

Finding Aid to The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Scherrie Payne

Overview of the Collection

Repository:	The HistoryMakers®1900 S. Michigan Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60616 info@thehistorymakers.com www.thehistorymakers.com
Creator:	Payne, Scherrie
Title:	The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History Interview with Scherrie Payne,
Dates:	October 7, 2005
Bulk Dates:	2005
Physical Description:	5 Betacame SP videocassettes (2:13:03).
Abstract:	Motown singer and songwriter Scherrie Payne (1944 -) was the last lead singer of The Supremes, in addition to having a successful career as a solo artist. Payne was interviewed by The HistoryMakers® on October 7, 2005, in Los Angeles, California. This collection is comprised of the original video footage of the interview.
Identification:	A2005_236
Language:	The interview and records are in English.

Biographical Note by The HistoryMakers®

Singer and songwriter Scherrie Payne was born November 4, 1944, in Detroit, Michigan, to Frederick and Charcle Lee Payne. The younger sister of Freda Payne, Scherrie learned to sing and play the piano at an early age. Payne attended Crossman Elementary School, Hutchins Middle School, and graduated from Central High School in 1961. Payne earned her B.S. degree from Michigan State University in 1966.

Teaching at Grayling School of Observation, Payne was discovered by Eddie Holland of the Motown team of Holland, Dozier and Holland. In 1968, Payne and her sister Freda, already an established performer, signed contracts with Holland, Dozier and Holland's new label, Invictus. Payne joined The Glass House, which consisted of herself, Pearl Jones, Larry Mitchell and Ty Hunter. Payne sang lead and contributed to the writing of "Hotel", "The Fox", "Horse and Rider", "Heaven Is There To Guide Us", "Let It Flow" and "Crumbs Off The Table," the group's biggest hit record. When The Glass House disbanded, Payne toured briefly with Charo's Review before Lamont Dozier introduced her to Mary Wilson; Wilson then invited Payne to join the Supremes. Payne joined Wilson and Cindy Birdsong in the fall of 1973 and became known as "the little lady with the big voice" singing most of the leads. Payne was officially the last lead singer for the Supremes in 1977, when the group consisted of her, Susaye Greene, and Mary Wilson. The final Supremes album *Mary, Scherrie & Susaye* was released in late 1976; it boasted several club smashes, including "Let Yourself Go," "You're My Driving Wheel," "Love I Never Knew You Could Feel So Good," "I Don't Want To Be Tied Down," and "I'm Gonna Let My Heart Do The Walking", which was their biggest hit. On June 12, 1977, in London, England, The Supremes performed their final performance. After the break up, Payne and Greene recorded 1979's *Partners* which focused on the writing and singing talents of both artists.

In 1982, Payne released her first solo hit, "I'm Not In Love." The Altair Records recording featured Payne's sister Freda, Mary Wilson, and Edmund Sylvers singing background. This success led to the recording of Payne's 1984 single, "One Night Only" (from *Dreamgirls*) for Megatone Records. In 1986, Payne and the late Ronnie Phillips formed Former Ladies of the Supremes (FLOS), which at various times included Cindy Birdsong, Jean Terrell,

Freddie Pool, Sundray Tucker and Lynda Laurence. In 2000, along with Lynda Laurence, Payne was a part of “Diana Ross’ Return to Love Tour”. Payne, who has also written two musicals and a number of screenplays and songs, has toured Europe and Asia extensively with the FLOS and performed on special occasions with her sister, Freda.

Scope and Content

This life oral history interview with Scherrie Payne was conducted by Larry Crowe on October 7, 2005, in Los Angeles, California, and was recorded on 5 Betacame SP videocassettes. Motown singer and songwriter Scherrie Payne (1944 -) was the last lead singer of The Supremes, in addition to having a successful career as a solo artist.

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:

Payne, Scherrie

Crowe, Larry (Interviewer)

Stearns, Scott (Videographer)

Subjects:

African Americans--Interviews

Payne, Scherrie--Interviews

African American women singers--Interviews

Organizations:

HistoryMakers® (Video oral history collection)

The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection

Occupations:

Motown Singer

Songwriter

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 Scherrie Payne, October 7, 2005. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

Processing Information

This interview collection was processed and encoded on 5/30/2023 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 Scherrie Payne, Section A2005_236_001_001, TRT: 0:30:05 ?

