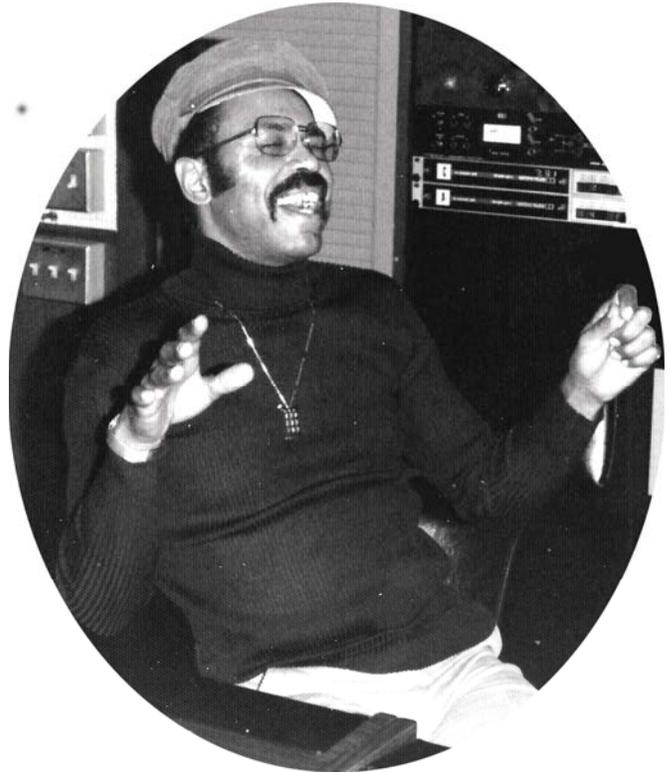


The Musical Legacy of Richard Barrett – Pt. 4

Little Anthony & the Imperials

by Charlie Horner

With Contributions from
Pamela Horner and Val Shively



rett. He gave us the ability to perform with class and dignity. He gave us the tools we needed. A guy like that doesn't come along very often. We didn't always agree, but we didn't disagree. And we were never disagreeable."⁹

* * *

In 1958, with the phenomenal successes of the Teenagers and Chantels, some might have thought that Richard Barrett the producer couldn't get any hotter. If that was the case, they were wrong. Barrett's next success came through a combination of talented teenagers he was already well familiar with.

The Imperials' story is rooted in the Fort Greene Projects of Brooklyn, New York. During World War II, the Brooklyn Navy Yard employed more than 71,000 people, building ships for the war effort. To house that many workers, the New York Housing Authority built thirty-six brick buildings ranging in height from six to fifteen stories and collectively called them the Fort Greene Houses.

Jerome Anthony Gourdine was born in 1941 in New York City and grew up in Fort Greene, where his father worked as an electrician at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Anthony came from a musical family. His mother sang with the Nazareth Baptist Gospel Singers, a group that also included her three sisters. Anthony's father played tenor and alto saxophone with the Sinclair and Buddy Johnson Orchestras during the 1940's and at times subbed with Duke Ellington.

"I always sang, one way or another," said Anthony. "I sang in church, I sang in school, I sang in centers. It seemed like I was always singing."⁵ "At that time, everyone was trying to sing. We would go down at lunch period and one guy would start singing and everyone fell in. We did that for about a year, that was 1954."⁶

By 1954, Anthony had graduated PS 67 elementary school and started Brooklyn's Boys High School. At Boys High, Anthony met William Delk who was also from the Fort Greene Projects and Doc Dockery who lived in Coney Island.



"That's Richard Barrett!

That's the guy who started me in this business," exclaimed "Little" Anthony Gourdine as he pointed to a screen image of his mentor at the Richard Barrett Memorial Service in October 2006. "He was unique in as much as he was... a man of the world. A renaissance bon vivant. He taught us [the Imperials] things that are unteachable today. We've been in this business for close to fifty years because of Richard Bar-

Recalled Anthony, "We said, 'Let's get a group together and sing.' We would rehearse but we needed another singer. We wanted a bass singer but we couldn't find one. At that time there were something like four or five famous groups that actually went to my school. One was the Fi-Tones and another was the Velours. Everybody dug tenor singers and bass singers. I was a tenor, a natural tenor, so we were looking for a bass singer. We found a fellow by the name of William Bracy, who was really a baritone, he wasn't a bass singer. We had no name for the group then, we were just four guys who would sing after school. We kept on singing for a long time, maybe seven or eight months. We would practice songs in the daytime and we would sing at certain functions they had at school assembly time."⁶

