



THE BOYER BROTHERS

by Opal Louis Nations

The sleeve notes to the initial Boyer Brothers album on Savoy, released in 1966, describe the Boyers as being America's most unique gospel-singing duet who have appeared in thirty-two states, the District of Columbia, Canada, Germany, England, France and Austria. Their appeal is universal.

"I think my brother and I are perhaps the first sanctified gospel singers to establish reputations as scholars - and still be singing the gospel we were born to," said Horace Clarence Boyer to journalist Michael McLeod in a newspaper interview given in 1982. Horace Boyer added that "gospel originated as the music of the poor and uneducated. Gospel singing is not exactly an upper-middle class diversion." But Afro-American gospel has come a long way since the slave songs of the Eighteenth century.

In a 1979 article on contemporary gospel music, H.C. Boyer posed the question, "Is it possible that one day gospel music will no longer belong to the church?" By perusing the pages of Lisa Collins' yearly publication, *Gospel Music-Industry Round Up* (Eye On Gospel Publications, Culver City, Ca.), one gets the impression that gospel has certainly blended into the mainstream with artists like Whitney Houston and Kirk Franklin traveling the same superstar highways and byways as our current rap and gangster rap idols. Monthly publications

like *Gospel Industry* out of Washington, DC continue to remind us of that fact.

Summer 1995 saw the publication of H.C. Boyer's illuminating *How Sweet the Sound - The Golden Age of Gospel* (Elliott & Clark, Washington, DC). Boyer's book, for the first time, surveys all the important players in the development of the genre including invaluable information surrounding male and female quartets. Boyer himself was and still is an active half of **The Boyer Brothers**, a traditional gospel-singing duet with roots in Winter Park, Florida. "We recorded during a period when few young African American gospel singers got a chance to do so. We were very lucky," says James Boyer. The Boyer Brothers, **James Buchanan** (born 1934) and **Horace Clarence** (born 1935) were two of eight children of the Reverend Climmie L. and Ethel Boyer of Winter Park, Florida. James states that the Boyers were baptized at The Flowers Temple C.O.G.I.C. in Winter Park, Florida and that the pastor, Elder J.J. Flowers officiated as he did through the 1940s and 1950s (he passed away in 1964).

James took to the piano at age four and was encouraged with regular lessons given by an aunt, Mrs. Shellie McLeod. The family was affiliated with The Faith Holy Temple C.O.G.I.C. in Winter Park where Rev. Climmie L. Boyer was pastor. In an article published in *Rejoice Magazine* (Vol. 2, #2, Fall 1989), James and Memphis gospel researcher Odie H. Tolbert Jr. discuss the growth

and history of The Church of God In Christ denomination, from its beginnings in the latter half of the Nineteenth century with Bishop Charles Harrison Mason's battles to have his singing Pentecostal parishioners accepted by the church establishment through its musical pioneers - The Boyer Brothers were certainly among that number - to its spread through musical festivals held all over the United States and Europe.

The brothers' mother, Georgia, born Ethel Mae Williams, was blessed with a beautiful singing voice which she used solely for revivals, church services and songs sung by **The Faith Holy Temple Choir**. Their father, Rev. Climmie L. Boyer, although not directly involved in music, was a caring and supportive man. An uncle, the only other musically gifted family member, was an extremely talented jazz organist who played the New Jersey club circuit with **The Specs Williams Trio**.

During childhood, James and Horace participated in the "Sunshine Band," a child evangelist group for young people under the age of twelve. "When we were kids," says James, "gospel recordings were our principal source of learning songs. Our main influences were Mahalia Jackson, Brother Joe May, Sister Ernestine Washington, The Dixie Hummingbirds, The Angelic Gospel Singers and especially the duet recordings of Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Marie Knight." The Tharpe/Knight Decca sides were the brothers' chief source of inspiration. The pair listened and learned. Horace, who sings tenor, took Tharpe's part while James, a baritone, copied Knight's interweaving vocal refrains.

Eventually, on the church front, both Horace and James played piano for services, and Horace, taking up extra duties, directed the choir. During what precious time the lads had free, trips to Orlando, just five miles from Winter Park, were in order. "The most famous recording artists came to Orlando," says James, "and our idols, Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Marie Knight, played a ballpark in Sanford, just twenty miles away from our home. Later on, **The Roberta Martin Singers** came to play at a church in Winter Park."

