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ECHOES OF THE PAST



AFTER HOURS



JOEL TUNERO
RECORD MEN OF HARLEM



INTRODUCING VIRGINIA GROUPS



JIM STEPHENS & THE SAFARIS



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After Hours: Joel Turnero, Lexy “Flap” Hanford & the Record Men of Harlem by Charlie Horner with contributions from Marv Goldberg, Todd Baptista & Pamela Horner

If Rhythm & Blues music was born in Baltimore, one could argue that it grew up in Harlem. Rhythm & Blues developed in the post-war years of the 1940s, a time that coincided with the Second Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the big cities of the North, Mid-West and West. Harlem reached its largest population of African American residents in 1950. Both older residents and new arrivals to Harlem needed entertainment, which is why the famed Apollo Theatre was so important.

The Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th Street at Seventh Avenue opened on January 26, 1934, and quickly became the center of Harlem’s Black entertainment.

The late 1940s brought about a dramatic revolution in popular music. The large jazz orchestras and swing bands of the 1930s had suffered greatly during the war years due to personnel being siphoned off to the military, wartime travel restrictions and curfews on the big dance halls. In their place, smaller music groups consisting of three to six musicians had the ability to play small clubs without needing to pay 12 or 14 musicians. These combos could afford to be less formal and more musically creative. New music genres like jump blues, often with a boogie woogie rhythm and heavy beat exploded in popularity.

Along with changing music styles came a seismic shift in the music recording business itself. Prior to 1940, the music publishing industry was tightly controlled by ASCAP in concert with the major record companies, *RCA Victor*, *Decca* and *Columbia*. When BMI formed, the industry suddenly opened up to independent publishing companies and songwriters. Almost overnight, dozens of independent record labels sprung up, offering recordings of new music genres that the major record labels were hesitant to touch.

Almost anyone with a little capital could start a record label, but without a national distributor, they needed a place to sell the records. So, music entrepreneurs began opening record stores and then start their own record labels. Finding talent



Bobby Robinson in front of Bobby's Happy House Records. Courtesy of Richard Barrett

to record and radio promotion came next. But they were all tied together, if you ran in the right circles and were in the right location. In Harlem, the right location was near the Apollo Theatre.

One of the first of the Harlem record store labels was *Apollo Records*, run out of the Rainbow Music Shop, 102 W. 125th Street. The label was formed in 1941 and named after the Apollo Theatre, only a block away. Started by Ike and Bess Berman, with Hy Siegel and Sam Schneider, *Apollo* initially recorded jazz, blues and gospel music but after Bess Berman assumed sole control of the record label in 1946, they also moved into the R&B field. Bess' husband, Ike Berman ran the record pressing plant that manufactured *Apollo's* records.

Fresh out of the army, Morgan Clyde “Bobby” Robinson opened his first record store, Bobby's Record Shop (later changed to Bobby's Happy House Records) at 301 W. 125 Street on August 20, 1946. The building had previously been a hat store,

but Bobby bought it for \$2,500; money he'd saved up from his stint in the service.

"I was the first Black [store] owner on 125th Street," Bobby told author John Broven. "I took a shot at records but I didn't know a thing about [them]. I bought anything that came out. The time and place couldn't have been better. It was pure luck. The Apollo Theatre was open seven days a week, six shows a day, from 11 AM to 1 AM. It was so close and people were passing the store all the time. The artists would stay at the Hotel Theresa and would drop in all the time." To further attract customers from the street, Robinson began playing records through an outdoor loud speaker.

In November, 1951, Bobby Robinson and his brother, Danny Robinson, started their own record label, *Robin*. Their first record was a saxophone instrumental by Morris Lane called "Bobby's Boogie." Soon after, Bobby had to change the label name to *Red Robin* after a threatened law suit from another *Robin* label in Tennessee.

