

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gloria Lynne

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Lynne, Gloria
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Lynne,
Dates:	February 5, 2008
Bulk Dates:	2008
Physical Description:	4 Betacame SP videocassettes (1:43:15).
Abstract:	Singer Gloria Lynne (1931 - 2013) recorded several hit songs including "June Night," "Love I Found You," and "I Wish You Love," which became her signature song in 1964. During her career, Lynne toured with Ray Charles, Billy Eckstine, Ella Fitzgerald and others. Lynne was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on February 5, 2008, in New York, New York. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2008_010
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Gloria Lynne was born Gloria Wilson on November 23, 1931, in New York City. Lynne grew up in Harlem in the 1930s and 1940s. The daughter of Trinidadian longshoreman, John Wilson, she was raised by her mother, Mary Curtis Wilson, a Creole from Lake Charles, Louisiana. Lynne began singing as a very small child in Harlem's Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, but she was also interested in secular music and entered numerous amateur talent contests.

In 1946, Lynne began her career at age fifteen, pretending to be older in order to qualify for a talent contest held at the Apollo Theatre, where she won first prize at “Amateur Night.” Although Lynne formally studied music for five years, much of her learning was gained through playing with jazz musicians. In the 1950s, Lynne recorded with The Enchanters, The Dell-Tones and the Dorsey Sisters. In 1958, at the age of twenty-seven, she was discovered by Raymond Scott, who at the time was a top A&R man at Everest Records. During her time with Everest Records, she made at least ten records between 1958 and 1963.

Lynne’s singing style has been described as a creamy alto, luscious and soothing, calming and sensual. She is a vocalist whose style and songs blur the distinctions among popular singing, jazz and blues. She made both straight jazz and jazz-oriented material during the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1960s, Lynne recorded several hit songs including “June Night,” “Love I Found You,” and “I Wish You Love,” which became her signature song in 1964. Lynne then went on tour with Ray Charles, Billy Eckstine and Ella Fitzgerald among others. Lynne moved into jazz later in her career and performed with many of the jazz greats, including Quincy Jones, Bobby Timmons, Philly Joe Jones and Harry “Sweets” Edison. During the late 1960s and 1970s, Lynne’s popularity waned, though she never stopped performing. In the 1990s, Lynne’s career experienced a strong resurgence when one of her earlier songs, “Speaking Of Happiness,” was used in the movie *Seven* and was also used in a television commercial for the Ford Motor Company.

Gloria Lynne passed away on October 15, 2013.

Lynne was married for thirteen years and has a son, Richard “P.J.” Alleyne, who also became a musician.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Gloria Lynne was conducted by Larry Crowe on February 5, 2008, in New York, New York, and was recorded on 4 Betacame SP videocassettes. Singer Gloria Lynne (1931 - 2013) recorded several hit songs including "June Night," "Love I Found You," and "I Wish You Love," which became her signature song in 1964. During her career, Lynne toured with Ray Charles, Billy Eckstine, Ella Fitzgerald and others.

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restrictions may be applied on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of The HistoryMakers®.

Restrictions on Use

All use of materials and use credits must be pre-approved by The HistoryMakers®. Appropriate credit must be given. Copyright is held by The HistoryMakers®.

Related Material

Information about the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview, as well as correspondence with the interview subject is stored electronically both on The HistoryMakers® server and in two databases maintained by The HistoryMakers®, though this information is not included in this finding aid.

Controlled Access Terms

This interview collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Persons:

Lynne, Gloria

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Burghelea, Neculai (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Lynne, Gloria--Interviews

Jazz singers--Interviews

African American singers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Singer

HistoryMakers® Category:

MusicMakers

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Interview footage was recorded by The HistoryMakers®. All rights to the interview have been transferred to The HistoryMakers® by the interview subject through a signed interview release form. Signed interview release forms have been deposited with Jenner & Block, LLP, Chicago.

