

The Wally Osborne Story: The Starfires and the Early Years

By Charlie Horner
With Contributions from Pamela Horner

Though his name may not be familiar to many readers, Wally Osborne is one of the unsung heroes of Philadelphia R&B. Born in Philadelphia on January 6, 1934, Wallace Osborne grew up in the Germantown and Strawberry Mansion areas of Philadelphia. Like many a youngster in the late 1940's, he was influenced by Sonny Til & the Orioles and the emerging sound of Rhythm & Blues vocal harmony.

"I really got into singing because of the Orioles," Wally recalled in a 1990 interview. "The Orioles were the big thing for young people. The Ink Spots and the Mills Brothers were older. Sonny Til was younger and we tended to go with younger singers. When the Orioles came out, everybody was trying to copy Sonny Til."

Still, Wally Osborne did not sing with any established groups at that time. "I was not in a group, then," said Wally. "I was a bathroom singer, copying Sonny Til."

Wally was also fascinated by the radio broadcasts of the *Parisian Tailor Kiddie Hour*, the on-air talent contest for black youth that gave rise to many future local stars. Though he never got to sing on the broadcast, Wally kept a photo of the cast all of his life.

After being transferred from Germantown High School to Simon Gratz High, Wally altered his birth certificate to enter the army in 1950 at age 16. As Wally was in training for airborne jump school, the Korean War began and his unit was transferred to Korea.

"When I went into the service, there were some guys in there singing," said Wally. "Then a group of us started singing in the service. I liked it. All through the service I sang with groups. Even in Korea. I sang in the USO but did not travel with a USO show. When we were in Korea, in the USO, we would go to Japan and sing in officers clubs."

By mid-1951, Wally's grandmother had notified the Army of his real age and he was sent back home with an honorable discharge. Over the next couple years, he studied music at the Ornstein School of Music, the same school that John Coltrane had studied at a few years earlier. There, Wally mastered playing the guitar, bass and piano.

In 1953, Wally Osborne re-enlisted in the Army and joined his old unit in Korea. As the Korean War was ending, Wally's outfit was sent to Japan and he again started singing with a vocal group. At this point, Wally crossed paths with Five Key's lead singer, Rudy West. "Rudy West was in the service the same time I was. He was a big celebrity being with the Five Keys. Rudy would never sing with a group in the service, but he would sing on his own. He was professional, we weren't."

One of the members of Wally's service vocal group was Bobby Holland. Bobby Holland was from West Philadelphia and had previously sung bass with George Grant, Billy Taylor, Octavius Anthony and Frank Vance in a group called the Royal Castelles. When Hol-



Photo of the Royal Castelles performing at a community function in early 1953. Left to right: Octavius Anthony, Billy Taylor, George Grant, Bobby Holland, Frank Vance. (Photo courtesy of Charles Anderson)

land was called into the Army in late Spring of 1953, the group recruited Ron Everett to replace him. Thus, when Bobby Holland and Wally Osborne were in Japan in the summer of 1953, the Castelles [name shortened by dropping "Royal"] were recording "My Girl Awaits Me" for the *Grand* label.

Wally Osborne was discharged from the Army in 1956 and returned to Philadelphia. There he got married and returned to the Ornstein School of Music (now part of Coombs College of Music) on the GI Bill. Within a year, Wally Osborne and Bobby Holland got together and started looking for a vocal group to sing with. Bobby had heard that the Castelles had broken up and thought they might connect with some former members to restart the Castelles. For a short time they sang with Octavius Anthony and a couple other guys as the Castelles. When that didn't work out, Wally and Bobby joined another group. While singing in a talent show at the Lyric Theater on Lancaster Avenue, they were heard by William "Lefty" Wright, Bernard Johnson and Harold Webb. Those three had been in a group that had recently lost two members. The five decided to sing together as the Starfires. The name was chosen from the Oldsmobile 98 Starfire convertible, as car names were common among vocal groups at the time.

