

you and your sisters?

- : Well, first of all we were, we were musical singers. Our professor, Professor Fink, he was classical and we did all classical music. And and my daddy liked that but when we started jazz, Papa he oohed, you know ...
- : So he, he wasn't crazy about it.
- : Oh, no, no!
- : How 'bout ...
- : But he, he liked just the classical music because we did too! We did a lot of classical and then we got into the jazz.
- : Did a, were your parents musicians or in the music business?
- : Oh, yeah!
- : They played classical, your ...
- : Yeah. Yeah, Mama and Papa both. Ah, um ...

Interview

Vet Boswell - April 1987

Vet : Yeah! Look, we got ready to sing. Martha always played the piano and I'd say, "Alright Martha, hit the piano." And when she hit that piano, the three of us all together would, it was just three people together! You know, we started singing and ...

Jan : Well, you know, in a few books that mentioned about the Boswell's and about Connie, ah, they they say Connie was the instigator alot.

Vet : Oh, she, Connie was!

Jan : She must've been one of those personalities, huh. A leader personality, is that what she is?

Vet : Yeah, but but Connie loved music. Well all of us loved music. But ah, but ah, Connie was a singer. I, I was what, I always called myself the Pip-squeak. Cause I was the third member, I was the light, you know, way up high

Jan : Um, hum.

Vet : But Connie, Connie could sing anything. And Martha could play anything and Connie could too! So it was, it was a good good threesome. Cause we had nearly everything going. I mean, just from ourselves.

Jan : Um hum.

Darci : Yeah!

Vet : We didn't, we never copied anybody. A lot of people asked us "Well did you copy so and so, did you copy this, copy that?" We said, "No, we never copied anybody. We don't want to copy anybody." We want to do ourselves."

Jan : Well, do you think you got the idea about making some of the sounds, those, the horn sounds or did you get the idea ...

Vet : We used to go, "DA, DA, DA, DA-DA-DAT".

Jan : Yes! (Laughter)

Vet : Yeah!

Jan : I missed it.

Darci : That's great! (Laughter)

Jan : That's what your gonna do! (Much laughter) And, you had a friend that ah, when you were growing up, Emmett Hardy. And he, he, did he help you in any way?

Vet : He, he and Martha fell in love with each other and that was just that nobody else outside knew anything.

Jan : Yeah!

Darci : Yeah!

Jan : Did you, did you , so did he play ah, did he play his horn in your house alot?

Vet : Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Jan : Did you sing with him while he was playing?

Vet : Yeah, but we used to ah, ah I had a saxophone and he had the the the ah, trumpet horn and he used used to come to our house. Oh God, nearly everyday or every evening and we'd, you know, I'd I'd get in there a little bit but not much. I I knew darn well that he preferred that this be Martha and you know, and Emmett. (Laughter)

Jan : And you were the little sister! (Laughter)

Vet : Yeah, I was the little sister!

Darci : (Laughter) And you were the intruder!

Vet : He didn't care for children even his his own sister's, he didn't like. (Laughter)

Darci : When you were starting out that, how many hours were you singing together a day?

Jan : Were you, you know, in some of the books there's not a lot of books yet that talk about the Boswell's and about Connie.

But

the few that do, they still they'll say well Connie ah, she thought, she sortof did a lot of the arrangements whether it was in her head or if she ...

Vet : Yes, she did.

Jan : ... would you. Did she do a lot of them?

Vet : Yeah. See we, we were the three people together and and ah, ah not only one to make up an arrangement but we made up a good arrangement. Then we'd say, "Wait a minute, Martha's got the best arrangement now!" So let's switch and go someplace else that we we, with Martha's, would do Martha's first and then we'd, you know, find some other ah songs or whatnot to do.

Jan : Uh hum.

Vet : Yeah. So there's a lot of, lot of people that ah, that only have ah ah small ah ah amount of voicing for their, for their ah production.

Jan : Um hum.

Vet : For the three of us, we would we would er er, we would not make-up ah ah, I would say to Martha, Connie would say to me, "Come on Vet , let's do this. You take F Sharp or you take this," and whatnot. And we'd all get together and it would turn out pretty good. If it didn't, we would just start all over.

Jan : Um hum.

Vet : Oh, we spent, we spent many nights with our eyes half, half closed.

Jan : When ah, when you became popular did ah agents and and recording producers, did they tend to tell you more "Well we don't want you to sing it this way. We want you to sing it our way". Did they ever do that to you?

Vet : Yes, they did. And we, when we came up with it we sang our way and they came over and said, "That was wonderful". I said, "I know, but don't tell us anymore how to sing! Now, this is it! That's the way we feel!" So we never did get anybody else to tell us not to sing a certain way!

Jan : Because Connie I notice again ah, that she on a, one of the record jackets and record covers, she said ...

Vet : Jack, Jack Kapp was the guy that used to always tell us to "sing the music just the way its written." We said, "We don't want that way!" He kept after us until finally we convinced him that we didn't work at it that way and this is the way we were singing. Which became very popular!

