



Wilma's grandfather, Elder William Mack Kline.



Wilma's father, Louis Albert Westfield.



Wilma's mother, Loretta Westfield.



Wilma and her first child, Terrance.

In the mid-20th century, a substantial body of gospel music was recorded and produced by a handful of small, local labels in Louisville. Grace Gospel Records, owned and operated by Wilma Clayborn and her husband John, is a central feature of Louisville's gospel music legacy.

my family history in music goes back to the 1890s, when my grandfather was a boy in the hills of Tennessee singing songs he would later teach his grandchildren. From the 1900s to the 1920s, music in the Black church was the solemn, sacred songs of the Anglican diaspora mixed with the African negro spiritual tradition, Holiness and Pentecostal churches, music that was more jubilant. They were singing jubilee music similar to white Southern sacred music. As time moved on, gospel music crept into their repertoire. Gospel music developed into something quite different from what they were used to. It was not accepted in many Black churches in the early days, and many people thought it was too jazzy.

I grew up on that traditional gospel of the 1920s and the '30s out of Chicago and St. Louis. It was the sound and songs of Thomas A. Dorsey, blues and jazz musician, who converted and gave his life back to God. Dorsey is recognized as the father of gospel music. He said that singing with spiritual

fervor and the word of God should be called "gospel music." So a lot of the sacred hymns were converted into gospel by embellishing the song with new chords and sometimes new rhythm. I use the word "gospelize." So we gospelized some of the songs from earlier traditions.

Gospel music is just a part of me. My family is a musical family going back to my grandfather. He was associate minister of a church that they built down there in Cleveland, Tennessee. I remember my grandpa telling me they used the shape note system, and he taught me shape note singing too. My dad would listen to Preacher Cobb and his 200-voice choir from Chicago on Sunday nights. The music was chipper, upbeat, and we enjoyed it. We stayed up until 11:30 p.m. listening to him. That was every Sunday night, like a ritual.

My mother, Loreta Westfield, grew up singing in the choir at her family's church, but she also put together a group of her sisters and cousins called the Shadows of the Cross. They had some pretty music that was a combination of that jubilee music but with a flavor of Black culture in it. When my mother came to Louisville in 1925, she found a group in the East End called the Utopia Union, which had been started by Ms. Reba Stringer. They had a senior choir and congregation singing. People were singing spirituals, sacred songs and jubilee music. They weren't singing gospel music yet because that hadn't materialized.

Before about 1940, you didn't hear of any gospel choirs in Louisville. This was a quartet city. I remember the Silverleaf Quartet, which was a female quartet, and the Sewanee Quintette. We would see them on programs — not in the church service — on Sunday afternoons and evenings. Many gospel quartets and groups couldn't go into a lot of churches because some pastors frowned on it. So the Quartet Union bought a building on 28th and Dumesnil streets.

We attended the Church of God Sanctified on South 15th Street. When I was little, it was a big white house that was set up as a church. It was farther back off the road than it is now. There was a pulpit and the choir sat on the side of that and there were benches for the congregants. It had a lot of windows and was bright in there. My mother and another lady from our church, Henrietta Frey, sang in the Utopia Union, which was one of the first community gospel choirs in the city. All of us little kids were around during rehearsals. We were little-bitty tots, but we knew all the songs and would sing with them. They decided to start a children's group, and we became the Junior Utopia Choir. At the age of four, I sang my first solo, on a song called "Telephone To Glory." The solo goes: "Central's never busy / Always on the line / You can get in touch with heaven / Almost any time / ...On the royal telephone." That's when I started hearing what I think of as "gospel music."

Then, in 1952, when I was 12 years old, my mother and Henrietta Frey started a gospel choir at our church called the Gospel Aires, and I was invited to sing with them. Three of us from the Junior Utopia Choir — Lillie Frey, Bud Frey and me — were invited to sing with the Gospel Aires. We were doing all kinds of songs. We sang the songs that the congregation sang — jubilee, spirituals, acapella songs — but they had different songs they'd throw in too. A new sound that nobody around here was singing. David Craig, our pianist and director, sang songs that his family had sung as younger people in Missouri. They also knew songs from Chicago, where gospel had really taken hold. We'd never heard those songs before. They weren't on the radio and people weren't singing them here in Louisville.

Sometimes we'd take a spiritual song and start it in a traditional way, then segue into a gospel sound. It was very exciting. And after we would sing songs like that, people would come to you and say, "Oh, you all just blessed my soul with that music."

