

**NIGHT  
TRAIN  
TO  
NASHVILLE  
THE GREATEST  
UNTOLD STORY  
OF MUSIC CITY  
PAULA BLACKMAN**

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

*Night Train to Nashville*

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# CHARACTERS

## MAIN CHARACTERS

<b>E. Gab “Blackie” Blackman</b>	WLAC sales manager
<b>Christine “Tee” Blackman</b>	Gab’s wife
<b>Eddie Blackman</b>	Gab and Christine’s son
<b>Susan “Gayle” Blackman</b>	Gab and Christine’s daughter
<b>Anne Duff Blackman</b>	Eddie’s wife
<b>William Sousa “Sou” Bridgeforth</b>	New Era Club owner
<b>Helen “Funny” Bridgeforth</b>	Sou’s wife
<b>Harriett Gail Bridgeforth</b>	Sou and Helen’s daughter
<b>James “Mister Jimmy” Stahlman</b>	<i>Nashville Banner</i> newspaper owner
<b>William “Hoss” Allen</b>	WLAC disc jockey
<b>Nancy Allen</b>	Hoss’s wife
<b>Cecil Rogan Allen</b>	Hoss’s mother
<b>Mamie Allen</b>	Hoss’s grandmother
<b>Gene Nobles</b>	WLAC disc jockey
<b>John “John R” Richbourg</b>	WLAC news announcer / disc jockey
<b>Lillian “Lilli” Richbourg</b>	John’s first wife
<b>Margaret Richbourg</b>	John’s second wife
<b>Albert “Shorty” Banks</b>	Sou’s business partner
<b>Katherine “Kat” Nuble</b>	Sou’s mistress / New Era Club waitress
<b>Mayor Ben West</b>	former <i>Nashville Banner</i> employee/ Nashville mayor
<b>Governor Frank Clement</b>	Tennessee governor

<b>Z. Alexander Looby</b>	civil rights attorney/activist
<b>J. Carlton Loser</b>	district attorney
<b>James Edwards</b>	Tennessee State Prison warden

## **WLAC MINOR CHARACTERS**

<b>J. Truman Ward</b>	station owner
<b>F. C. Sowell</b>	general manager
<b>David Binns</b>	station engineer
<b>Paul Oliphant</b>	program director
<b>Tom Baker</b>	former sales manager
<b>Herman Grizzard</b>	news and sports announcer/disc jockey
<b>Jimmy Ward</b>	Truman's son
<b>Hugh "Baby" Jarrett</b>	disc jockey
<b>Guilford Dudley</b>	L & C board member
<b>Paul Mountcastle</b>	L & C board member
<b>Randy Wood</b>	advertiser
<b>Ernie Young</b>	advertiser
<b>John Cheek</b>	car dealer advertiser
<b>John Sloan</b>	department store advertiser
<b>Fred Harvey</b>	department store advertiser
<b>Sam Moore</b>	Bible advertiser
<b>Sam Phillips</b>	record producer/former WLAC employee
<b>Mary Elizabeth Hicks</b>	staff musician/vocalist
<b>Jordon Stokes</b>	attorney
<b>Don Whitehead</b>	news announcer

## **NEW ERA CLUB MINOR CHARACTERS**

<b>Christine “Kitty” Kittrell</b>	New Era Club vocalist
<b>Ted Jarrett</b>	New Era Club house musician/ composer/producer
<b>Edward “Skippy” Brooks</b>	house band leader
<b>Clarence “Gatemouth” Brown</b>	house band leader
<b>Nathan Bellamy</b>	club manager
<b>Wilma Jean</b>	Kat Nuble’s daughter

## **NASHVILLE BANNER CHARACTERS**

<b>Jack Phillips</b>	salesman
<b>Fritz Stahlman</b>	assistant secretary
<b>Dick Battle</b>	reporter
<b>Charlie Moss</b>	managing editor
<b>Robert Churchwell</b>	reporter
<b>John Malone</b>	photographer
<b>Ann Stahlman</b>	Jimmy’s daughter

## **STUDENT PROTEST MOVEMENT CHARACTERS**

<b>James Lawson</b>	activist leader
<b>Rev. Kelly Miller Smith</b>	adviser
<b>Rev. C. T. Vivian</b>	adviser
<b>Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.</b>	adviser
<b>Paul LaPrad</b>	student protester
<b>Diane Nash</b>	student protester
<b>John Lewis</b>	student protester
<b>Guy Carawan</b>	musician