Scherrie Payne was born on November 4, 1944 in Detroit, Michigan to Charcle Hickman Farley and Frederick Payne. Her father's side of the family traces its ancestry back to whites who emigrated from England. Payne's great-grandfather, William Logan, was swindled by Cornelius Vanderbilt in a land deal. Payne's mother was born in Birmingham, Alabama, but moved to Detroit with her mother, Ada Brack, after her father, bandleader James Marshall, died from tuberculosis. She lived through Detroit's 1943 race riots, and graduated from High School of Commerce. Payne's father was born in Asheville, North Carolina and moved to Detroit around 1940, where he boxed and trained in the same gym as HistoryMaker Berry Gordy. Payne's parents met at Bethel AME Church in Detroit, and married on December 7, 1941. She and her sister, HistoryMaker Freda Payne, attended Crosman Elementary School, had friends of many races, and watched TV on Friday nights. Payne recalls seeing the Four Tops on a family trip to Idlewild, Michigan.

African American women singers--Interviews.

Video Oral History Interview with Scherrie Payne, Section A2005_236_001_002, TRT: 0:29:20 ?

Scherrie Payne was more extroverted in early childhood than her older sister, HistoryMaker Freda Payne, but grew more introverted as she became a young adult. At Crosman Elementary School in Detroit, Michigan, she excelled at spelling, and her older sister often got into fights. Payne recalls attending Bethel AME Church with her family, and her grandmother, Ada Brack, buying the neighborhood's first TV. While Payne was in middle school, her sister launched a musical career, recording several songs with HistoryMaker Berry Gordy's label; Payne remembers traveling with her family to New York City for her sister to pursue a record deal. Payne attended Central High School in Detroit, Michigan where she joined several student clubs and graduated in 1961. When Payne enrolled at Michigan State University, black students were still segregated together in the residence halls. She reflects on why she and her sister rarely perform together, and how a putdown from her father dampened her confidence early in her career.

Video Oral History Interview with Scherrie Payne, Section A2005_236_001_003, TRT: 0:30:20 ?

Scherrie Payne was inspired by her Latin and English teachers at Central High School. She first saw The Supremes in the early 1960s in Detroit's Edgewater Park, where they performed 'Buttered Popcorn.' Payne enrolled at Michigan State University in East Lansing, and graduated in 1966 with a major in medical technology. Some of her friends at college included sports stars Horace Walker and Bubba Smith, and her childhood friend Sandra Sims. After college, Payne turned to songwriting. Her audition for Eddie and Brian Holland in 1968 led to Payne's contract with Invictus Records. She remembers joining the Glass House, their hit album 'Crumbs Off the Table,' and recording the song 'Want Ads,' which became a hit for the Honey Cone. After the Glass House disbanded in 1972, Payne sang backup for Charo. She joined The Supremes as lead singer in 1973, performing with HistoryMaker Mary Wilson and Cindy Birdsong. They recorded hits such as 'He's My Man' and toured internationally, including to South Africa.

Video Oral History Interview with Scherrie Payne, Section A2005_236_001_004, TRT: 0:31:10 ?

Scherrie Payne toured South Africa with The Supremes when apartheid was in effect. She recalls interviewing members of the African National Congress and the prejudice that fellow Supreme Cindy Birdsong faced while shopping. Her mother, Charcle Hickman Farley's, death from breast cancer in 1977 led Payne

to return to her Christian faith. After The Supremes broke up in 1977 when HistoryMaker Mary Wilson quit, Payne released an album with Susaye Greene titled 'Partners.' She also sang backup for artists including Luther Vandross and HistoryMakers Quincy Jones and James Ingram. In 1986, Payne formed the Former Ladies of the Supremes with Jean Terrell and Birdsong. The group later included Lynda Laurence and Freddi Poole. She and Laurence sang backup for Diana Ross on the 2000 Return to Love Tour, which ended early due to contract disputes. Payne describes her hopes and concerns for the African American community, and reflects upon her life, legacy and family.

Video Oral History Interview with Scherrie Payne, Section A2005_236_001_005, TRT: 0:12:08 ?
Scherrie Payne narrates her photographs.