The group took the name, the Duponts, from the chemical company. Doc Dockery's father was a drummer who introduced the group to his friend Paul Winley. Winley, brother to the Clovers' Harold Winley, was a songwriter who was interested in starting his own record label. Winley had written "I Got My Eyes On You" for the Clovers before hooking up with David (Baby Cortez) Clowney and Bob Kornegay (Du Droppers) to write songs as a team. Winley had known Clowney prior to Clowney joining Richard Barrett's Valentines. In fact, Winley wrote "Real Humdinger" for Clowney's first group, the Five Pearls (*Aladdin* label).

"Publishers would slam the door [on songwriters]." Winley said. "You know, 'No good! Later!' and all that stuff. So I thought that the best thing to do was to start my own company. A lot of songwriters on Broadway thought I was



Clowney at the time. We did a thing called 'Soft Lights'/'Saturday Night Rock' with David. Then we did 'You'/'Must Be Falling In Love' [with the Duponts]. I put the two records out but nothing happened. In Philadelphia and a few other places, the Duponts record was hotter than a rocket, but it never got off the ground."⁷

Recorded at Regent Sound Studio in New York, the Duponts' first record was backed by established musicians: Sam "The Man" Taylor (sax), Panama Francis (drums), Mickey Baker (guitar) and David Clowney (piano). The record was released in August 1956 but failed to click. Winley and the Duponts parted ways, with Winley selling the masters to *Savoy* three years later after Anthony gained fame with the *Imperials*. Paul Winley kept with his *Winley* label, however,



The Duponts, 1957

crazy. The old black songwriters used to say, 'What are you talking about? How are you going to start a record company?' I figured that I had nothing. So there was nothing to lose. I'll make a few records. If they happen, they happen. If they don't, they don't."⁷

The Duponts met Paul Winley at the CBS Building on 53rd St. in Manhattan where, by now, a lot of groups were rehearsing. After hearing the Duponts sing, Winley decided to record them. "He kept telling us, 'I can get you a deal,'" said Anthony, "And he took us to the Apollo Theatre. He was going to put us on the amateur night. But we sang for [Apollo Theatre owner] Frank Shiffman and he said, 'Come back some other time, boys, when you're ready.' That was embarrassing."⁸

"In 1955 I had a group of kids out of Brooklyn, New York," remembered Winley. "Anthony Gourdine and a few other fellows in a group called the Duponts. I went into the studio with them and Baby Cortez. We called him Baby



scoring hits with the Paragons and Jesters. Clowney continued to write and produced some of those records for him, while still singing with the Valentines.

The Duponts hung out with songwriter Otis Blackwell, who worked with the group. Blackwell introduced them to Jack Hook, Alan Freed's manager. Hook also owned the *Royal Roost* label and so the Duponts' next recording, "Prove It Tonight" b/w "Somebody", was for *Royal Roost*. Hook also got the Duponts on Alan Freed's weeklong show at the New York Paramount in February 1957. Also on the bill were the Platters, Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers, Ruth Brown, the Cadillacs, the Cleftones, Buddy Knox and Teddy Randazzo. Randazzo, who just split with the Three Chuckles, would have a major impact on Anthony's career in the 1960's.

Meanwhile, some of Anthony's friends from Boys High and the Fort Green Projects had formed another singing group. Clarence Collins, Ernest Wright, Nate Rogers and Tracey Lord had a group called the Chesters. Trying to get discovered, the Chesters did like several groups before them – they set out to meet Richard Barrett.

"Richard Barrett used to manage the Chantels," recalled Clarence Collins. "They were playing the Paramount and we used to rehearse and go over there. We used to say, 'Richard, man, why don't you listen to our group?' Every time Alan Freed had a show at the Paramount, we'd go over and hang out backstage, because we always wanted to be in show



business. And I used to kick Richard and say, 'Come on, man, listen to our group.' So finally he got tired of that and he told Ernest and me to come down and have an audition with George Goldner. Anthony wasn't with the group yet. So we did that and Goldner said, 'You guys sound nice but you need another lead singer.'"⁸

"We were just the Chesters then and I was doing lead," recalled Ernest at Richard Barrett's Memorial Service. "We went into the studio to record for Richard and George Goldner and the recording wasn't coming out right. So they stopped the session and Richard came out and he said, 'Come back when you have a better lead singer. I was relieved [of my position as lead singer]. Why was I relieved? Because I sang through my nose. Singing through your nose and not your diaphragm, you're not going to make it. Walking away we knew we had to find a better voice – a lead voice.'"⁹

The Chesters went back to their neighborhood where they persuaded Anthony Gourdine to leave the Duponts and join the Chesters.