The Mello-Moods

Always looking for talent to record, Bobby Robinson heard about a young vocal group called the Bluebirds out of the Harlem River Housing Projects on West 151st Street and Seventh Avenue. The group consisted of James Bethea, Bobby Baylor, Monte Owens, Buddy Wooten and Bobby Williams. Robinson went to check out the group and after hearing them sing the standard, "Where Are You," invited them to rehearse in his record shop.

"They'd come down at night at about eleven and we'd lock the doors and rehearse right in there,"



The Mello-Moods in 1951 (from left, back row): James Bethea, Bobby Baylor; (front row): Monte Owens, Buddy Wooten, Bobby Williams.

Photo of courtesy Todd Baptista



Joel Turnero (from Galen Gart & Roy C. Ames, *Duke/Peacock Records*)

Bobby told *Record Exchanger Magazine*. "We worked one, two or three nights a week until I got it just the way I wanted it." Robinson also introduced the group to Joel Turnero, who became their manager and renamed them the Mello-Moods.

Joel Turnero

Joel Turnero was born Joseph Claude Turner on July 20, 1922, in Fort Worth, Texas. Little is known about his childhood years, but by 1940 he was living with his mother and younger brother in Los Angeles. Joel's June 1942 draft registration indicated he was working at the Benicia Arsenal, a military installation in Northern California at the time. We don't know if Joel Turner entered the service or not but two years later newspapers indicated he was working in the entertainment business, appearing at New York City's Broadway Theatre. The only show running at the Broadway Theatre at the time was Billy Rose's musical, "Carmen Jones."

Recently married, Joel Turner returned to Los Angeles in December, 1948. At this time, newspapers referred to him as "Mr. Personality of New York City" and described him as the greatest single act since Timmie Rogers - "he sings, dances, plays almost any instrument and does all sorts of acrobatics." Joel was an "ace drummer" and even emceed fashion shows at Los Angeles' legendary Club Alabam.

Joel Turner was also the lead singer of the Balladeers who recorded "Keep Me With You" b/w

“Please Don’t Deprive My Heart” (*Aladdin* #3008) and “Forget Me Not” b/w “What Will I Tell My Heart” (*Aladdin* #4083). Other group members included Joseph Burgess, Bill Deremitt, Thomas, Herman and James Stephens. “Forget Me Not” was written by Joel Turner, the first of many of his compositions.

In April, 1949, Joel Turner teamed with popular Pasadena radio station KWKW disc jockey, Charlie Davis, to present a weekly Saturday afternoon radio program called “Wax Time.” This was the start of Joel Turner’s radio career. Within two months, Joel Turner was hosting his own KWKW radio program at Noon every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

In July, 1949, Joel Turner appeared in the musical, “Sugar Hill” that ran at the Las Palmas Theatre in Los Angeles. Joel was part of a four-man dance team called the Rug Cutters.

In the Spring of 1950, Joel Turner formed a tap dance trio called the Jays. That didn’t last too long, for in June 1950, Joel Turner was performing with Dinah Washington at an upscale Los Angeles night spot called the Oasis. Joel emceed the show and also performed a ten-minute tap dance to the music of Calvin Boze’s orchestra. The two week engagement was a huge financial success.

Spurred on by the successful publicity of the shows at the Oasis, Joel Turner moved south to San Diego where he performed and managed one of the top nighteries. There, he divided his time between promoting and writing a column, although we don’t know for which publication.

The last report of Joel Turner in California came in April, 1951. A newspaper reported that Joel Turner was getting lined up for a terrific movie production where he’d get a change to show off about 15 minutes of his tap dancing talent. We don’t know if that ever happened for by the Autumn of 1951, Joel Turner was back in Harlem, calling himself Joel Turnero.

In Harlem, Joel Turnero quickly became part of Bobby Robinson’s organization. The [*Red*] *Robin* label was technically owned by Bobby and brother Danny Robinson. However, *Cash Box* magazine wrote, “... Joel Turnero and his partner, Bobby Robinson. Pair head label plus hottest R&B retail shop in Harlem.” The same trade magazine reported that Turnero was managing Bobby’s Record Shop.