The Gospel Aires did programs at our church, we went to other churches, and as the years went on, we started traveling in the region. I can remember going in a caravan of cars to churches in Russellville and Hopkinsville in Kentucky, and Evansville and Indianapolis in Indiana. The furthest we went was Chicago or Nashville. We would



Gospel Aires, 1950s.

go help them in their services and boost them up, make them feel good. Help them sing if they had very small memberships.

It was hard to find gospel records back when I was a teenager. I would go to Vine Record Store downtown on Fourth Street. The manager and clerk was a woman named Lee, and I'd say, "Do you have any Sallie Martin Records? Albertina Walker and the Caravans?" And she'd say, "Well, we just can't find them." Then I'd go to the Bible Bookstore on Guthrie Street where they had some gospel, but they didn't have any Black sheet music or song books at all. We heard gospel music on the radio late at night from Randy's Records in Gallatin, Tennessee. So I started ordering records from them. I ordered sheet music from a store in Chicago.

I went to college when I was 15 because I skipped several grade levels at Talbert Elementary school on Eighth and Kentucky. Teachers told my mother that they didn't have anything else to teach me, so they'd put me in the next grade level. I took a test and could have gone to college when I was 12, but I didn't want to. I wanted to experience high school. I graduated from Central High School, and then I started college when I was 15 years old. I was accepted at U of L, but I didn't want to be just a number in the class. So in 1956 I enrolled at Kentucky State College, where I majored in science and biology. I never thought about my age. I never felt like I

was in over my head. If I didn't understand something, I was not afraid to ask questions.

When I was 17, a junior in college, I formed an informal singing group with some of the girls in my dorm. We got together maybe every other night down in the basement at the dorm and we would sing and just practice. We didn't know each other, but we knew the songs. We started singing for the midweek service because they didn't have anybody singing then, and we were the first gospel group on the campus.

When I came home in the summer of '57, the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses was held in Louisville. The convention was really big — like several conventions in one — with many different departments. The NCGCC Youth Department was over at Mount Lebanon Baptist Church. The Parent Body was at Broadway Temple AME Zion at 13th and Broadway. We were joined by some friends from Detroit who were musicians in the Youth Department of the national Church of God Sanctified. They stayed with us for a week at my parents' house out on Cooper Chapel Road. They loved coming out to Mom and Dad's house in the country. They took me with them to the convention that week. One night I heard some music that I had never heard before, and I don't think anybody else had ever heard it either.

That night, Sister Sally Martin — a well-known gospel singer who worked alongside Thomas Dorsey — introduced

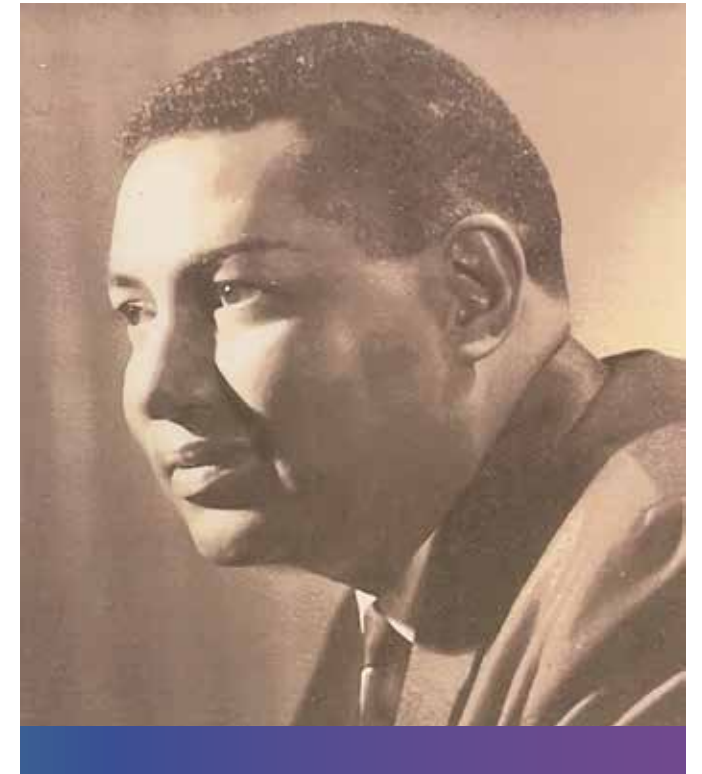


Wilma Clayborn.

these three sisters from Chicago, and they sang "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know." It blew everybody's mind. Changed everybody. I'd heard other people sing that song when I was a child, of course, but when they sang it, chills ran through you. Nobody arranged songs like that. People were just wide-eyed and in awe. That was the Barrett Sisters, and their harmonies were all over the place; one would go down the scale and another would go up. They were singing melodies *within* the melody of the song, while keeping the basic song intact. It was so different. Nobody else sang like that. They were just phenomenal. They became nationally and internationally known.

