

"America's Got Talent" host Jerry Springer, right, congratulates CAP Lt. Col. Paul Salos for his performance.

By Ashley M. Wright



Photo courtesy of 'America's Got Talent'

CAP's got Talent

**Longtime CAP
member shines
on national stage**

L

Lt. Col. Paul Salos of Civil Air Patrol's Texas Wing has talent. The New York native sang his heart out on the NBC show "America's Got Talent," making it into the top 10 by impersonating legendary crooner Frank Sinatra.

Salos' career as an entertainer began a half-century ago. The 40-year CAP veteran now jokes about it taking 50 years to become a success in six months, which was the duration of his time on the national reality TV show.

The decades of practicing for stardom worked in his favor. Salos outperformed 300,000 people who auditioned to land a top 10 spot on the summer's No. 1 show, which had a weekly audience of 10 million.

"I'm on top of the world," he said. "I'm not getting off this train until the end of the ride. This is my life."

The "America's Got Talent" portion of the ride ended shortly before the entertainer's 72nd birthday on Sept. 23, as he fell just short of the votes needed to continue in the top five.

The show allows entertainers to perform their act, with judges and home viewers voting for their favorite. Last year's winner, a ventriloquist, won a \$1 million prize and a contract to perform at the Las Vegas Hilton, according to the network's Web site.

"We have achieved so much," said Salos, who is a member of the Plano Mustangs Composite Squadron. "I hope to be able to plow that road for older entertainers."

Salos auditioned for "America's Got Talent" in Dallas in March. He said the audition line stretched "10 miles long." The entertainer returned the

CAP Lt. Col. Paul Salos performs on "America's Got Talent," an NBC competition showcasing the nation's top entertainers. Salos, a Frank Sinatra impersonator, was one of 3 million people who applied for the TV show and one of 300,000 that auditioned. He advanced to the Top 10, finishing sixth in the competition.

following day and won the heart of the three judges and audience.

"You are as smooth as velvet," celebrity judge Sharon Osborne told Salos at the audition. "Your voice is perfect. Your phrasing was unbelievable. It's fantastic."

Perfecting his Sinatra act took the CAP lieutenant colonel nine years, he said.

Salos' reincarnation of "Old Blue Eyes" on a national stage had quite an effect on some of the younger members of the Texas Wing.

"I think it is really great to see one of the members setting the example by going after his dreams," said 1st Lt. Steve Gilbert, the Plano Mustangs squadron commander.

Gilbert said watching Salos' "phenomenal" performances became an organized event for the group.

"It was one of the best performances I saw," said Cadet Staff Sgt. Emilie Cannady. "I've never heard of Frank Sinatra, but Col. Salos is awesome."

Salos said he was glad some of the younger cadets were listening to the music of the big band era. "The music is so old it's new," quipped the veteran performer, showing his sense of humor.

Salos was instrumental in having "America's Got Talent" feature a clip of himself and other CAP members aboard a Gippsland GA8 Airvan in support of the organization's

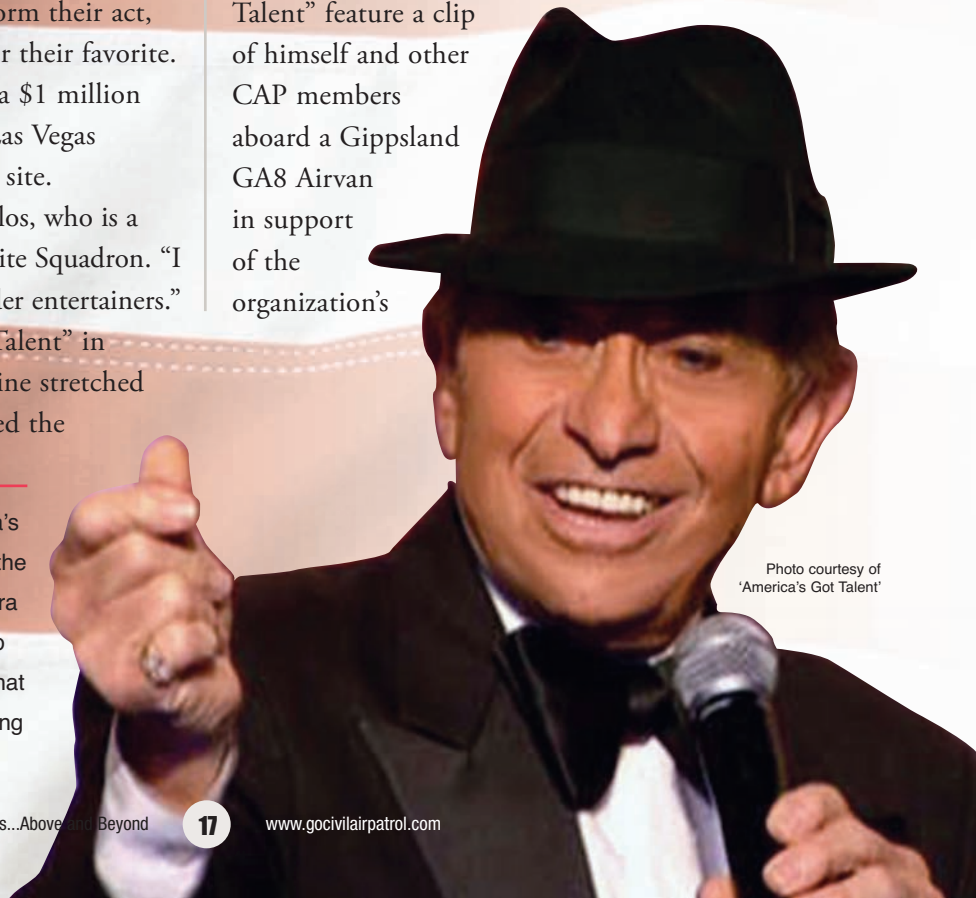


Photo courtesy of 'America's Got Talent'

Hurricane Katrina relief missions in 2005. The segment aired before one of his last performances on the show.

This was not Salos' first appearance on television. In 1956, he appeared on "The Ed Sullivan Show" with the Air Force "Tops in Blue." During his career in the Air Force, he toured the country. He also performed while stationed at Wheelus Air Force Base in Tripoli, North Africa.

Whether flying to recover space shuttle debris from the tragic Columbia crash for CAP or singing "Fly Me to the Moon" for America, Salos credits his wife, Jane, with giving him strength.

"Jane has been the backbone," he said. "She has been with me through thick and thin."

Although he did not take the top prize on



In 1956, then Air Force Airman 3rd Class Paul Salos, left, chats with Ed Sullivan before a "Tops in Blue" performance on Sullivan's popular TV show. Salos had just completed basic training before the "Tops in Blue" performance.

"America's Got Talent," the lieutenant colonel feels his entertainment career is still on the rise.

"It is not over until I can't do it anymore," he said.

Shortly after his run on the show ended, Salos was booked to perform in Las Vegas with Terry Fator, the 2007 "America's Got Talent" winner, on Oct. 17 at the MGM Grand Casino Theater. The show also invited him back for its Oct. 1 finale.

Salos said in an advance interview for "America's Got Talent" that his performances on the show fulfill a lifelong dream and would be the crowning glory of his career.

But, as Sinatra would say, it appears "The Best is Yet to Come" for CAP's top crooner. ▲

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