"I had written a song 'Do Ko Icke No,'" said Wally. "We met Jimmy Gorham who had a big band back in the day, before we ever came along. He was doing a lot of talent scouting and he had it in with all the big companies like *MGM*. He also knew Ivin Ballen who owned *Gotham Records*. *Gotham* had a recording studio down on Federal Street. Jimmy Gorham heard us and said he



The Starfires

The Starfires on *Bernice Records*. Left to right: Harold Webb, Wally Osborne, Bernard Johnson, Bobby Holland, William "Lefty" Wright.
(Photo courtesy of Dave Brown, *Philly Archives Records*)

liked us and would take us down to *Gotham* to record. We recorded about three or four songs there. [One of the songs recorded for *Gotham* but not released was "Don't Cry".] Then he recorded Howard Tate and a girl singer. Gorham said he could place the songs with a label. He took us up to *MGM* but they couldn't do anything with us. He tried and tried."

Discouraged, the Starfires began looking for other opportunities to record. "We heard this song by Ronnie & the Classmates on *End Records*," remembered Wally. "One of the guys in our group knew Ronnie Jones and Ronnie told us to go up to New York City and see the man, Richard Barrett. We said, 'Richard Barrett? We know him. He used to sing in Philly.'"

Richard Barrett had started singing with the North Philly group, the Royal Angels. After a trip to NYC and an unsuccessful appearance on the Apollo Theatre's amateur night, the Royal Angels, with the exception of Richard, returned to Philadelphia. Barrett remained in New York, becoming the lead singer for the Valentines. By 1958, Barrett had moved into the producing and management end of the record business, working A&R for George Goldner's *End* and *Gone* labels. Barrett was responsible for the success of Frankie Lymon & the Teenagers, Chantels, Little Anthony & the Imperials, Dubs, and dozens of others. [For more on Richard Barrett's career, see *Echoes of the Past*, Issues # 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85.]

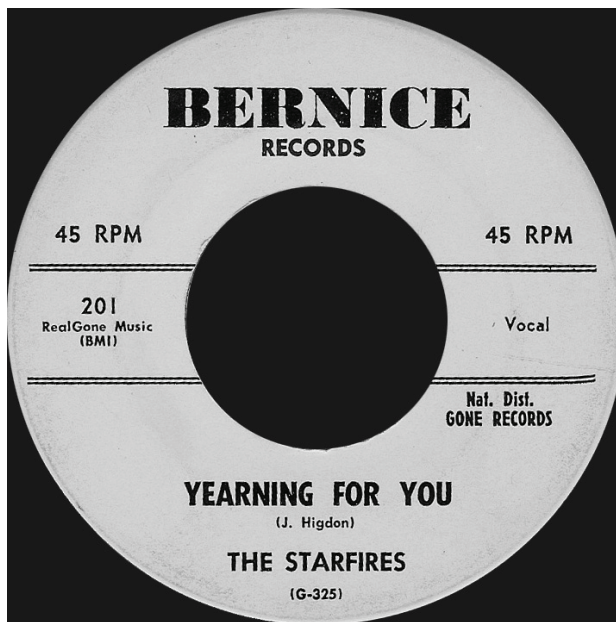
"We asked where we could find Richard Barrett, and Ronnie told us 1650 Broadway," Wally continued. "So all five of us went up to 1650 Broadway. During the 50's, things weren't as complicated as today. We could just walk into his office. We just walked in and said we were from Philadelphia. Richard said, 'OK, sing.' We sang acappella and Richard Barrett said, 'I like your sound. I'm going to record you.' He then told us he wanted us to meet the boss. So he took us into this real

plush office on the 14th Floor. George Goldner was sitting behind his desk. He said, 'What 'cha got, Richard?' Richard told him these are my home boys, etc. So George said, 'Let me hear what you've got.' We sang 'Yearning For You,' a song written by John Higden, a friend of someone in the group."

"After we auditioned, they told us to hang around and they'd sign us to a contract that very day. The waiting area and receptionist were all in one room. So we went out and started talking to some of the people that were there. There were groups, one after another. They'd just come in and audition for Richard. He'd be sitting in there with his piano. The day we were there, Little Anthony & the Chesters came in. That was when Richard Barrett signed the Imperials. The Flamingos stopped by that day. The Shirelles were in that day to audition for Richard Barrett. They got turned down. This was before they signed with Florence Greenberg."