Bootleg 45 of “Forget Me Not,” written by Joel Turner. Originally only made as a 78.

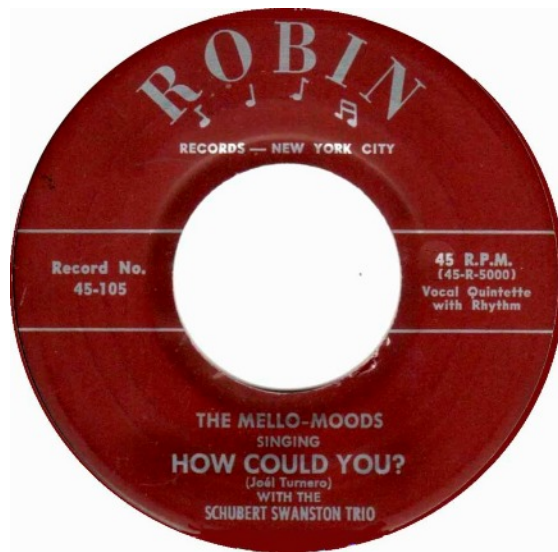
Back to the Mello-Moods

In November, 1951, Joel Turnero took the Mello-Moods into the studio where they recorded “Where Are You” and a Turnero composition, “How Could You” for the flip side. The backup instrumentation was provided by the Schubert Swanston Trio (Edwin “Schubert” Swanston (piano), Jimmy Buchanan (tenor sax) and Maurice Hines (drums). Swanston had accompanied Louis Armstrong in the early 1940s, as well as many others. Issued in December 1951 as *Robin* #105, “Where Are You” hit No. 7 on the R&B charts in February 1952.

In the Spring of 1952, Joel Turnero took the Mello-Moods back into the studio to record their second release. The standard Sinatra tune, “I Couldn’t Sleep A Wink Last Night” was backed with a Turnero-Swanston original, “And You Just Can’t Go Through Life Alone.” This came out as *Red Robin* #104 (ignore confusing release numbers).

In the Fall of 1952, Joel Turnero began working in A&R (artists and repertoire) for Bob Weinstock at *Prestige Records*. An A&R representative is responsible for finding promising new artists and overseeing the artists’ development. Turnero did more than that for *Prestige*. He wrote songs, supervised sessions and handled promotion. In October 1952, Joel Turnero took the Mello Moods to record for *Prestige Records*. Turnero was still managing Bobby Robinson’s record store into 1953, so apparently he had Robinson’s blessing for the Mello-Moods’ new venture.

On November 6, 1952, the Mello-Moods, recorded four tunes: “Call On Me,” “I Tried, Tried,

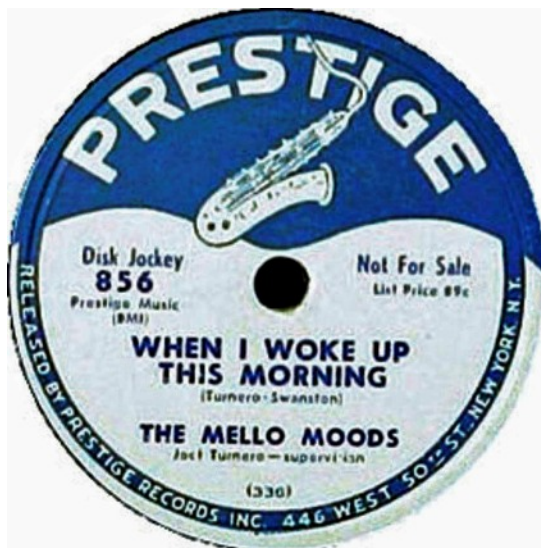


And Tried," (released as *Prestige* #799), "I'm Lost," and "When I Woke Up This Morning" (released as *Prestige* #856). All except "I'm Lost" were composed jointly by Turnero and Swanston. Oddly, the backing band was that of Teacho Wiltshire, not Swanston. Similarly, Turnero and Swanston wrote "Miss My Daddy" and "Sighin' And Cryin'" for Paula Grimes which Wiltshire backed on *Prestige* #801.