## TIME LINE OF EVENTS

### 1922

Gab starts working full-time for the Castner-Knott department store  
Truman Ward buys WLAC radio

### 1925

Sou moves to Nashville  
The Grand Ole Opry broadcast debuts on WSM radio in Nashville  
WLAC receives its radio broadcast license

### 1931

Gab goes to work at the *Nashville Banner*

### 1933

Nineteen-year-old Cordie Creek is lynched in Columbia, Tennessee

### 1934

Sou opens a pool hall on Charlotte Avenue

### 1936

Sou opens his first New Era Club adjacent to the pool hall

### 1941

Sou relocates the New Era Club to Fourth Avenue North

### 1943

Hoss Allen enlists in the army

## 1944

John Richbourg leaves WLAC temporarily for the navy  
Sam Phillips is hired as John's temporary replacement

## 1945

Black caddies from the Richland, Woodmont, and Belle Meade country  
clubs build a golf course under the Cleveland Street viaduct

## 1946

John Richbourg returns from the navy  
Columbia Race Riot—Black residents fight back after James Stephenson and  
his mother are victims of racism; this event becomes the opening salvo in  
the civil rights movement  
Gab arrives at WLAC radio; Gene Nobles begins broadcasting race records  
B.B. King leaves Indianola, Mississippi, for Beale Street in Memphis  
Hoss Allen returns home from the army  
Nashville civic leaders' proposal to build a city auditorium to replace the  
slums fails

## 1947

Sister Rosetta Tharp discovers Little Richard in Macon, Georgia

## 1948

Hoss Allen stars in the title role of *Othello* at Vanderbilt, resulting in his winning  
a scholarship to a prestigious summer stock theater in New England  
WLAC radio applies for television broadcast license  
Hoss gets part-time clerical job at new station WMAK

## 1949

Christine Blackman is elected head of the Nashville Council of Church  
Women  
Gab hires Hoss Allen  
City passes auditorium bond referendum  
B.B. King debuts on Memphis station WDIA

## 1950

Sam Phillips opens a recording studio in Memphis  
Robert Churchwell joins the *Nashville Banner*  
Sixteen-year-old James Brown sent to prison  
Eighteen-year-old Hal Hebb wounded in Korea

## 1951

B.B. King's "3 O'Clock Blues" reaches #1 on R & B chart  
Sam Phillips records Ike Turner's masterpiece "Rocket 88"  
Sou buys the Birmingham Black Barons  
Ben West elected mayor of Nashville  
Sou turns in his federal gambling tax stamp

## 1952

Thirty-two-year-old Frank Clement elected governor of Tennessee  
Truman Ward sells WLAC back to Life and Casualty Insurance Company  
James Brown is released from prison  
Christine Kittrell records "Just Sittin' Here Drinkin'"  
University of Mississippi students vote Gene Nobles favorite deejay  
Big Mama Thornton records "Hound Dog"

## 1953

Sam Phillips records Johnny Bragg and the Prisonaires  
Gab's nephew Buddy is killed in a plane crash  
FCC awards WLAC a television broadcast license  
Hoss Allen begins weekday *Top Five* broadcast

## 1954

Supreme Court issues *Brown v. Board* ruling  
Sou hires Charley Pride as pitcher for Black Barons  
Kitty Kittrell and Little Richard record "Lord Have Mercy" at the New Era  
Frank Clement reelected governor  
Sou indicted on federal gambling tax statute  
Sam Phillips records Elvis Presley's first hit, "That's All Right"  
Ray Charles records "I Got a Woman"

## 1955

City auditorium forces relocation of New Era Club to Twelfth and Charlotte

WLAC creates radio's first self-censorship board

Hall Hebb joins the Prisonaires

Hoss meets his mistress, Della Reese

John Richbourg's wife abandons her family

Sou is convicted on federal tax statutes, files appeal

Little Richard records "Tutti Frutti"

James Brown works as Little Richard's understudy/replacement singer

Rosa Parks is arrested for refusing to yield her bus seat

## 1956

Sou acquitted on appeal

Hoss Allen debuts James Brown's hit record, "Please, Please, Please"

Triple zero bet breaks numbers bankers

B.B. King performs 342 gigs during the calendar year

Little Richard, Fats Domino, and others perform at first interracial concert  
in Tennessee