"All the girls were hanging around [the Chesters]," Anthony remembered. "The Duponts would sing... the Moon-glow's 'Most of All', which was our top tune. Then when it was the Chesters' turn, their bass would sing and all the girls would go running away from us, over to them. I said, 'I wanna be in that group.'" "[Anthony's group's] bass used to sound like a tenor," Ernest added.⁸

On advice from the Cellos, the Chesters auditioned for and were signed by *Apollo Records*. Prior to the recording session, Clarence dropped out of the group for a short time, being replaced by Keith Williams. By 1957, Bess Berman, the legendary owner of *Apollo Records* was in poor health (her husband Ike had died a year earlier) and *Apollo* was being run by her son-in-law, Charles Merenstein. In February 1958, *Apollo* released two sides by the Chesters, both written by and led by Anthony Gourdine. "The Fires Burn No More" b/w "Lift Up Your Head" had a lot of promise, sounding reminiscent of songs by Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers. But *Apollo Records* in the late 1950's was just not as strong as in the early 50's label when it launched the careers of the Larks, Five Royales and Mahalia Jackson. Merenstein couldn't find the right niche for the group, yet still had them tied up contractually.

"They were stuck with a company called *Apollo*," stated Barrett. "I went there and bought their contract. They



Alan Freed Show at the New York Paramount with the Teenagers, Platters, Cadillacs, Cleftones, Ruth Brown and the Duponts, February 1957.

[Apollo] were always running these kids crazy, and the guy [Merenstein] wanted \$125 for some jackets they bought for the kids. So I went and gave the guy a check for \$125, I bought the contract, got them their release, gave it to them and told them they were on their own. I didn't have time to bother with them, but I couldn't see kids like that struggling with a company that wasn't doing them any good, just holding them down."⁸

By now, Clarence Collins had returned to the Chesters, replacing Keith Williams. The group was more determined than ever to have Barrett record them. "They said they wanted to be with me," Barrett said, "But I just couldn't find time for them for quite a few months. But they stuck around. They wouldn't go anyplace else. My office was at 1650 Broadway and they had a big lobby there. I used to come in and see them and I'd tell them, 'First chance I get, I'll get to you.'"⁸

Barrett's time was pretty much taken up with the Chantels, Flamingos, Channels, Dubs, Isley Brothers and several other acts.

"We went [back] downtown looking for the man everybody was looking for," recalled Ernest. "We were trying to find him to say, 'We're back! We're back and now we have the formula.' So Richard said, 'Let's hear what you've got.'" The Chesters again auditioned for Barrett and Goldner with two Ernest Wright compositions, "Cha Cha Henry" and "Two Kinds Of People In The World". "We sang 'Two Kinds Of People' and Richard said, 'OK, it's a good song.' But then he said, 'Try this.' Richard put the bridge 'I'm The Boy Who Told The Girl Of The Stars Up Above' to the song."⁹

Barrett considered "Two Kinds Of People" an "A" side and was set to back it with "Cha Cha Henry" when fate brought another hit song across his desk. Barrett's (and Goldner's) offices were on the 14th floor of 1650 Broadway. In the late fifties and early sixties, more music business transactions took place in 1650 Broadway and the Brill Building across the street (1619 Broadway) than almost anywhere else in the country. At 1650 Broadway you could write a song, hire the musicians, cut a demo, and take it around to record companies, publishers, managers, artists and promoters without ever leaving the building. Don Kirshner's publishing company was located on the 7th floor of the building. Kirshner had a number of songwriters in his employ, including Al Lewis and Sylvester Bradford. Kirshner also had a young singer making acetate demos of the songs so potential record labels and producers could hear them. His name was Robert Cassotto but his stage name was Bobby Darin.

