

The Musical Legacy of Richard Barrett – Part 3

Richard and the Heroines of Harmony

by Charlie Horner and Pamela Horner



In a genre dominated by male vocal groups, Richard Barrett was among the first to recognize the potential of R&B quartet singing by young women. To be certain, Barrett was not *the* first. *Atlantic* recorded the Blue Belles (1951), Cookies (3/55) and Bobbettes (2/57). *Jubilee* had the Enchanters (1/52), *Aladdin* had the Crystals (11/56) and *Baton* had the Hearts (1955). Raoul J. Cita brought the Joytones to George Goldner in 1956. But before 1957, fifties vocal harmony was largely dominated by male singers.

After his success with the Teenagers, Richard Barrett should have thought of himself more of a manager/producer/composer than the Valentines' lead singer. But the Valentines were still one of the hottest groups around and fate had to intervene again to connect Richard with his next successful discovery – the Chantels.

The Chantels – Part 1

"At the time, I thought of myself more as a performer than a composer," Barrett said. "But in 1957 I found the Chantels, or actually they found [me]. We were working at a place called the [Roseland] Ballroom [52nd & Broadway]. It was a big dance ballroom, you know, where they have all the big bands, and [the Valentines] just happened to get a booking there." [5]

Meanwhile, five teenage singers, Arlene Smith, Lois Harris, Sonia Goring, Jackie Landry and Rene Minus, dressed in white blouses and aqua skirts, had taken the train from the Bronx to Manhattan to see the Valentines perform. "We knew they were playing somewhere in New York. We were headed there to find them but didn't quite know where we were going," recalled Lois Harris Powell. "We were walking on Broadway when we were stopped by a man who asked if we were sisters because we were dressed alike. We said, 'No, we're not sisters, we sing.' Then he started giving us this spiel about how he could produce us and make us recording stars. He asked us to come up to his studio. I don't even know who he was. He stopped us by the Brill Building.

Well, that was Tin Pan Alley." The young man's studio was above the Broadway Theater, just around the corner from the Roseland Ballroom.

"In the course of conversation," Lois recalled, "I looked out the window and saw three or four of the Valentines walking along Broadway. We were going to see them and we were right nearby. They must have been at intermission. There were long breaks in the shows in those days so that's why they were in the street. When we saw them, we said, 'Oh my God! That's the Valentines!' Being smart teenagers like we were, we called out, 'Hey Stuck Ups! Can't you speak?' Richard Barrett saw us and said, 'Come down stairs.' and we did. We started talking to Richard, because he was the first one to acknowledge us. He made a comment about us wearing the same color dresses and we said, 'We sing.' He said, 'What do you sing?' and we said, 'Stuff!' So he said, 'Sing something.' and we sang one of the songs we'd been singing in the Bronx. Richard said we that had potential and that possibly he could get us a recording deal. We said, 'Yeah, right!' like we didn't believe him. He said, 'Well I didn't lie to Frankie Lymon.' We knew that he'd discovered Frankie. Then he asked us for our phone number and he said he'd call in a couple of weeks. We said, 'Yeah, sure!'"

"These girls were in the studio," said Richard. "They saw me and said 'Hey, the Valentines!' And they came running down the stairs. They said, 'We sing.' The girls were cute and everything... but when they started singing... WOW! I heard this sound that I was accustomed to in church, this angelic sound. They were all Catholic girls and I thought that it would be really good to put a sound like that in rock and roll." [5]

"We didn't expect anything to come of it," said Lois. "But sure enough, Richard did call, and set up a meeting. We met over at Arlene's house with her mother and father. He did a full run down of what he could possibly do, and said he'd rehearse us. So, he came to Arlene's house and rehearsed us for a couple of weeks and then decided we were ready to go and meet George Goldner."

The Chantels story began a few years earlier at St.



Anthony of Padua School, a parochial school in the Bronx. There, a group of girls who'd known each other since the second grade, began singing together in the choir. "That was basically where we got the harmony and learned how to sing a cappella," recalled Lois. "Because a lot of what we sang in church was a cappella. Gregorian Chants, three part and four-part Liturgical Music, sung in Latin for the most part." The nuns who ran the choir also taught the girls to play the piano and other instruments as well as to sight-read music. Much to the dismay of their music teachers, the girls also took an interest in the R&B songs they heard on the radio and began singing those songs after choir rehearsals.

By early 1957, the group's personnel was down to Arlene Smith (soprano lead), Lois Harris (top soprano), Sonia Goring (second soprano), Jackie Landry (second alto) and Rene Minus (lower alto/bass). They took the name the Chantels from a basketball rival (St. Francis de Chantelle). While all the girls were in high school except Rene (8th grade), they still returned to St. Anthony of Padua's to sing in the choir. Chantels' rehearsals were either at Lois', Arlene's or Jackie's house. A lot of times they were at Lois' house because both Jackie and Arlene took piano lessons from her aunt.

