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Harmon, Arlis Odell, 1905-1992 (MSS 153)
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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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BOX 1</th>
<th>SHELF LIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HARMON, Arlis Odell</strong></td>
<td><strong>1866; 1892; 1924-1992</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 1</td>
<td>Descriptive Inventory and biographical data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 2</td>
<td>Employment papers and address book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 3</td>
<td>Incoming letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 4</td>
<td>Correspondence about musical affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 5</td>
<td>Huff, Margaret - Letters and sheet music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 6</td>
<td>Sturdevant, Bill - Letters, 1982 (2) and sheet music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 7</td>
<td>Thompson, Reid - Letters from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 8</td>
<td>Family history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 9</td>
<td>Bills, notes, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 11</td>
<td>Poems written by Harmon: I-K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 12</td>
<td>Poems written by Harmon: L-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 13</td>
<td>Poems written by Harmon: T-Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 14</td>
<td>Composition book, containing holographic words of poems and songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 15</td>
<td>Obituaries written by Harmon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folder 16</td>
<td>Photographs (photocopies)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Folder 17  Miscellaneous  1935; 1965-1987 or later  37 items

**CATALOG CARD**

MSS  HARMON, Arlis Odell, 1866; 1892?; 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.

1 ½ boxes. 17 folders. 874 items.

Gift of the A. O. Harmon estate.

K/39

**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
Sturdevant, Bill, b.1908 B1,F6
Thompson, Reid B1,F7
Women - Attitudes toward, 1985 B1,F3

PHOTOGRAPH CARDS

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

CHRONOLOGICAL CARDS

1924-
1926-
1951-
1976-