

The Maintenance Man¹

The pilot was everyone's hero
He was brave, he was bold, he was grand
As he stood by his battered airplane
With his goggles and helmet in hand.

But for each of these flying heroes
There were thousands little reknowned
And these were the men who worked on the planes
But kept their feet on the ground.

We all know the name of Lindberg, and
We've read of his flight of fame.
But think if you can of his maintenance man,
Can you remember his name?

And think of the wartime heroes
And the acclaim that they all got.
Can you tell me the name of their crew chiefs?
A thousand to one you cannot.

Now pilots are highly trained people
And wings are not easily won,
But without the work of the maintenance man,
Our pilots would march with a gun.

So when you see a powerful airplane
As it makes its way through the air,
Remember the grease-stained man with the wrench in his hand,
For he is the one who put it there.

¹ Author unknown. RADM Red Best (USN, Ret) closed the 1999 Gunfighter banquet with this poem.