

The Sweet Delights

by Charlie Horner

With contributions from Pamela Horner

Sometimes the most rewarding part of preserving the legacy of our music is the wonderful friendships we make along the way. As researchers and writers we must remain objective. Still, Pam & I have known Gerylane and Eddie Edgehill for years. I wrote about Eddie Edgehill with the Valentines [2] and Del Knights [3] in past issues of *Echoes of the Past*. Sadly, Eddie passed in 2010. This article covers the musical career of Gerylane Edgehill and her group, the Sweet Delights.

Gerylane Edgehill was born Gerylane Moore in Wilmington, NC. She moved with her family to North Philadelphia when she was eight years old. "I always sang in church from the time I was very little," recalled Geri. "I sang in the choir."

In the early 1960's Gerylane met former Valentines' Eddie Edgehill. Eddie was singing with the Del Knights at the time, one of Philadelphia's most underrated vocal groups. Another member of the Del Knights, Warren Sherrill, was going with a girl next door to Gerylane, and brought Eddie over. In March of 1964, Gerylane and Eddie Edgehill were married. Eddie would continue his singing career with Terry Johnson's Modern Flamingos group until 1967, when he decided to follow his friend Richard Barrett's example and move into the songwriting, producing and managing end of the music business. Having discovered produced and/or managed everyone from Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers to the Chantels and Little Anthony & the Imperials, Richard Barrett was now back in Philadelphia managing the Three Degrees. Eddie Edgehill and Warren Sherrill, wrote and produced "Do The African Twist" by the Mad Men on the *Gamble* label.

Meanwhile, Gerylane Edgehill wanted to sing and she organized a female soul group. She first got Gracie Montgomery [later Allison] and went through a progression of other singers named Karen and Louise. Eddie was anxious to manage and produce the group but he was impatient by the constant personnel turn-overs. Eddie told Gerylane, "When you get the group together, call me. I don't have the time to be bothered. Every time I look you've got a new person."

Knowing they needed a good lead singer, Gerylane and Eddie Edgehill recruited Valerie Brown who had been singing with a New Jersey group, the Vonettes, that was breaking up. The new group sounded good enough to record, but they couldn't get the sound that Eddie Edgehill wanted. Eddie felt that Val was not hitting the right notes, and this group never recorded..

Gerylane knew a young girl named Peggy Murphy who was brought in to be the new lead, whereupon Valerie left the group.

A new group, the Sweet Delights, was formed



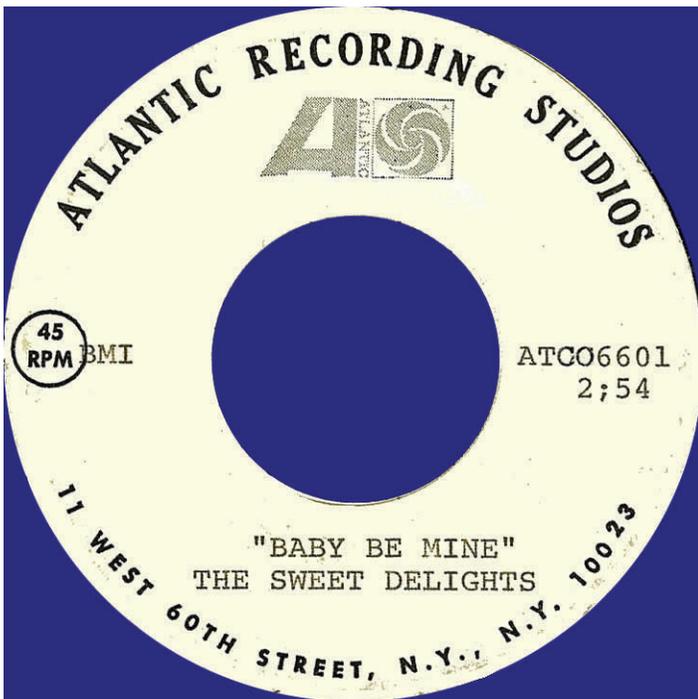
The Sweet Delights as they recorded "Baby Be Mine".
Left to right: Gerylane Edgehill, Peggy Murphy, Albert Byrd, Jackie, Grace Montgomery
(Photo courtesy of Gerylane Edgehill)

including Gerylane Edgehill, Gracie Montgomery, Peggy Murphy, Peggy's husband Albert Byrd, and a girl remembered only as Jackie. Eddie Edgehill managed the group. The group began working on a song called "Baby Be Mine".

