

Log of follow up interview of Ederic Kerney and phone interview of Evelyn Turrentine-Agee on Thursday, May 20, 2010 for the American Music Archives North Mississippi Religious Music Project.

This interview was intended to be a follow up interview of Ederic Kerney after the one conducted two days earlier on Tuesday, May 18, 2010. The topic of the interview was to be the differences in traditional and contemporary gospel music. We thought that Mr. Kerney was going to play selections of early contemporary gospel music from his collection of 45rpm records and talk about the significance of each one. Instead, it turned out to be a recording of Mr. Kerney on the air at his radio station asking callers to talk about which of the two kinds of music they preferred and why with some specific song names given and samples of those songs played. All the songs played are traditional. Towards the end of the recording some songs were played in their entirety after callers quit calling in. We did not ask any questions of Mr. Kerney during this recording. He called a traditional gospel singer named Evelyn Turrentine-Agee during the middle of the recording and I, Eric Griffis, and Miles Laseter did a short, roughly 10 minutes, phone interview with her about why she prefers traditional music and how she feels about other forms of gospel music. During some of the radio songs played Mr. Kerney offered commentary to us that was not recorded because he was using his radio microphone for the recording. I have tried to fill in those comments in the with bracketed explanations.

Eric Griffis and Miles Laseter conducted this recording of Ederic Kerney live on the radio air at 12:45pm on Thursday in the broadcast studio building for KBUD 102.1 FM in Sardis, Mississippi. The building is located at 627 East Lee Street, Sardis, Mississippi 38666. The building is on Mississippi Scenic Road 315 which is also called East Lee Street at this location. It is about a block or two east of Interstate 55 off of exit 252. The phone interview of Evelyn Turrentine-Agee was conducted by Eric Griffis and Miles Laseter during this broadcast session over the phone from this location to her home in Detroit, Michigan.

In this Log, EK refers to Ederic Kerney. Any reference to the first person such as "I" or "me" refers to Eric Griffis. All others are referred to by their names.

0:00 EK begins his radio segment doing a survey of his listeners of whether they like traditional also known as "old school" gospel or contemporary gospel which he is referring to as "new school." At one point he says, "Do you more like the contemporary or the praise and worship or do you like traditional gospel, you know, old school gospel?" [so the phrasing is confusing to me as to what he means by "praise" and "worship." There was no explanation of these terms.] He asks his listeners to give him the names of old school songs they like so he can find it on his computer and play portions of the songs. Then he asks the people to call in and tell him what kind of music they like and why.

1:40 The first listener calls in and identifies himself as “Izell” and EK knows his last name is Valentine. He indicates that he had called in earlier in the day. EK knows the caller is calling on his cell phone while working in a field on his tractor. EK talks about how far the black community in that area has come from “singing in the fields to you riding in a tractor that’s got FM radio in it with air conditioning.” The caller says he likes the traditional song “Do Lord.”

3:05 The next listener calls in. She says she loves old school gospel “because it’s for real” and “you can get something out of it, you can get a message out of it.” When asked what one of her favorites is she says a song called “It’s Too Late” by a group called The Memphis Spiritual Four. She says the song is “twenty-something years old.” When EK asks her what is one of the old songs she can remember from when she was young on Sunday mornings and her mom was in the kitchen cooking biscuits and cornbread, she tries to remember the name of an old Hymn but cannot recall it. Even though the caller never said her name, EK called her what sounded like “Ms. Cora.” [I believe there is a distinction in Hymns and traditional gospel but I am not clear on how the different people are using the terms.]

4:50 EK plays a song when he is talking to the caller about old Hymns and she cannot remember the name of the one she is trying to think of. The song he plays starts with the lyrics, “One thing I know, I been born again.”

6:25 EK talks to another caller who says traditional gospel is the best gospel. Then the caller tries to promote a Sunday night gospel sing at an area church featuring all traditional music and he names several singing groups that will be there but EK turned the recorder off during that part. He then plays more of the same song that has been playing. It is slow paced and the singer repeats some phrases slowly and spaced out throughout the music, so not much is said in the song.

8:00 EK takes another call and the lady says her name but it is not clear. It sounds like she says she is from Paradise Missionary Baptist Church. She says she likes the modern songs but she likes the old songs. Then she says, “This is one of my favorite Hymns,” and starts singing, “I love The Lord, He heard my cry.” EK turns the music back up and it sounds like the same song that has been playing for several minutes now in the background.

9:40 EK takes another caller who says he or she [I cannot tell from the voice] likes “old school” music “because it has a meaning and a message.” The caller then requests an “old school song” which is Aretha Franklin singing “Amazing Grace.” At the end of the call EK again turns the music back up and the singer can be heard referring to himself as “L.W.”

10:14 EK takes another caller who briefly states that she prefers traditional music.

10:43 EK announces that they are going to do a “unity praise” and asks everyone to listen to the radio and sing with Reverend L.W. Bolton. Then he turns the music up and the singer sings, “I love The Lord, He heard my cry.” The Reverend singing repeats that same line, but it is so drawn

out the second time that he interjects saying in between words and during words and EK interjects some also before the line is done. All together that two line song clip lasted about one minute before EK turned it off.