While still at Hungerford High, James served as local promoter for both **The Angelic** and **Ward Singers**, in Orlando. The Boyer Brothers now spent summers and weekends appearing at church venues around Seminole, Orange and Sumter counties. In 1951, at summer break, one of the Boyers' high school teachers invited the couple to her hometown of Terre Haute in Indiana for a week-long revival engagement at her Methodist Church. By now, The Boyer Brothers' format was firmly set. James sang baritone and played piano. Horace stood beside the piano at the mike and sang tenor.

Horace describes The Boyers' routine in his book, *How Sweet The Sound* (page 244). "We sang two-part harmony on slow songs and used call and response on jubilee and shout songs. Singing in the sanctified style, the Boyers were adept at building tension through the use of the vamp." A Leesburg, Florida newspaper review described The Boyer Brothers' act as follows. "The Boyers' singing has a rich, full quality which few local gospel singers can achieve. Everywhere they have appeared, they have acquired loyal followers. Horace Boyer, a hefty, rather boisterous young lad, injects quite a bit of showmanship into his singing and at the same time, keeps that semi-pleading, down-to-earth style that has been known to cause people to shout, smile and chant. He puts his heart and mind into his singing which garners adulation and often creates a chorus of fervent amens. Brother James, who is much more soft spoken, possesses a voice with a similarity to many popular crooners. While it is not completely free of affectation, the sincerity of his emotion causes many music lovers to feel the message that he is trying to get across."

Once the week-long Terra Haute revival was over, other engagements came so that the one-week stay expanded to three. The Boyers were so popular that the duo played other churches in the Terra Haute area. Then one thing lead to another, and they found themselves performing in Indianapolis and other places along the way. The Greyhound bus was their sole means of transportation.

It needs to be said right here that The Boyer Brothers intended to continue their education. They both wanted to be teachers and study for their Bachelor de-

gree at The Bethune-Cookman College at Daytona Beach. To go to college, they needed money. "The only work teenage Black males could get in those days was cleaning yards or washing windows," says James. "We discovered that singing paid more money. It was an easy decision, however, besides the rewards - we loved the songs and the music, and we delighted in expressing it." Sometimes funds were limited and the Boyers had to rely on the hospitality of their hosts. "Preachers and church people were kind enough to allow us lodging and in some cases food, so we managed," says James.

Back home in Florida, the Boyers religiously tuned in to John Richbourg's radio program on WLAC. Starting in the late 1940s, Richbourg along with Gene Nobles and Hoss Allen, three White disc jockeys, played the best popular Black music to a mixed listening audience over WLAC which had 50,000 watts of power. WLAC's signal stretched all the way from Music City (Nashville) down the Eastern seaboard into the Deep South including Winter Park, Florida. On a quiet night, WLAC could be heard from Canada to the Caribbean. It was the Boyers' intention to visit John Richbourg whenever they could. On the way home from the Indiana trip on the Greyhound bus in the summer of 1951, the Boyer Brothers stopped off in Nashville. "We went and found John Richbourg at WLAC," says James. "We introduced ourselves and said we desired to make records. He had us to audition with only the piano. After he had heard one song, he said, wait a minute. Between his radio chores, he set up recording equipment and told us to run through two songs. Horace had arranged **James Anderson's** "Step By Step" and we had learned the traditional "Oh Lord, Stand By Me," which comprised our first 78 rpm record."

"Step By Step" lopes along with James and Horace singing punctually in harmony. The piano figures follow the classic sparse gospel chording of the day. "Oh Lord, Stand By Me" is sung with a little more vim and vigor with frilly piano and enthusiastic hand clapping accompaniment. Two other songs were given a run through during the session, but because they were simply taped and held back, James probably thought they were for audition purposes only. Although the Boyers enjoyed four releases on Excello in the 1952-'53 period, they have no recollection of ever meeting with the label's owner, Ernie Young, or his assistant, Ted Adams. How the release of the first Excello record came about in August 1952, we shall never know. We can assume that Richbourg sold Young on the idea of starting a second gospel release series and that Young liked what the Boyers had to offer. Gordon Skadberg in his liner notes to "Krooning - Southern Doo Wop, Vol. 2" (Ace 629, 1996), says that Young founded Excello to produce "Southern" type records aimed primarily at Black audiences in that regional market. He was already having success selling gospel records produced on his Nashboro label. It was simply a matter of expansion.

