

# IN NEW BOOK, ARETHA FRANKLIN

- Sets Record Straight About Her Mother
- Talks About Feud With Luther Vandross
- Tells How She Became Queen Of Soul

**A**retha Franklin reveals the Aretha nobody knows in her just-published autobiography *Aretha: From These Roots*.

The Queen of Soul tells all and sets the record straight on a number of issues in her life, including her mother's relationship with her and her brothers and sisters.

In the new book, the legendary soul queen also reveals that she and singer producer Luther Vandross had a heated feud in the recording studio. She also recalls her dues-paying days and tells how she finally became the undisputed Queen of Soul.

*Aretha: From These Roots* (Villard, \$25) was written with David Ritz, the biographer of Marvin Gaye, Ray Charles, Smokey Robinson and others.



▲ Queen of Soul Aretha Franklin looks back on her extraordinary life and career in her autobiography *Aretha: From These Roots*.

She said she wrote the book so that her fans would get "a better sense of who I am other than what they have seen on stage; who I am as a woman and a person in the community," she told JET.

She dedicates the book to her family, including her parents, Barbara V. Siggers and the renowned minister, Rev. C.L. Franklin.

She said she wanted the public to know the truth about her mother's relationship with her and her sisters and brothers, Erma, Vaughn, Cecil and Carolyn.

She states that her mother did not abandon her and her four siblings. She said news reports published throughout her career that her mother abandoned her family are simply not true.

"My parents separated when I was six," she writes. "Despite the fact



◀ Franklin recalls her loving parents, Barbara V. Siggers and renowned minister the Rev. C.L. Franklin, in new book.

my dad, who was in a better position to care for us on a daily basis. And he did. Mom couldn't afford to raise five children on a nurse's aide's salary. However, she communicated with us by phone and regular visits. She never lost sight of her children or her parenting responsibilities—and her visits continued regularly. She sent us beautiful gifts, and we traveled to Buffalo to spend the summers with her yearly," she writes.

She told JET, "She was very responsible; she was highly responsible. And she did anything that any good mother did."

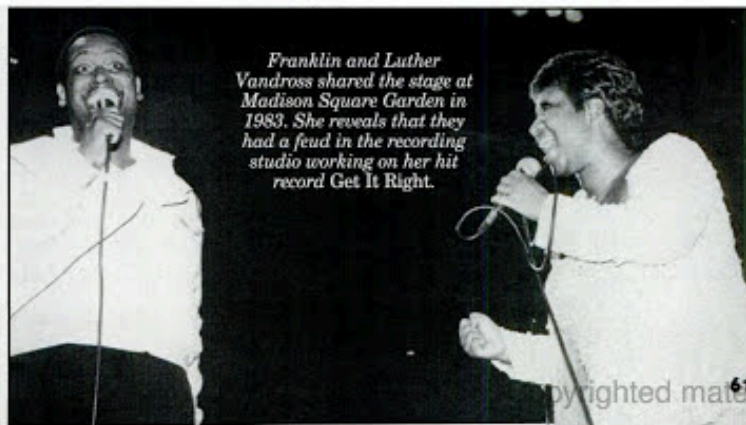
The rumor that her mother had abandoned her "just perpetuated over the years and even some folks in the industry picked that same lie up and wrote it as if it were a fact without even checking or asking," she told JET.

Her mother died of a heart attack when Aretha was 10. "I cannot

that it has been written innumerable times, it is an absolute lie that my mother abandoned us."

She stresses, "In no way, shape, form or fashion did our mother desert us. She was extremely responsible, loving and caring."

Franklin continues, "She simply moved with Vaughn back to Buffalo, where she lived with her parents, Clara and Reverend Wafford. My parents decided we would stay with



Franklin and Luther Vandross shared the stage at Madison Square Garden in 1983. She reveals that they had a feud in the recording studio working on her hit record *Get It Right*.



COVER STORY



▲ At age 16, Aretha Franklin was the nation's youngest gospel singing sensation. ▶ She was crowned the "Queen of Soul" in the '60s by noted disc jockey Perovs Spann in Chicago.

describe the pain, nor will I try," she writes. "Pain is sometimes a private matter, and the pain of small children losing their mother defies description," she says in the book.

She recalls that her mother "was a superb singer, her voice clear and distinctive. She also played piano



in traditional gospel style. She was a nurse's aide, which is why I considered being a nurse at a young age."

With wit, sass and humor, the Queen of Soul also discusses the feud she had with Luther Vandross in the recording studio when he was producing her hit record *Get It Right*.

"All of a sudden Luther wanted to tell

◀ In 1987, Franklin celebrates her success with her family, sisters Erma and Carolyn, brother Cecil and his wife, Earline.