"We looked at the list on the directory downstairs at 1650 Broadway and they must have had, I don't know how many, record companies there! *End Records* had the whole 14th Floor. We were so glad to have signed with *End/Gone Records* because they had the track record."

"We were in our early 20's. Richard told us to go home and come back in three weeks. When we came back, we stayed the whole week in NYC. We stayed at Harold's aunt's house in Brooklyn. We would come by subway over to 1650 Broadway. They had this arranger, a white guy. He would sit and write the lyrics. They'd have Little Anthony's group coming in to record and Arlene & the Chantels. Everyone was assigned a time. We got there at 7:30 in the morning so we could sit and listen. Not in the control room. Richard was in the control room. Richard used Regent Studios because he was more familiar with it. The Teenagers and Heartbeats were recorded at Regent. It was a beautiful sounding studio. Richard would yell things to us from the control room.



The Starfires on the *Bernice* label.
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)

Our hearts would be pounding. He put all kinds of pressure on us. He'd call us all sorts of names. They put out 'Yearning For You' b/w 'Do Ko Icke No' on the *Bernice* label [#201]. Then we did another record after that but it never got released. I think George Goldner's wife or somebody wrote that. I never did find out who Bernice was. When it came out I said, 'What's this *Bernice Records*?' I thought we'd be on *Gone* or *End*. And Richard said, 'We'll since you're doing a fast record ['Do Ko Icke No'], we started a new label. You're the first ones on it.'" [A rumored second *Starfires* release on *Bernice* #202, "You Are Mine" b/w "River Of Tears" seems to be non-existent. No major collectors that we know of have ever seen one. In fact *Bernice* #202 was used for the *Supremes* – "You Are Mine" b/w "Be My Love". Wally Osborne was unfamiliar with the *Supremes* on *Bernice*.]

After "Yearning For You" failed to chart, the *Starfires*' one year contract with George Goldner was allowed to expire. The group continued singing at various engagements around Philadelphia.

At that point, the *Starfires* went through some changes. Wally Osborne dropped out of the group in order to manage them. "I wanted to be like Richard Barrett," recalled Wally. "So we got a guy named Rudy [last name long forgotten] from West Philly. He was a tall thin fellow and he became the new lead." Though Wally no longer sang with the *Starfires*, as their manager, he continued to rehearse them.

The *Starfires* auditioned for and recorded "Get Myself a Girlie" for *Cameo-Parkway Records*, but it was never released.

By 1960, many groups were rehearsing at the home of Larry Kerrin on 29th Street, in the Strawberry Mansion section of North Philadelphia. Kerrin had previously worked for Len "Buddy" Caldwell's *V-Tone* and *Len* labels, but was now starting his own *Maske* label.

"I went to Larry Kerrin's house," said Wally. "That's how I first met Herb Johnson. The *Cruisers* were



**The *Starfires* on the *Bargain* label.
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)**

rehearsing at his house, along with Tommy Cook & the *Strangers*. [For the story of Tommy Cook & the *Strangers*, see the *Dreamers/Universals* article in ***Echoes of the Past***, Issue # 109.] So I was down there and this is when I first met [future radio personality and *Arctic* label owner] Jimmy Bishop. He was standing there and said he was new in town. We got to know each other and started writing songs together."

While still holding down a regular job with the City of Philadelphia, Wally Osborne and Jimmy Bishop started managing several vocal groups. Jimmy Bishop was not yet involved in radio.

