

The Southern Gospel Music Association announced March 17 at Dollywood its Southern Gospel Music Hall of Fame inductees for 2009.

"We are honored to add these great musical servants to a very elite group of people who have made Southern Gospel music known around the world," said Dr. Jim Goff, SGMA Induction Committee chairman. "Without their contributions it is safe to say our music would have reached fewer ears and affected fewer hearts and lives. Without them our industry would have been much smaller in its reach."

The 2009 SGMA class of inductees includes: Neil Enloe, Ed Hill, Harold Lane, Don Light, Bill Lyles, Elizabeth "Lady" Mull, Billy Todd, and Charlie Waller.

The official induction ceremony will occur as part of the festivities of SGMA Day, Oct. 7, 2009.

"I know the inductees, their families, fans and friends will be pleased to hear of this honor," said Charlie Waller, SGMA executive director. "We will certainly be planning an outstanding induction ceremony this year."

The day generally features a fun-filled day of concerts, dinner and the induction of the 2009 Southern Gospel Music Hall of Fame newest members.

For more information, or to obtain tickets call (865) 908-4040.

The Southern Gospel Music Association is a non-profit organization that maintains the Southern Gospel Museum and Hall of Fame, the only facility honoring this genre of music, for the historic preservation of the accomplishments of the music and its people. Museum hours match those of Dollywood. Donations are tax-deductible. For more information about the museum or its inductees, visit www.sgma.org.

Tidbits about this year's honorees (Courtesy SGMA Hall of Fame):

Neil Enloe

Southern Gospel performer and songwriter Neil Enloe was destined to become one of the most influential through his more than 40 years with the Couriers based in Harrisburg, Penn. The group pioneered Southern gospel in the urban centers of the east and Canada. The group was one of the first regular groups on the "Gospel Singing Jubilee." Over the course of his career, from one of the quartet's founding members in 1957 to his retirement in 2000, Enloe sang lead, played piano, and arranged the majority of the group's music. Along the way, the Couriers became one of the best-known and most respected groups in Southern Gospel. Several of his songs have become standards, most notably "Statue of Liberty," the Dove Award

winning song from 1976.

Ed Hill

Baritone singer Ed Hill currently performs with the Stamps Quartet. The minister's son started singing at 15 with Humble Hearts, and later the Prophets Quartet. Ed and The Prophets become regulars on the "Gospel Singing Caravan" television series. After Ed retired The Prophets, he joined Hovie Lister and The Statesmen and later with J.D. Sumner of the Stamps Quartet. Ed, along with The Stamps were permanent members of the Elvis Presley Show until Presley's death in 1977. Ed was instrumental in the assisting numerous young gospel artists. When Sumner reorganized the Stamps Quartet from his existing Master's V group, and Ed returned.

Harold Lane

Harold is a singer, songwriter, musician and arranger whose career in, and contributions to, Gospel Music have spanned the past 55 years. Lane formed the Gospel Harmony Boys, a professional group that continues to minister still today—55 years later. That quartet began one of America's first Gospel Music TV shows in 1953 that played every Sunday for over 17 years. The Gospel Harmony Boys became the very first quartet to ever appear on "The Today Show" with Dave Garraway in 1956. He also performed with Conner Hall and the Homeland Harmony Quartet only to return to the Gospel Harmony Boys in 1957. He began writing early in his music career and authored many songs sung by the great quartets of the day including the Statesmen, The Blackwoods, Wally Fowler and the Oak Ridge Quartet and many others. He joined the Speer Family in 1967 replacing Dad Speer. The Speer's recording of Harold's best known composition; "I'm Standing on the Solid Rock" holds the record for being the Singing News #1 song for the longest period of time. Another of Harold's great songs, "What Sins Are You Talking About" reached an esteemed level of notoriety as the theme song for a National Network TV show, "The Hitchhiker" during the 1990's.

Don Light

He began his career as a Grand Ole Opry drummer and general manager of Billboard Magazine's Nashville office, secured his place in gospel music history by launching the first booking agency for gospel music artists. Don Light Talent launched with the Happy Goodman Family and the Oak Ridge Boys in 1965, soon adding to the roster the Chuck Wagon Gang, Governor Jimmie Davis, The Florida Boys, the Lewis Family, the Rex Nelon Singers, the Cathedral Quartet, the Singing Rambos, Wendy Bagwell and the Sunliters, the Thrasher Brothers and others. Over the years, Light added independent record producer and artist manager to his biography, producing more than 50 albums and discovering and managing a diverse roster of artists such as Jimmy Buffet, Delbert McClinton, Keith Whitley, Steve Wariner, Marty Stuart, Mark Collie, the Oak Ridge Boys and others. Light was one of the original organizers of the GMA and served on both the GMA and Country Music Association and served on the CMA Board of Directors for a number of years.

James William "Bill" Lyles 1920-1954

Bass vocalist Bill Lyles is considered one of the industry's greatest voices. He performed with the Hamilton County Quartet near Chattanooga, Tennessee, and the famous Swanee River Boys. He rose to national prominence as the bass singer for the Blackwood Brothers Quartet

reaching new heights of popularity starring on national television, charting in Billboard magazine, and recording exclusively on the RCA label. Lyles was killed when a plane piloted by fellow quartet member R.W. Blackwood crashed in Clanton, Ala. on June 30, 1954.

Elizabeth "Lady" Mull

Best known as "Mizz Mull" or "Lady Mull" to listeners of the "Mull Singing Convention." The wife of the late Rev. J. Bazzel Mull co-hosted the landmark television broadcasts. She and her husband appeared on radio stations throughout the country and owned numerous stations including WJBZ, Praise 96.3, in Knoxville. The couple promoted gospel music concerts throughout the Southeast and published a successful church songbook series. Mull fulfilled an integral part of the "Mull Singing Convention of the Air" being her late husband eyes who was blinded at 11 months old. They were inseparable for more than 60 years.

Billy Todd

Bass singer Billy Todd performed 12 years with the Dixie Echoes of Pensacola Fla. After returning to his singing career after serving as principal at Berean Christian School in Pensacola. Todd came to that job after leaving an illustrious gospel music career behind as a member of The Florida Boys from the 1958-1972. He sang with his family at the age of eight, the Freewill Four, Sylacauga Melody Boys and even in a barbershop quartet along with Jim Nabors, "Gomer Pyle" from "The Andy Griffith Show." He is a member of the Gospel Music Hall of Fame with the Florida Boys and received the Grand Ole Gospel Reunion Living Legend Award.

Charlie Waller

The colorful concert promoter, singer, and producer Charlie Waller works tirelessly to preserve and promote Southern Gospel Music. He currently serves as the Executive Director of the Southern Gospel Music Association located at Dollywood. His Grand Ole Gospel Reunion, held each year in Greenville, SC., was created to be a showcase for traditional Southern Gospel Music and has become a mega-event. As a part of this event, Waller was the first to do a "Reunion" style video. He promoted his first Southern Gospel concert in 1971, in of all places, New Orleans, La. He formed the Southern Gospel Music Association of Georgia which eventually became the Southern Gospel Music Guild. He owns a very large private collection of Southern Gospel memorabilia including a number of Statesmen and Blackwood Brothers microphones and vintage video transferred from early film and kinescope. He was a Top Five nominee for the SGMA Video of the Year Award for his video, "A Tribute to Wendy Bagwell." His latest video project is "Hovie's Finale." Waller has done much to bring the legends of gospel music before a new, younger audience.