Little Richard records Royal Crown Hairdressing commercial

## 1957

Court-ordered school integration brings violent protests

Hattie Cotton Elementary School bombed

Jewish Community Center bombed

Life and Casualty tower opens

John Lewis enters Nashville's American Baptist Theological Seminary

## 1958

James Lawson begins weekly civil rights lectures for college students

## 1959

Hoss takes over for Gene Nobles

Johnny Bragg pardoned by Governor Clement

Payola bribery scandal ensnares WLAC deejays

## 1960

Nashville college students protest segregation at downtown lunch counters  
Hoss and John R charged in payola scandal  
Z. Alexander Looby's home bombed  
Confronted by student protestors, Mayor West capitulates  
Nashville becomes first Southern city to desegregate its public spaces  
Martin Luther King Jr. speaks to Nashville's student protestors  
Johnny Bragg arrested  
Gab fires Hoss for payola scandal misbehavior

## 1961

Hoss hired as southern sales representative for Chess Records  
Gab hires Hugh Jarrett as Hoss's replacement  
Kat Nuble's daughter's death causes fallout, breakup of Sou's marriage  
Jimi Hendrix arrives at nearby Fort Campbell

## 1962

Gab advises John to create and sell a scrapbook to resolve financial issues;  
*Soul Book* sells one hundred thousand copies.  
Gab is honored with sales award for implementing a strategy to correct  
payola issues  
Jimi Hendrix meets New Era Club musicians at Clarksville's Pink Poodle Club  
Student civil rights protests resume; fifteen-year-old Ella Bigham knocked  
unconscious by police  
City auditorium attracts acts formerly seen at the New Era Club

## 1963

Nashville switches from city government to municipal government  
Martin Luther King Jr. delivers "I Have a Dream" speech during the March  
on Washington  
President Kennedy addresses civil rights during speech at Vanderbilt  
Etta James records "Etta Rocks the House" at the New Era Club  
Gab fires Hugh Jarrett, rehires Hoss; Gab implements a monitoring system  
known as "Blackie's Bible"

Gab advertises Bible created by door-to-door salesman Sam Moore  
President Kennedy assassinated  
Hal Hebb murdered; Hal's brother, Bobby, composes "Sunny"

## 1964

Noble Blackwell creates variety show *Night Train* for WLAC-TV; Jackie  
Shane and Jimi Hendrix appear  
Cassius Clay/Muhammad Ali holds court at New Era Club

## 1965

Nancy divorces Hoss  
Hoss creates *Night Train*-type musical variety show, *The !!!! Beat*

## 1966

Otis Redding replaces Hoss as emcee of final *The !!!! Beat* after Hoss becomes  
inebriated  
After police crackdown on numbers runners, process server James Utley is  
wounded and his four-year-old daughter, Antoinette, is murdered

## 1967

Police raid Sou's package store, confiscate his entire liquor inventory  
Stahlman tries to prevent Martin Luther King Jr. and Stokely Carmichael  
from speaking at Vanderbilt; riots follow  
Nashville civic leaders reroute the planned construction of I-40 in order to  
demolish Jefferson Street, home to 80 percent of the city's colored-owned  
businesses

## 1968

Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated  
Gab hires first Black newscaster on a national network, Don Whitehead  
James Brown records "Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud"

## 1969

Nashville's Black business district bulldozed to make way for a freeway

Former governor Frank Clement is killed in a car accident

Jimi Hendrix performs at Woodstock

John Richbourg discovers Joe Simon, produces Joe's #1 hit, "The Chokin' Kind"

James Brown performs at Nashville civic auditorium; John R honors him as  
the bestselling R & B musician of 1969

## **1970**

Hoss is charged with second-degree murder following a deadly car crash

Johnny Bragg sent to prison for third time

Hoss tapes his radio programs from a home studio

## **1971**

Hoss enters Cumberland Heights rehab center

Judge dismisses Hoss's murder charges

B.B. King wins first Grammy award for "The Thrill Is Gone"

Aretha Franklin and Stevie Wonder perform in concert at Fisk University

Johnny Bragg receives third pardon

## **1972**

Life and Casualty Insurance hires consultants who advise a switch to Top 40;

Gab and John R oppose the program change

Hoss changes his format to *Early Morning Gospel Hour*

## **1973**

John Richbourg retires in protest to format change

Gab hires Spider Harrison, first Black deejay on WLAC as John R's  
replacement

Gab retires in protest to Top 40 format change



Photo by Norris Collins.

Gab Blackman, Faye Emerson, Christine Blackman, and Bill "Hoss" Allen on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1953 at Hermitage Hotel.



Gab with Black caddies at the Woodmont Country Club.