I joined NCGCC in 1957. I've been a member for 64 years and am on the board of directors. When I started a family, my children traveled with us and went to conventions from the time they were literally babies. I remember being in a hotel once with our kids, and my son Terrance slept in the bed with me and my husband while Jocelyn, the baby, slept in a dresser drawer. We used the pillow for the mattress. That was her bassinets.

Thomas Dorsey's main ideas when he started the NCGCC was to help musicians, singers and directors to learn new music, and take it back to their choirs. If you wanted to be a member of the NCGCC, you had to be a member of a local chapter. Each chapter was made up of different groups from different churches. An NCGCC chapter in any city was to



John Clayborn.

be made of singers from at least five different churches. The idea was, if you have all these people — representing at least five different churches, and singing songs that they learned at NCGCC — that helps to spread the music around. People were encouraged to bring their music that they had written to the national convention. So many people wrote music and shared it, and then people took it home to their unions and their churches. Last year we counted 48 chapters nationally, and I remember 1,400 people or more at some annual conferences. It's just like being on a river where the boats come up and down the river and go to different places dropping people off and picking people up: As we go to different conventions, we hear other people singing, and people hear us singing, and we all bring that music back to our homes. The local chapter of the NCGCC was called Louisville Choral Union.

I graduated from KSU in 1960 at age 19. My first job out of college was teaching science in Paducah, Kentucky. Every place I went, I would start a gospel group. So I started a community group there called the Gospel Cherubim with a friend of mine, Lloyce Ann Burton, whose father was the pastor of a big Baptist church. We sang at nursing homes, church programs and other events. One day, I auditioned a guy to be a tenor in the group. He was a very dynamic singer, but I didn't hire him to be in the group at that time. His name was John Clayborn, and he would later become my husband.



Larry Adams (seated) with unknown choir.

John had a record shop in a small building in Paducah. Everyone called him John Clay, and his shop was called Clay's Records. He was into gospel — he even sang in a group called Wings Over Jordan Singers in Columbus, Ohio — but he didn't have any gospel music in his store. I said, "Well, how about I get you some gospel music in here?" I helped him out in that store and set up his gospel catalog. I went to Nashville and visited the recording companies like Nashboro and Randy's Records, where you ordered music from back then. I knew how to do that. I was one of the big promoters of gospel music wherever I went, and every place I went I started a gospel group. When I came back to Louisville, John followed me, and after a year or so we got married in 1963. After we got married, he started singing in the choir at my church, Church of God Sanctified.

Louisville's known for having a lot of talented singers and musicians. We may not have the big record exposure like other cities, but the talent is here. People come from all over to hire musicians from Louisville. I don't know why, but Louisville's gospel scene was always overlooked, like we were just a hick town. But we had such powerful singers and groups. I don't know if there was a sound that was particular to Louisville, but there were people who were writing gospel music and people who were singing and traveling, doing tours. Lucille Jones and the Traveling Notes went all over the country, and

they did a couple of albums and a 45 with Nashboro. There was Van Eva Jeffries, the Carnation Quintette, the Gospel Majors, Glen Elliot and the Angelic Chimes. There was so much talent at the time and a lot of great church choirs like Greater Salem, Cable Baptist Church, Lampton Baptist Church. There were just so many of them at the time.

Quartets, groups and choirs would perform at different programs and concerts every week after Sunday worship and before or after night services. Everyone could hear the different sounds, different family groups, community groups, groups that came out of the church that weren't in a choir. Everybody had a particular month and a particular Sunday. And if you were going to have a program, you didn't want to have a program on their day, because you didn't want to mess up their crowd. Everybody who wanted to celebrate their anniversary would invite others to come in and be on that program.