"Richard took us to George Goldner and we sang for him," stated Lois. "Richard and George were fascinated by the sound because we didn't sound like a street corner group. They knew that we had a unique sound and Richard liked Arlene's voice because it was quite strong. He rehearsed us. We had some of our own songs that we'd made up. Richard kind of doctored them a little bit and said he thought it would sound better if we did it this way or that. We listened and did that demo thing for George Goldner and he liked it. From that point we set up recording dates and did 'The Plea' and 'He's Gone'. 'The Plea' evolved from a song that we were doing. There was a boys' group that my cousin and a couple of neighborhood guys were in. They sang a song called 'Baby' and we liked it. But we kind of changed the words and title and did a lot of stuff with it. We sang it for Richard and he changed it and then it evolved into 'The Plea'".

The Chantels' first songs were recorded in July 1957. Earlier that year, George Goldner had sold his interests in the *Rama* and *Gee* labels to Morris Levy and started *Gone*, *End* and *Cindy*. Barrett was heavily involved in securing talent and producing records for the new labels. "He's Gone" b/w "The Plea" was released in August 1957 on *End*. By late September, "He's Gone" began climbing the Pop charts, topping out at #71. Still, the song's popularity in the New York area led to some local appearances.

"Richard got us a guest spot singing at the Apollo," Lois stated. The Apollo appearance was a walk-on appearance

on Jocko Henderson's Labor Day Show. Jocko must have been impressed, for by September 14 the Chantels were doing a Jocko record hop at Laurel Gardens, Newark, with Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Doc Bagby, Lee Andrews & the Hearts, the Teenagers, the Channels, the Love Notes, the Sentimentals, the Shepherd Sisters and the Shells.[12] "The first Apollo appearance went pretty well," said Lois, "And the next thing we knew, we had an actual week at the Apollo singing with other groups. I believe the show was MC'd by Murray the K. The Apollo show was also Bobby Darin's first venture out into the public eye." [Darin and "Murray the K" Kaufman, who was producing show at the Apollo in 1957, were close friends. Darin was one of the few white artists to be well received at the Apollo.][13] "At that show we were in our dressing room and we were singing some of our stuff from the church. One song in particular, "Terra Tremuit," Richard heard and told Murray the K, to come up and hear it. We sang it for him and he told us to do it on stage. We said, 'You've got to be kidding. You want us to sing Latin on the stage of the Apollo? They're going to boo us off the stage.' But he said, 'You have to do it.' So we did and it really went over. We were surprised."

For the Chantels' second release, Barrett gave the group a song called, "Maybe".[11] Some Chantels' bios say the recording was done in a converted Midtown church in order to use the organ. "None of us remember that," stated Lois. "We all remember it being a regular studio like Bell Sound." "It was in a studio, Bell Sound," confirmed Sonia Goring Wilson. "There was no organ there, just Richard banging away on the piano. Richard's piano became a signature sound of the Chantels."

In fact, no organ is heard on the record. An alternate take of "Maybe" used later on an LP box set did have an organ. However, the organ seems oddly out of place and only comes in at the song's end. It's likely overdubbed, a process Barrett and Goldner used at that time. The overdubbing may have been done in a church, but not the original session. "The 'Maybe' session was a horror," Lois said. "That was like the worst session. We had to do as many takes as it took to get it the way Richard wanted. It was frustrating. We were in the studio, I can't tell you how many hours. It was just torture. Richard couldn't get the sound that he wanted from Arlene until he finally made her frustrated and she started crying. Then she sang the song and it came out the way he wanted."

"Maybe" was released in December 1957, just in time for the Chantels' next weeklong appearance at the Apollo (Dec. 13) with Thurston Harris, the Clovers, the Paragons, Dee Clark, Bette McLaurin and the Two Morros.[12] The record quickly climbed to #2 on the R&B Charts and #15 on the Pop Charts in early 1958.





THE CHANTELS

The Chantels were suddenly in demand, signing up for a month-long road tour that also included Sam Cooke, Thurston Harris, the Silhouettes and Ernie Freeman.[14] Initially, Lois Harris didn't tour with the group, leaving only four voices while on the road. As with the Teenagers, Barrett took the Chantels out of their respective schools and transferred them to Quintano's School for Young Professionals, a private school more accommodating to performers' schedules. "I was in my last year of high school," said Lois. "My mother was not impressed with this kind of singing but she went along with it because I was a good kid. When they sent out the applications to transfer me to professional school, the nuns and my mother would not allow it. It was probably just as well because for four months, if I had have transferred out, I probably would not have graduated on time. When I got pulled, the girls were just starting to tour heavily. They took new pictures [without me]. It was devastating to me. Then when they sang in New York, I joined them. They had a week at the Apollo, so I would be in classes from 7:30 'til 2, jump in a taxi, go down to the Apollo and do the last three shows of the evening."

Lois was on all of the Chantels' recordings, including the January 22, 1958 session that produced "Every Night (I Pray)", "Whoever You Are," "Sure Of Love," "I Love You So," and "Memories Of You". Recordings were done at Bell Sound Studios with both Richard Barrett and George Goldner present. Richard usually had more to do with the Chantels' recording because he knew how he wanted it to sound. "If Goldner wanted it another way," said Lois, "They'd argue and Richard would win most of the time. Richard would get mad and throw a tantrum and say, 'OK, we're packing up and leaving!' And Goldner would say, 'Never mind. Never mind.'"