11:55 EK takes another caller who identifies her name pronounced like “Sha-day.” She says she is young and she listens to different kinds of music depending on her situation. She is 24 years old and was raised up on old school music. She said she likes a group called The Memphis Harmonizers and a song they sing about, “I want to be a good Christian in my heart” and “as long as I’ve got shoes to put on my feet and food.” EK identifies that song as “Lord I Want To Be a Christian.” She also mentions some older singers she likes to listen to. She lists Stevie Wonder, Willie Banks, Willie Neal. EK plays the song he thinks she is referring to but the recording is by a different group called Keith “Wonder Boy” Jackson and The Spiritual Voices.

14:44 EK takes another caller who identifies herself as Patricia Lucas calling from Holly Springs. She says she likes an old song by Shirley Ceasar about, “Hold my mule, I’m going to shout right here, I’m going to shout right here.” Then EK asks her if she is holding a mule right now. She says no but she says she knows about “that mule” because she is from the old school. EK then plays that song. The song is mostly a talking story song about an 86 year old man named John who goes to a church and shouts out loud and dances even though the people in that church do not accept that behavior in that church. So the church deacons go visit Shouting John during the week when he is out plowing his fields with his mule and they threaten to kick him out of the church if he does not act calmer during service.

[at this point EK tells me about this song but he is not talking into the microphone because he has been using the radio microphone plugged into the recorder. He tells me that the song illustrates the church practice of sending the deacons to do the church business rather than the pastor of the church as a matter of politics.]

21:45 EK plays another song called “God Did It” by Evelyn Turrentine-Agee.

[EK then calls Evelyn Turrentine-Agee on the phone so that we may interview her. She is in Detroit, Michigan. Off the microphone EK gives us a brief explanation that she is a traditional gospel singer that has been performing for years.]

23:17 Evelyn Turrentine-Agee answers the telephone. EK tells her that we are from the University of Mississippi and that we are doing a documentary on gospel music. He tells her we have been listening to old gospel and are interested in the basis of gospel and the differences in it and that we are going to ask her a few questions. He says if she is nice then he will cook her some ribs when she comes back. She agrees.

24:00 I talk to her and tell her about our project. She tells the story of how she became a gospel singer. Her father was in a gospel quartet and she traveled with him around St. Louis, Missouri where she was born and raised. She was singing when she was two or three years old, so

churches began to want to see her sing because she was so young. She said they only sang “Church music” and that she did not know anything about contemporary. She says that eventually new forms of music came along such as contemporary and praise and worship but she always stayed with the traditional gospel music because they were brought up believing that “Church music” is what God wanted them to sing in the Church. She says she is “strictly an ‘in the church kind of music’ person.”

26:43 I ask her if she has literally been performing gospel music her whole life. She says she has. She says:

Actually, it is kind of like my life, past my family, because, you know, I live, eat, and breathe gospel music. At this time I am trying to have my own record label. I’ve released independent projects and so forth, so It’s actually becoming my life.

27:20 Evelyn talks about the different kinds of gospel music. She thinks there is a need for all types because there are different types of music that appeals to everyone no matter what their musical preferences are.

29:00 Evelyn says the differences in types of gospel music have to do with musical style but the message is the same throughout. She says that the different generations in her family listen to all different styles but they all listen to gospel in one form or another.

31:35 Evelyn says her preference for traditional music is because it represents church as she knows it. She said, “I have opened my mind to receive gospel in any form as long as it is The Good News and the message is not compromised.”

33:40 I get contact information from her so that I can mail her a consent waiver form for the archives. We conclude the interview.

34:40 EK goes back on the air. He asks the listening audience if they knew that R&B/Soul artist Johnny Taylor started out singing gospel music. He then plays a gospel song by Taylor called, “I Never Dreamed Heaven Would Be Like This.”

37:15 EK explains that many of those blues artists started out in gospel but switched to blues because there was more money to be made in secular music.

37:40 EK takes another call from a listener who identifies herself as Erica Perkins. She says she like new and old music but it really depends on what the song is about, “if they are really talking about something that they know or if they are just singing.” When EK asks which she turns to when she is “having one of those days,” she said she turns to the old music. She says, “There is nothing new under the sun, that hadn’t already been through it.”

38:58 EK plays a traditional gospel song by blues artist B.B. King called “Jesus Gave Me Water From The Well.” The song featured King as the lead vocalist and featured backup singers

repeating the title of the song in various ways. The song was also notable because there were none of the guitar solos that B.B. King is famous for. [EK could not tell me where he got that recording or what year it might have been from.]

42:05 EK plays a song by Dorothy Norwood called “Down Old School Boulevard.” The whole track consists of Norwood telling about how other forms of music cannot do what traditional gospel can do then she sings a medley of traditional songs and talks between each one. She sings “I Need Thee” first. She says that is what she was raised on. Then says that every morning when she gets up she thinks about how good God has been to her and sometimes sanctified Church songs will “come down in my spirit.” Then she sings part of a song called, “He’s A Wonder In My Soul.” Then she talks about the deaths of some of her brothers and sisters from different kinds of health problems and how hip-hop music did not help her in those situations and she had to turn to traditional gospel songs. Then she sings part of a song called, “What A Friend We Have In Jesus.”

48:20 EK plays a song by Lula Collins called “Almighty God.” The song mostly consists of different chants such as the line, “I want you to hold me” repeated over and over again. [While the song is playing EK tells me off the microphone that Lula Collins is known as “The Delta Gospel Queen.”]

51:12 EK plays a song by the Jackson Southernaires called “Lord Jesus.” The entire song is a prayer set to music.

56:55 EK plays a song by Lee Williams and the Spiritual QC’s called, “I Won’t Let Nobody Steal My Joy.”

59:04 The recording ends.