Turnero and Wiltshire combined to write "'Cool Goofin" and "Baby Baby I Want You So" for Rudy Ferguson (*Prestige* #798). As with the Mello-Moods recordings, Joel Turnero is credited with supervising the recording session of Rudy Ferguson. Turnero was also involved with the hit record, "Red Top" by King Pleasure (*Prestige* #821) although not credited on the record label.

On June 13, 1953, Irving Marcus, sales manager of *Peacock* and *Duke Records*, announced the signing of Joel Turnero as Eastern A&R Representa-

tive for the Don Robey firms. Marcus came east just as "Crying In The Chapel" by the Orioles was breaking big. Wanting to cash in on the song's action, Marcus asked Joel Turnero to find an R&B vocal group to cover the song. Joel contacted the Brooklyn group, Billy Dawn Quartet (Billy Dawn Smith, Tommy Smith, Donnie Sehested, Sonny Benton), and arranged a recording session with bandleader Al Browne, who was also the group's accompanist. The record was released as *Duke* #116 with the flip side, "I Done Done It," composed by Joel Turnero and Al Browne.



The 4 Dukes. From left: Tommy Smith, Billy Dawn Smith, Donnie Sehested, Sonny Benton. Note the Joel Turnero background. (from Gart & Ames, *Duke/Peacock Records*)

Marcus and Turnero then organized a recording session for Dizzy Gillespie's baritone saxophonist, Wild Bill Graham. Several sides were cut, for *Peacock's Progressive Jazz* label including one featuring Joel Turnero's vocals. We don't know of any of these ever being released.

As Willie Mabon's recording of "You're A Fool" was hot at the time. Joel Turnero wrote an answer record to it called, "I Ain't No Fool Either." It was recorded by Willie May Thornton (*Peacock* #1626).

Shortly after that it was reported that *Herald Records* cut four sides with a new vocal group singing Joel Turnero compositions, but the releases were scrapped and the group never identified.

During this time, Joel Turnero became a regular columnist for *Cash Box* magazine. He didn't write under his own name, but we believe he wrote the "Stars Over Harlem" column that began in October 1953.

Meanwhile, Joel Turnero made another career move, into radio. On December 13, 1953, Turnero previewed his new radio show, "Blues Express" on WNJR-Newark, New Jersey. The show began broadcasting for two hours from 2 - 4 PM every Sunday. Turnero's position on radio and at *Cash Box* put him at the center of the Harlem music scene. Joel was constantly sought out by artists and music business personnel alike.

In January, 1954, Joel Turnero took the time to escort Chicago dj and label owner, Al Benson, around New York to promote his new *Parrot* label releases. Turnero not only spotlighted the releases by the Five Thrills and Pelicans on his WNJR radio spot, but began using Paul Bascolmb's "Jan" (*Parrot* #792) as his theme song.



Louis Jordan (left) reading an article about him in *Cash Box* written by Joel Turnero (center). DJ Jack Walker (right).



From left: Bandleader Lucky Thompson, Joel Turnero, boxing champ Archie Moore, dj's Ray Carroll, Willie Bryant

Bobby Thomas & the Vibranaires

Aside from the Mello-Moods, the vocal group most associated with Joel Turnero is the Vibranaires. Inspired by Sonny Til & the Orioles, Asbury Park resident Bobby Thomas first assembled a singing group in the late 1940s. By 1954, they'd become a popular Jersey shore R&B group called the Vibranaires - Bobby Thomas, Mike Robinson, Roosevelt McDuffie, Herbert Cole and Jimmy Roache.

