

## Mp3 The Bell Sisters - Rarities



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Tightly-harmonized pop music from sister duo of the 1950s. 31 MP3 Songs POP: 50's Pop, EASY LISTENING: Crooners/Vocals Details: The Bell Sisters (Cynthia Strother, 16, and Kay Strother, 11) were discovered Halloween night, October 31, 1951, singing "Bermuda" on an L.A. TV show called "Peter Potter's Search for a Song." Their subsequent fame was immediate; the song Cynthia wrote was picked up that night by a music publisher who was a judge of the evening's amateur compositions. Within a week, the young duo cut a demo in Hollywood for Henri Rene, then West Coast A&R man for RCA Records. Mr. Rene liked the girls' self-arranged harmonies so much, he decided they should record for RCA. The girls were hurried back into the studio and on November 12 recorded "Bermuda" (with an arrangement by Henri Rene). Because it was common then for many artists to release the same song, the Bells' recording of "Bermuda" was rushed through the RCA pressing plant. By March 1952, "Bermuda" reached #7 on the Billboard charts and eventually sold over 1,000,000 copies. Cynthia and Kay, adopting their mother's maiden name of Bell for their act, enjoyed a rollercoaster ride of success, eventually releasing eleven records (22 songs) for RCA and hitting the charts with "Wheel of Fortune" (#10) and "Hambone" (with Phil Harris and charting at #19). They appeared on radio and television programs including the Johnny Carson Show, the Colgate Comedy Hour, the Frank Sinatra Show, the Perry Como Show and the Dinah Shore Show. They appeared 14 times with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope and opened for Nat King Cole in Los Angeles. They took their act on the road (during school breaks) and performed in New York, Montreal, Dallas, Maryland, Las Vegas and Reno. They earned up to \$4,500 per week, which was an unheard of sum to these teens. They shared stages with the greats: Kay Starr, Rosemary Clooney, Lucille Ball, Tony Curtis, Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, Mel Torme. They even toured Korea (in 1953 and 1954) for the USO. Kay, only 13 on their first tour, was the youngest performer ever to

tour with the USO. One of their biggest thrills was making movies for Columbia ("Cruisin' Down the River"), Paramount ("Those Redheads from Seattle") and Universal ("Les Brown Goes to Town," a B&W film short). One of the songs they released for RCA was "Take Back Your Gold," an abbreviated version of the song they performed in "Those Redheads." After their peak in 1952-1954, the Bell Sisters continued to perform around the U.S. at state fairs and charity telethons for several years. They were excellent a capella singers and were popular at military hospitals and bases, where they had to perform without a band. Eventually, the girls lost interest in performing and being "stars." Cynthia and Kay both settled down to raise their respective families - Cynthia went on to teach swimming to handicapped children and adults; Kay became an elementary school teacher. They look back on their career as Bell Sisters as one phase in their very active, full lives. The song "Bermuda," their biggest hit, still earns royalties for Cynthia over 55 years later. It appeared in the 1996 Gramercy film, "Grace of My Heart."

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