

THE REV. HORACE J. McCLURE STORY



**-The last surviving member of
The Original
SOUL STIRRERS OF TEXAS**

THE REV. McCLURE HOLDS the distinctive honor of being the last living member of the original **Soul Stirrers** founded by tenor singer **Walter Le Beau** out of members of the New Pleasant Baptist Church in Houston. According to research conducted by Ray Funk, the roots of the Soul Stirrers harken back to 1926 (but more on this later).

The Rev. McClure was born in 1912 in Pickton near Sulphur Springs in Hopkins County, below Greenville, Texas. His mother, Nellie, kept home at Sulphur Springs, his father, Morris McClure, farmed and dug wells. It was while inside a well in 1918 that Morris McClure tragically lost his life. Consumed by a gas accumulation in the shaft, he died before being raised to safety. Nellie moved the family, consisting of nine children, to Dallas in 1929. All nine offspring sang in various choirs around Dallas. Rev. McClure first sang in the **St. John's Baptist Choir** in Dallas.

Two years later, McClure switched to The Monger Avenue Baptist Church where he joined **The Sacred Belt Singers** formed from members of the church. Soldiers of the Sacred Belt Singers included **James Holdiness**, first tenor, **Nathaniel Tisdale**, second tenor, **Jesse Poindexter** served as both manager and baritone singer, and McClure sang bass. The Sacred Belt Singers had cut only one record before McClure joined them, "Ezekiel Saw The Wheel." "Ezekiel Saw The Wheel" became extremely popular around Dallas, the group was often called to sing it.

The group's rendering of the song was accompanied by sweeping arm gestures, knee bends and body postures. The fans lapped it up. The Sacred Belt Singers played on church programs alongside the **Famous Blue Jay Singers** whom McClure and his fellow harmonists idolized. The Sacred Belt Singers' repertoire was spiced with six humorous songs. These included "Old MacDonald" and an effective version of "Who Stole The Lock Off The Henhouse Door."

By 1935, McClure found that he had to work a regular job to make ends meet. Taking on janitorial duties, McClure labored at two dime and ten stores, J.J. McAllister and M.E. Moses. This lasted only a few months. Having worked well as a salad maker at J.G. McCroy's while singing in the Sacred Belt Singers, McClure was asked to go back. Not only did McClure make salads at McCroy's restaurant, he concocted his own extremely popular mayonnaise to dress them. Good reason to take him back.

In 1931, according to Ray Funk, baritone quartet singer **S. Roy Crain** moved from Trinity, Texas to Houston in search of better paid employment. After his arrival he began checking out the local quartet scene and stumbled across the **New Pleasant Green Singers**. The group at this point was composed of **Edward R. Rundless**, lead tenor, **Walter Le Beau**, tenor and manager, and **O.W. Thomas**, bass. Crain was soon enlisted as they were desperately in need of a good baritone singer. His one condition was that they

change names to the Soul Stirrers. A second baritone, **A.L. Johnson**, was added to the group in 1934. After Le Beau's presence on recordings cut by Alan Lomax for the Library of Congress in Austin in February 1936, he spent more and more time training for the ministry and less in the quartet. The group was entering a brief period of turmoil. Members quit, and Crain brought in singers from Trinity to replace defectors. During, or shortly before, this period of constant flux, McClure was taken on as bass singer. "The Soul Stirrers were based in Dallas for awhile, and I was asked to come aboard as bass singer in April 1936," says McClure. A.L. Johnson had taken on more managerial responsibility and had helped organize the local quartet union. The union met every Sunday and put on quartet programs. This was how the Soul Stirrers became aware of McClure's talents. McClure remembers Le Beau, Rundless and Crain being members in the group. McClure says Johnson had switched from second baritone to bass when he came in contact with the Soul Stirrers. It must be assumed that Thomas had quit.

One day, Johnson fell sick and McClure was asked to replace him. In 1937, shortly before being replaced by **Jesse J. Farley**, McClure met and married Leola Sanford, daughter of

the Rev. John Sanford. Le Beau eventually became a preacher in Oxnard and Rundless took up with **Pearl Carter** who had sung in the all-female **Egypt Sacred Four**.

In 1940, McClure took a job at The National Disinfectant Company or NDC. The NDC manufactured janitorial supplies - waxes, deodorants, etc. They also made a DDT fly spray which they shipped to army camps and major department stores. In 1945, McClure became a minister and moved with his wife Leola to Los Angeles. In L.A. he joined the Freemasons and exercised his vocal talents in the **John Howard Ogletree a-cappella group**, a sort of **Wings Over Jordan** spin-off. The **Wings Over Jordan** were directed by **Rev. Glynn Settle** whose wife became a close friend of the McClure family.

McClure then spent two years in the **Hall Johnson Singers** where he sang both bass and baritone. He then worked two jobs trying to support his family which put him out of favor with the Freemasons as he had to skip regular meetings. He commenced pastoring in 1954. McClure currently preaches at the Homestead Baptist Church in Los Angeles where he alternates with the Rev. Julius Cashmere of the Gabriel Baptist Church.

Look Who's Coming!

THE FAMOUS
FIVE SOUL STIRRERS
OF HOUSTON, TEXAS



Bear in mind that we are just passing through. Don't fail to hear us. Our Motto is to Serve the Lord with Gladness. Come before His presence with singing.—Ps. 100: 2. The Soul Stirrers will appear

AT LONE STAR BAPTIST Church
DATE MONDAY MAY 25th
CITY Houston Texas 1954

ADMISSION, 10 Cents