Albert Thomas Byrd was born in North Philadelphia, the seventh of twelve children. As a youngster Albert sang with an R&B group that once opened for B. B. King at the Tippin' Inn in Berlin, NJ. He also sang with a gospel group, the Vocal-Aires Juniors, who were understudies to a well known group, Bill Murray & the Vocal-Aires.

With the basic melody and harmony worked out for "Baby Be Mine," Eddie Edgehill took the Sweet Delights to Frank Virtue's recording studio at Broad Street and Columbia Avenue (now Cecil B. Moore Ave).

Frank Virtuoso was a musician, bandleader and recording engineer who fronted a combo called the Virtues, for which he played lead guitar. The Virtues' "Guitar Boogie Shuffle" was a top ten record in 1959.



Test pressing of "Baby Be Mine" by the Sweet Delights
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)

Frank Virtue initially started a recording studio in the basement of his home to record his group, but by the 1960's had opened a professional recording studio on the third floor above a store on North Broad Street.

By the mid-1960's, Frank Virtue's studio had become a favorite haunt for the production trio of Weldon McDougal, Luther Randolph and Johnny Stiles, who were breaking new ground with a dynamic rhythm section they'd assembled. The musicians, including guitarists Bobby Eli, Norman Harris, Roland Chambers, bassist Ronnie Baker and drummer Earl Young, would evolve into the famed rhythm section of MFSB as The Sound of Philadelphia. Another mainstay of Virtue Studios was arranger Bobby Martin. Martin had toured as a pianist with Lynn Hope's combo in the early 1950's before becoming A&R man for Harold B. Robinson's *Newtown* label in the early 1960's. There, Martin had produced the early recordings of Patti LaBelle & the Blue Belles. By 1968, Martin, Stiles, Virtue and the crew of talented musicians were recording just about anyone who came to them.

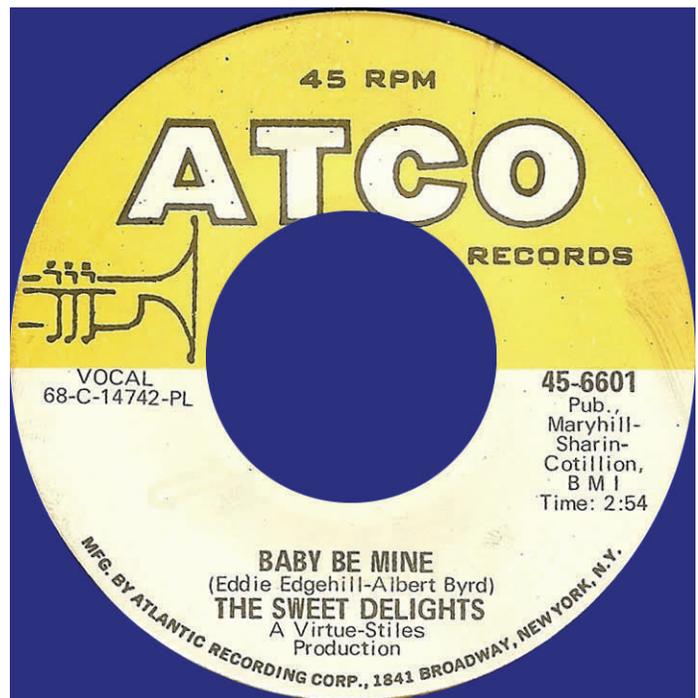
Singers would often arrive with a melody and lyrics and then the arrangers and musicians would go to work. "Luther Randolph did a lot of arrangements that he never got credit for," said Johnny Stiles, "But that's the way it went. Bobby Martin would do the brass part and we'd do all the rhythm section. Frank Virtue gave us pretty much carte blanche in the studio. We were always recording. We recorded more people than I can ever remember." [4]