Sylvester Bradford had been singing, playing piano, arranging and writing songs for about six years. He had recorded with the Bradford Boys (*Rainbow Records*), Ivories (*Jaguar Records*) and Suburbans (*Baton Records*).¹⁰ His co-writer, Al Lewis, had been writing songs since the 1920's. Born in New York City in 1901, Lewis' biggest success as a lyricist was "Blueberry Hill," a song he wrote in 1940. When "Blueberry Hill" was revived by Fat's Domino in 1956, Al Lewis was suddenly thrust back into the spotlight.

"I had a group [the Suburbans] that I took around to try to get some songs played," recalled Sylvester Bradford on how he first met Al Lewis. "And Al Lewis was a partner of Don Kirshner. Kirshner liked the songs but he didn't like the group. So I got a phone call to come down and Kirshner said, 'Hey, why don't you write with Al? Forget the group. The songs are great!' So I got in with Don Kirshner and he was good friends with Bobby Darin. I got in with this group and I stayed with Al Lewis and just wrote songs. Al Lewis was about thirty years older than I. He wrote "Blueberry Hill" but that

was when I was a kid. Don Kirshner later left him for Al Nevins but when Al Lewis and Don Kirshner and I were together we did pretty good. But we stayed with Bobby Darin. Al Lewis owned part of Bobby Darin's Production for quite a while."

Bradford and Lewis had Bobby Darin record their demos. "We always used Bobby Darin," said Bradford. "For about thirty songs. He was a very good friend of both of us." In 1958, Bradford and Lewis wrote a pretty ballad that began, "You don't remember me, But I remember you, T'was not so long ago, You broke my heart in two, Tears On My Pillow...". They had Darin record the demo and took it upstairs to Barrett and Goldner. Goldner thought the song had potential and handed it to Barrett to find an artist for it. What Goldner didn't know was that Barrett and Lewis had had a recent disagreement and Barrett was not anxious to record a Lewis tune.

"A friend of mine had recorded a demo," Barrett recalled. "And this kid was a nice guy; I had liked him anyway. We were sort of close, and this kid was having some problems – his mother had just died and he was having a bad time. And, in those days, they'd pay you a certain amount of money for doing a demo. But if the demo got chosen and an artist recorded it, they would pay you an extra bonus. There used to be a place called Hanson's [a coffee shop on the corner of the 1650 Broadway building], and we used to all go there every morning for breakfast. My friend would show up and ask about the demo. The guy I'm talking about is Bobby Darin, and I loved him but I did not want his song. I hated the [songwriter], because we'd had an argument one time prior to that. So I didn't like this guy Al Lewis. After a while I just loved [Lewis] because he was really cool. So I was wrong. Anyway, I took the demo and threw it in the trash basket. And I had two trash baskets – one on the outside of my desk and one under it. And I used to put that demo in the basket under my desk every day. I'd play it first and Bobby was singing it like Sinatra. And I *did* like the song. The cleaning lady used to come in every night. I'd come in every morning and the demo would still be there. I'd throw it in the trash basket and it would fall flat, so the lady would never see it and take it away. So I played it every day and I liked the song."⁸ This went on for about a week until Barrett got so attached to the song he decided to give it to the Chesters.

By now the Chesters had been renamed the Imperials. The name was suggested by Goldner's promotion man, Lou Gallo. Alan Freed started playing "Tears On My Pillow" immediately, announcing it as "Little Anthony" and the Imperials. The name stuck and *End Records* made all subsequent

2

TEARS ON MY PILLOW

Words and Music by SYLVESTER BRADFORD and AL LEWIS

Moderato

my you

and by

C Am Dm G7 C .. Am .. Dm .. G7 ..

The image shows a page of sheet music for the song "Tears On My Pillow" by Sylvester Bradford and Al Lewis. The page is numbered "2" in the top left corner. The title "TEARS ON MY PILLOW" is prominently displayed in the center. Below the title, it says "Words and Music by SYLVESTER BRADFORD and AL LEWIS". The tempo is marked "Moderato". The sheet music includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (F major/D minor), and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is written on a single staff. There are lyrics "my" and "you" under the notes. At the bottom of the page, there are guitar chords: C, Am, Dm, G7, C, .., Am, .., Dm, .., G7, ..



pressings "Little Anthony & the Imperials". Original pressings from July 1958 listing only "The Imperials" are more highly prized by record collectors.

