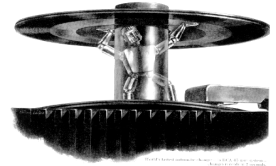


The 45rpm Phono Gazette

Mills Brothers Convention



William Gourd in the center between Mills Brothers Elmer Hopper and John H. Mills II.



45EY2 featured in Mills Brothers Convention display

By William Gourd

In the first week of September, 2003 I attended the Third International Convention of the Mills Brothers Society, at Virginia Beach, Virginia. The Mills Brothers were, according to one commentator, "the grandfathers of all of the United States popular music vocal groups in the twentieth century." An African-American quartet as they began their performing and recording career when they were pre-teenagers in the 1920s, they continued until 1936 when John C. Mills, the eldest brother, died of complications from pneumonia. The remaining three brothers, Herbert, Harry, and Donald, nearly quit the music business, but their father, John H. Mills, stepped in to replace the elder son as the bass singer and guitarist, and the Mills Brothers quartet continued. John H. retired in 1957, and for roughly the next thirty years The Mills Brothers were a trio and a guitarist, the latter role filled for a number of years by Norman Brown. Throughout their career The Mills Brothers performed all over the globe to audiences that became devoted to their brand of harmony, and they made more than 2000 commercial recordings of songs. (One couple, members of The Mills Brothers Society, has attended over 80 Mills Brothers concerts during that time.)

The last surviving Mills Brother died in 1999. Donald's son, John H. Mills II, has teamed with Elmer Hopper, who spent more than twenty years in the second generation of The Platters, and the two of them are now (Continued on page 2)