In late April, 1954, the 3 Towers Inn on Route 206 in Somerville, New Jersey, staged a show called "The Big Battle Royal: New Jersey vs. New York." The show pitted New York saxophonist Charlie Ferguson against Newark saxophonist Joe Holiday. In the vocal group category, Bobby Thomas' Vibranaires battled it out with New York City's Solitaires, who were flying high at the time with their first recording, "Blue Valentine."

"They called these 'battles of the groups'" explained Solitaires bass singer Pat Gaston, who remembered the event well. "But there was no animosity then. You just went out there and tried to be the best group."

While singing at the 3 Towers Inn, Bobby Thomas and the Vibranaires were approached by Joel Turnero. "Joel Turner introduced himself and said he was from New York," recalled Bobby. He told us he liked our group. He looked kind of distinguished. His hair was processed and he was neatly dressed. He asked, 'How would you guys like to record?'"

Turnero was in the process of partnering with Lexy "Flap" Hanford. Hanford was a 45-year-old sporting man with a strong interest in gambling,

the horses and boxing. Turnero had the experience, connections and knowledge of the music industry. Hanford had the money. Together they planned a Harlem-based record label and record store.

Lexy "Flap" Hanford

Lexy Hanford was born near Decatur, Georgia, in 1909. He grew up in Florida. By 1950, Lexy was living in Long Branch, New Jersey, about ten miles north of Asbury Park. Still, he spent much of his time in Harlem.

The first newspaper reference to Lexy Hanford is from January 1951, when he and three others were detained in Asbury Park in possession of gambling related paraphernalia. Three were initially charged with failing to register as convicted criminals but charges were dropped for lack of evidence that they'd been in the city for the required 24 hours. A subsequent article showed Lexy partying with friends at G. Phil Williams' Gold Coast Restaurant on Fifth Avenue and 125th Street in Harlem.

Turnero gave the Vibranaires a demo of a song he'd written called "Doll Face." Not liking the way the demo soloist sounded, Bobby give it his own styling. Turnero arranged for the Vibranaires to meet Lexy Hanford. Hanford and Turnero formed the Flaps Recording Company, as Hanford was the principal owner. They planned two record labels - *After Hours* for R&B and *Chariot* for gospel recordings.



The Vibranaires. Clockwise from top: Bobby Thomas, Herb Cole, Roosevelt McDuffie, Mike Robinson, Jimmy Roache. (From Bobby Thomas)



Joel Turnero (standing center) with Chuck Willis (seated right) and other industry personnel

The Vibranaires recorded "Doll Face," "Ooh, I Feel So Good," "Stop Torturing Me," and "Stop Jiving Baby" in a single session on May 21, 1954. "Stop Torturing Me" was written by Bobby Thomas. The rest were Joel Turnero compositions.

Just when the group was to record, they lost the talents of their baritone, Herb Cole. "The police came and tapped on our car window as we were preparing to leave," recalled Bobby Thomas. "They had Herb step out of the car and detained him for stealing a bass guitar from a band at the Asbury Park Armory where the Vibranaires had played the night before." The Asbury Park police were already familiar with Herb Cole. He had pleaded "no defense" a few weeks earlier to selling a gun that was subsequently used in a robbery.

The Vibranaires had to rearrange their harmonies for one less voice, during the car ride to New York. Recording was done at Sidney Feldman's Mastertone Studios, 709 Eight Avenue. The backing band was the previously mentioned Shubert Swanston Quartette, with the addition of two others, one being Mickey Baker on guitar.

"Doll Face" b/w "Ooh, I Feel So Good" was released as *After Hours* (#103) in the summer of 1954. The 45 RPM copies were made in red vinyl. In spite of record being the first recorded, it was the label's third release. The first two released were by the jazz combo, the Dee Jays, formed by Johnny Johns and Jim Jam Smith, both former members of the Loumell Morgan Trio. The Dee Jays backed Chico Shepherd on "You Actin' Funny, Honey" and "Gonna Love You Madly" (*After Hours* #101) and then had their own release, "So Close In My Arms" b/w "I'm Really In Love" (*After Hours* #102).