"Tears On My Pillow" reached #2 on the R&B Charts and #4 on the Pop Charts, the most successful song for both the Imperials and the Bradford-Lewis songwriting team. It has since become a fifties era music standard.

No sooner had "Tears On My Pillow" been released than Barrett had the group on TV, lip syncing their hit on *Dick Clark's Saturday Night Beechnut Show* (August 23) and *American Bandstand* (September 10, 1958). Barrett and Al Lewis, who had now patched up their differences, held out to have the group appear in person on *Your Hit Parade*. *Your Hit Parade* had their own cast of singers do the latest hits but Barrett insisted on and got the Imperials to do "Tears On My Pillow", the first such group to sing their own hit on the show.

By October 1958, the Imperials were riding high with "Tears On My Pillow". The flip, "Two People In The World" was also getting significant play, especially in New York. The Imperials joined the Irvin Feld/GAC Tour that ran from Octo-

ber 3 to 19 and also starred Buddy Holly & the Crickets, Dion & the Belmonts, Jimmy Clanton, Frankie Avalon, Clyde McPhatter, Bobby Darin, Jack Scott, the Coasters, Bobby Freeman, the Danleers, the Olympics, the Elegants, Connie Francis, Eddie Cochran and Syl Austin. In seventeen days the tour covered Massachusetts, Connecticut, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, North Carolina, Virginia and Canada.

Barrett's strict supervision of his young singers, that began with the Teenagers and Chantels, continued with the Imperials. "When I was a kid, I did not like that man," remembered Anthony with a smile. "I was seventeen years old. It was almost like he told my mother and father, 'You stand over here. I'm in control now.' That's the way Richard was. When you're a young person you don't think much of that. The first gig we did, he locked us in our rooms in the hotel. He wouldn't let us go anywhere. He got a guy to watch us. We looked at each other and said, 'This isn't what we thought show business was all about!' Because all I wanted was hit records and to be where the girls were. And Richard gave that dream to me and made that dream come true. But he wouldn't let me have the girls!"⁹

Anthony's appreciation of Richard Barrett's methods grew as he got older. "He was giving me information to help me grow to become a man," Anthony reflected. "This man showed us what show business was all about. He pulled us aside and said, 'I'm going to teach you something you don't know about. It's called show business class. You can be any group in the world, but I want you to be the sharpest, the best singing, the best everything!' And he meant that. Not just on stage but backstage as well. He ruled with a complete iron fist, to the point that I felt so... I was very unhappy. But I grew up to learn to love [Richard Barrett]. I came to realize what he was saying."⁹

Returning to New York after the tour, the Imperials were booked into the Apollo Theater along with the Chantels, Dells, Little Willie John and the Isley Brothers. During the week, Anthony developed laryngitis. "I had laryngitis so bad," Anthony remembered, "I couldn't even think about singing the top notes. The Dells were on the show and Johnny [Funches] sang my high parts into a mike backstage. I was out there opening my mouth, but I wasn't singing. And nobody knew."⁸

While Richard Barrett was still writing his own songs, his success made him the target of every young songwriter trying to catch a break. Barrett had to balance placing his own songs with his groups along with a score of great songs being written for him. Many of the songwriters, such as young Neil Sedaka, were right there in 1650 Broadway. Sedaka had recorded with the Tokens' ("While I Dream") and played chimes on the Willows' "Church Bells May Ring" prior to joining Don Kirshner's writing staff. Sedaka and Howie Greenfield had written "The Diary" especially for Little Anthony & the Imperials and handed a demo of the song to George Goldner. Goldner liked the song and told Barrett to make that tune the Imperials' next release.

Goldner then went out of town leaving Barrett to run the *End/Gone* label complex. Barrett saw the opportunity to instead have the Imperials record one of his own compositions, "So Much". "So Much" was actually released while the Imperials were on tour, but upon their return they lip synced the song on *Dick Clark's Saturday Night Beechnut Show* (November 29).