While in Nashville, the Boyers visited the Ryman Auditorium, home of the Grand Ole Opry. In those days, the Ryman, a church building, put on regular gospel programs. James describes the visit as follows. "Ms. **Gertrude Ward** was kind to us from the day we met her at the Ryman. **Mahalia Jackson** and **The Ward Singers** were appearing on the same bill. We went looking for Mahalia to ask if we could sing as one of the opening acts. Mahalia was at the movies but someone told us to speak to Mrs. Ward. When we approached her, she said 'sure!' After that, We felt a closeness to her. There were four Ward Singers that night, Gertrude and **Clara Ward**, **Marion Williams** and **Henrietta Waddy**. Marion was so hospitable and we felt a connection because she was identified with the Holiness Church, and so were we. We studied every record The Wards released. It should be remembered that Clara Ward was one of the few gospel singers to ever have a publicist - so we were able to track her appearances through *The Pittsburgh Courier*, a national newspaper, and through *Jet Magazine*."

When "Step By Step" came out and Richbourg played it over WLAC, all sorts of mail came in. People wrote to the Boyers from small towns in Alabama, Tennessee, Ohio, South Carolina and Mississippi. They wanted the Boyers to come to their neighborhoods and concertize. "Richbourg would forward the mail," says

photo: courtesy Opal Nations/Last Chance Archives



Horace & James Boyer with drummer Jackie Gilbert circa 1961

James. "Then we would write to the people, arranging programs of songs." "Step By Step" sold better than one would have expected, although *Billboard* failed to review it, and most of the trades turned a blind eye. "We received one or two royalty checks from Excello, and we always felt we were being short-changed," says James, "but we had no way of checking. We never signed for more than one year at a time, however."

The release of "Nothing Can Change Me" backed with "Jesus, Savior Pilot Me" came close on the heels of "Step By Step." "Jesus, Savior Pilot Me" is another fine gospel ballad sung stridently with Prof. Alex Bradford-like howls plus fine piano and accompanying organ. "Nothing Can Change Me" is a cheerful, jolly jump song celebrating the joys of salvation. Again, the second release sold well, but it failed to gain notice in the major trades.

"We traveled everywhere," says James. "Usually in the big cities, as part of a major program, appearing with other artists and musicians. In Atlanta, we first appeared with **The Radio Four** and **The Caravans** on an Easter Sunday afternoon. In New Orleans, we appeared with **Bessie Griffin**, **Sam Cooke** and **The Soul Stirrers**. In Chicago, **Singing Sammy Lewis** presented us and at another time, **Willie Webb** presented us with **Brother Joe May**. In Philadelphia at the Met, we were with **The Davis Sisters** and **The Sensational Nightingales**."

"We also took time out to visit Clara Ward's house at 3800 North Eighteenth Street. Clara kept Ward's House of Music, her business office, in the basement. It was John Moultrie (Willie Ward Moultrie's husband) who had booked us to appear at the Met on **The Davis Sisters'** anniversary program. In Memphis, **Rev. Cleophus Robinson** presented us with **The Davis Sisters** and others. In Cleveland, we actually headlined under the sponsorship of disc jockey Mary Holt. Later, we had **Dorothy Norwood** on **The Boyer Brothers'** Anniversary Celebration in Orlando. In Washington, DC, we worked with **Beatrice Woodford** and **The Young Gospel Singers** who also recorded for Excello in May 1953. In Dallas, we were at The Sportatorium, again with **The Davis Sisters**, except that they failed to show up. In Tampa, we were with **Dorothy Love-Coates** and **The Original Gospel Harmonettes** and on other occasions with **Mdm. Edna Gallmon Cooke** and **The Nightingales**."