The Vibranaires sign with *After Hours Records*. From left: Roosevelt McDuffie, Bobby Thomas, Joel Turnero, Lexy Hanford, Herbert Cole, Mike Robinson, Jimmy Roache.

Turnero and Hanford wasted no time in starting their gospel label, *Chariot*, either. They immediately signed the New York-based gospel group, the Stevens Singers to a five-year contract and released three *Chariot* singles - "I Heard The Voice" b/w "Jesus Paid It All" (*Chariot* #500); "Rushing Wind" b/w "Deliver Me Oh Lord" (*Chariot* # 501) and "My Lord What A Morning" b/w "Holy Baby" (*Chariot* #503??). The Stevens Singers (Dorothy McLeod, Helen Bryant, Evelyn Archer, Herman Stevens) would go on to record for the *ABC Paramount* and *Epic* labels.

In August, 1954, Lexy Hanford and Joel Turnero opened Flap's *After Hours Record Bar* at the corner of 125th Street and 7th Avenue. The ultra-modern looking record store was shaped like a bar. Joel Turnero managed the store and broadcast his radio show from the store window. Artists playing the Apollo often dropped by to autograph records. The *Midnighters*, *Orioles*, *Five Keys* and *LaVerne Baker* all adopted Flap's *After Hours Re-*



Stevens Singers sign with Lexy Hanford (center)



The Vibranaires' "Doll Face" on *After Hours* #103. It also came out on *Chariot* #103. (From the Classic Urban Harmony Archives)

cord Bar as their national headquarters for fan mail. Lexy Hanford and his wife's infant daughter, Leslie Denice Hanford was chosen by Ruth Brown, the *Dominoes*, *Faye Adams*, the *Drifters* and *Roy Hamilton*, as their mascot *Rhythm & Blues baby*.

In June or July, 1954, the Baltimore R&B group, the *Swallows*, recorded for *After Hours*. The group was appearing at the *Apollo Theater* and staying at the *Hotel Teresa*. when Hanford expressed an interest in recording them. At the time, the *Swallows* consisted of *Earl Hurley*, *Eddie Rich*, *Dee Ernie Bailey*, *Irving Turner*, *Money Johnson*, and *Al France*.

"He [Flap Hanford] was checking into the *Hotel Teresa* at the same time we were," *Eddie Rich* told *Todd Baptista*. "Plus he had come to the *Apollo* to see us. He was promoting something himself on



Grand opening of Flap's *After Hours Record Bar*. From left, front row: *Lucky Thompson*, *Archie Moore* (boxer), *Lexy Hanford*, *Ruth Brown*, *Willie "Gator Tail" Jackson*. Back row: *Joe Holiday*, *Joel Turnero*, *Monte Bruce*, *Willie Winfield*.

his own label. We signed with him and recorded in New York. He paid us part of our money and then Flap checked out at three o'clock in the morning while we were still in bed. So he got one over on us, too.”

The Swallows recorded "Good Time Girls" and "My Baby," released as *After Hours* #104. Apparently the number 103 was being held for the second Vibranaires release.

In November, 1954, Hanford and Turnero did release the second Vibranaires record, "Stop Torturing Me" b/w "Stop Jibing Baby" [note the spelling mistake]. This time, the group's name was shortened to the Vibes. According to Bobby Thomas, Turnero and Hanford thought Vibranaires was too hard to pronounce, so they shortened it.

Oddly, the Vibes record was issued on the gospel label, *Chariot*, using the *After Hours* numbering system (#106). In fact, The Vibranaires' first record, "Doll Face" was also reissued as *Chariot* #103 at the same time. No further records were issued on *Chariot's* gospel number series, 500. It is likely that another "After Hours" label forced Hanford to stop using that name. One final label release, Doc Pomus' "The Last Blues" b/w "Work Little Carrie" is said to exist as *After Hours* #107.