"I used to rush home from school every day to watch Dick Clark," recalled Neil Sedaka. "And one day he said, '...and now for the follow-up to 'Tears On My Pillow', and it wasn't 'The Diary'. I said, 'Oh my God, that's an omen!'"¹¹

Sedaka was so angry he recorded "The Diary" himself and his version quickly rose to #15 on the Pop Charts, solidify-

TWO TERRIFIC ENTRIES
THE DUBS

"BE SURE (My Love)"

b/w "Song In My Heart"
GONE 5034

THE IMPERIALS

**"TEARS ON MY
PILLOW"**

b/w "Two People In The World"
END 1027

GONE-END RECORDS

1650 BWAY N. Y., N. Y.



George Goldner (far left), Richard Barrett (second from left), and WINZ (Miami) DJ Bob Green (center) and the Imperials accepting a Gold Record for "Tears On My Pillow" (1958).

ing his singing career. The Imperials' "So Much" reached #24 on the R&B Charts but barely made a ripple on the Pop Charts (#87). Goldner returned to New York and was furious with Barrett. Barrett rushed to release the Imperials' version of "The Diary" (recorded first) but by then it was too late. "That's one I let get away," Richard later told historian Charlie Horner.

Trying to repeat earlier success, Barrett went back to Bradford and Lewis for another song. "I got to know Richard and we became pretty good friends," recalled Sylvester Bradford. "I'd go upstairs and talk to him. Sometimes we'd go out to lunch. But Al Lewis knew him a lot better." By now, Bradford and Lewis were enjoying the success of their song, "I'm Ready" with Fats Domino's rendition hitting #16 on the Pop Charts. They'd also had a couple of songs recorded by Gene Vincent. Bradford and Lewis wrote "Wishful Thinking" for the Imperials but it failed to chart. They also gave Barrett "Ific", which he recorded with both Lucy Rivera and the Chantels.

The Imperials played the Apollo in January 1959 with Jerry Butler, the Crests, the Quintones and the Flamingos. They appeared on American Bandstand (February 16, 1959) doing "Wishful Thinking" before joining the "Biggest Show of 1959 Tour" with Bo Diddley, Jimmy Clanton, Clyde McPhatter,

the Crests, the Platters, the Coasters and Lloyd Price in March. *End Records* also released the Imperials' first LP, "We Are The Imperials" in March.

By June 1959, the Imperials were back home at the Apollo, appearing on a Dr. Jive Show with Brook Benton, Shirley & Lee, Wilbert Harrison and the Shirelles. While the Imperials' next few records failed to generate national chart action, their stage performances were pure excitement. The group was doing "I'm Alright" as an up-tempo closing number to show off their dance steps that included splits and frenzied footwork. The performance created such a stir that George Goldner sent Sam Cooke over to the Apollo to work with Anthony and put lyrics to the song. The talented Cooke had words to the song in ten minutes.

Late in 1959, the Imperials were given the song, "Shimmy Shimmy Ko-Ko-Bop" to record. None of the group really liked the song but it did go on to be their second biggest selling record to date, reaching #14 on the R&B Charts and #24 on the Pop Charts. It also has the distinction of being the song that Alan Freed interrupted to announce his resignation from radio amid the payola scandals.

Trying to find a new formula, Barrett had the Imperials record "My Empty Room," released in May 1960. It turned



Richard Barrett with Little Anthony & the Imperials, January 2002. Photo courtesy of Julie Barrett.

out to be the group's last chart record on *End*. The melody was based on the First Movement of Tchaikovsky's Sixth (Pathétique) Symphony. "[Richard Barrett] introduced us to classical music," said Anthony. "I didn't know what he was doing at the time but he was opening our minds to bigger and larger things, a bigger picture. He was planting a seed in us that would prepare us for fifty years in the music business."⁹

"I used to take [the Imperials] to my house and play the classics for them," Barrett said. "I would play Milt Jackson, John Lewis and the Stuttgart Symphony Orchestra. I used to play Montovani for them. I'd play passages and they would sing those passages in harmony. Those classical passages were really different, but they were into the music so much, and they were doing what they wanted to do, which was to perform and sing... [The Imperials] had great harmony. We used to listen to the Hi-Los, the Four Freshmen, I gave them all those things. I used to take them to see Montovani at Carnegie Hall. I'd put them right down in the front row, so they could see what they heard on the records. Montovani was one of my favorites. That was the groundwork I tried to lay down for everybody."⁸