Wally met Steve Hodge of *D&H Records* while networking at a local radio station. Stephen Hodge ran a thriving jukebox operation in NYC. He'd previously owned the *Atomic* label and had recorded Jimmy Castor & the *Juniors* and Dennis Brown & the *Atomics*. Hodge's partner at the time was Julius Dixon [sometimes listed as Dixon]. Dixon also had a long history as a label owner and songwriter. He'd co-written "Dim Dim The Lights" (Bill Haley), "Lollipop" (Chordettes) and "It Hurts To Be In Love" (Annie Laurie). Earlier, Dixon had managed and written for the *Jaytones* (*Timely* and *Brunswick* labels) and owned the *Alton* label ("Clouds" by the *Space-men*). By 1961, the two shared an office on 125th Street in Harlem with record label icon, Bobby Robinson. As you opened the door there was a partition – on one side was Bobby Robinson's *Fury* label and on the other was Dixon and Hodge's *D&H Records*.

Hodge was in Philadelphia looking for talent to record. He came to Philly because at that time Philly had a lot of groups and a lot of good musicians. Specifically, he was in Philadelphia to record Anna King.

"I told Steve Hodge about the *Starfires*," said Wally. "Then we went to NYC at 125th Street to his office and that's when I first met Bobby Robinson. Steve Hodge never was a go-getter like Bobby Robinson, because Steve Hodge had a thriving business. He had all the black clubs



**The *Starfires* on the *D&H* label.
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)**



**The Cordells on the *Bargain* label.
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)**

and bar owners up there dealing with him with jukeboxes. Then we were with *D&H* – Dixon & Hodge.”

In February 1961, *D&H* released their first and only record by the Starfires. The ballad side was the old standard, “These Foolish Things”. The flip was “Let’s Do The Pony,” a song written by Wally Osborne about the popular dance.

“I was the first person to write a song about the Pony,” recalled Wally. “Then Billy Arnold made a record called ‘The Pony’, way before Chubby Checker. [The reference here may be to Don Covay & the Goodtimers “Pony Time” on the Arnold label.] We basically did the Pony at the same time – two different songs. Arnold’s song got a lot of play in Philadelphia. Ours got a lot of play on WHAT. In fact that’s how Jimmy Bishop met Louise Williams, his future wife. She was on WHAT at the time. She used to do gospel during the day and at night do a two-hour love song thing. She would play this record, ‘These Foolish Things’.”

The *D&H* label was short-lived. Julius Dixon pulled out of the partnership, and Steve Hodge continued producing records out of the 125th Street office, now on his own *Bargain* label and the reactivated *Atomic* label.

The Starfires’ next release, “You’re The One” b/w “So Much” came out on the *Bargain* label. Both songs were written by Wally Osborne. It was quickly followed by “Love Will Break Your Heart,” a song co-written by Wally Osborne and Jimmy Bishop. The flip, “The Dances,” was a Wally Osborne composition. All four songs were recorded at Tony and Don Luisi’s *Sound Plus Studio* in Northeast Philadelphia. “You’re The One” did fairly well on the East Coast and also in Cleveland.

“There was a disc jockey in Cleveland who had a record hop,” said Wally. “Steve Hodge called me and said we had to take the group there. I was the Starfires’ manager, so we drove to Cleveland and went into a big auditorium. There were other stars there but the biggest were

the O’Jays.”

Along with managing the Starfires, Wally Osborne started searching for talent to take to Steve Hodge. One of the Starfires knew a guy named June, a member of the North Philly group, the Cordells, who were looking to record. They auditioned for Wally.

“They came to me and they were sharp! On the money! So I called up Steve Hodge and told him I’d got this group. He said, ‘OK, I’ll be down. Get them in the studio.’ That’s the kind of guy he was. He depended a lot on me. I called up *Sound Plus* and set up a time. By the time Steve heard them, it was a recording session.”

The recording session produced “The Beating Of My Heart” (*Bargain* #5004), giving a start to the Cordells. The flip side, “Laid Off” was written by Wally Osborne and Ronnie Gordy, a member of the group. The Cordells, containing Jimmy Ellis and Earl Young, would later evolve into the Exceptions and then the Trammmps.

Vocal harmony enthusiasts also enjoy a record by Betty Freeman on the *Bargain* label (#1008), “What Can I Do”. The record was produced by Wally Osborne, who also wrote the other side, “I’ll Never Let Him Go”.

“Betty Freeman’s was a girl with a voice something like Gloria Lynn,” said Wally. “I introduced her to Steve Hodge. She was from Philly.”