1953 was a busy year for The Boyer Brothers who were by now engulfed in school work (James) at Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach and Horace at Hungerford High School. A month before the third Excello release, "He Delivered Me" backed with the traditional "He's Got The Whole World In His Hands,"

the Boyers conducted their second and final session with the company in Nashville. From this emerged the fourth and most obscure Excello release, "When Life Is Done" sandwiched with "I Can Feel God's Power."

The Boyer Brothers made third place in *The Pittsburgh Courier's* voting poll, gospel singers section, behind **The Ward Singers** and **The Cincinnatians**. At the foot of the voting results, *The Courier* wrote, "Gospel singing is big business and *The Courier* introduced voting for this type of music last year, and the readers responded nobly." The Cincinnatians were an excellent male aggregation fortunate enough to record for Brunswick who dubbed drumming over their acappella renditions of, among other songs, James Anderson's "Step By Step."

In May, the Boyers appeared at The City Auditorium in Atlanta. A month later, *Billboard Magazine* announced a nationwide tour taking place in both Chicago and New York. By now, the Boyers had established a booking headquarters on South Campbell Street in Daytona Beach. A concert recital was given at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Otto Leonard of Smithfield, Virginia (?), and another at The Venetian Gardens Ballpark as part of a festival sponsored by The Leesburg Federation of Clubs in Florida. A local notice mentioned that by this point the Boyers had sung in sixteen states, the District of Columbia and Canada. The article continued by stating that although the Boyers were virtually unknown singers, they drew more people to their concerts than most entertainers.

During a stay in Chicago in the summer of 1954, The Boyer Brothers befriended Prof. Alex Bradford who at that time sang and recorded with **The Bradford Specials** at Specialty Records out in Hollywood. Bradford also served as talent scout for a number of labels, Apollo, Specialty and Chance being just a few. It was through Bradford's connection with Ewart Abner Jr. at Art Sheridan's Chance Records that the brothers recorded for the label. Chance Records was located on "Record Row" or Cottage Grove, which stretched from 47th to 50th Streets. "Prof. Alex Bradford was very kind to us," says James. "He arranged our July 1954 session and even played some of the songs for us. Alex assisted a number of singers the same way. With Alex's connection for the session, we worked with Ewart Abner Jr."

Four songs emerged from the Chance Session. "Trust Him Today" and "Going Back To God" came out on the Chance label in August. "Going Back To God" is a rocking chart sung with great gusto. Prof. Bradford played piano and added to the spirit-moving atmosphere of the recording. "Trust Him Today," a bal-

lad, again accompanied by Bradford on piano, is reminiscent of later recordings made by **The O'Neal Twins** who pilfered much from The Boyer Brothers' style. Abner was in the process of quitting the faltering Chance Records during this time, and according to James Boyer, took the brothers with him when he went to work for John and Vivian Bracken at the fledgling Vee Jay Records at 4747 Cottage Grove. Vee Jay reissued the Chance single in April 1955, and the remaining two songs, "Let's Walk Together" and "I Love To Tell The Story" turned up on two Vee Jay singles issue in December 1955 and October 1956, respectively. The Chance single was reissued yet again on a Vee Jay International album entitled "Forty Gospel Greats" (VJS 2-19000) in 1974.

In July 1955, under Abner's supervision, The Boyer Brothers cut their first session for John and Vivian Carter's Vee Jay label. Except for the two songs accompanying the two from Chance, the Carters saw fit not to issue any of the five remaining titles which included a cover version of **The Staple Singers'** 1954 Sharp recording of "This May Be The Last Time" and **C.D. Martin's** "His Eye Is On The Sparrow." The Boyers appeared at The Sandy Gavin Auditorium in Phoenix City, Alabama and in the fall gave a concert with **The Alex Bradford Singers** and **The Ann Martin Singers** at The Big Bethel AME Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

James remembers nothing concerning contractual arrangements with Vee Jay. Abner handled the brothers' legal affairs, and their major concern was to continue making records for as long as possible. "In some ways it was bad," says James, "but in other ways it was a blessing, because so few gospel singers were recording in those days - especially as young as we were. Vee Jay allowed us to record at Chicago's Universal Studios which was also being used by stars like **Nat King Cole** and **Ella Fitzgerald**. It was a period of celebration for us. Gospel music was different back then. Mahalia's stature was the measuring stick by which so much was evaluated. Although we were paid an advance to record, we never received royalties or guested on Vivian Bracken's own weekly gospel radio program over WGRY."