"Every Night" was the next Chantels' release and the next record to chart (#16 R&B Charts and #39 Pop Charts). "I Love You So," a cover of the Crows tune, became the Chantels fourth record in a row to chart (#14 R&B Charts and #42 Pop Charts).

On March 1, 1958, the Chantels appeared on *Dick Clark's Saturday Night Beechnut Show*, lip syncing "Maybe".

It was the first of three appearances the Chantels would make on Clark's shows. *American Bandstand* appearances on July 7 ("Maybe" and "I Love You So") and September 18, 1958 ("He's Gone," "Maybe," "Every Night (I Pray)," "I Love You So") followed.[15]

The Chantels joined the Alan Freed Big Beat tour on March 28th that played 65 shows in 42 cities in 48 nights. Lois was on Easter vacation from school and joined the group for the first week only. The tour began at the Brooklyn Paramount and visited Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, Michigan, Ontario, Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Also on the tour were Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, Larry Williams, Screaming Jay Hawkins, Frankie Lymon, the Pastels, the Diamonds, Jo-Ann Campbell, Billie & Lillie, Ed Townsend, Danny & the Juniors and Sam "The Man" Taylor.[16]. Jerry Lee Lewis and Chuck Berry competed throughout the tour to top one another. In the first week alone, Lewis demolished several pianos, pushing what remained of one piano off the stage into the audience. In Boston's 7200 seat Boston Arena, police stopped a rowdy crowd from dancing in the aisles by turning on the lights. Fights broke out between rival gangs and a minor riot ensued. Chuck Berry and other entertainers retreated from the stage in fear for their lives and the show was shut down. The event was immortalized in the film "American Hot Wax" and the song "Poor Rock & Roll" by the Nobels. Freed was indicted for inciting a riot and rock & roll shows were temporarily "banned in Boston".[17] Through it all, the Chantels were safely locked away in their dressing room, unaware that there was any disturbance at all.

Barrett had always been overly protective of his younger acts, but the facts that the Chantels were young and female made him all the more so. "He was worse with us than with the guys," recalled Lois, who by May 1958, had graduated high school and was able to tour with the rest of the Chantels "His thing was, guys will be guys, even though he cracked the whip with them, but he was really protective with us. He wouldn't let anyone near our dressing room. He'd lock us in the dressing room most of the time or have someone standing outside. At one point, Rene's mother chaperoned us, then Sonia's mother and then sometimes Arlene's father. When we were going on the road, the other Chantels [still in school] had a tutor who went along. She helped them with their school-work and acted as chaperone. Once the chaperone was with the girls, then Richard didn't have to lock them up. He wouldn't let us out of his sight. He wouldn't let people near us. He wouldn't let us go anywhere. Even to the point that he had his own spies to find out whether the girls had boyfriends and

END 1015

"EVERY NIGHT"

(I PRAY)

b/w "WHOEVER YOU ARE"

THE CHANTELS

GONE RECORDING CORP. ▶ END MUSIC, INC.

1650 BROADWAY,
NEW YORK, N.Y.



The Chantels: Photo courtesy of Val Shively.

sometimes would scare the heck out of the guys." "The Chantels looked like they were in prison half the time," remembered Barbara Jean English, lead of the Clickettes. "They'd be sitting there on their little hands and we'd say 'What's the matter with them?' They'd be sitting there very cute, very quiet because 'the General' said don't talk to nobody, don't say nothing."

Barrett created an image of the Chantels as perfect little angels with melodic voices and nothing could interfere with that image. He was meticulous about their appearance, but so was the group. "Our parents were very much involved in what we wore," said Lois. "Richard kind of picked up on that. It was very clear that he wanted us to look like the angels we were supposed to be. So we dressed very modestly."

The Chantels rehearsed singing and worked on choreography. For that, Richard brought in Cholly Adkins, whom he'd used to teach the Teenagers and many others their steps. By 1958, Barrett was working with quite a few artists. He rented space in the CBS Building (now the Ed Sullivan Theater) at 1697 Broadway to rehearse his acts, including the Chantels, Imperials, Isley Brothers, Dubs, Flamingos, Tunemasters, Bouquets (Clickettes), Lucy Rivera and others. "Richard was very much in demand," Sonia recalled. "Aretha Franklin once came knocking at his door to for him to record her. He used to say, 'That's one I missed.'"

The Chantels' next release "Prayee" b/w "Sure Of Love" did not chart nationally. Barrett got material for the Chantels and his other groups from a number of sources. Many he wrote himself. Others were given to him as demos with the hopes he would use them. "It was Nate Nelson of the Flamingos who wrote 'If You Try', Lois stated. "He wrote it and then played it for Richard who thought it would be good for us to sing. In the same way, Richard had the demo of 'Congratulations' that he played for us. He told us we were going to record it. We worked on it and did our own background. We just would make it up as we went along. Richard would get a demo and play it for us. If we liked it we'd say OK we'll do it. If we didn't like it we'd say, 'We don't like it.' Sometimes he'd say, 'Too bad!'"