Around this time, Steve Hodge also issued the Starfires’ “Love Will Break Your Heart” on his *Atomic* label. We have no explanation as to why the record was out on both *Bargain* and *Atomic*.

Louise Williams helped Jimmy Bishop get a job as a radio disc jockey at KATV in St. Louis. There he became quite popular, leading to his eventual return to Philadelphia.

Meanwhile, Wally Osborne’s success producing records at *Bargain Records*, led to an offer as A&R man at *Don-El Records* in Philadelphia. *Don-El*, and subsidiary labels *Chestnut* and *Alpha* were located at 2020 Ridge Avenue in North Philadelphia. The labels were owned by



**Lady Fox & the Foxettes on the *Don-El* label.
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)**

Don White, whose main business was real estate. The first record Wally Osborne produced for *Don-El*, seems to have been "Don't Cry" by Little Grier [Chester Grier] in 1962. The song "Don't Cry" may have had it's origins in the Starfires' song of the same name, recorded but not released by *Gotham Records* some years earlier.

Next, Wally produced two very fine records with Lady Fox & the Foxettes, "I Think Of You" (*Don-El* # 114) and "It Must Be Love" (*Don-El* # 118).

"Lady Fox's name was really Betty Fox," remembered Wally. "Her husband's name was Hubert Fox. The other two girls were Yvonne Bushnell and Liz Grant. Yvonne Bushnell came out of the Jaynetts ["Sally Go 'Round The Roses"]. She lived in Philly then but had come from the Jaynetts. She later married [well known music columnist] Masco Young."

While most of the artists Wally worked with at *Don-El* were assigned to him by Don White, Wally did take the liberty of recording his friend and former Starfires' member, Bobby Holland. *Don-El* #117 featured Holland singing "Two Steps Ahead Of A Woman," a song Wally would later recycle with Herb Johnson.

One of the groups Wally Osborne worked with a lot was the Kittens.

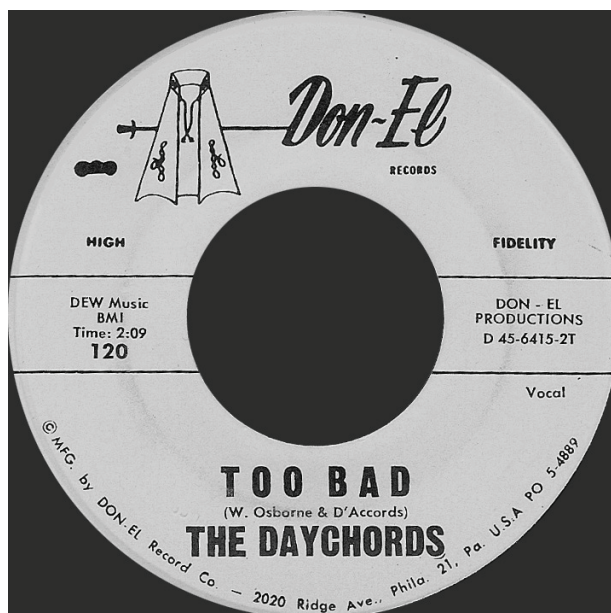
"A woman brought the Kittens to *Don-El*, said Wally. "And *Don-El* contacted me to write something for them. They were all in high school, Germantown High, except Barbara, who was the lead on "Count Every Star".

The Kittens are believed to have included Barbara [last name not remembered], Sheila Ferguson, Jeanie Scott, Yvonne Brown and a fifth member. Sheila Ferguson would go on to sing with the Three Degrees and then star as a soloist. Jeanie Scott was the older sister of future Three Degrees' Helen Scott.

"The Kittens were good," recalled Wally. "They were fresh. They never did any clubs because they were too young. They went on tour a couple times. Don White



The Kittens on the *Chestnut* label.
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)



The Daychords on the *Don-El* label.
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)

had some good acts."