Some time around this period, the brothers graduated from Bethune-Cookman College at Daytona Beach. James majored in Business and Social Science while Horace focused on Music, including a dissertation on African-American gospel. In March 1957, *Billboard Magazine* announced the following: "Cal Carter is planning a hurry up session for Army-bound spiritual group, The Boyer Bros." A date was set in May at which time six songs were committed to tape. The Boyers, by now stationed far away or overseas, had to wait half a year before Vee Jay reluctantly issued "Nothing Less Than Jesus" coupled with "I Heard From Heaven" from the May session. We must assume that Vee Jay Records felt that as the brothers were not in a position to fill engagement dates that would enable the company to sell and promote product, they did not see the need to gamble with the artists solely based on their reputation. As a consequence, the remaining four titles stayed in the can.

"Nothing Less Than Jesus" is a peerlessly sung vehicle, supported as usual by Prof. Bradford's deft organ and celeste. Solid drumming punctuates an exciting call and response effort. The upbeat "I Heard From Heaven" sounds as if accompanied by the ghost of Alex Bradford on the organ part. The song's feel and arrangement most definitely indicates that Bradford had a hand in the writing of it. Although "Nothing Less Than Jesus" turned out to be The Boyer Brothers' most sought-after release, they were destined never to record for the firm again.

An article published in 1959 in a local hometown newspaper described The Boyer Brothers' Army exploits in some detail. "Both brothers have been on active duty for some time. James recently returned from a year and a half in Europe during which time he sang in Germany, Austria, and Paris, France. Horace is still in the Army. He has another year to serve and is currently stationed at Fort Jackson, S.C. where his primary duty is that of assisting Chaplain Kissinger of the first training regiment. While in Europe, James' duty assignment was personnel administrative specialist. He appeared in many soldier music presentations and gave a command performance for the 7th Army Commander in Nuremberg, prior to

photo: courtesy Opal Nations/Last Chance Archives



Early 1970's publicity photo
Horace & James Boyer

his return to the U.S. Last Mother's Day, he performed in a gospel concert at the Ring Theatre in Amber, Germany. Horace is music director for the chapel of the training regiment at Fort Jackson."

Mrs. Ethel Boyer, the Boyer's mother, organized a homecoming gospel concert at the Winter Park C.O.G.I.C. with the date set at August 3rd. Local performers plus the Boyers were slated to appear. The Boyer Brothers influenced many singing duets during the 1950s. One such item was **The O'Neal Twins**, Edward and Edgar O'Neal, who grew up singing at storefront churches and prayer meetings around St. Louis. The O'Neals belonged to the Pentecostal Movement. Another such pairing was **The Boggs Specials** who sometimes took on a third voice, that of **Billy Bennett**. The Boggs Specials were **Prof. Harold Boggs** and his driver/partner, **Warner Buxton**. "The Boggs Specials and The Boyer Brothers exchanged programs," says James. "This meant that in Florida, they were often our guests and sometimes stayed with us at Winter Park, and in the Port Clinton, Ohio-Toledo area, we would stay with them. We were friends and shared music and the experience of performing."

In 1961, The Boyer Brothers appeared on Orbit, a morning gospel T.V. show in Orlando at WLOF, Channel 9. Other guests included **The Sunlight Gospel Singers**, drummer **Jackie Gilbert**, plus **Clara Ward** and **The Famous Ward Singers**. James Boyer, going out as a solo, gave a musical birthday concert with **The Clara Ward Singers** at the Carver Heights High School in Leesburg, Florida, sponsored by The Leesburg Negro Chamber of Commerce. James has a few interesting things to say about The Wards. "While we were students at Bethune-Cookman College, The Boyer Brothers would often coordinate their appearances. Although our relationship with Ms. Ward was professional, our mother would cook for them each time they came to perform. On another occasion, Clara Ward invited The Boyer Brothers to discontinue under their own name, and become part of The Ward's Male Quartette although it was never revealed to us just who the other members might be. We emphatically told her that The Boyer Brothers were not interested in singing under any other name. We thanked them for the thought. The Ward's Male Quartette never came about."