▲ Franklin won rave reviews for her showstopping performance in *The Blues Brothers* in 1980.

me how to sing, when it was I from whom he had learned much about how to sing," she writes.

"My point was simple: If he wanted to tell the artist how to sing, why didn't he sing it himself? His job was to produce and advise the artist about phrasing, diction, melody, and to be adventurous and say certain things, but definitely not say, 'Sing it like this.'"

She remembers, "I picked up my coat and walked out of the studio as he and I continued shouting at each other." They later apologized to each other and finished the recording, which became a No. 1 hit.

She explained to JET, "When I say this, I say it with respect and I say it in a positive vein. Luther and I really do like each other. We have a lot of mutual respect for each other, even when we are not talking, we are still

cool. I guess you could call it Aries butting heads, because he's an Aries too. We are very opinionated people."

She added, "He was lying at the base of his radio listening to me. I wasn't lying there listening to him," she laughed, recalling how Vandross grew up listening to her sound and style.

"All of this is said with love. I really do love Luther and respect Luther. I like him a lot. He is a terrific person, he really is. But I am not going to have Luther try to tell me how to sing, as much as I like him. That is a no-no. Maybe he just wasn't thinking."

With candor, the private Aretha also opens up and discusses the challenges and pressures she faced as a single teenage mother.

She remembers how her father reacted when she became pregnant.





▲ The Queen of Soul was among the 1994 Kennedy Center honorees with Kirk Douglas, Harold Prince (seated), Morton Gould and Pete Seeger.

"Some other fathers have been known to put their daughters out of their homes, but not my dad," she writes.

"He was not judgmental, narrow or scolding. He simply talked about the responsibilities of motherhood. He was a realist, and he expected me to face the reality of having a child. The days of spiced ham and Popsicles were over. I was becoming a young adult and a parent all at once."

She also discusses her marriage and divorce to Ted White, who also was her manager at the beginning of her career; her later marriage and

divorce with famed actor Glynn Turman and also chronicles her later romances, including one with singer Dennis Edwards of the Temptations. She reveals that her hit tune, *Day Dreaming*, which she penned, was inspired by her romance with Edwards.

She also tells readers how she became the world famous Queen of Soul.

She has ruled over soul music for so long, many think she has always been the Queen of Soul. She says, however, that it took a long time before her career "exploded."

"I was not an overnight sensation by any means," she told JET. "Things don't happen overnight."

She grew up singing gospel in Detroit's New Bethel Baptist Church, presided over by her father. She often traveled with him and sang as part of his ministry. At age 16 she was the nation's youngest gospel singing star.

At age 18, she signed with Columbia Records and began her career singing pop standards, and as she describes it in her book, "blues, gospel-based jazz and rhythm and blues."

She writes that she "didn't have any real hits" on Columbia and also played some of the smallest clubs in the country.

"I had to have played the tiniest club in the world, where one foot was in the dressing room and if I moved the other foot, I was out of the dressing room," she laughed.

"It was just a chair, a mirror and a curtain and that was it...So I have

paid my dues. Believe me, I have paid my dues."

Her career took off when she left Columbia and signed with Atlantic.

"I felt a natural affinity with the Atlantic sound. To me, Atlantic meant soul." She adds, "I wanted a hit, and I wanted to be with a company that understood the current market."

Her 1967 debut Atlantic album *I Never Loved A Man (The Way I Love You)* included *Dr. Feelgood* and her signature tune *Respect*.

"I had finally reached the plateau where I was being called a star," she writes with pride.

As her star continued to shine she was formally crowned the Queen of Soul—a title that she still wears with pride.

"It was in the sixties that a noted disc jockey, Pervis Spann, anointed me Queen of Soul in the city of Chicago on the stage of the Regal Theater. He placed a beautifully bejeweled crown on my head, and I still cherish the memory of my silver-sequined gown. The only queens I had known were Dinah Washington and Elizabeth I and II. To be considered worthy of the same title held by Dinah was an honor of the highest order."

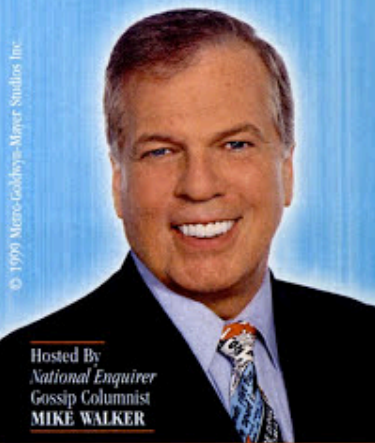
Reflecting on her memoirs, she told JET: "I am just glad that it has been written. It documents the Franklin family story. There are some great stories in there. I just hope people will enjoy it as much as I did."

—CLARENCE WALDRON

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