Richard also used the Chantels, individually or together, to backup other artists. "We just loved to sing," recalled Sonia. "We could be in the studio and somebody would be singing and we'd just automatically make up some background for them. Arlene Smith joined Willie Wilson in a duet of "I've Lied", backed by the Tunemasters. The song was released on *End* and some copies credit "Willie and Arlene and the Tunemasters". An alternate take of the recording, released

years later, seems to have all the Chantels.[18] Richard also had members of the Chantels back Ronnie Baxter on "Is It Because" and Jimmy Pemberton on "Rags To Riches". "I did background with a male group Richard was working with," recalled Lois. "I don't remember the name of the group. It had kind of a Latino cha cha to it. Jackie did background with another group Richard was working with and she did a duet with somebody. A lot of times they needed a high female voice he'd stick me into somebody's session." The Chantels also backed Richard Barrett on a few songs. After the Valentines' breakup, Richard continued to record. "Summer Love" by Richard and the Chantels (*Gone* #5060) charted in 1959 (#29 on R&B Charts, #93 on Pop Charts). (A demo of the side was later released on the *Crackerjack* label.[25]) The Chantels also backed Richard on a cover of the Fleetwoods' tune, "Come Softly To Me".

Once, Goldner wanted many of his artists to record standards. The Chantels did "C'est Si Bon," "I'll Walk Alone" and "I'm Confessin'". Veteran songwriter Bennie Benjamin was brought in to work with the Chantels. They recorded Benjamin's song, "How Could You Call It Off". Also, in 1958, *End* issued the first album by the group, "We Are The Chantels". Initial copies showed a photo of the Chantels in long dresses and gloves. It was inexplicably recalled and issued again with a photo of two white teenagers around a jukebox.

When touring the segregated South, the Chantels ran into the same issues as other young black entertainers. "We were on this one southern tour," recalled Lois. "It was the tour from hell because from the time of our first show in Maryland, we're talking Jim Crow. We didn't sleep in a decent hotel until we got back across the Mason-Dixon Line and then we were in Ohio on the way back home." "The bus tours were grueling," said Sonia. "We were young. We had a chaperone and tutor. Traveling and trying to keep up with school work was horrible. At the same time it was very exciting for young girls."

Sonia recalled the time Richard taught the girls about the realities of growing up too fast. "We were traveling down in North Carolina and we were being very mischievous. We wanted to become grown women way before our time. We wanted to smoke cigarettes, which we never did and we wanted to drink. Richard said, 'OK, we're gonna fix you!' So he went and bought a bottle of something and said, 'OK, you wanted to drink, try it!' He just gave us a little sip. That was all we needed. One minute one of our members was on the floor, she couldn't stand up. The next morning she got up and she had such a hangover. That was enough of a lesson. We



Arlene, Richard, Lois, Sonia and Rene, reunited in 1999 for the Great Day In Harlem photo shoot. Photo by Jerry Skokandich.

had all day to recover because we got on the bus and she was fine for the next show. But that was the last time she ever tried anything. We never thought about drinking or smoking again. To this day we're not really drinkers. We don't smoke."

"Richard was always the cowboy," said Lois. "We were doing a show in, I believe, Oklahoma. There was an intermission in the show and apparently Richard had a gun and he was showing it off to somebody when the gun went off and he got shot in the leg. Richard was very dramatic. He was screaming, 'Sonia, I'm shot!' They called an ambulance and here was Richard, lying on the stretcher and he was in pain. But it wasn't a bad gunshot wound. It was like a 22 caliper gun or something. I think it was a gun he'd bought when we were in Texas. And it went off. It was comical because he was so dramatic about it. Obviously, he was not going to die, and it was not serious. But he was so dramatic and ready to meet his maker and all this stuff. We were kind of rejoicing, not because Richard got shot but because he was going to have to leave and go back to New York. That meant he was not going to finish out the tour with us and we were free. We still had our chaperone with us so we still couldn't do anything. But, it was like, 'Oh Good. Now we can have some fun.' Of course we weren't going to do anything because we were far from home and we were scared to death. And this was still the South."

By 1960, Goldner again had financial problems that would eventually lead him to sell *End* and *Gone* Records to Morris Levy. The last recording session by the original Chantels yielded a few instrumental songs (remember, the Chantels could all play instruments). Arlene Smith bolted the Goldner-Barrett management to go solo. Lois Harris left the Chantels to finish nursing school, get married and raise a family. Chapter One of the Chantels story came to an end.

The Clickettes and Fashions

While the Chantels were rehearsing with Barrett at the CBS Building in early 1958, Jackie Landry brought Richard another group of talented young ladies from the Bronx called the Bouquets. Barbara Jean English, Trudy McCartney, Charlotte McCartney and Sylvia Hammond would later find fame as the Clickettes. "I lived on the same block of Jennings Street as Jackie Landry," Trudy recalled. "My sister Charlotte and she were the same age so they were very close."