James was instructor in Business Education and English at The Phyllis Wheatley High School at this time. As a student of gospel history and spiritual music composition, Horace Boyer made it his mission to meet with the great **Thomas A. Dorsey** in the Windy City. His trip is outlined in Bernice Johnson Reagon's book, "We'll understand it better - by and by" (Smithsonian Institution, 1992) for which Horace contributed six significant gospel composer monographs as well as function as overall compositions analyst.

"On March 13, 1964, I arrived in Chicago as a young graduate student and called Mr. Dorsey and asked for an interview. I introduced myself as one of The Boyer Brothers which did not seem to mean anything to him. However, he agreed to the interview, and I spent two days with him." Overawed by Dorsey's arresting influ-

ence on gospel music, Horace Boyer states, "his name is synonymous with the entire genre. His association with gospel music is so great that there were periods during the 1940s and 1950s when all new gospel songs were called 'Dorseys'."

In 1966, says James, "we contacted Lawrence Roberts about recording for Savoy. It turned out that he knew our music. He arranged for us to record in Atlanta, and we did two albums - "Take Your Troubles To Jesus - The Famous Boyer Brothers, Vol. 1" (Savoy 14143) and "Step By Step - The Famous Boyer Brothers, Vol. 2" (Savoy 14155) recorded in 1966 and 1967.

The liner notes to the "Step By Step" album indicate that the collection is "musically dedicated to the Gospel Choir of the Bay Street C.O.G.I.C. Winter Garden (Park?) Florida where James is director and to the Wells Special Choir of St. Paul's Baptist Church at Cocoa (Cape Kennedy) Florida where Horace is both director and organist."

Of the two collections, this writer is familiar with only one - "Take Your Troubles To Jesus." Of all the songs, my favorites are "Step On Over," a vigorous chart song with assertive, military-like bravado, "He'll Understand," a sweeping ballad with strong, soaring vocals, "Friendship With Jesus" which joyfully goes along in glorious waltz time, and "All On The Altar," a slow, soulful melody sung with compassion.

I asked James how The Boyer Brothers' songs get to be written and from where the inspiration comes. "Sometimes the songs come from an experience," says James. "For example, we were once traveling to New Orleans on a train. Crossing Lake Pontchartrain Causeway, I became frightened by the water which coursed beneath both sides of the train. It was during this period of fright that I wrote "Lord, Be My Protector." (This song was issued by Vee Jay Records in 1955.) "Usually an experience triggers a song. When I tried to just write, nothing memorable would come."

As the 1960s came to a close, Horace entered The Eastman School of Music at New York's University at Rochester where he would earn his Ph.D. in Music Theory. James, on the other hand, secured a place at Ohio State University and later graduated with a Ph.D. in Education. In 1974, The Boyer Brothers contacted Shannon Williams at Nashboro Records, and it was agreed that the Boyers cut one album, "Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory" (Nashboro LP 7129). "We received an advance of expenses," says James, "but we never received any further compensation. I remember we flew into Nashville and took some singing friends with us: **Mildred Loman Eason**, **Ruby Harris**, **Linda Pope** and **Aurelius Brown**, all from Florida. After the one Nashboro session, we never released another record. In the early 1980s, however, we cut some songs for **Rev. Haran Griffin** in Jackson, Mississippi, but they were never released because Griffin's record company never got off the ground. Somehow we got our hands on the masters, but they were never mixed."

In October 1975, The Boyer Brothers gave a concert at The Holy Tabernacle Church of Dorchester in Boston with **The Exciting Gospel Enchores**, a group one could almost call the sons of The Boyer Brothers, "they matched us so perfectly it was like passing the torch, from the old to the new."