In January 1955, Joel Turnero moved his radio program to station WOV-New York. There he broadcast as "The Home Boy" from the window of the After Hours Record Bar every evening from 8 to 9 PM. Turnero also maintained an office in the Bishop Building, 271 West 125th Street for his Terrific Tunes talent and production agency.



The Swallows, 1954. From left: Irving Turner, Earl Hurley, Frederick Johnson, Eddie Rich, Buddy Crawford.

In February, 1955, a local newspaper wrote that Jesse "Tex" Powell, sat in on Turnero's radio program to introduce the show's new theme song, Powell's "Flap Meets The Home Boy." They reported that the frantic sax solo was available for purchase on the *After Hours* label. We know of no such release, but the record in question may in fact be "Jumpin' With Flap" b/w "Parisian Nights" on *Flap's Recording Co, Inc* (#1). Curiously, the label looks almost identical to those used by the *Atlas* label.

Meanwhile, Joel Turnero continued making the rounds to different record companies, placing some of his tunes. At *Grand Records* in Philadelphia, Turnero supervised Eunice Davis' recording of



Metal acetate of "Stop Torturing Me" by the Vibranaires. From the Bobby Thomas Collection now in the Classic Urban Harmony Archives



78 RPM of "Stop Torturing Me" by the Vibes . From the Bobby Thomas Collection now in the Classic Urban Harmony Archives

two of his tunes, "Let's Have A Party" b/w "Every Time Your Lips Meet Mine" (*Grand* #130).

In the Fall of 1955, Joel Turnero began managing blues guitarist Roy Gaines. Gaines was also accompanist for Chuck Willis at the time. Turnero and Gaines co-wrote Gaines' recording of "All Of My Life" (*Groove* #0161) as well as "Right Now Baby" b/w "De Dat De Dum Dum" (*Groove* #146).

During the summer of 1956, Turnero and Chet Williams assembled an R&B stage show that they took on the road to Fairmount, West Virginia; Uniontown, Pennsylvania; and Somerville, New Jersey. The show featured Roy Gaines, the Heartbeats, Harriet Kaye, and the El Dorados.

Meanwhile, while still running Flaps' After Hours Record Bar, Lexy Hanford chartered a flight to take 50 friends to California to watch Sugar Ray Robinson fight Carl "Bobo" Olson at Wrigley Field in Los Angeles on May 18, 1956.

Flap Hanford also got back into the record label business in 1956, starting the *Danice* label to record a young vocal group called the New Yorker's 5. The New Yorker's 5 were formed by future R&B stars J.R. Bailey (Cadillacs) and Fred Barksdale (Solitaires) who had been singing with Dean Barlow's Crickets. They recruited Rocky Smith, Shelly Dupont and Johnny Darren for the group. The New Yorker's 5 recorded "Gloria My Darling" and "Cha Cha Baby" as *Danice* #801. Both songs were written by Lexy Hanford under the pseudonym, John Handy. "Cha Cha Baby" was also recorded a year later by Alfredito And His Orchestra as *Tico* #366. The *Danice* label, was named after Flap Hanford's daughter and had his photo on the label. Flap's After



From the collection of Bob Javors.
Courtesy of Anthony Barcia.

Hours Record Bar existed throughout the 1950s and possibly beyond.

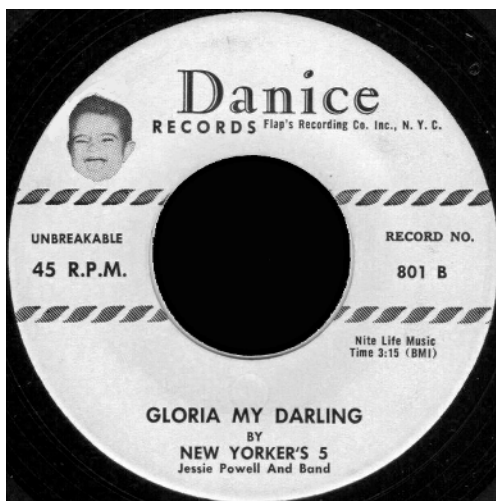
By 1960, though, Joel Turnero was back with his old partner, Bobby Robinson. Joel brought vocalist Helen Bryant to Robinson where she recorded two Turnero - Robinson compositions, "I've Learned My Lesson" b/w "That's A Promise" for Robinson's *Fury* label (*Fury* #1042). Joel also handled promotion for other Robinson artists like Lightnin' Hopkins.