In the spring of 1961, *End* released the Imperials' second LP, "Shades of the Forties". The album of beautiful pop standards was supposed to set the stage for the group's move away from rock and roll shows and into nightclub work. Before that happened, however, the original Imperials lineup began to splinter. Nate was drafted into the service and Tracey left to get married. At this point, Sammy Strain was brought into the group. Strain was born and raised in Brooklyn (Fulton Street & St James Place). He had known Anthony, since Anthony's days with the Duponts and went to school with Ernest. Strain was a veteran singer, having sung with the Chips ("Rubber Biscuit") and the Fantastics ("There Goes My Love"). He'd met Richard Barrett when the Fantastics and Valentines did a gig together. Sammy was singing with the Impacts ("Canadian Sunset") when he got a call from Richard Barrett asking him to join the Imperials.¹² Anthony Gourdine also left the group at this time, signing with *Roulette* as a solo act. Barrett replaced Anthony with George Kerr, a former member of the Serenaders ("I Wrote A Letter"). Barrett held auditions to replace Anthony and selected Kerr, a native of Newark, NJ, from among twenty-five applicants.¹³

Toward the end of 1961, Richard Barrett split with George Goldner, taking the Imperials, Impacts and Chantels to *Carlton Records*. While "Look In My Eyes" was a big success for the Chantels, the Imperials' lone release, "Faithfully Yours," attracted little attention.

Barrett's next move was to Harold B. Robinson's *Newtime* label out of Philadelphia. The group's first release on the label was credited to "Anthony & the Imperials" even though there was no Anthony in the group. The record was recalled and issued again as just "The Imperials". "A Short Prayer" was a Barrett composition while the flip, "Where Will You Be" was written by Jimmy Castor and John Pruitt. Castor had known Barrett since the time he'd filled in for Frankie Lymon with the Teenagers. In fact, both Castor and Pruitt had written for the post-Lymon Teenagers (*Columbia Label*) and recorded with the later Teenchords (*Juanita Label*). Castor had earlier tried to give Barrett some songs for the Chantels without success.¹⁴

In 1963, Richard Barrett produced a record with Spaniels' lead, Pookie Hudson for Lloyd Price's *Double-L* label. "Lloyd hired Richard Barrett to do the session," Hudson remembered. "Richard was managing the Imperials, and he had them around, so he had them do the background." "I Know, I Know" was written by Sammy Strain and Barrett (under the pseudonym B. Junior). "We did a couple of things," said Pookie. "We did 'Three Steps From The Truth', which was never released." "I Know, I Know" did well in several markets and charted briefly.¹⁵

When Barrett moved to Luther Dixon's *Ludix* label he again took the Imperial and Chantels with him. Only one Imperials' release resulted from these sessions and it came out later on Capitol (*Ludix's* parent label). The Imperials were working as a lounge act in the Catskills and Little Anthony's recording contract had also stalled out.

Both the Imperials and Chantels split with Richard Barrett at this point. Barrett would move back to Philadelphia. Anthony Gourdine would reunite with Clarence Collins, Ernest Wright and Sammy Strain and re-form Little Anthony & the Imperials. Under the new direction of Teddy Randazzo, the group would again score big with songs like "I'm On The Outside (Lookin' In)", "Goin' Out Of My Head" and "Hurt So Bad".

Over the years, Richard watched with pride as his young group developed into one of the finest club acts in the business. He stayed in touch with them. Whenever the Imperials would perform anywhere nearby, he'd always be there – still critiquing!

And the lessons Richard Barrett taught the Imperials stayed with them through their career. "I'll always be grateful to Richard," Anthony reflected. "This man was absolutely 150% right in knowing what to do with the Chantels and us and other artists! Some artists didn't listen and didn't get it. We got it. It took a long time, but we got it!"⁹



Imperials singing "Wind Beneath My Wings" acappella at the Richard Barrett Memorial Service. Photo courtesy of Weldon A. McDougal III.