St. James at 22nd and Oak streets had a program there for quartets and small groups. They'd allow people to come in and have programs. St. Stephen, Greater Salem, Stoner Memorial at 12th and Oak streets, that's where Della Porter and her groups frequently had programs, and we'd go there a lot. Lampton Baptist had a group called the Lamptonites. We had programs at our church and Sunday nights at Moore Temple COGIC. Bishop Moore played saxophone, and they



Gospel Motivators, 1968.

were always jammin', as they say. Once a month at Cable Baptist Church, there would be an impromptu community concert where different groups would perform. Cable had several choirs. The group Larry Adams Ltd. came out of Cable. Paul Merrit played piano there. He was a powerful musician and was sort of the instigator in pulling a lot of things together.

I had been away to college and away to teach, but I came back to Louisville in 1962 or so because I was homesick. The Gospel Aires — the group I had been in with my parents — had fizzled out. At the Church of God Sanctified, we had the senior choir sound and the mixed congregation sound, but we felt like there was an opportunity to do something more contemporary. We had people in the church who wanted to *sing*, so we started the Gospel Motivators.

We were all in our 20s, and we had a different sound. It was unique because of the way we combined sounds. We weren't singing the hymns of the church. We weren't using the jubilee sound. It was a very contemporary gospel sound at that time. We were doing new gospel songs that we'd learned at the national convention. Gospel is continuously changing because the world is continuously changing. At that time, gospel music was coming out of the church and was starting to mix with the sounds and styles of secular music.

We sang Clinton Utterbach's songs, which were smooth.

And the jazzy part came from California by way of Edwin Hawkins. Gospel music changed around the early '70s when Edwin Hawkins put a spin on "Oh, Happy Day," a hymn that they gospelized. It was a totally different sound that developed between jubilee-type singing, spirituals and gospel, and mixed the sounds of New York, California, Chicago, Missouri, Tennessee: Our sound was from all over the country.

To me, being in the Gospel Motivators was great because I was playing for the group and directing it. There were dynamite singers in my church. They learned quickly. It was easy to teach them. I had a few frogs, but they came around and they were faithful. We never had more than about 20 in the group. It always stayed about the same: eight or nine women and the same for the men. We were together from about 1965 to about 1975. We put out that one 45 on Grace Gospel, and a couple on Sensational Sounds, Brother Joe Thomas' label.

My husband started Grace Gospel as a way to help talented people get recorded. John gave people advice on how to get records made, and he did some work in the studio coaching people on their singing, diction and delivery. Later on, he started recording groups himself and releasing the music on our record label, Grace. We started recording groups and producing records around 1965.

During the Christmas season one year, we went to visit John's uncle and the family that raised him in Keeling,



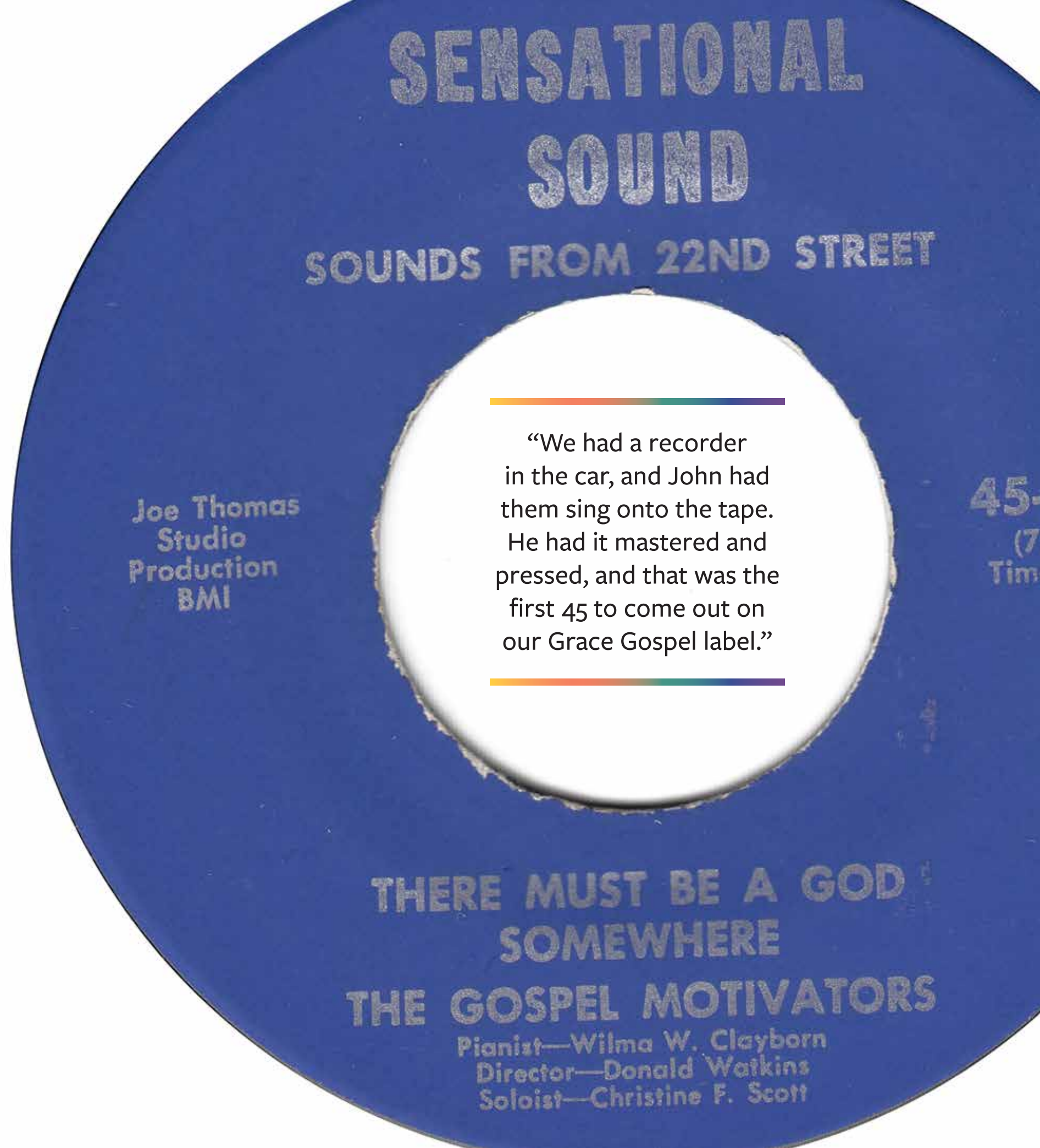
The Lee Brothers.