John Richbourg, Don Whitehead, and James Brown on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 1970 at the Nashville Civic Auditorium.



Christine and Gab Blackman at the 1968 Grammy Awards.



Helen and Sou Bridgeforth circa 1946.



Photo courtesy of Harriett Bridgeforth Jordan.  
Sou Bridgeforth and Ted Acklen  
circa 1947 at the New Era Club.

Photo courtesy of Harriett Bridgeforth Jordan.



Gab and Christine Blackman  
with grandchildren Paula, Brett,  
and Cris circa 1968 in Nashville.

Photo by Dr. Price Duff.



WLAC Nauta Line, the Gab Blackman  
family in July 1969 at Old Hickory Lake.

Photo by Ed Blackman.



Gab at a retirement party with Bill "Hoss" Allen, Gene Nobles, Don Whitehead, and Spider Harrison in September 1973.

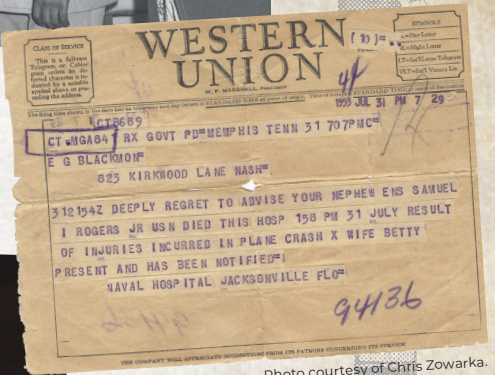


Photo courtesy of Chris Zowarka.  
1953 telegram.

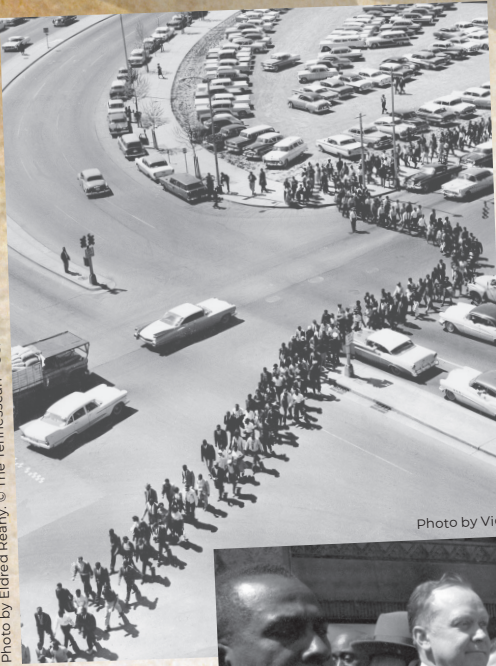


Gab Blackman with Baby Chicks supplier Mrs. J. Carter, circa 1947.



Perplexed little boy stands before wreckage of Hattie Cotton School in Nashville on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1957.

Photo by Bill Preston. © The Tennessean - USA TODAY NETWORK.



Students March to Tennessee State Capital on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1960.

Photo by Vic Cooley. Courtesy of the Nashville Public Library Special Collection.



Mayor Ben West, Reverend C.T. Vivian, and Diane Nash on the Nashville courthouse steps on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1960.



Injured student Ewingella Bigam at segregation student protest on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 1963 at 6th Avenue, Nashville.

Photo by Jack Gunther. Courtesy of the Nashville Public Library Special Collection.



Hell's Half Acre  
circa 1950 at  
Capitol Hill,  
Nashville.

Photo courtesy of the Metro Archives, Nashville Public Library.



Hell's Half Acre  
circa 1950 at  
Capitol Hill,  
Nashville.

Photo courtesy of the Metro Archives, Nashville Public Library.



Colored YMCA  
Circa 1961 @ 4th  
Avenue North,  
Nashville.

Photo courtesy of the Tennessee State Library.





Harriett Bridgeforth Jordan circa 1955.

Photo courtesy of Harriett Bridgeforth Jordan.

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Gab Blackman at  
WLAC microphone  
on September 20<sup>th</sup>,  
1960, Nashville.

Photo courtesy of Harriett Bridgeforth Jordan.



Sou Bridgeforth  
golfing circa 1950.

**NEW ERA CLUB**  
 ENTERTAINMENT NIGHTLY NO COVER CHARGE



*Nashville's Finest*

WM. SOU BRIDGEFORTH, *Proprietor* 415½ Fourth Avenue, North  
 E. J. BANKS, *Manager* Nashville, Tenn.