Notes & References

1. For "Richard Barrett's Musical Legacy: Part 1, 2 and 3" see *Echoes of the Past*, Nos. 78, 79 and 80 (Winter 2006, Spring 2007, Summer 2007)
2. Charlie Horner's interview with Sylvester Bradford, Oct 15, 2007.
3. Charlie Horner's interviews and conversations over the past thirty years with Richard Barrett.
4. Special thanks to Val Shively, Marv Goldberg, and Julie Barrett. Photo's provided by Julie Barrett, Charles Anderson and Weldon A. McDougal III.
5. Marc Taylor, "Goin' Out of My Head Over Little Anthony And The Imperials," *A Touch Of Classic Soul*, Vol. 1, No. 8, (Aug 2006), pp.9-13.
6. Art Turco, "Interview: Little Anthony Gourdine," *Record Exchanger*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1973).
7. Phil Groia, "The Paul Winley Story," *Bim Bam Boom*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1973), pp.30-31.
8. Dennis Garvey, "Little Anthony and The Imperials Back in Harmony," *Goldmine* No. 358, (15 Apr 1994), pp. 50-62.
9. Richard Barrett Memorial, West Laurel Hill Cemetery, Bala Cynwyd, PA (14 Oct. 2006).
10. For a complete history of Sylvester Bradford's vocal group career, see: Marv Goldberg, "The Suburbans," <http://home.att.net/~marvart/Suburbans/suburbans.html> (2004).
11. Colin Escort, "Neil Sedaka For Fans," <http://groups.msn.com/NeilSedakaForFans/biography.msnw>
12. To hear Bob Davis' comprehensive interview with Sammy Strain visit <http://www.soul-patrol.com/soul/ojays.htm>
13. Phillip Groia, *They All Sang On The Corner*, Phillie Dee Enterprises, NY (1983), p.138.
14. Phil Groia, "Jimmy Castor," *Bim Bam Boom*. Iss. 8, (1972).
15. Todd R. Baptista, "The Spaniels," *Group Harmony: Behind The Rhythm And The Blues*, TRB Enterprises, New Bedford, MA, (1996), p.17.
16. For the latest news on Little Anthony & the Imperials, visit their website, <http://www.littleanthonyandtheimperials.com/>

Pre-1964 Little Anthony & Imperials Discography

The Duponts

Winley 212	You/Must Be Falling In Love	1956
Royal Roost 627	Prove It Tonight/Somebody	1957

Little Anthony "Guardine" and the Duponts

Savoy 1552	You/Must Be Falling In Love (reissue of Winley 212)	1958
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The Duponts (later configuration of Duponts w/o Little Anthony)

Roulette 4060	Half Past Nothing/Screamin' Ball	1958
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The Chesters

Apollo 521	The Fires Burn No More/Lift Up Your Head	1958
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Little Anthony & Imperials (reissue of Apollo 521)

Apollo 755	The Fires Burn No More/I Know (Lift Up...)	1960
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The Imperials

End 1027	Tears On My Pillow/Two People In the World	1958
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Little Anthony & The Imperials

End 1027	Tears On My Pillow/Two People In the World	1958
End 1036	So Much/Oh Yeah	1958
End 1038	The Diary/Cha Cha Henry	1959
End 1039	Wishful Thinking/When You Wish Upon A Star	1959
End 1047	A Prayer And A Juke Box/River Path	1959
End 1053	So Near And Yet So Far/I'm Alright	1959
End 1060	Shimmy Shimmy Ko-Ko-Bop/I'm Still In Love With You	1959
End 1067	My Empty Room/Bayou Bayou Baby	1960
End 1074	I'm Taking A Vacation From Love/Only Sympathy	1960
End 1080	Limbo Part 1/Limbo Part 2	1960
End 1083	Formula Of Love/Dream	1960
End 1086	Please Say You Want Me/So Near Yet So Far	1961
End 1091	Traveling Stranger/Say Yeah	1961
End 1104	A Lovely Way To Spend An Evening/Dream	1961

The Imperials

Carlton 566	Faithfully Yours/Vut Vut	1961
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Pookie Hudson (uncredited backup by Imperials)

Double-L 711	I Know I Know/Jealous Heart	1963
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Anthony & the Imperials

Newtime 503	A Short Prayer/Where Will You Be	1962
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The Imperials

Newtime 503	A Short Prayer/Where Will You Be	1962
Newtime 505	The Letter/Go And Get Your Broken Heart	1962
Capital 4921	Bermuda Wonderful/I'm Still Dancing	1963

Little Anthony & The Imperials (actually just Little Anthony)

Roulette 4379	That Lil' Ole Lovemaker Me/It Just Ain't Fair	1961
Roulette 4648	That Lil' Ole Lovemaker Me/It Just Ain't Fair (reissue of Roulette 4379)	1965

Little Anthony

Roulette 4477	Lonesome Rodeo/I've Got A Lot To Offer Darling	1963
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