One local producer who brought artists to Virtue Studios was Jessie James. In 1967, James brought a young singing named Johnny Corland to Virtue Studios and cut a song called "Boogaloo Down Broadway". James had the song released by *Jamie-Guyden's Phil-*

L.A. of Soul label as by "The Fantastic Johnny C" and it became a big hit. Impressed with the job the Virtue Studio musicians did, James quickly brought in another singer named Cliff Noble. James and Noble had the melody and lyrics to a song called "Love Is Alright", but it was Bobby Martin, Johnny Stiles and the studio musicians who arranged an incredible backing track. When Jessie James didn't have a flip side for the record, he said, "I don't give a s***. Just use the instrumental track to 'Love Is Alright'". The musicians and arrangers remixed the instrumental track and gave it to Jesse James, who got it released on *Phil-L.A. of Soul*. The instrumental track, titled "The Horse" and credited to Cliff Nobel and Co. (even though Cliff Nobel was not on it) became a huge hit. [5,6] From that point on, Martin, Stiles and the studio musicians began using instrumental arrangements similar to "The Horse" on the next several records, backing the vocals with the instrumental tracks. For example, listen to the instrumental flips "Horse Fever" (Cliff Nobel & Co.), "The Camel" (Cliff Nobel & Co.), "Philly Horse" (Tony Alvon & the Belairs) or even the vocal to Fantastic Johnny C's "Hitch It To The Horse".

When the Sweet Delights recorded "Baby Be Mine," a similar instrumental track was used for the backing track and flip side. Titled "Paul's Midnight Ride" and credited to The Delights Orchestra, the instrumental track to "Baby Be Mine" fit the pattern. Listening to it recently, guitarist Bobby Eli proclaimed it "son of 'Horse'". [7]

Frank Virtue got the record released on the *Atco* label and it got local airplay but did not chart nationally. The Sweet Delights did make another record, "I Had A Good Thing (But I Blew It)". The record was released as



Stock copy of "Baby Be Mine" by the Sweet Delights
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)

by Al Thomas (Albert Byrd's middle name was Thomas) on the *Virtue* label (without crediting the Sweet Delights). The flip was the instrumental track, re-titled as "Corn Bread And Molasses" by the Al Thomas Ork.

According to Gerylane, there was a disagreement between Frank Virtue and Albert Byrd after the second record, and Virtue decided to drop the group. The Sweet Delights broke up again, but that is far from the end of the story.

"The Sweet Delights got back together," said Gerylane. "Valerie Brown came back and at the time Gracie Montgomery was still with us. The group added a fourth member, Betty Allen. "I ran into James Allen of the soul group Broadway Express [8] one day. He and I had gone to elementary school together but I hadn't seen him in years. It turned out that he and his wife were living right around the corner. I told him we were looking for another girl singer and he said his wife Betty sings. So Betty ended up singing with us. In the meantime, Gracie started missing rehearsals so we were left with the three of us, Valerie, Betty and me. We rehearsed for about two months, just the three of us. Without Grace we had to switch notes and get everything worked out for three voices."

Even without recording again, the Sweet Delights became very popular as entertainers. The Edgehills' friend Richard Barrett was having success with the Three Degrees and Richard began helping the Sweet Delights get gigs.

"Our first job was a club in New Jersey," recalled Gerylane. Richard Barrett arranged that. We did a good job but the manager said he couldn't pay us because he didn't make that much money. And the club was packed! I called Eddie and Eddie called Richard.



THE SWEET DELIGHTS

Personal Direction
Edgehill

The Sweet Delights, ca. 1969
Left to right: Valerie Brown, Gerylane Edgehill,
Betty Allen
(Photo courtesy of Gerylane Edgehill)



Al Thomas with uncredited backup by the Sweet Delights
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)

By the time I got back to the dressing room the girls told me the manager wanted to see me. He paid us with a paper bag full of one dollar bills."

From that point on, the Sweet Delights started going to different places after the 3 Degrees finished up there. "We started working places like Boston. This was the three of us, me, Betty and Val. Eddie was our manager. He sent us to Boston and Newport, RI. We went all over New England and Canada."