The Kittens' first release was "Count Every Star" backed with the Wally Osborne composition "I'm Worried," released on March 1963 on the *Don-El* subsidiary label, *Chestnut*. *Chestnut* is often thought of as Don White's country & western label, since it includes several releases by country star, Les Seever. In reality, White used *Chestnut's* early releases to break new artists before moving them to the *Don-El* label. Wally Osborne also produced the Kittens on "I Need Your Love Tonight" b/w "Johnny's Place" (*Don-El* # 205) and "Walter" (*Don-El* #122).

Kittens' Yvonne Brown would later marry Walt Reeder, now the largest black owned booking agency in the country. "Yvonne wrote the song 'Walter' because she was going with him at the time," said Wally.

Presumably the Kittens broke up in 1964 when Richard Barrett auditioned and signed Sheila Ferguson to record solo [*Landa* label] for him. She would then join the Three Degrees.

Wally Osborne also recorded Johnny Alton with vocal background by the Kittens.

"Johnny Alton was very talented," said Wally. "But the same year that Don White released Johnny Alton's first record ['Please Love Me' b/w 'Glad That You're Mine' - *Chestnut* #204], Berry Gordy released Little Stevie Wonder's 'Fingertips'. Both Stevie Wonder and Johnny Alton were thirteen at the time. Don White got his airplay in Philadelphia. Stevie Wonder got his airplay in Detroit and then moved to the East. When Don tried to move Johnny Alton's airplay to the Mid-West, Berry Gordy had that covered. Johnny Alton used to sound like Frankie Lyman, a real showman. Johnny Alton and Lady Fox (without the Foxettes) went on tour. The Foxettes were just too young."

Another group that Wally Osborne produced was the Daychords. The Daychords first recorded for *Don-El* as the D'Accords and then backed Roxy "I'm So In



**Herb Johnson on the *Swan* label.
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)**

Love". The group was from the area around 10th Street & Columbia Avenue (now Cecil B. Moore Avenue). From writer credits, it appears the members were Branson Bagwell, Luther Cook, John Sims, Earl Washington and Dewey Wilson. Wally Osborne wrote and produced the Daychords' "One More Time" b/w "Too Bad" [*Don-El* #120] in 1964.

By this time Jimmy Bishop was back in Philadelphia. He joined his now wife, Louise Williams Bishop, as radio personalities on WDAS-AM. As Bishop's popularity grew, he began producing stage shows and started the *Arctic* record label. Wally Osborne felt that his former partner would now be a help in promoting Osborne's records. While Bishop remained friendly to Wally, he rarely played Wally's records. Wally wrote a song called "Boys Have Feelings Too" which he had Johnny Alton record [*Alpha* #103]. The record went nowhere, as Jimmy Bishop issued Barbara Mason's "Girls Have Feelings Too" on *Arctic*.

Wally Osborne had a lot of say at *Don-El*. He hired his own musicians for the sessions, even giving fifteen-year-old guitarist Bobby Eli his first session experience.

Wally Osborne met vocalist Herb Johnson through Len "Buddy" Caldwell. Johnson had previously waxed several records for Caldwell's *V-Tone*, *Len* and *Palm* labels. By 1963, Herb was performing locally with a band. One night Herb's bass player didn't show up and Wally Osborne filled in. Wally not only became a regular member of the "Impacts" but also brought Bobby Eli into the group as guitarist.

In late 1963, Wally recorded an acetate of Herb Johnson singing "Two Steps Ahead Of A Woman," the composition he'd previously released by Bobby Holland. On the flip, Wally recorded Herb singing the Orioles' standard, "Tell Me So".

"I was down Paul [Mosely]'s record store [*P&L*

Records] and I had just finished doing this record with the band. Paul was on the phone talking to Bernie Ben-nick of *Swan Records*. Paul was playing the record and Bernie asked what he was playing. Paul said his friend, Wally Osborne, just came out of the studio, and that's his record. Bernie asked me on the phone if I wanted to lease it. I said, 'Yes. I just came out of the studio today.' He asked me how much I had to have for it and I said \$400. He came down the store, gave me \$400 and put the Herb Johnson record on his label, *Swan Records*.

