

Writers Forum

By GEORGE B. RUSS



McKinley Cates (inset) and Little Charles Chrisp and the Chrisp Sisters.

The life story of the Union Baptist Male Chorus can be compared with the story of the well-known fable of the "Ugly Duckling who finally turned into a beautiful Swan."

We were a somewhat motley group, so far as vocal training was concerned; and unwilling, to a large extent, to do more than "cornfield" renditions of popular Prayer Meeting Songs. But the spirit of the men was bold and courageous, for the most part, and with the determination of a few of the fellows hope was sustained for bringing into being a Male Chorus.

McKinley Cates was the president of the Trustees Board during the 40s. These were the "fat years" for this organization; for the first time, perhaps, in the history of the church, the male congregation as well-organized—on one accord—going places in a big way. Taking the bull by the horns and getting the job done was a specialty. Cates was a splendid leader and the men enjoyed the fellowship of working together—keeping up the physical aspects of the church proper. These were the years when the nation was at war and anxiety, uncertainty and rationing was harassment to those on the homefront; but, by and large, for the Christian forces these were some of the best years of our lives.

Aside from our regular work in and around the church, the guys would make visitations to the sick in the community and offer prayer and sing a hymn or two. This is actually where the idea of a male chorus began. And during the Fall of 1946, November 18, the men of the Trustees Board met in the assembly room of the Gray Street church-house, with Mrs. Dorcas Croom Reeves, and initiated the Union Baptist Male Chorus. "Let the light from the lighthouse shine on me" this was the first hymn the fellows used to flex their vocal chords on and learn to blend their harmonies as "a single human organ." (Mrs. Dorcas C. Reeves). For us, this was proved to be no simple undertaking. We were asking for the "light from the lighthouse to shine on me," for many months. But little by little, step by step, the men advanced enough to make their first appearance: "The Old Ship of Zion, I Can Tell The Nation and Yes, God is Real."

In all candor, the male chorus did not seem destined to survive for more than a few seasons, at most, but divine guidance through its co-ordinator, McKinley Cates and some of the members, the men stuck to their musical guns and received for their effort the second Sunday of each month to sing for the church.

Otha Lee Thompson was the 1st president; Warren E. Stubbs was second in line to serve and chairman of the Male Chorus.

By the time the new church, the present edifice on North Roxboro Street, was finished, the fate of the chorus, then under the leadership of Napoleon Sanders, was well established—this group of singers was here to stay. The male chorus raised its building fund donations through an annual program called "Man of the Year." The first recipient of this award was William Reeves—husband of Mrs. Dorcas C. Reeves. Although the congregation of men is overwhelmingly outnumbered by the congregation of women, the male chorus has done well carrying the ball of responsibility. Aside from regular donations to the building fund, the chorus was among the first organizations to purchase a window for the sanctuary.

The color standard of the Male Chorus is: Navy-blue and white; flower: white carnation; Motto: "Praise ye the Lord: For it is good to sing praises unto our God."

While the Union Baptist Male Chorus cannot look back on years strewn with great triumphs, this group can review its history with a great deal of pride for having over come a long line of struggles. A single ruling that they were not serve outside the confines of the church, unless they were serving with the pastor elsewhere gave grounds for much embarrassment. However, through self-discipline—obedience—they have emerged one of the best organized choruses in the business.

Other leaders serving the male chorus are: deacon, Clarence Jones, Mrs. Barbara Adams Wright, George B. Russ, J. D. Green, W. C. Young.

The present roster of officers: President, Grover Wilson Sr.; Secretary, Van Clark, Sr.; Treasurer, Clarence Jones; Director, McDuffie Holman; Vice president, Joseph Ford.

Sunday, November 18, the Union Baptist Male Chorus celebrated its 27th Anniversary to the harmonies of several-hundred-choruses-cross-country: Little Charles Chrisp and the Chrisp Sisters were the Guest Stars; other groups from the Garner area include The Dependable Quartet and the Good Samaritan Male Chorus; The Union Baptist Junior Male Chorus; Ebernezer Male Chorus; Amey Singers; St. Paul Male Chorus; Russell Memorial Gospel Chorus; Mt. Level Gospel Chorus; Mt. Oliver Echoes—Dearborn Drive; Gethsemane Male Chorus; Pettiford Singers—Roxboro, N.C.; Mt. Gilead Male Chorus; Mt. Zoar Male Chorus; Cox Memorial Male Chorus and Gospel Chorus; Mt. Vernon Male Chorus; Oak Grove Male Chorus and Gospel Chorus—The Grady Davis Choir—Union Baptist—and, an audience of 400 visitors and church family. The success of this Anniversary definitely takes this group out of the fledgling class. They are handsome, confident, self-assured Swanmen.

