The recording session took place in early September of '58. I remember the session date being on a Friday. That Sunday, Chip was on a plane headed for Mobile, AL. He was enrolled at Spring Hill College earlier in the year and was now due to start classes. So, for all intent and purposes, this would bring to a close the chapter on the Town & Country Boys/The Town Three.

We would see Chip when he was in town during school breaks and on holidays. Greg would set up an occasional gig weeks in advance when he could; usually a high school social event that we would look forward to. Eventually though, Greg and I joined up with another country band.

Fran and The Claytons were fronted by a young and attractive girl singer from Yonkers, NY...and that worked out fine for a while. Plus we already owned the wardrobe.

It was about this time, with Greg's help, that I was learning a few chords on the guitar which soon morphed into songwriting. Toward the end of 1960, we cut a few guitar/vocal demos and Greg was off and running again. This time he had his sights set on Philadelphia – home to Dick Clark, American Bandstand and about a half-dozen indie record labels.

At Chancellor Records, Greg found an advocate for the songs in a&r director, Jerry Ragovoy. This led to a Philly recording session for me and "She Cried." Of course, nothing happened with my record but Ragovoy played that record for Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller in the fall of '61 and that led to the Jay and The Americans' hit of "She Cried" in 1962.

Simultaneously, I was working as an assistant in a small music publisher's office located at 1650 Broadway – the heart of the teen music scene in those years. One day in '62 my boss, Jerry Teifer (yet another "Jerry"), called me in to say that a friend of mine was coming by that afternoon to play a few new songs. That friend turned out to be Chip.

By now, Chip had relocated from Mobile to a college in Hartford, CT and would begin making regular trips into Manhattan.

Teifer had good contacts in Nashville which was a logical locale for Chip's songs. And with Chip now associated with the company, he and I decided to try collaborating on a song or two. Our first was "Down In The Cellar" – an answer to the Drifter's hit, "Up On The Roof."

A novelty recording was produced with singer Ramsey Gordon. Chip and I tried our hands at a two-part background harmony that came off satisfactorily. The master was placed with Tahoe Records and distributed world-wide through London Records.