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## Harmon, Arlis Odell, 1905-1992 (MSS 153)

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Manuscripts  
Department of Library Special Collections  
Kentucky Building  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, KY 42101

*Descriptive Inventory*

**MSS 153 HARMON, Arlis Odell, 1905-1992**

1 ½ boxes, 17 folders 874 items, 1866; 1892?; 1924-1992

Gift of the Harmon Estate, Scottsville, Kentucky

***BIOGRAPHY***

Arlis Odell Harmon, son of Thomas M. (1870-1953) and Ivy (1880-1909) Harmon, was born on April 1, 1905, in Allen County, Kentucky. The death of his mother, which occurred when he was only four, later inspired him to write several songs pertaining to maternal love and the loss he experienced. In 1928, Harmon assumed the position of a private investigator in Birmingham, Alabama. Then for almost thirty years, he worked chiefly as a railroad/street railroad engineer inspector in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo. He also served as a checker for the Louisville Railway Company and was associated briefly with the Tennessee Electric Power Company in Nashville. Later, Harmon found time to write a column regularly for the Scottsville, Kentucky Citizen-Times, using the pseudonym, "The Lone Traveler."

In 1959 Harmon returned to Allen County, Kentucky, and began concentrating on gospel music, which he had loved since boyhood. After learning to read shape notes, he then learned to play the organ. Harmon wrote many poems, some of which he set to music.

Harmon's first song Coming Home on a Promise and a Prayer, was published by

James D. Vaughan Publishing Company in 1961. Some of the other notable companies, which published his works, were Albert E. Brumley & Sons, Convention Music Company, Tennessee Music and Printing Company, and Stamps-Baxter Music and Printing Company. Harmon claimed that his success in the composition of gospel music was because of divine inspiration, that is, the Lord guided him through each song until it was completed.

Harmon describing his lifestyle, in a letter written to the readers of The Vaughan Family Visitor wrote, "I am a bachelor, do my own cooking, and believe it or not, my cooking hasn't killed me yet, but sometimes I almost chicken-out on eating my cooking. I live alone out on Dogwood Ridge in Allen County, Kentucky, where it is quiet and peaceful and have the best neighbors anyone could wish for."

Harmon died on May 30, 1992, leaving behind a varied collection of published gospel music tunes, and a name that will remain in the hearts of those who know his music.

### ***THE COLLECTION***

The collection includes correspondence, obituaries, poems and songs written by Harmon, as well as other music-related items. Harmon's collection of 45, 78, and 33 1/3 rpm phonograph records, gospel newsletters, books, and approximately 700 gospel song books are housed in the Kentucky Library.

**SHELF LIST**

<b>BOX 1</b>	<b>HARMON, Arlis Odell</b>	<b>1866; 1892; 1924-1992</b>	<b>847 items</b>
Folder 1	Descriptive Inventory and biographical data	1992	2 items
Folder 2	Employment papers and address book	Aug. 24, 1928- June 2, 1958; n.d.	32 items
Folder 3	Incoming letters	1924; 1969-1992	56 items
Folder 4	Correspondence about musical affairs	Feb. 2, 1960- Pre-Sept. 7, 1991	50 items
Folder 5	Huff, Margaret - Letters and sheet music	Oct. 28, 1975- May 8, 1979	7 items
Folder 6	Sturdevant, Bill - Letters, 1982 (2) and sheet music	1953 - June 11, 1982; n.d.	22 items
Folder 7	Thompson, Reid - Letters from	June 8, 1972- Feb. 16, 1987	14 items
Folder 8	Family history	1866; 1892?; 1976; n.d.	14 items
Folder 9	Bills, notes, etc.	1942-1992	41 items
Folder 10	Poems written by Harmon: A-H	1958-1983	138 items
Folder 11	Poems written by Harmon: I-K	1933-1982	116 items
Folder 12	Poems written by Harmon: L-S	1935-1991	145 items
Folder 13	Poems written by Harmon: T-Z	1934-1982	116 items
Folder 14	Composition book, containing holographic words of poems and songs	n.d.	1 item, 96p.
Folder 15	Obituaries written by Harmon	1964-1990	53 items
Folder 16	Photographs (photocopies)	1985-1990; n.d.	30 sheets

Folder 17	Miscellaneous	1935; 1965- 1987 or later	37 items
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### **CATALOG CARD**

MSS 153	HARMON, Arlis Odell, 1905-1992	1866; 1892?; 1924-1992
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Poems, 1934-1991 (515), obituaries, 1964-1990 (53), written by Harmon, a gospel song writer and enthusiast, of Allen County, Kentucky. Includes correspondence about gospel music, genealogical data, photos, etc.

1 ½ boxes. 17 folders. 874 items.

Gift of the A. O. Harmon estate.

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### **SUBJECT ANALYTICS**

Allen County

Authors - Kentucky

Brumley, Albert E., & Sons, 1970-1977 B1,F4

Brumley, Albert Edward, 1905-1977 B1,F4

Christmas cards B1,F3

Clergy - Methodist - Letters of, 1972-1987 B1,F7

Genealogy - Gilliam family B1,F3&8

Genealogy - Harmon family B1,F3&8

Genealogy - Meador family B1,F3

Genealogy - Motley family B1,F8

Genealogy - Simmons family B1,F3

Gospel music

Gospel music - Publishers and publishing B1,F4

Gospel musicians

Harmon, Arlis Odell, 1905-1992 - Photos B1,F16

Huff, Margaret B1,F5

Leap year, 1985 B1,F3

Lyricists - Allen County

Louisville - Churches - Methodist, 1972-1987 B1,F7

Methodist churches - Clergymen's papers, 1972-1987 B1,F7

Montell, William Lynwood, b. 1931 B1,F3&4

Music - Publishing B1,F4

Obituaries B1,F15

Poetry B1,F9-13  
 Publishers and publishing - Gospel music B1,F4  
 Song writers  
 Stamps-Baxter Music and Printing Company, 1968-1972, 1991 B1,F4  
 Sturdevant, Bill, b.1908 B1,F6  
 Thompson, Reid B1,F7  
 Truman, Harry, Pres. U.S., 1884-1972 - Comments about, 1985 B1,F3  
 Vaughan, James D. - Music publisher, 1971-1980 B1,F4  
 Women - Attitudes toward, 1985 B1,F3

### ***PHOTOGRAPH CARDS***

Harmon, Arlis Odell, 1905-1992 - Photos B1,F16

### ***CHRONOLOGICAL CARDS***

1924-  
 1926-  
 1951-  
 1976-