Forum's "Man of the Week" is one of the old-timers at Union Baptist. He has been on the scene for four decades (a conservative estimate). He is no longer the rolling ball of energy that he was when we first met. His broad shoulders are slightly stooped, footsteps heavy and slower, however, as we talked about the good old days, his eyes sparkled with the vim and vigor that was once typical of "Kinley Cates."

Cates and his family grew up together in and around Union Baptist; Mrs. Carolyn Cates, Willetine, Maxine—Newark, N.J. Mrs. Wilma Jean Lyons—Danville, Va., McKinley Jr.

Today, Mr. Cates, like many of U.B.C.'s once popular, ambitious leaders, is a statesman without portfolio, however, he has no remorse in having to surrender his crown to younger, stronger men. "George, I really did what I set out to do. I worked hard to make my church a great church for my family and other

"Black Americans Almost White," Say Africans

By James Oscar Cuthbertson, Jr.

Writer's note: Four people were interviewed for this story. This is 33 and 1/3 per cent of the African Students enrolled at UNC. An attempt was made to contact the remaining portion, but it was not successful. One interview was dropped because the information given was useless.

"When I got here, I was disappointed. The impression, I had in Nigeria was that life in America was very rosy. That, America had a more perfect system," said Akanbi Adewole, a first year Ph.D. candidate in Psychology.

"Since, I got here my opinion of America has changed," he added.

"I was alarmed at the size of New York (his port of entry)," said 33-year-old Joshua Adeniyi, a first year graduate student in Public Health.

"Traffic jams were everywhere," he added with a big wide smile. "And so many skyscrapers."

"New York was the thing that impressed me the most about America," said Joshua Olewle, a 27-year-old Political Science Ph.D. candidate from Nairobi, Kenya.

"I was confused in the city. It was much bigger than Nairobi. Moving to southern America was better. In Kenya, I got the impression that all America was urban, but that is not the case. Much of it is sprawling countryside."

Adeniyi, Adewole, and Olewle have many things in common. One, they are all first year graduate students at the University of North Carolina. Two, they all live in Carr Dorm (the International Student Center). Three, they are over 7,000 miles away from home. And four, they all hail from the newly emerging continent of Africa.

They are three of twelve African students enrolled at UNC. The nine others live either in suburban Chapel Hill or Durham.

Adeniyi and Adewole are Nigerians, while Olewle is from the east coast nation of Kenya.

Although, the vastness of the U.S.

shocked them upon their arrival, the American people did not. They had formulated impressions prior to coming from reading U. S. Embassy literature and interacting with American tourists.

"My idea of a typical American was that of a proud, friendly individual. The American way of life is so different than the Nigerian," said Adewole.

"Everyone here is more individual. Back home, we are more compact. We are welded together in an extended family system. Here, the nuclear family system is the rule. I grew up with my paternal grandmother, in a big compound," added Adewole.

Adeniyi also thinks that America has a highly individualistic society which he says results in problems that are unheard of in Nigeria.

"In our compound, when someone has a problem people in the compound can detect it even before he can," he said. "This way, we can solve problems before they begin and we don't have so many people doing irrational things because they think that nobody cares."

He added that the male-female relationship here which is almost equal, especially in the area of intellectual capabilities is different than Nigeria.

Olewle had no pre-conceived characteristics about America before he came to this country.

"In Kenya, there is a lot of interaction between tourists and the people," said Olewle smilingly. "We know what Americans are like."

Two of the students are married—Adeniyi and Olewle—and left their wives and children at home. Adeniyi's wife, Victoria, and his two sons—Tunji and Deji, are coming over to be with him in January.

Olewle has no plans to bring over his wife, Alice, and his daughter, Rose, at the present time.

Adewole, the bachelor of the bunch, taught as an assistant lecturer for two years in psychology at the University of Lagos prior to coming to America.

He also won scholarships to London and Australia. He decided to come to the States because "we have some similarities. In music and dance,

brothers here."

"We don't understand your problems (Black America)," he said. "We have a bad perception of Black America. In most cases, the establishment gives false impressions. I wanted a first hand insight into what's happening."

"I listened to Stokely Carmichael and Jesse Jackson in Nigeria and I was impressed. All that you usually hear on the news is Panthers shooting, and all the bad things like riots. I wanted to see for myself."