The Bouquets had formed a year earlier with Barbara Jean English as lead. Barbara was born in South Carolina but came to New York City by way of Philadelphia. "I moved to New York in 1957," said Barbara. "My family moved here and I met Trudy in Yorkville Vocational High School. I lived in the Lower East Side and she was from the Bronx but we went to the same school. Everyone at that time had a singing group. The girls used to sing in the halls. I was very shy, being new in the school and I didn't have any friends. I wrote a song on the bus going to school. I was trying to make friends and I wanted to be in a group. I walked up to a group that Sylvia was singing with and I asked them if they could put a background to this song I had just written. I sang it and I think Sylvia liked my voice so much that she quit that group. Trudy was singing in one group and Sylvia was singing in another group and they decided to sing with me. We needed another singer and Trudy said, 'My sister Charlotte sings!' Charlotte went to another school but we got in touch and we started rehearsing. We didn't have a manager or anything. The Chantels were already working with Richard Barrett and they arranged for Richard to hear us. We sang for him and he liked it. Everybody was there in the room; there were the Chantels and the Teenagers. Richard had a lot of other groups too. It was like a factory. It was just an amazing time in our lives. Richard rehearsed us on



Clickettes at Smalls Paradise, 1957. [L to R] Trudy McCartney, Sylvia Hammond, Charlotte McCartney, Barbara Jean English, Carlene McCartney. Photo courtesy of Sylvia Hammond-Akrige and Trudy McCartney Cunningham.

'But Not For Me' but he didn't spend a lot of time with us. There was a promise that he was going to do something with us but he was very busy with the Chantels."

Though Richard didn't spend a lot of time with the Bouquets, he did insist they conform to his high standards. "He used to tell us, 'Don't put the starch that you make up in the kitchen in your crinolines because it can drop on your shoes!' and 'Don't put pins in your bra straps!' recalled Barbara. "He was not producing us then but these were things he would still tell us -- things we should do for a classy kind of presentation."

"We rehearsed with the Chantels at the CBS Building," said Trudy. "Richard Barrett was supposed to be our manager but he couldn't manage us so he gave us Gordon King



The Clickettes



as manager and from then on we always rehearsed there."

"Gordon King and Richard Barrett were running buddies at the time," recalled Chantels' Lois Harris. "Gordon was the son of my mother's good friend and our family doctor, Gordon King Sr. He was a friend of Richard's and sometimes he would drive us around. If Richard was doing something, he'd have someone else drive us to where the venue was. Richard had a lot of different people who did that."

"Gordon wasn't with us too long before Zell Sanders took us away from him," remembered Trudy. "He was a good manager but I don't think he knew too much about music. We did most of our own arrangements. When he came on the scene we were already singing 'But Not For Me,' 'I Love You I Swear,' and a couple of other songs."

Gordon King made of demo of the Bouquets' "But Not For Me" and shopped it around. In doing so, Gordon left the Bouquets waiting around for him one time too many and the group was approached by Zell Sanders. Zell owned the *J&S* label and managed the Hearts ("Lonely Nights"). She was also starting a new label, *Dice Records*, for her daughter Johnnielouise Richardson (of Johnnie & Joe fame) to run. Saunders lured the group to her new label where she changed their name to the Clickettes. The group's first release, "But Not For Me," was purchased from Gordon King. The Clickettes would go on to release great sides for *Dice*, including "To Be A Part Of You," "Because Of My Best Friend," "Warm Soft And Lovely," "Lover's Prayer" and "Why Oh Why".

"The *Dice* records were successful," said Barbara, "But regionally. 'Because Of My Best Friend' was huge in Philly. It was #1 for weeks with Georgie Woods. The B-side, "To Be A Part Of You" was #6 on the charts. It opened up the gates to the Chitlin Circuit but the distribution for *J&S* was not good. We were big on the East Coast – New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Washington. We worked a lot in New York. It was saturated in this area but it was not a national record."

Trudy and Charlotte were on all the group's *Dice* recordings but did not go on the Clickettes' overnight tours. Their parents wanted them to stay in school so Zell Sanders replaced them on the road with Jeanne Bolden and Barbara Saunders. On occasion, another girl remembered only as Shirley also filled in on stage.[19]

Lack of national success and dissatisfaction with Zell Sanders' handling of the group led to their leaving *Dice Records* 1960. "After we left Zell, we went back to Richard Barrett," said Barbara. "Trudy and Charlotte had left the group. It was Sylvia and I with Barbara Saunders and Jean Bolden."

Barrett was winding down his association with George Goldner and working quite a bit out of the Brill Building as an independent. "We were never really out of touch. It was all a community in New York when you were singing. The Brill Building, the CBS Building, 1650 Broadway... this was where you hung out. We knew Richard and we were still friends. It was just a way of life. You sang and you saw people all the time. One of the girls, Jean, was dating Richard's friend, Buzzy Willis (Solitaires). So we got back with Richard."