Wally Osborne continued playing bass with the Impacts from 1964 to 1967. The group would back Herb Johnson on his gigs and then back other artists on the bill. In addition, the band took jobs backing other artists. Larry Magid, who would go on to become a major promoter, was just starting out at the time and booked the band into college fraternities.

"We worked every weekend," said Wally. "Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, I was out of town. Bobby Eli would call me. We played behind acts like the Shirelles, the Chantels, the Vibrations and Barbara Lewis."

In 1966, Wally wrote "I Found True Love" for Herb Johnson, which was released on J. Tyler Williams' *Tyler* label.

In 1967, Herb Johnson suggested Wally start his own record label. The result was *WOMAR Records*. The name came from the initials of Wally Osborne, his wife, Mabel, and his father-in-law, Ambrose Robinson, who provided the initial funding to start the label.

The first release on *WOMAR* was a soulful duet ballad by Jeri and Joe, "Cold Cold Love" *WOMAR* #100. Jeri was Jeri Payne and Joe was Joe Freeman, who later sang with the Ethics.

"I knew Joe's brother, Raymond Freeman," remembered Wally. "Raymond used to sing with the Tops (most likely the group that recorded "An Innocent Kiss" for the *Singular* label). They were from Germantown and appeared on national TV with Ted Mack. Raymond told me about his younger brother, Joe."

Former Starfires' Bobby Holland had one release on *WOMAR*, "You Can't Have Your Cake" b/w "I Wish I Knew", *WOMAR* #102.

Also notable for vocal harmony fans is *WOMAR*



**Herb Johnson and Charlie Horner
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)**



**The Four Thoughts on the *WOMAR* label.
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)**

#103 by the Four Thoughts. The song is a great soul remake of the Moonglow's "When I'm With You". The Four Thoughts, led by James Norfleet, were also from Germantown.

The *WOMAR* label was short-lived, beginning in 1967 and running for only a year. Of the singles released, Wally said he only pressed the minimum, 500 copies of each, making them very desirable.

Perhaps some of Wally Osborne's greatest contributions to Philadelphia soul music came with his next two record labels, *Toxsan* and *Soulburst*. On *Toxsan*, Wally recorded Herb Johnson & the Impacts, Monica, Rocky Brown, Chapter One, Topaz, Unit and Paradise. We only know of one record on the *Soulburst* label, "I'm Not In Love With You Anymore" by the Passionettes. The Passionettes actually contained former members of Lady Fox's Foxettes.

Monica came out of the Voices of East Harlem in NYC and later appeared on Star Search. Rocky (Emerson) Brown, formerly sang with the Students on *Red Top* ("Mommy & Daddy"). There are stories behind the other *Toxsan* artists like Chapter One, Topaz and Paradise (which Wally placed on *Phila.LA of Soul* in 1980). These are beyond the scope of this article, but can be found in the liner notes of the *Philly Archives* CD, "Best Of Wally-O-Productions". This CD, found at www.funkadelphiarecords.com makes available Wally Osborne's soul recordings on *WOMAR* and *Toxsan*, including a number of fine previously unreleased sides. It also includes Herb Johnson's *Swan*, *Tyler* and *Brunswick* label releases. *Philly Archives* is completing CD's on the Best of *Don-El Records* which should be available soon.