One of the things that surprised Adeniyi when he got to America was the relatively low amount of racial tension.

"I was told that the racial tension was quite high in the South. This has been somewhat exaggerated. I was also told that there was no poverty," he added.

"Poverty in America is worse than poverty in Nigeria."

"It is a cost to be poor here. If you are poor in Nigeria, there are many other things to compensate," he continued.

"There's rest bed if you are old. In the compound of our extended family system, you have so many people to help you," he added.

"In America, there is a lack of care for the aged. In Nigeria, there is always a close tie between a child and his parents. The older the parents get, the more dependent they are on their children," he said.

He added that when someone in his compound dies, they celebrate and rejoice because they know that when the person was living they were well taken care of.

He emphasized that in his compound they all share and no one goes hungry.

Of the thirteen African students on campus, seven are from Nigeria, three are from Kenya, and one each from Zaire, Uganda, and Liberia.

Eight are in graduate school and five are in undergraduate school.

Adewole has found that culturally, there's a big gap between Black Americans and their African brethren.

"Culturally, Black Americans are almost white," he said. "They are very individualistic. However, there are

we are together in the way that we relate to it and express ourselves."

Adeniyi agrees that Black Americans are different. He says that they are more individualistic in life styles than their African brothers.

"We are similar in some aspects however," he said. "We both consider large families a virtue."

He sees housing as a problem for the majority of Black Americans.

Olewle sees very little differences between American whites and American blacks.

"In the communities around, all the people live pretty much the same. However in music, we have a common element. Black Americans have the same forcefulness and vigor in their music that we do.

They have been here only a short while, but they have definite opinions on the American political system and President Nixon.

"The American System is perfect to some extent. It is perfect for some people," Adewole said. "The Democratic theory works, but only for a few."

"If I had been asked seven years ago about the American system, I would say something different than now," said Adeniyi.

"It's a mockery of democracy. The power belongs to the people only at election time. It's only the name after the election. Elected people may or may not do the will of the people," he added.

"Politics is an art and the primary objective of any political or political power is to be in power and to return to power for as long as possible and by whatever means," continued Adeniyi.

Olewle finds the American political system interesting and says that he is impressed by the openness of discussion and the involvement of students in government.

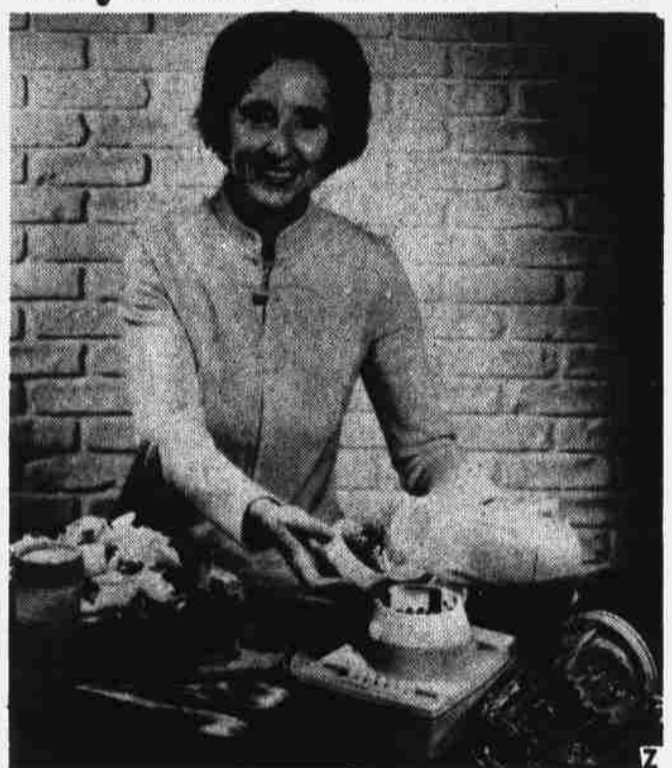
He is the only one of the students that is impressed by President Nixon. "He has impressed me because of his efforts in bridging the gap between the East and West," he said.

"He does not have an international image of Africa as J.F.K. did, but his foreign relations efforts have impressed me."

families in the community. I am not completely happy over our success—there is much room for improvement—I'm leaving the future church to the young bucks. I wanted a male chorus, and you know I didn't come by it the easy way. I am proud of the fellows."

McKinley Cates has been Chairman of the Trustee Board for 30 years; serves with the Senior Usher Board; a member of the Board of the Finance Committee; and, a member of the Deacon Board.

Anytime Is Blender Time



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