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"We never made any money because we spent it all on clothes," Laurie said. "Barb Kinkaid made all our clothes. I must have watched too much Lawrence Welk when I was younger, because I thought we should always match."

No one in the group could read music at the time and they figured out how to play the popular songs of the time by ear.

"We did it all by ear, if it didn't sound right we'd just keep trying until we figured it out," Viv said.

When they wanted a new song they would sit by the radio with a tape recorder for it to come on then they would record it so they could rewind and play and dissect the lyrics and the chords.

"We would write it all out, sometimes it was interesting because we would all interpret the lyrics different," she said.

The group was chosen to represent Nebraska in the Wrangler Country Showdown in Nashville in 1984.

The Patches band members were flown to Nashville to perform and compete on the new Grand Ole Opry stage.

Amazingly a bus full of 96 people followed them to support them as they performed for five minutes.

"Our parents, grandparents, husbands and a bunch of other people from the area showed up all dressed in red for Cornhuskers to support us," Laurie said. "Some of the other performers had a handful of fans and we had an entire bus load. They rode the bus all the way down watched us for five minutes and then rode all the way back the next day. It was really awesome."

While in Nashville they got to walk onto the original Grand Ole Opry stage and they only had a few minutes but they knew they had to sing something.

"We sang an a cappella version of 'Rocky

Top,' it was really amazing," Laurie said.

The grand prize of the contest was a recording contract and although it was a wonderful dream, not everyone was hoping to win.

"After we were eliminated we found out Viv was praying we wouldn't win," Laurie said.

"I had six kids and a husband who was a truck driver at home," Viv said. "I couldn't be on the road for a year. I really was praying we wouldn't win."

Although it was an exciting competition, everyone agrees now they are happy they didn't win.

"Musicians who make it nationally are plagued by constant worry because there is so much competition and pressure to have that next hit," Laurie said. "It really can't be all that fun."

"And fun was what we were all about," Eunice chimed in. "We were really having fun interacting with the crowd and each other."

"We had a lot of fun, we were goofy with the crowd," Laurie said. "We had regulars who followed us around to all our shows and we would send cards to people when they were sick or got married. We did a lot of wedding dances and a lot of funerals, too."

The women said they didn't just put on a concert, they performed an entire show.

"We worked hard at having fun," Viv said. "We'd write and perform skits and we'd change costumes between each set. Some people would come watch us set up, watch the whole show and then watch us tear down."

"We were popular in the heyday of the steakhouse," Laurie said. "It was a time when people appreciated live music and actually danced. We used to teach line dances and everyone would dance."

"We would make it a point to go out and talk to each table," Jeanie said. "At first I was intimidated about approaching people but before long I figured out the trick was to ask them something about themselves and go from there."



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