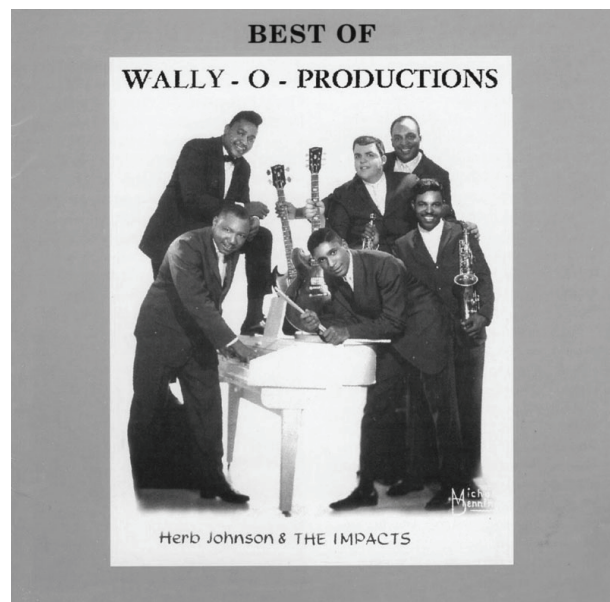
*

*

*



**The Herb Johnson Settlement on the *Toxsan* label.
(From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)**



**Philly Archives CD PH-9
Best of Wally -O- Productions
Cover shows Herb Johnson & the Impacts**

(Courtesy of Dave Brown)

It has now been almost twenty-five years since John Moore and I interviewed Wally Osborne at his home. Sadly, Wally passed away some years ago. Fortunately my cassette tapes of our conversations have preserved the details of his career. May this article help preserve his legacy. – Charlie Horner

Notes

1. This article was taken primarily from an extensive interview with Wally Osborne by Charlie Horner & John Moore, (ca. 1990).
2. Additional information gleaned from David L. Brown's liner notes in the *Philly Archives* CD, "Best of Wally—O—Productions" (2000).
3. Sincere thanks to all those who contributed information to this article including John Moore, Val Shively, Dave Brown and Charles Anderson.
4. Of course, this article could never have been written without the author's many conversations over the years and deep friendships with singers Herb Johnson; Richard Barrett (Valentines); George Grant, Billy Taylor, Ron Everett and Frank Vance (Castelles); Emerson "Rocky" Brown (Students); Bill Keith (Blendtones); and many others.
5. For more on Richard Barrett, see Charlie Horner's seven part series in *Echoes of the Past*, # 78,79,80,82,83,84,85.
6. For more on Herb Johnson see the liner notes in the *Philly Archives* CD PH-5, "Herb Johnson—Remember Me" (2002).
7. See also Bob Bosco's article on Hern Johnson in *Echoes of the Past*, # 34 (1995).
8. For more articles on R&B, Doo Wop and Gospel vocal harmony, visit Charlie & Pam Horner's web-site. www.classicurbanharmony.net.

Starfires Discography

Bernice # 201	Yearning For You Do Ko Icke No	1958
D&H #200	These Foolish Things Let's Do The Pony	1961
Bargain #5001	You're The One So Much	1961
Bargain #5003	Love Will Break Your Heart The Dances	1961
Atomic #1912	Love Will Break Your Heart The Dances	1961?

Unreleased Starfires recordings:

Gotham	Don't Cry
Cameo	Get Myself A Girlie

The Starfires on Decca are a different group.

Some Other Records Wallo Osborne Produced

The Cordells

Bargain #5004 The Beat Of My Heart
Laid Off

Betty Freeman

Bargain #1008 I'll Never Let Him Go
What Can I Do

The Kittens

Chestnut #203 I'm Worried
Count Every Star
Don-El #205 I Need Your Love Tonight
Johnny's Place
Don-El #122 Walter
Lite Bulb

Johnny Alton (backed by the Kittens)

Chestnut # 204 Please Love Me
Glad That You're Mine
Alpha #003 Boys Have Feelings Too
Heartbreaks

Little Grier

Don-El #112 Don't Cry
But You

Lady Fox & Foxettes

Don-El #114 I Think Of You
Our Love
Don-El #118 It Must Be Love
How Are You

Daychords

Don-El #120 One More Time
Too Bad

Bobby Holland

Don-El #117 Two Steps Ahead Of A Woman
Because I Love You
WOMAR #102 You Can Have Your Cake
I Wish I Knew

Herb Johnson

Swan #4186 Tell Me So
Two Steps Ahead Of A Woman
Tyler #100 I Found True Love
Toxsan #101 I'm So Glad
Where Are You
Brunswick 55393 I'm So Glad
Where Are You
Toxsan #106 Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow
Damp Faint

Four Thoughts

WOMAR #103 When I'm With You
Kisses & Roses

Jeri & Joe

Cold Cold Love
Without You Babe