Preferred Citation

The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Lynne, February 5, 2008. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 2/5/2020 by The

HistoryMakers® staff. The finding aid was created adhering to the following standards: DACS, AACR2, and the Oral History Cataloging Manual (Matters 1995).

Other Finding Aid

A Microsoft Access contact database and a FileMaker Pro tracking database, both maintained by The HistoryMakers®, keep track of the administrative functions involved in scheduling, researching, and producing the interview.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I: Original Interview Footage

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Lynne, Section
A2008_010_001_001, TRT: 0:29:08 2008/02/05

Gloria Lynne was born on November 23, 1931 in New York City to Mary Curtis and John Wilson. Her maternal great-great-grandfather was of Native American descent, and owned a tobacco farm. Her mother grew up in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and spoke Patois, which she taught to Lynne through song. Her father was born in Trinidad, and he met her mother while passing through Louisiana on a boat. They then moved to New York City, but separated shortly after Lynne's birth. She grew up in Harlem, where she frequented the Apollo Theater and Minton's Playhouse, and listened to the choir sing at United House of Prayer for All People. As a young girl, she met Mary McLeod Bethune and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. Her mother educated her about black history at the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature, History and Prints. Lynne attended Mother A.M.E. Zion Church near her home, where she sang in the church choir. As a preteen, Lynne was sent to Westfield State Farm, a reformatory school in Bedford Hills, New York.

Jazz singers--Interviews.

African American singers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Lynne, Section

A2008_010_001_002, TRT: 0:29:19 2008/02/05

Gloria Lynne performed in the choir at Westfield State Farm, a reformatory school. She returned to Harlem in New York City when she was fourteen years old, and auditioned at the 'Amateur Night at the Apollo.' She won first place, and began performing there regularly. She also performed in clubs around Harlem, joining groups like The Enchanters and The Delltones. Lynne often provided the vocals for demo records, and was discovered by music producer Raymond Scott after he heard one of her tapes. In the 1940s, Lynne married Harry Ayllene, and they had a son, P.J. Alleyne. In 1960, Harry Belafonte heard Lynne perform at the Copacabana in New York City, and recruited her for his TV special, 'New York 19.' In 1965, she recorded the hit song 'I Wish You Love,' which was written and composed by Marty Paich. To supplement her singing career, she worked as a license clerk at city hall in Bergen County, New Jersey. She went on to tour with entertainers like Jimmy Scott, Redd Foxx, Jimmy Smith, and Art Blakeley.

Video Oral History Interview with Gloria Lynne, Section
A2008_010_001_003, TRT: 0:29:21 2008/02/05

Gloria Lynne obtained her high school diploma at Westfield State Farm in Bedford Hills, New York. Although she had initially planned to attend Fordham University, she decided to pursue music instead, after the release of her first album. During her career, she recorded with Della Reese-Lett and Lena Horne, and her favorite contemporary musical artists include Toni Braxton and Beyonce. Lynne befriended many celebrities, and had a close relationship with actress and singer, Liza Minnelli. Lynne also befriended comedian and activist Dick Gregory, who was once followed by the FBI while visiting her home. During the Civil Rights Movement, Lynne and Mahalia Jackson performed in a fundraiser organized by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In 2007, Lynne was honored by Congressman John Conyers, Jr., who instituted Gloria Lynne Day in Washington, D.C. Lynne reflects upon her music, life and legacy; and talks about her spirituality. Lynne also describes her concerns for the African American community.

Gloria Lynne performed with The Delltones as a teenager, and toured with comedian Redd Foxx. She also toured with Ray Charles, and accompanied him on his private plane, which he sometimes flew with assistance. Shortly after Jon Voight's Academy Award win, Lynne and some of her colleagues took him out to dinner in Harlem, New York City. Despite her success, Lynne often struggled financially, because of low royalty payments from record companies. She talks about her son, P.J. Alleyne who is also a musician, and concludes the interview by describing how she would like to be remembered.