Tennessee, down near Memphis. We were laughing and talking with some of his people, and come to find out a lot of them were singers, including the Lee Brothers, who had a group called the Spiritual Singers of Stanton, Tennessee. We met them in a living room in this big white house back in the country where my husband grew up. Somebody called them up and they came over to the house and sang. They had beautiful harmony. We had a recorder in the car, and John had them sing onto the tape. He had it mastered and pressed, and that was the first 45 to come out on our Grace Gospel label. A year or two later we brought them to Louisville and organized a recording session at Allen and Martin Studios in J-Town and worked with them to record *Walk On in His Footsteps*. Early on, John also worked with Cliff Butler, who released some music on the Grace label, before he started his own label later.

When we recorded a group, the group got the bulk of the records. And we didn't reorder them unless they wanted them. We did mail order back then because we didn't have distribution. We just knew a lot of people and we kept in touch with them. Additionally, we went to at least three conventions a year, and we would sell Grace records there along with records by popular artists.

But by 1966 we were doing quite a bit of business. At first, John got an office at 21st and Broadway in a house. In front of the house was a beauty salon, and his office was in the back of that. There was another room in the front where they had a record player, and he put records on display. Various people would come through and say, "Oh, I sure would like to have that record," and John knew where he got it from. He'd call the distributing companies and have them ship some records. It got to where people were asking him, "Can you get me this record? Can you get me the Barrett sisters? Albertina Walker? Edwin Hawkins? Shirley Caesar? Mighty Clouds of Joy? Can you get me this-that-and-the-other thing?" People were just flocking in because it was hard to get gospel records. It got larger and larger, and in 1966 we moved from 21st and Broadway and set up a full-blown record store at 18th and Chestnut across from Asbury Chapel AME Zion. We rented the storefront from West Chestnut Street Baptist Church.

We had several big display racks of albums from people who were singing in the industry at that time, and people were excited to be able to get those records. Students from U of L, who were writing their dissertations, would come to the store to get information off the back of records. We had mail orders from Canada and Texas and Tennessee. There was one guy



SENSATIONAL SOUND

SOUNDS FROM 22ND STREET

Joe Thomas
Studio
Production
BMI

“We had a recorder in the car, and John had them sing onto the tape. He had it mastered and pressed, and that was the first 45 to come out on our Grace Gospel label.”