Barrett rehearsed the Clickettes and recorded "Where Is He" (a Barrett composition) and "The Lone Lover". He worked a deal with *Guyden Records* in Philadelphia to issue the record. Before the Clickettes could record again, Zell Sanders interfered. "She owned the name Clickettes in so much as she recorded the group under that name," recalled Barbara. "She was still trying to get us to come back but we just didn't. So she said we couldn't use the name anymore and we started calling ourselves the Fashions." By then Sylvia had left the group, replaced by Helen Powell Liebowitz, formerly of the Impacts. The Fashions were Barbara Jean English, Helen Powell Liebowitz, Jean Bolden and Barbara Saunders.

Richard recorded four sides with the Fashions. "Dearest One" b/w "All I Want" was issued on *Warwick Records* in 1961. Barrett and Eddie Jones produced the Fashions' ballad, "Fairy Tales". Barrett would revisit "Fairy Tales" a year later with the Capri Sisters and again nine years later when he recorded the Spaniels' Pookie Hudson. The Fashions version was backed with a cover of the Orlons' tune, "Please Let It Be Me". It came out on Morty Craft's *Elmor* label. All of these Fashions' sides were recorded by Barrett in New York City. The Fashions made a couple of sides for Roulette without Richard's assistance, before breaking up. Barbara Jean English went on to a successful solo career.

The Veneers

As *End/Gone Records* suffered financially around 1960, Richard Barrett began writing and producing songs as an independent. One of his associates was veteran singer and song writer, Eddie Jones. Jones was born in California but moved to New York where he became an early member of the Solitaires (before they recorded). After exiting the service, Eddie became the lead of the Demens/Emersons, who recorded Jones' composition, "Take Me As I Am" and "Joanie Joanie".[20]

Eddie Jones brought Richard a young female group, Lorraine and Barbara Joyner and Annette and Valerie Swinson. The Joyner sisters from Manhattan were actually first cousins to the Swinson sisters from Brooklyn.

"We lived on the Lower East Side and Eddie moved into the community, recalled Louise Joyner. "We were called the Relatives at first, because we were two pairs of sisters and our moms were sisters. We were the group for the lower east side. When they had community affairs, they'd call on us to sing. Most of it was volunteer stuff, without pay. But we were celebrities on the lower east side, even before we recorded. Eddie knocked on the door one day. I was a teenager. My mother sent for us, gathering us up one by one, from wherever we were. Eddie Jones was sitting in the living room. He said, 'I heard about you gals. I'd like you to sing me a number.' We cleared our throats and did about four lines before he said, 'OK, that's it. Are you girls signed up with anybody?' We said no and he said, 'Go get your mother.' We jumped and we were all hugging each other. We got my mother and he said, 'I want to take these girls down to Broadway to see some big shots. These girls should be recording. How long have they been singing?' My mother said, 'Ever since I can remember.'"

Eddie Jones began working with the group, giving them songs he'd written, playing piano for them and getting them gigs. He'd often perform with the group. After a short time he took them to meet Richard Barrett.

"Eddie Jones took us downtown and he said, 'We're going to meet this gentleman named Richard Barrett,' said Lorraine. "We said, 'Who's Richard Barrett?' and he said, 'The Chantels.' We said, 'The Chantels? We're gonna sing for him?' We were all so elated. He took us to audition for Richard. We sang a modern jazz rendition of 'Summertime'. We sang 'A Thousand Stars'. Richard wanted to hear our range. We did the regular rock & roll when he wanted an up tempo song. Then he said, 'Does anyone else sing lead?' I did a lead. He wanted to know the versatility of the group. We did about three or four songs and he didn't let us complete any of them. He acted the same way Eddie did. Annette, for a young girl, was so astronomical. We'd do about three lines and he said, 'That's it girls.' He met with Eddie and when Eddie came back he said, 'Hey girls, he's interested. I have the contract in my pocket. We have to go talk to mama. He wants to sign you up immediately and bring you into the studio."

"When Richard signed us up," remembered Lorraine, "He said, 'I'm going to have to change your name.' We said, 'Oh no, we want to keep it.' He said, 'It's great but it just won't fly in the industry. I'm gonna call you the Veneers.' We said, 'What does that mean?' and he told us it meant 'a fine finish'.

Barrett began rehearsing the Veneers. As with the Chantels, Barrett was overly protective of the group. "He was very strict," said Lorraine. "At shows he would say, 'Don't go out of this dressing room. You're not even to peep out. They're not supposed to see you.'"

Without the budget to hire Cholly Adkins, Barrett taught the group choreography by his own methods. "When he was teaching us choreography," said Lorraine, "He would tie our wrists. He said, 'When I take these ropes off, you'll be



The Veneers in 1960: Clockwise from top: Annette Swinson Smith, Valerie Swinson, Barbara Joyner, Lorraine Joyner. Courtesy of John Clemente.



able to move your hands in coordination, blindfolded'. And he was right. But I didn't like it then because I'd come home and say, 'Richard's tying us up.' And my mother would say, 'Why is he doing that?"