Photo courtesy of Harriett Bridgeforth Jordan.

New Era Club—Nashville's Finest—with Sou Bridgeforth circa 1940.



Anne Duff Blackman, Eddie Blackman, Christine and Gab Blackman, Dr. and Mrs. Price Duff in August 1956 in Nashville.



L&C Tower in downtown Nashville on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1962.

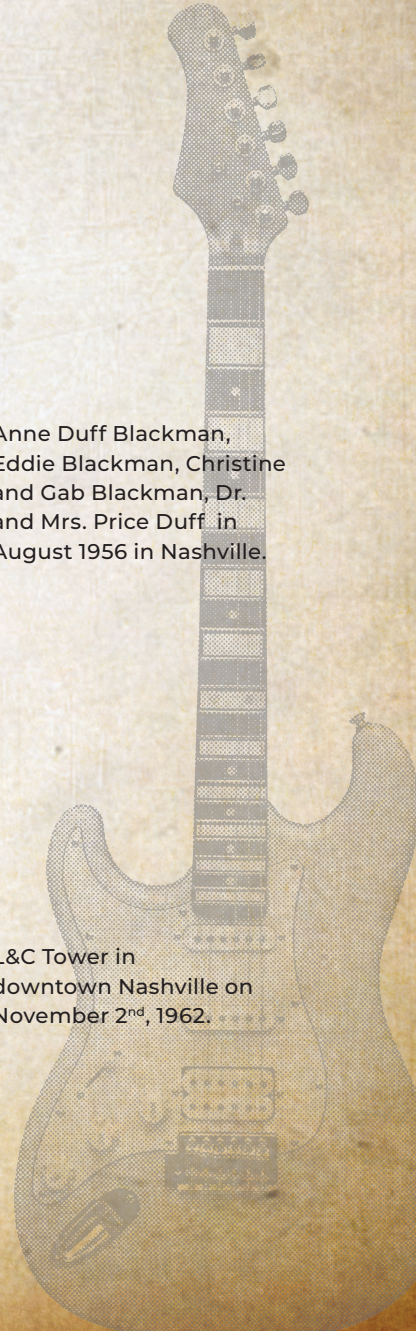


Photo courtesy of Harriett Bridgeforth Jordan.



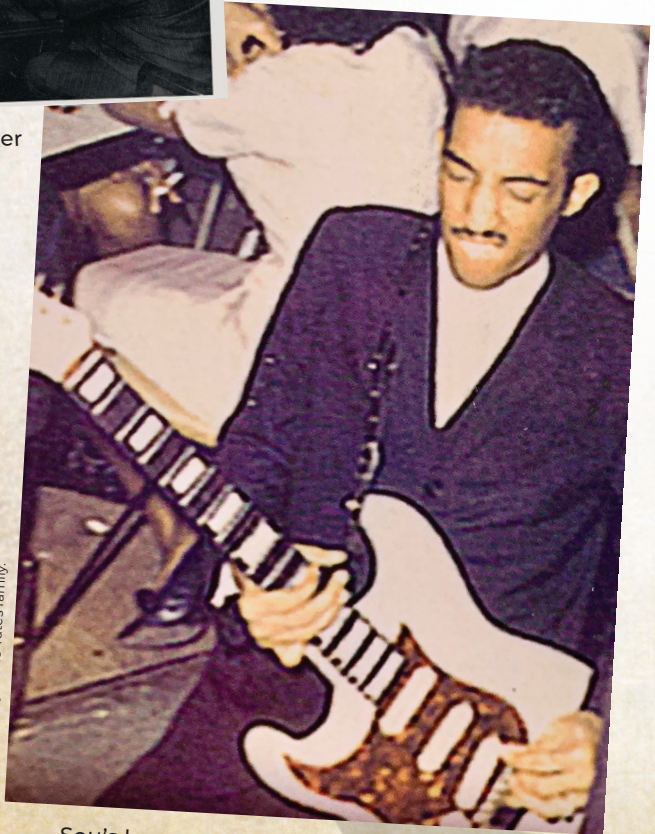
Sou Bridgeforth playing poker at New Era circa 1940.

Photo by John Lain Malone. Courtesy of the Nashville Public Library Special Collection.



Bill "Hoss" Allen and Mrs. Robert Worth Bingham in May 1946 at the Bell Meade Country Club, Nashville.

Photo courtesy of the Yates family.



Sou's house guitarist George Yates playing at The New Era in 1962.