THERE MUST BE A GOD
SOMEWHERE
THE GOSPEL MOTIVATORS
Pianist—Wilma W. Clayborn
Director—Donald Watkins
Soloist—Christine F. Scott



University of Louisville Photographic Archives

John Clayborn at Grace Gospel Record Store on Broadway.

from Canada who could not find gospel music at all where he lived. We would mail his records to a P.O. Box in New York, and he would go over the border to get them. Once a month, he would order two or three albums from us. There were music stores from other cities that would come through Louisville and buy music from us to put in their stores.

We started Grace Gospel Music because we wanted to do more to spread the gospel in song. More than enough was being done for secular music. And it was indeed hard to find our kind of gospel music. People couldn't find the records they were hearing on the radio. We began seeking and finding recordings of the past for those who asked for them. And in doing so, it caught on and caused a phenomenon in the city of Louisville. Once people could go into an all-gospel record store and find what they really wanted, they would soon spread the message.

We had gone to the NCGCC and people were asking for records there. John was one of the first people to set up a booth selling records at the convention. Years later, one lady told me, "We used to bug your husband to play this record, play this record, play this record, and he knew we didn't have any money to buy them. We just wanted to hear them!"

My group, the Gospel Motivators, recorded one record for the Grace label. But our first record had been put out on Sensational Sounds with Brother Joe Thomas, who recorded different groups in town out of his house. Brother Joe was a blind organ and piano teacher. He started Papa Joe's Music School, which was on Broadway. He only charged \$1.50 for a lesson, even into the 2000s when he retired. Places like Durlauf Music Studio charged \$3 or \$4. He said, "As long as God sends me students, I will not increase my rates." Late in his life when his health was failing him, his family moved him back home to Tennessee. But he was here for years and years and developed so many musicians here in the city.

The Gospel Motivators had recorded a 45 with Joe Thomas on 22nd Street in his house where he had a studio. He was going to produce it and press it, and we kept waiting and waiting and waiting for the record. My husband and I had been to the NCGCC in Detroit, and we headed to our church convention in Nashville like we did every year. That was like going to Jerusalem. The convention was a week long, and on Monday or Tuesday, my husband called back to Louisville to find out where the record was because we wanted to sell that 45 at the convention where the Gospel Motivators were performing on the program. But Brother Joe hadn't gotten this record to us. He hadn't even sent it out to have it mastered



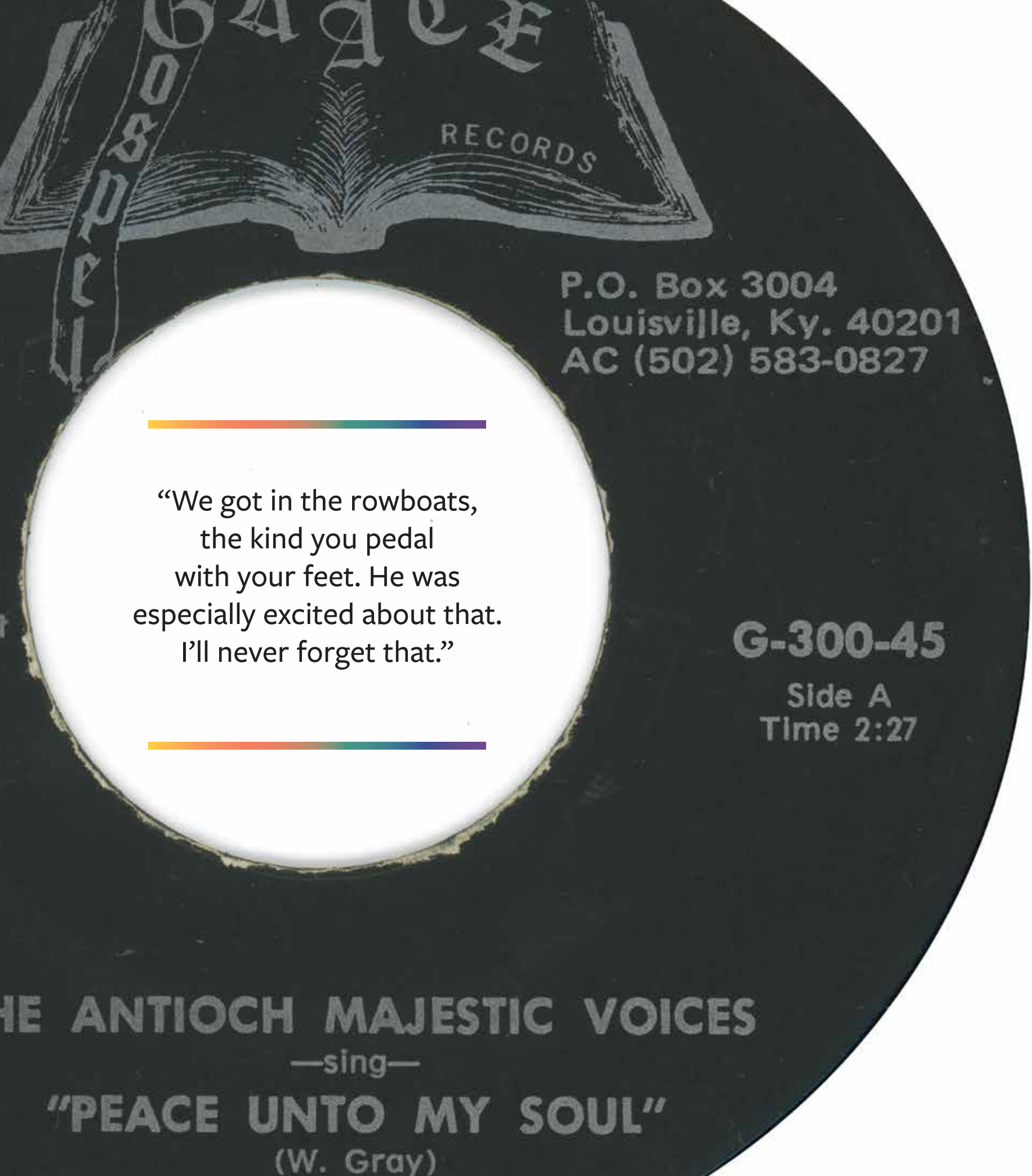
and pressed. So John called Bud Frey, one of the people in the choir, and said, "Go over and see what's going on. Why doesn't he have the record down here?" So he did and Joe still had the tape in Louisville. He got the tape from Joe and had it put on a Greyhound bus to Nashville, where my husband took it to the pressing company. My husband said it was the most exciting experience that he had had in the record industry business. They took him through the plant and showed him all the workings of the record-pressing business, how they did the mastering of it and everything. They got the record pressed in two or three days and we sold some records at that convention. The next year, they invited us to be the opening choir for the Monday night musical.