In 1962, Joel Turnero was signed exclusively to Dominion Music as a songwriter. He took the opportunity to record two of his compositions, himself - "The Joke Of The Year" and "It's All Up To You" (co-written by Bobby Robinson). Joel Turnero recorded these as *Felsted* #8637 under the name Skip Layne, a name he would use often from then on.

Joel Turnero also composed and produced "Steppin' High" b/w "Du Dee Squat" for New York blues singer, Little Luther [Thomas] (*Criss Cross* #110) and "It's So Nice" b/w "Ain't Gonna do That No More" for the female soul group, the Patterns (*ABC-Paramount* #10284).

Joel Turnero began broadcasting again in 1962 on WJNR-Newark, but this time using the name Skip Layne. He also started a new record label, *Inferno*, where he recorded the doo wop group, the Souvenirs.

The Souvenirs were a Harlem group, consisting of brothers, Norman and Coleman Solomon, Tommy Dorsey, John Rogers and a bass singer remembered as Harold. Turnero saw the group perform and became their manager. Turnero and lead singer, Norman Solomon, co-wrote "It's Too Bad" and backed it with "I Could Have Danced All Night" (*Inferno* #2001).



Note Flap Hanford's photo on the Danice label



The Preludes (Souvenirs) on *Octavia*

Turnero also recorded the Souvenirs singing “A Place In My Heart” and “That Would Be So Good.” Those two sides he placed with *Octavia Records* (#8008) where they were released under the name the Preludes.

In the mid-1960s, Joel Turnero moved to Los Angeles and reinvented himself as Skip Layne. Working with famed bandleader Ernie Freeman he composed, “The Happiest Day Of My Life” b/w “The King Of Tears” for Bobby Samson & Light Years (*Acta* #803). The record was a hit overseas.

In 1968, Skip Layne was named Vice President of the newly formed Main Track Music Enterprises, a division of Mus-Art. He then co-produced Mary Love’s record, “The Hurt Is Just Beginning” for *Jubilee Records* (*Josie* #999).

The Experts - “You’re Being Brainwashed Baby” b/w “Wake Me When It’s Over” (*Whirl Wind* #1001), co-written and produced by Turnero (as Skip Layne Productions) was picked up by *Metro-media* (#116) in 1969.

Skip Layne continued moving through the West Coast music business in the 1970’s including as Special Products Director for *Cyclone Records*, and the Special Products Coordinator for Entertainment Trust Corp. (ETC) where he headed *Tiffany Records*. There he promoted Allen Tousaint’s record, “The Sweet Touch of Love” (*Tiffany* #9015).

Moving to *Oak Records* in 1972, Skip Layne headed the subsidiary *Turf* label. Sometime after that he retired from the music business to run a successful real estate business. He came out of retirement in 1987 to serve as an executive adviser to *Alasam Records*. Joel Turnero (Skip Layne) died of pancreatic cancer in Los Angeles, July 11, 1987.



From left: Bobby Robinson, Jacksonville dj
Ken Knight, Joel Turnero, 1961

He was 64. Lexy Flap Hanford died in February, 1984.

* * *

Notes

I wish to thank two of the most knowledgeable most respected music historians I know - Marv Goldberg and Todd Baptista. Their assistance made this article possible. Thanks also to Pamela Horner.

Sources

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- Todd Baptista’s article, Meet The Mello-Moods at www.goldminemag.com
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For more articles, photos and news about the vocal harmony field, visit www.ClassicUrbanHarmony.net