In fact, for the next four years, the Sweet Delights plays night clubs, supper clubs and private parties, singing their own interpretations of r&b, rock, classical and popular tunes of the day. They sang everything from "One Night Affair" and "Knock On Wood" to "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Head". They sang Temptations' songs like "Superstar" and had their own Temptations-like choreography. Choreography was arranged by Eddie Edgehill, who had always been the lead choreography for the Valentines. Gigs included the Golden Nugget and Downtown Lounge (Boston, MA), Ma's Lounge and Hurley's (Newport, RI), Ellis Lounge and Cape Verden (Providence, RI), 30 Acres (Nantucket, MA), Sound Track (New Haven, CT), Talk Of The Town (New London, CT), Apollo 12 (New Bedford, CT), Jolly Knight (Prince Edwards Island, Canada), Arrows (Halifax, Nova Scotia), Rockheads (Montreal, Canada),

Sweet Delights



**The Sweet Delights, later group
Left to right: Betty Allen, Gerylane Edgehill,
Gracie Montgomery
(Photo courtesy of Gerylane Edgehill)**

Wonder Garden and Club Harlem (Atlantic City, NJ) and many, many more.

“We worked the Wonder Garden twice a year,” remembered Gerylane. “We worked with Wilson Pickett, Junior Walker and Eddie Holman. The first time we worked there we replaced Honey & the Bees. At the Club Harlem in Atlantic City, we were working the back room while Harold Melvin & the Blue Notes were working the front room at the bar,” recalled Gerylane.

The Sweet Delights also made a ten day tour of military NCO clubs throughout the South. They sang at Fort Dix (NJ), Quantico (VA), Seymour Johnson (NC), Langley (VA) and Camp Lejeune (NC) and others.

By the early 1970’s the Sweet Delights decided to give up the hectic demands of full time traveling and singing. Years later, the Sweet Delights (Gerylane Edgehill, Gracie Montgomery Allison and Betty Allen) got together again due to many requests to sing at local cabarets.

The instrumental flip side of the Sweet Delights record, “Paul’s Midnight Ride,” seemed to have found new life as a dance tune in the Carolinas. In addition, Wichita KS record label *Solo* issued the instrumental

track with an added vocal by DJ Tim Jacob called “Mercy Baby”. The exact same record was also released on the *Custom Sound* label as “Mercy Baby” by (dj) Gay Poppa. [6]

Valerie Young went on to become a member of the soul/funk group, People’s Choice, who recorded for *Phil-LA of Soul*. Her voice can also be heard on some of the recordings by soul vocal group Blue Magic.

Albert Thomas Byrd moved into gospel music, where he’s had a couple of recent CD’s. He’s also been active as a writer.

Eddie Edgehill passed on January 13, 2010.

Gerylane, Betty and Gracie remain good friends, getting together from time to time to relive old memories.

Notes and References

1. Based on interviews, conversations and correspondences with Gerylane Edgehill, Eddie Edgehill, Johnny Stiles, and Bobby Eli.
2. Charlie Horner, “The Musical Legacy of Richard Barrett (Part 1),” *Echoes of the Past*, No. 78 (2006).
3. Charlie Horner, “The Musical Legacy of Richard Barrett (Part 6),” *Echoes of the Past*, No. 84 (2008).
4. For the early years of Johnny Stiles’ career, see Charlie Horner, “Early Philly Rhythm & Blues: Johnny Stiles and the Medallions and Mannhattans,” *Echoes of the Past*, No. 91 (2010).
5. Tony Cummings, “The Sound of Philadelphia,” Methuen Paperback, London (1975).
6. John A. Jackson, “A House On Fire: The Rise And Fall of Philadelphia Soul,” Oxford, NY (2004).
7. Private correspondence with Bobby Eli.
8. Read Bob Bosco’s article on the Broadway Express in *Echoes of the Past*, No. 65 (2003).

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Sweet Delights Discography

As by the Sweet Delights:

Atco 6601 Baby Be Mine 1968

As by Al Thomas:

Virtue 2500 I Had A Good thing (But I Blew It) 1968

(Both flip sides are instrumental tracks)