The Boyer Brothers have enjoyed a lengthy career in radio programming. Since 1974, says James, "I have always had a Sunday morning radio show on which I have featured recorded traditional gospel music. From 1974 until 1986, I was on KMAN-AM at 8:30 a.m. Sundays. In 1986, I went over to KQLA 103.5 FM at 7:00 a.m. each Sunday. That program continues to this day - it is called **The James Boyer Program of Gospel Music**. In 1988, KHCA, a Christian rock station, took to the air at 95.3 FM in Manhattan, Kansas. I was invited to do a program for them. I call my show **The Tradition of Gospel Music** and play only traditional forms of gospel. It is aired 9:30 a.m. Sundays and has a sizable listening audience in the Central Kansas area. It continues today. I stick to traditional gospel music, as plenty of programmers seem to be doing just contemporary gospel."

Notable accomplishments during the decade of the 1980s begin with a recital given at Washington Univer-

sity at Pullman in connection with the Washington State Black History Celebration. This was followed in 1981 with a song selection at Florida State, on a program celebrating Christmas. Stepping up appearances, the Boyers were part of a large gospel extravaganza in Topeka, Kansas in July 1982, followed by an engagement at The Smithsonian Institution in praise of **Lucie Campbell's** lifelong contribution to gospel music.

Horace became musical curator at The Museum of American History attached to The Smithsonian. The Smithsonian had begun to schedule tributes to gospel music. "Part of a museum-wide effort," Horace says, "to reflect the grassroots history and day-to-day lifestyles of the country." In 1984, the Boyers conducted a classic gospel song workshop at The Smithsonian in collaboration with The National Baptist Convention. A year later, the Boyers put together a ten-song cassette at their own expense entitled "Classic Gospel Songs" to accompany materials used at The Smithsonian workshops. The set opens with a remake of their first record, "Step By Step" which the brothers sing with eagerness and clarity. Other standouts include a revivalist rendition of the "Church's Going Back To Jerusalem," a solid, driving interpretation of "Come On, Let's Pray," a reissue of the extremely fine jubiliatory "Going Back To God," first issued by Chance Records in 1954, plus the beautifully rendered "I Love To Tell The Story," first issued on Vee Jay in 1955.

1986 was marked by The First Arts in the Park Celebration of Gospel Music in The Boyer Brothers' own home town. The Boyers appeared with a host of other artists. In 1989, the Boyers concertized in honor of Afro-American Heritage at the First National Black Historical Society and Museum in Wichita, Kansas. 1995 saw the release of Horace Boyer's "How Sweet The Sound" (The Golden Age of Gospel), (Elliott & Clark). The flyleaf explains that the text outlines the development of gospel from a discrete musical style in the early 1900s to one of the most listened-to forms of music in the world. The book is a welcome addition to what precious little has been published to date in the traditional form.

Last year, Horace received the Distinguished Service Award from the University of Colorado at Boulder for his devotion to spreading the gospel. His recent appearance on "The History of Gospel," a T.V. documentary, showed an articulate, charming and, as always, zestful scholar, devoted to his art. James Boyer is currently writing a monograph on ex-Caravan **Albertina Walker**, based partly on interviews given after a concert organized by James at The All Faiths Chapel on the Kansas State University campus at Manhattan.

For most of their college teaching careers, James has been a member of faculty at Kansas State at Manhattan and Horace, The University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Horace teaches music, and James, a minister, promotes the teaching of gospel music while pastoring the C.O.G.I.C. which he and his wife founded in 1976. Their contributions to the survival of traditional gospel music in the U.S. has proved invaluable.

- with thanks to James and Horace Boyer



Circa 1955

BOYER BROTHERS DISCOGRAPHY

Boyer Brothers:

- James Buchanan Boyer, piano and baritone vocals
- Horace Clarence Boyer, organ and tenor vocals

Nashville, July 1952

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Step By Step | Excello 2000 |
| Oh Lord, Stand By Me | Excello 2000 |
| Nothing Can Change Me | Excello 2002 |
| Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me | Excello 2002 |

Nashville, April 1953

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| He Delivered Me | Excello 2010 |
| He's Got The Whole World In His Hands | Excello 2010 |

When Life Is Done

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| I Can Feel God's Power | Excello 2029 |
|------------------------|--------------|

Famous Boyer Brothers:

- James Buchanan Boyer, piano and baritone vocals
- Horace Clarence Boyer, tenor vocals
- Gerald Spraggins, organ
- Alex Bradford, piano*
- plus unknown drums

