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Harmon, Arlis Odell, 1905-1992 (MSS 194)

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Manuscripts & Folklife Archives
 Special Collections Library
 Department of Library Special Collections
 Western Kentucky University
 Bowling Green, KY 42101

Descriptive Inventory

MSS 194 HARMON, Arlis Odell, 1905-1992

½ box. 4 folders. 66 items. 1866-1992. Originals.

1992.149.2

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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.

COLLECTION NOTE

This collection includes three scrapbooks of manuscript music on lined pages. The pages were removed from acidic scrapbook; the contents of each scrapbook was placed in a separate folder. A sequential list of titles is included in each folder. Harmon's collection of 45, 78, 33 ½ rpm phonograph records, gospel newsletters, books, and approximately 700 gospel song books are housed in the Kentucky Library. A larger collection of Harmon material is found in Manuscript Collection 153.

SHELF LIST

| BOX 1 | HARMON, Arlis Odell | 1866-1992 | 847 items |
|--------------|--|------------------|------------------|
| Folder 1 | Descriptive Inventory and biographical data | | 1 item |
| Folder 2 | Scrapbook of manuscript music written and composed by Harmon | | 29 items |
| Folder 3 | Scrapbook of manuscript music written and composed by Harmon | | 34 items |
| Folder 4 | Scrapbook of manuscript music written and composed by Harmon | | 2 items |

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

MSS HARMON, Arlis Odell, 1866-1992
153 1905-1992

Scrapbooks of manuscript music, chiefly gospel music, written and composed by Harmon of Allen County, Kentucky.

½ box. 4 folders. 66 items.
1992.149.2

SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Allen County – Relating to
Gospel music
Gospel musicians
Lyricists

Music and musicians
Songwriters

Jeffrey 02/12/2008