When it came to music or business, Richard was very serious. But he also had a lighter side. "When we used to hang out, up in his office, it was such fun," said Lorraine. "It was always a family type atmosphere. The same characters. He had a little entourage up there. Richard was a comical guy. He was serious about his music but around the office he would tell a lot of off color jokes. He'd have everybody laughing. We'd all be sitting around and after a while we'd repeat music and we'd all just fall right in and do background. Richard would play piano. It was a lot of fun. We'd always have a good time. There was Tony Middleton (former lead of the Willows) and Titus Turner. They used to hang around Richard's office and we used to all go into the studio together. Tony Middleton did a few of Richard's numbers, like 'Blackjack'. I remember that because the Veneers did the background." The Veneers also backed Titus Turner on "The Return of Stagger Lee" b/w "Answer Me" in February 1959. "We did a lot of background for Richard's artists," said Lorraine. "Rightfully so, because why would he have to hire background singers when he had the Veneers. I remember one time when we were in the studio, I was taking a break down in the vestibule and I first met Barbara English of the Cockettes/Fashions."

Barrett had just restarted *Princeton*, a defunct Goldner label and had written a couple of ballads, "Believe Me (My Angel)" and "I". Barrett and Jones had the Veneers record the sides. Eddie Jones played piano on the session. Released on the *Princeton* label, "Believe Me" did well in New York but failed to break nationally. Still, the Veneers got a lot of work from the record, especially in New York, Long Island and in Philly with dee jay Georgie Woods.

The Chantels – Part 2

In 1961, former Chantels' lead Arlene Smith came out of retirement to sign a solo contract with *Big Top* records. *Big Top* wanted Burt Bacharach to produce Arlene, but George Goldner was getting ready to sell *End/Gone Records* to Morris Levy's *Roulette Records* and became irate. Goldner claimed that Arlene Smith was still under contract to him, and thus would become a *Roulette* artist. "They thought of me as

George's artist," Arlene told author Mark Ribowsky, "And they were giving *Big Top* a hard time." Young producer Phil Spector was brought in as mediator. Spector was respected by both sides; he'd previously produced for *Big Top* ("Sammy Turner") and sold Goldner the master to "I'm So Happy" by the Du-canies. To resolve the matter, Arlene did one record for *Big Top*, produced by Phil Spector. Her next record was for George Goldner, produced by Richard Barrett. After that Smith would again record for *End*. Spector had Smith cover his Paris Sisters' "He Knows I Love Him Too Much". Barrett produced the second record, co-writing, "Everything" with Eddie Jones. It came out on the *Spectorous* label, named for Spector. Barrett kept the name Spectorous for his production company.[22]

Meanwhile, Richard Barrett wrote a new song, "Look In My Eyes," that he felt was perfect for the Chantels. Original Chantels, Jackie Landry, Sonia Goring and Renee Minus, were anxious to sing again but Arlene Smith was hopelessly tied up with *Roulette*. "We wanted Arlene to come back and record with us," said Sonia, "But Richard said she was recording on her own. So Richard found somebody else." Richard made Veneers' lead, Annette Swinson, the new Chantels' lead, giving her the stage name "Annette Smith".

Naturally, the Veneers were devastated. They knew how the industry was and always feared the day that Annette might be taken out of the group. Still, they were a family group and thought that might hold them together. To try to make up for that, Barrett arranged for the Veneers to audition with Jackie Wilson as his backup group. "We cried about it and everything," recalled Louise Joyner. "But we took the job with Jackie Wilson and Annette went on with the Chantels. We didn't do any recordings with Jackie. We just did performances with him for a brief period. It wasn't that long." The Veneers also continued to work with Eddie Jones. Eventually, Eddie and Barbara Joyner were married.

Barrett got the Chantels signed with *Carlton Records* and "Look In My Eyes" was soon on the R&B (#6) and Pop Charts (#14) in 1961. For a follow up, the Chantels teamed up with Barrett to do an answer record to Ray Charles' "Hit The Road, Jack" called "Well I Told You". It also charted (#29 Pop Charts). "We had a lot of fun doing "Well I Told You", said Sonia. "We performed that on stage with Richard too." With the group popular again, *End Records* released a final LP ("There's Our Song Again") of Chantels sides still in their possession. They purchased the Veneers sides and for the album and a single, billed as the Chantels. *Carlton records* issued an LP called "The Chantels On Tour" featuring songs by the Chantels, the Imperials and former Del Viking, Gus Backus. During this time, Jackie left to have a son, being replaced on stage by either Yvonne Fair or former Fashion, Helen Powell Liebowitz. Annette also left to have a family, being replaced by future Platters' vocalist Sandra Dawn.[7]

Barrett then took the Chantels to *Ludix Records*, owned by Luther Dixon. Dixon had been a former member of the Barons on *Decca* and the Buddies on *Glory*.[23] He'd already written "Sixteen Candles" for the Crests when he was asked to join *Scepter/Wand Records* and produce acts like the Shirelles and Chuck Jackson.. In 1963, Dixon was approached by *Capital Records* and asked to start *Ludix*. The first record on the label was the Chantels' "Eternally". "Eternally" turned out to be the Chantels' last chart record (#77 Pop Charts). Although Barrett's name does not appear on any of the Ludix records, Sonia remembers him producing them. This turned out to be the end of Barrett's management of the Chantels. The group wanted more say in what they recorded and Barrett was considering moving back to Philadelphia. As a parting good will gesture, Barrett hooked the group up with *Capital Records* where they recorded a number of pop standards.



