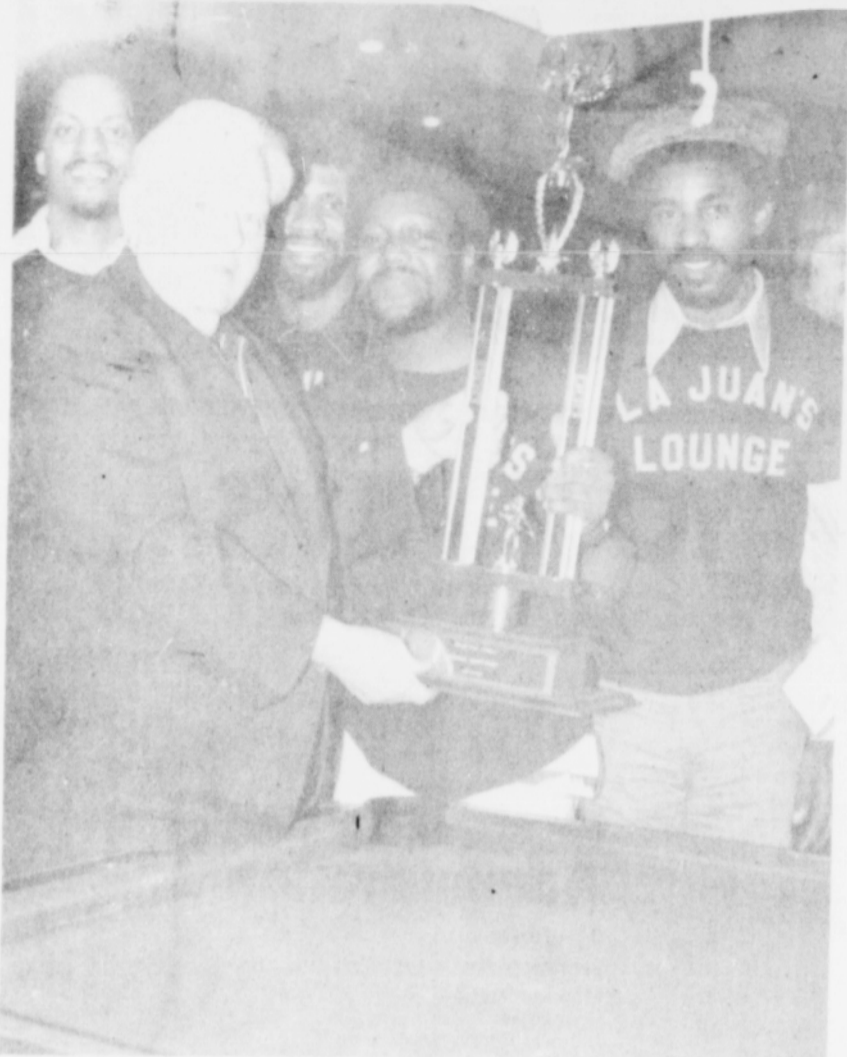


ENTERTAINMENT

HAPPENINGS

ENTERTAINMENT



Busch Pool League Commissioner Minnesota Fats presents the second place trophy to captain Andrew Williams (Center) following the finals of the recent Busch Pool League National Championship in St. Louis. La Juan's lost 4-3 to another St. Louis team, "The Place II," in the finals of the 25-team national championship tournament, held at the Bel-Air Hilton Hotel. Other players celebrating the second-place finish and \$2,000 in prize money include (background, left to right) Charles Milliner, Sam Bailey and James Shelton.

SINGING CAREER BEGAN IN CHURCH

The McCrary siblings, as so many other groups, began singing in church, and their music to this day reflects their spiritualness. They have come a long way since those days in their Youngstown, Ohio, choir, having firmly established themselves in gospel, R&B and dance music, and now the McCrarys are expanding their territory into the pop field with their Capitol debut, *Just For You*.

Born into a family of ten, Alfred, Charity, Howard, Linda and Sam McCrary were introduced to music by their father, and rehearsals often took place at home whenever they could squeeze in a few bars. "We use to practice singing while we were washing dishes," remembers Howard. "Sam was the eldest, so he was sort of the supervisor."

The group appeared on the *Ted Mack Amateur Hour* television program and made the finals, a feat which whetted their collective appetite to become professional performers. "It did a lot for our morale," indicates Alfred. "Being on national TV at that point helped launch our desire."

They toured the U.S. and Canada with several choir groups, but they were desirous of a career of their own. Owing to this, a decision was made to move the entire family to Los Angeles so that their door would be more readily available when opportunity came knocking. Just in case, they continued to work crusades with Oral Roberts and Billy Graham.

Finally, in 1972, they were offered a record contract and released *Sunshine Day* on Light Records. Although the music was gospel, the quintet found that they were constantly adding more and more showmanship in their live concerts. "We have a concept that we could do a combination of message music with upgraded showmanship," says Alfred. "That opened doors for us because we became very successful at it."

They made several guest appearances on television and went on USO tours of Alaska and the Far East before recording their first secular album, *Emerge*, on the Catseye label in 1975. In the wake of the LP, the McCrarys decided, of all things, to break up.

"We'd been together since we were kids," says Charity, "and we needed to develop our private lives a little more."



THE MCCRARYS

"Actually, it was a very significant period for us," adds Alfred, "because we still had a lot of determination while we were apart. We all remained very active writing and doing sessions."

Charity and Linda found themselves doing background vocals on such records as Stevie Wonder's *Song In The Key Of Live*, Thelma Houston's "Don't Leave Me This Way" and on several Diana Ross sessions.

Alfred, meanwhile, had taken a job as a staffwriter at Island Music. "I really got into writing at that point," he says. "It was my only outlet."

One day he brought a batch of songs in and the publisher asked whom he thought should record them. Without hesitation Alfred took it upon himself to announce that the McCrarys were available.

The singing McCrarys (says Howard, who had other interests to attend to temporarily) gladly reunited to record *Loving Is Living*, which spawned a Top 10 R&B, Top 40 pop charts single, "You" featuring Stevie Wonder playing harmonica.

National tours with Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis and the *Dramatics* ensued, and the McCrarys recorded a follow-up LP, *One The Other Side*, which was more dance-music oriented, in 1978. They supported it with a major tour accompanying the *Jacksons*.

Last year the McCrarys hooked up with producer Patrick Henderson (best noted for his work on the Doobie Brothers' *Minute By Minute* LP and for co-producing Amy Holland's LP with Doobie Mike McDonald), who brought a dose of his pop sensibilities to *Just For You*. "Patrick incorporated that element of surprise," notes Alfred. "He added that well-rounded appeal."

Another welcome surprise for the family is the official return of Howard who plays keyboards and harmonica on the new album and shares in the songwriting and lead singing. "I am truly overjoyed to be back," enthuses Howard. "I believe that everything has its perfect timing and this just happens to be it."

"We have a message," he continues, "and it is that loving is living. That is a universal concept of human belief. Love is the only truth. It transcends all races, colors and religious beliefs."

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