We released a record for Archie Dale and the Tones of Joy. John promoted that record and worked with some people in New York to get it played. He promoted Archie's record and that was the first national recognition we got at Grace Gospel. John promoted them and they started traveling and Grace got some recognition. Grace released records with many groups here in Louisville: the Antioch Majestic Voices, the Gospel Motivators, the Gospel Descendants, the Webster Singers, and the Kentucky State University Gospel Choir. These were among the first recordings we released.

The author, who started college at age 15.



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“We got in the rowboats,
the kind you pedal
with your feet. He was
especially excited about that.
I’ll never forget that.”

P.O. Box 3004
Louisville, Ky. 40201
AC (502) 583-0827

G-300-45
Side A
Time 2:27

THE ANTIOCH MAJESTIC VOICES
—sing—
“PEACE UNTO MY SOUL”
(W. Gray)



Wilma, Terrance and Jocelyn at the NCGCC convention, 1974.

In 1973, my family went to Cincinnati for the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses, like we always did. We were going to set up a booth to sell some Grace records and some sheet music. John stayed with us until Monday, when he left for a teacher’s meeting at Eastern Kentucky University.

When I wasn’t in the booth selling records that week, I was in rehearsal with one of the choirs that I was singing with or directing. On Wednesday night, I was about to go into a concert with the Alumni Chorale. We wore long formal dresses with beads on them instead of robes, and the men wore nice suits. We were lined up, ready to march in and start singing.

Somebody came to me in line and said, “You need to call the front desk. Somebody’s calling you.” And then all of a sudden, I saw one of the pioneers, the founding sister, Sally Martin. She came up to me and said, “Come on, daughter.” And she took me to the phone booth, and the person on the line said, “Your husband has passed away.”

I guess I went blank. I’m saying, “No, I don’t understand you.” And they went on to explain that he’d had a heart attack. He was in the hospital and then he was gone. He was 48 years old. Sally Martin was right there to console me, and to have one of the founders of this whole organization to be with me, I felt numb, honored and scared.

I was 32. I had two children — a boy and a girl, eight and nine years old — off somewhere singing or practicing with the children’s department. Somebody got them and brought them to me in my room, where we had to try and explain that Daddy wouldn’t be back. They didn’t understand that at all.