The Chantels on Carlton.

None of the sides were ever released, though. The Chantels continued touring and recording for *TCF*, *Verve* and *RCA* into the 1970's.[7] Sonia also spent a short time with Barrett's next big female group discovery, the Three Degrees.

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Today, the Chantels still thrill audiences with their new lead, Amy Ortiz, and the backing of original members Lois Harris Powell, Sonia Goring Wilson and Renee Minus White. Jackie Landry passed away in 1997.[24] Arlene Smith still performs on the oldies circuit. The song "Maybe" has been sung by everyone from Janis Joplin to John Frusciante of the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Barbara Jean English, Trudy McCartney Cunningham and Sylvia Hammond-Akridge still sound fabulous as the Clettes. For a while they were joined by Lorraine Joyner of the Veneers, but now Trudy's younger sister Carlene Sabb sings with them. Charlotte McCartney Ford has recently passed on.

By 1964, one of Richard Barrett's biggest female group discoveries was still in his future. But it's said that years later, when working with the Three Degrees, Richard still heard the Chantels in his mind.



The Chantels singing "Terra Tremuit" and "Maybe" at Richard Barrett's Memorial Service, Oct 14, 2006. Photo courtesy of Weldon A. McDougal III.

Notes & References

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Richard Barrett Produced Chantels Songs

He's Gone/The Plea	End 1001	1957
Maybe/Come My Little Baby	End 1005	1957
Every Night/Whoever You Are	End 1015	1958
I Love You So/How Could You Call It Off	End 1020	1958
Sure Of Love/Prayee	End 1026	1958
If You Try/Congratulations	End 1030	1958
I Can't Take It/Never Let Go	End 1037	1958
Goodbye To Love/I'm Confessin'	End 1048	1959
How Could You Call It Off/Whoever You Are	End 1069	1960
I'm The Girl/There's Our Song Again	End 1105	1961
Look In My Eyes/Glad To Be Back	Carlton 555	1961
Still/Well I Told You*	Carlton 564	1961
Here It Comes Again/Summertime	Carlton 569	1962
Eternally/Swamp Water	Ludix 101	1963
Some Tears Fall Dry/That's Why You're Happy	Ludix 105	1963
Memories Of You	End EP 202	
I'll Walk Alone	End EP 202	
C'est Si Bon	End EP 202	
Ific	End LP 312	
My Darlin'	End LP 312	
You'll Never Know	Carlton LP 144	
So Real	Murray Hill LP 000385	
If You Try (alt. take)	Murray Hill LP 000385	
Every Night (alt. take)	Murray Hill LP 000385	
Goodbye To Love (alt. take)	Murray Hill LP 000385	
I'm The Girl (alt. take)	Murray Hill LP 000385	
Memories Of You (alt. take)	Murray Hill LP 000385	
How Could You Call It Off (alt. take)	Murray Hill LP 000385	
Prayee (alt. take)	Murray Hill LP 000385	
Maybe (alt. take #5)	Murray Hill LP 000385	

Arlene Smith Produced by Barrett

Everything/Good Girls	Spectorous 150	1961
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Chantels backing other artists, produced by Barrett

As: Willie & Arlene & Tunemasters

I've Lied [Arlene Smith]/ End 1011 1958

I've Lied (alt. take) [Arlene Smith & Chantels] Collectables CD 8802

As: Ronnie Baxter

Is It Because/ Gone 5060 1959

As: Lucy Rivera

Ific/ End 1041 1959

As: Jimmy Pemberton

Rags To Riches/ End 1052 1959

Rags To Riches/ Mark-X 8002 1959

As: Richard Barrett & Chantels

Come Softly To Me/ Gone 5056 1959

As: Richard Barrett

Come Softly To Me/ Orchid 5004 1959

As: Richard Bee [and] Richard Barrett & Chantels

Summer's Love/All Is Forgiven Gone 5060 1960

As: Richard Barrett

Summer's Love [alt. take] End EP

As: Richie Barrett

Summer's Love/Let Me Down Easy Crackerjack 4012 1963

Veneers Produced by Barrett

As: The Veneers

I/Believe Me Princeton 102 1960

As: The Chantels

I/Believe Me End 1103 1961

As: Tony Middleton

Blackjack Triumph 605 959

As: Titus Turner

The Return of Stagger Lee/Answer Me King 5186 1959

Clickettes/Fashions Produced by Barrett

As: Clickettes

Where Is He/The Lone Lover Guyden 2043 1960

As: Fashions

Dearest One/All I Want Warwick 646 1961

Fairy Tales/Please Let It Be Me Elmor 301 1961