Chicago, July 1954

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Trust Him Today* | Chance 5009 | Vee Jay 130 |
| Let's Walk Together | | Vee Jay 209 |
| I Love To Tell The Story | | Vee Jay 163 |
| Going Back To God* | Chance 5009 | Vee Jay 130 |

Chicago, June 1955

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Lord Be My Protector | Vee Jay 209 |
| Until Jesus Comes | Unissued |
| He's My Solid Rock | Vee Jay 163 |
| He Heard Me | Unissued |
| One More Time | Unissued |
| This May Be The Last Time | Unissued |
| His Eye Is On The Sparrow | Unissued |

Famous Boyer Brothers

- James Buchanan Boyer, piano and baritone vocals
- Horace Clarence Boyer, tenor vocals
- other musicians - unknown

Chicago, May 1957

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Thank God For That | Unissued |
| Let The Light Keep Burning | Unissued |
| Nothing Less Than Jesus | Vee Jay 851 |
| Lord, I'll Do Your Will | Unissued |
| What Prayer Can Do | Unissued |
| I Heard From Heaven | Vee Jay 851 |

Famous Boyer Brothers

- James Buchanan Boyer, piano and baritone vocals
- Horace Clarence Boyer, tenor vocals
- Marvin Anderson, organ
- Nat Turner, bass
- John Kelly, drums
- Unidentified tambourine

Atlanta, March 1966

- "Take Your Troubles To Jesus": Savoy LP MG 14143
- A Child Of God
 - All On The Altar
 - Almost Persuaded
 - God So Loved The World
 - I Surrender All
 - Take Your Troubles To Jesus
 - Step On Over
 - He'll Understand
 - There's A Dark Cloud Rising
 - Friendship With Jesus

Famous Boyer Brothers

- James Buchanan Boyer, piano or/and baritone vocals
- Horace Clarence Boyer, tenor or/and piano

Marvin Anderson, organ

Nat Turner, bass

John Kelly, drums

Atlanta, 1967

- "Step By Step": Savoy LP MG 14155
- We Are Healed (H.C.B., piano)
 - I'll Be A Servant For The Lord
 - Church's Going Back To Jerusalem
 - Step By Step
 - I Can Feel God's Power
 - Scandalizing My Name
 - I Don't Know What God Wants (J.B.B., piano)
 - Don't You Believe In Prayer
 - You Can't Compare God's Goodness
 - Just One More Time (J.B.B., piano)

The Boyer Brothers

- James Buchanan Boyer, piano and baritone vocals
- Horace Clarence Boyer, organ and tenor vocals
- Mildred Loman Eason *
- Linda Pope **
- Sister Ruby Harris ***
- Arclius Brown ****
- unknown drums

Nashville, 1973

- "Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory": Nashboro LP 7129
- God Is Using Me
 - Lord, Be My Protector
 - Don't Forget The Family Prayer
 - Thank God For That
 - Everything Will Be Alright
 - You've Got A Friend
 - The 27th Psalm (Wait On The Lord) *
 - Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory **

PARDON US!

RB Issue No.8 - in our Deitra Farr CD review we reported some erroneous 'facts' regarding Farr's career story and Deitra was quick to correct us with an accurate account which we will convey right now to you, our readers...First of all, Deitra never gained renown as a poet (her poetry was never published). Secondly, Erwin Helfer did not turn her on to her own cultural history (she was well aware of her cultural roots long before she met Erwin. He simply helped her with stage routine, etc...we stated "there are no writing credits on the CD jacket" - true enough but they are, however, listed on the disc itself. Our apologies.

RB Issue No.8 - our very esteemed colleague, Dick Shurman, wrote us to address a couple of points in the last issue. Firstly, regarding the Universal/MCA release *Chess Blues Piano Greats*, "...on the Spann Checker songs *Five Spot/It Must Have Been The Devil*...it's pretty widely accepted that the other guitarist besides B.B. is Jody Williams, taking the second solo on "Five Spot." Secondly, "...on the new Spann Testament CD...you'll hear Spann call his (Muddy Waters) name more than once before solos."