Before we’d left Louisville, John felt good, just a little tired. We had a church picnic up outside of Cincinnati before we went to the convention. I remember that after we ate, we got in the rowboats, the kind you pedal with your feet. He was especially excited about that. I’ll never forget that.

After John died, I just did whatever I had to do. I was fortunate to have a mother and a father who took care of the



Jocelyn, Jason and Wilma Clayborn.



Wilma and her great-grandson, Raj.



kids after school. They had a farm in Okolona. That was our family's place. John and I bought a couple of acres up the road where we built our house. I was teaching biology at Shawnee High School then. I came to the record store after school.

At that time, Grace Gospel Records was at 11th and Chestnut in the Village West Mall, and people were still coming and buying records. I had hired somebody to help, and we were there for two or three years before we moved to Third and Chestnut in the Henry Clay building. It was a YWCA building, right on the corner.

I continued to make 45s and albums on the Grace label after John died. I was recording the Gospel Descendants, the Webster Singers, Larry Adams Limited. Larry was a unique pianist, and his songs were different from the gospel music and the spiritual music that we normally heard. His arrangements and lyrics were pretty and euphoric. His songs made you feel like you were floating. And so I did their album. I had a good time organizing the photo shoot for that record. I'd never done that part of the process. We found a couple of places in Louisville to take pictures. The new federal building on Chestnut had this horse sculpture. I set them up around that for the photo shoot. That was exciting to me. I had not done that before.

I would go to the studios with the groups and monitor

the sessions. I may have offered suggestions for changes here and there, like a producer, had them redo or restructure a song, or even go a different direction. When we made the record, the group paid for the studio time and I took care of the labels and the jacket copy and all the administrative work. Grace didn't have a whole lot of distribution. The groups got most of the records and sold them. I would keep one box — maybe 20 — which we used for promotion.

In the 1980s, I also did a gospel radio show called *Reta West and the Love Express* on WXLN, an FM radio station here in Louisville that did religious broadcasting. I didn't want to use my name because I was a teacher, and active in quite a few other things in the city. My maiden name is Wilma Reta Westfield, so Reta West became my radio name. I don't know how I got to "The Love Express." I enjoyed spinning records and talking about the artists and the songs. I was on every night, Monday through Friday, from 11 o'clock to midnight. Then I went back to Okolona. I'd get up, get the kids ready for school, then go teach and run the record store. I don't know how I did it. I did the show for about six years. When cassette tapes came around, people started buying records and taping them for everybody else to listen to. I ran the record store on a thin margin because I had to pay somebody to be in the store. A few times I had to pay the bills out of my pocket. We finally closed the record store in 1989.

I was very active in the National Convention of Gospel Choirs and Choruses at this time. In addition to singing with the Alumni Chorale, I worked in the Supervisors Guild, which oversees the youth department. At the national conventions I taught several classes like copywriting and publishing music. Often I brought in people from the Library of Congress to come and talk to my classes about getting their music and their publications copyrighted. I also taught courses on new music for children, and a course guiding youth directors on how to monitor their songs to be appropriate for children. In the early '90s, I was asked to run for a position on the national board. There are 21 members on the national board, and I was voted on as a member-at-large. I'm in my fourth term on the board of directors for the NCGCC.

I have friends everywhere because of gospel music. My grandson, Jason Clayborn, is a very successful gospel singer. He travels all over the world. And he tells me all the time, "Everywhere I go, people say, *How's Nana? How's Ms. Clayborn doing? Everybody knows you.*" Recently Jason was given an honorary doctorate in humanities from Simmons College. At the convocation, the Rev. Kevin Cosby said something to the effect that, "California has the Hawkins Family, Detroit has the Winnan Family, but

the First Family of Gospel in Kentucky are the Clayborns." We have continued this music through the generations. My grandparents, my parents, John and I, our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Most of them are continuing the tradition, by teaching, directing and playing in church choirs.

I guess I did all of that — the gospel record store, the gospel label, the radio show, all of the work with the convention — because I knew it needed to be done. My idea was to promote religious music and gospel music in any manner that I could. When people ask me what I've gotten out of all of this, all my years in gospel music, it's just been a joy singing and teaching this music and knowing the people. I love encouraging people. It gives me joy to stimulate their understanding and belief in the almighty and their spiritual development in music. Gospel music was written from people's immediate experiences. Whatever experience the writer is having, right then, with God and with their life, is what they write about. That's gospel, and it encourages me. ■