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

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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 153 HARMON, Arlis Odell, 1905-1992

1 ½ boxes. 17 folders. 874 items. Originals. 1866-1992

1992.149.1

BIOGRAPHY

Arlis Odell Harmon, son of Thomas M. (1870-1953) and Ivy (1880-1909) Harmon, was born on 1 April 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 Arlis Odell Harmon, as well as other music-related items. Harmon's collection of 45, 78, and 33 1/3 rpm phonograph records, books, and approximately 700 gospel song books are housed in the Special Collections Library.

SHELF LIST

BOX 1	HARMON, Arlis Odell	1866-1992	847 items
Folder 1	Descriptive Inventory and biographical data	1992	2 items
Folder 2	Employment papers and address book	Aug. 24, 1928- June 2, 1958	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	22 items
Folder 7	Thompson, Reid - Letters from	June 8, 1972- Feb. 16, 1987	14 items
Folder 8	Family history	1866; 1892?; 1976	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	30 sheets
Folder 17	Miscellaneous	1935; 1965-1987 or later	37 items

BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD

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

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.

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SUBJECT ANALYTICS

Allen County – Relating to

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
 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 S., 1884-1972 – Comments about, 1985 B1,F3
 Vaughan, James D. – Music publisher, 1971-1980 B1,F4
 Women – Attitudes toward, 1985 B1,F3

Jeffrey 09/23/2013