Darci : Did, was there ever a back flash though? I mean, did he ever say, "Okay, well I'm not going ah actually release this. They'll sing it the way they want but I won't actually release it.

Vet : Oh, he said that a couple of times, said that a couple of times. But we went right on the way through.

Darci : Yep, yeah.

Vet : It wouldn't stop us. So he finally, we finally convinced him that this, 'cause so many people around us, I mean, all the musicians and everything. They knew what we were doing. But, Jack didn't know. He was only a guy that that, ah owned this ah, this ah

Jan : ... the record company.

Jan : So, do you, you know, Connie, when I read about Connie's talking about these record ah producers like Jack Maped, she said sometimes ah I think I remember her saying we had to fight ah tooth and nail or blood and tears ...

Vet : You're right!

Jan : ... she said to get, to get what we want recorded. And another time, I read were she said ah something that you know sometimes they wouldn't let us record what we wanted. We would sing it in the clubs but we really didn't get to record it on record. Do you remember that?

Vet : Yeah. Well they, they er er, on on some of the records they didn't want us to do it but we did enough. We we continued with our our our version of this particular music and all the people around the, around the um, music hall, they all were on our side so Jack Maped didn't have a foot to stand on. He really didn't!

Darci : But what was his reasoning anyway? What could he possibly, why didn't he, what didn't he want you to do?

Vet : He was one of these one of these ump du dum dum boys!
(Laughter)

Jan : Yeah! (Laughter)

Darci : Okay, to be ... (Laughter)

Vet : He didn't have jazz or real feeling in his whole body. He just knew that that somebody wrote some music and he was going to make us sing it. But we didn't do that!

Jan : Yeah, yeah! But, ...

Vet : 'Cause I know, I know all the all the music people in New York. My God, they came when, they always came over and, they'd send us flowers for singing.

Jan : Um hum.

Vet : It would be just our our version, you know, or our type of singing with the music that they they had ah, you know, sheet music.

Jan : They did. Well, I think I read too, that the three of you, when you would sing together, you'd get pretty close together and sing.

Vet : Oh yeah. But, Connie, Connie ...

Jan : So you could hear one another?

Vet : Martha would sit at the piano, Connie would sit on the the piano seat at the edge, and I would be over their shoulders.

Darci : I see!

Vet : And I got news, you never heard any kids that had broken shoulders like they had cause I had my hand on their shoulders and if they started to do anything or else make a mistake, I'd squeeze it. (Laughter) I'd squeeze their shoulders. I was mean. I'd squeeze them. (Laughter) But, because music is music to me.

Darci : So you, so you're like, even though you were the youngest you were almost like the mother of this group.

Vet : I was!

Jan : You had to keep them in line, huh?

Vet : Yeah, because sometimes they'd get to giggling. I didn't mind if the giggled a little bit but when you start to giggle and you got a theater full of people out there that's when the hands come to stop it. (Laughter)

Jan : Is that the way that when you would perform for the, for in a concert or in a show, is that the position that you would usually take? Would you three ...

Vet : Yeah, I I always stood. Martha sat at the piano and Connie sat next to Martha at the piano. So, I had both of them. See! (Laughter)

Jan : Yeah!

Vet : Martha had the piano here. It wouldn't be a long piano but it moved back big enough for Connie to, Martha would be here and Connie would sit here. When I was in between, they didn't, they never forgot me. I'd be right there with my hands on their shoulders though. I'd squeeze them. (Laughter)

Jan : That's what you normally, you said you you always thought of yourself as always singing the high part. Is that normally what you sang is the top voice.

Vet : Well, I would sing, I would sing the ah the higher part than Martha and Connie. Connie has a very low voice and since Martha had even a lower voice than Connie. Well, I had the highest voice.

Jan : So, so, you never really ever switched down and sang the middle voice.

Vet : Oh, I would if if if the music depended on it. I could I could hit up a high note but I could also slide right down to it, the little note.

Jan : So, cause I think in your music didn't you, all of you, a lot of times cross voices. You might be singing high then in the next measure maybe you'd come down.

Vet : Yeah, we did. We did, yeah, we crossed over. I don't know where we got but we crossed it. (Laughter)

Jan : How was it ah like for you to tour with ah Paul Whiteman?

Vet : Oh, he was a doll! He was a doll! You know, he'd he really liked the three of us. We got together all the time. We were always together. We'd have breakfast together, lunch together, we'd have dinner together 'cause we're all in that same circle.

Jan : And you performed with his orchestra?

Vet : Well, we we did for a while but then he had the ah Rhythm Boys. And we didn't want to miss up their things, you know, singing. So, we, we would only come in once in a while. Or mostly, we stayed right out of that ah, that Paul Whiteman thing. Because they had the Rhythm Boys and there wasn't any sense of us being in there. We'd come on our own.

Jan : But you went to ah, in London, to London, appeared in London with Paul Whiteman. Is that ...

Vet : Yeah, I think , I think it was Paul that went to London with us.

Jan : Um, hum.

Vet : Oh, they liked us. They didn't know what we were singing but they liked us. (Laughter) because we used to use a lot of gibberish, you know. We'd sing in gibberish.