

# 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)

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## Mills Bros. Convention (continued)

performing Mills Brothers music, using the now-copyrighted name "The Mills brothers." John and Elmer did two shows in Virginia Beach at the most recent Mills Brothers Society Convention. Elmer also does two or three well-known Platters songs in their shows. The International Society for the Preservation and Promotion of the Mills Brothers Musical History was founded in 1994 by Daniel R. Clemson and Charles J. Horner, Jr. at Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, and currently counts as members slightly more than 350 Mills Brothers devotees worldwide.

## Challenge Update

*Push the idler away from the motor shaft when the changer is turned off.*

Well at least one person has taken the challenge seriously and come up with a possible solution. If anyone else is working on this, please let me know by the end of February. This way I can announce the winner in the spring newsletter. Don't forget, the winner gets a lifetime subscription to the newsletter.

Speaking of subscriptions, it is time to renew. If your address label says 1/05, then this will be your last issue. Please send \$5 for one year (4 issues) or \$10 for two years (9 issues) to Phil Vourtsis

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## The Work Bench

### A Troubleshooting Story

One of my projects lately was to fix a maple 7HF45 in beautiful condition. The machine would play fine for a while and then a real loud hum would make you jump out of your seat. Adjusting the volume control would not control the hum but if you tapped the volume control it would subside. This would intermittently occur driving the owner, Bob Becker, to distraction. First thing I did was look under the amp and there were all these old wax/paper capacitors staring me in the face. Since these caps can cause many problems I changed them all out. Then I powered it up and played a stack of records. Everything sounds great for about a half hour and the same nasty hum comes blasting out of the speakers. I start probing the resistors and capacitors and find a general area where the problem is. It is under one of the 35C5 output tubes. When I physically move a couple of the resistors, the hum comes and goes. Re-soldering the resistor connections did not help so I replaced the resistors. No improvement. Time to regroup. I've changed all the capacitors and resistors in the area. The only thing left is the tube socket. With a magnifying glass I examined each pin on the socket and then I saw the problem. Two of the very first wires that were installed at the factory at the bottom of the socket were crimped properly but had no solder on them. That means it came from the factory that way. I carefully soldered the two pins down to the affected area and that did the trick. Moving the resistors now had no affect and the amp was nice and quiet. Now having plenty of experience with these types of repairs I knew it was not time to celebrate until a couple of hours had gone by with records playing and no problems. After two hours I was convinced the repair was complete so I went to turn off the record changer with the slide switch on top of the changer and this tremendous hum comes out of the speaker! I just walked out of the room and said this can wait till another day. The next night I returned to take another look and every time I would poke at the slide switch on the changer, the hum would come and go. I examined the underside of the changer moving all the wires but it had no affect. Then I went right to the source, the on/off switch. I removed the metal cover and a piece of solder fell out into my hands. That piece of solder was rolling around in there and would occasionally short one of the pins to the metal cover! Once it was removed I ran another two-hour test and I can finally say that the unit is fixed! What are the odds? Two separate problems causing the same type of intermittent symptoms. Really felt good to get this one working.

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