

**THE CENTER FOR POPULAR MUSIC, MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE  
UNIVERSITY, MURFREESBORO, TN**

**OVERSTAKE, EVELYN COLLECTION  
MANUSCRIPTS, PRINTED MATERIALS,  
SOUND RECORDINGS**

**02-020**

**Creator:**

**Type of Material:**

**Physical Description:**

1.2 linear feet of manuscripts including:  
    Scrapbooks, photographs, personal papers  
    24 manuscript sound recordings  
12 photographs; 7 books; 7 serials; 6 sheet music  
3 commercial sound recordings

**Dates:**

1932 - 1952

**Abstract (Descriptive Summary):**

**Provenance and Acquisition Information:**

This collection was donated to the Center by Charles Wolfe, English Department, MTSU in March 2003. Dr. Wolfe bought the collection from the on-line auction house, E-bay. No information is known about the previous owner.

[**Notes:** Dr. Wolfe notified the Center that a group of personal correspondence came with the collection and was intended to be included with his donation. He loaned the letters for photocopying, but they were not returned. Attempts are being made to locate the letters.]

**Subject/Index Terms:**

**Agency History/Biographical Sketch:**

Evelyn Overstake was born December 20, 1914 in Decatur, Illinois, the first of three daughters born to two Salvation Army workers. The Overstake Sisters began harmonizing at school functions and mission meetings and their popularity led to radio appearances in central Illinois. Renamed the Three Little Maids, the sisters began singing on WLS Chicago in 1931. The group appeared on the *National Barn Dance, Round-Up*, and *Dinnerbell* programs. They signed on with the American Record Corporation and cut four titles in April 1933, all issued on the Conqueror label. Bufwack and Oermann say of Evelyn in *Finding Her Voice*, "her low tones are perhaps the outstanding feature of the trio's records."

Evelyn's sister, Eva, married Red Foley (bassist for the group, Cumberland Ridge Runners). Eva's pregnancy ended the Three Little Maids act in early 1934. (Eva and

Red's daughter, Shirley Lee Foley, married singer Pat Boone, thus the many Pat Boone articles in this collection.) Evelyn continued a solo career on WLS through 1942. Evelyn was also known as the "Melody Maid," or "The Little Maid," and had her own solo programs, including a Saturday morning show. Evelyn married D. R. Bechtel of Chicago and had a son, Neil Eugene Bechtel. The youngest Overstake sister, Lucille, later performed as Jenny Lou Carson, and became a successful songwriter in the 1940s and 50s.

**Scope and Content:**

Documenting the singing career of Evelyn Overstake, this collection consists of materials relating to the Three Little Maids, the *WLS National Barn Dance*, as well as printed and personal items. Manuscript items, which make up most of the collection, include two scrapbooks, one containing newspaper clippings, photographs, sheet music covers, programs, and memorabilia. Another scrapbook contains mostly photographs of Evelyn. Personal papers include illustrations, greeting cards, and church bulletins.

A significant portion of the collection relates to Evelyn's years as a radio performer. In addition to the Three Little Maids, Evelyn performed on "Dreamers Bay," "A Musical Journey with Miss Evelyn," and was an accompaniment to the Hilltoppers. Various episodes of radio show scripts, advertisements, fan letters, and photographs of WLS performers are among the contents. Of particular note are two manuscript songbooks, which are bookbinders containing song lyrics for use on the radio. One of the binders has a table of contents of 400 songs; the other appears to have various songs in alphabetical order. One piece of sheet music among the manuscripts is titled "My Carolina Rose" and is a proof copy complete with corrections and mark-ups and a photograph of Evelyn on the front cover.

The photographs are mostly of Evelyn Overstake, but three are of WLS performers, many containing written notes to Evelyn. Performers include Al and Pete, Otto, and a band group photograph.

The manuscript audio discs are home recordings, radio air-checks, and instantaneous discs of Evelyn and/or WLS radio programs on which she sang. The 78 rpm discs contain episodes of the radio show, "Musical Journey" with "Miss Evelyn."

This collection documents a segment of one of the most popular radio sister acts (The Three Little Maids) of the *WLS National Barn Dance* from Chicago in the early 1930s. Covering Evelyn Overstake's singing career through the 1930s and 40s, the materials represent insight into women radio stars in the early years of country and "hillbilly" popular music.

**Collection Contents (Folder/Box List):****Box # Folder # Description****Box 1**

Folder 1	Radio Scripts
	Radio script, WLS National Barn Dance, November 30, 1940
	Radio script, Musical Journey, February 17, 1951
	Radio script, Musical Journey, February 9, 1952
Folder 2	Memorabilia
	Illustrations, cards



**Materials Cataloged Separately:****Sheet Music:**

*Roll On, Mississippi, Roll On* by Eugene West, James McCaffrey, Dave Ringle, 1931.

*Put On An Old Pair of Shoes* by Mr. And Mrs. Billy Hill, 1935.

*Peter Cottontail* by Steve Nelson and Jack Rollins, 1950.

*I Gave a Rose to You* by Lucien and Gwynne Denni, 1934.

*The Longest Way 'Round is the Sweetest Way Home* by Kerry Mills, 1908.

**Serials:**

*Chicago's Night Life*, August 31, 1945 [contains photograph of Evelyn and Lucille]

*Motion Picture*, October 1961 [Pat Boone family on cover]

*Photoplay*, December 1958 [Jenny Foley gets married at Pat Boone's house]

**Books:**

*The Blue Book of Favorite Songs*, Hall & McCreary Company, 1928.

*The Silver Book of Songs*, Hall & McCreary Company, 1935.

*357 Songs We Love to Sing*, Hall & McCreary Company, 1938.

*American Mountain Songs*, Ethel Park Richardson and Sigmund Spaeth, 1927.

*WLS Family Album 1940*

*WLS Family Album 1943*

**Sound Recordings:** [This is a preliminary list only, see audio logs when completed by audio specialist.]

**78 rpm: Commercial:**

Hush Little Darlin', Dick Haymes; Decca 24803

Blue Christmas, White Christmas, Ernest Tubb; Decca 46186

**78 rpm instantaneous discs:**

(List represents labels on recordings. Please refer to audio logs for specific song titles and details.)

Home recording by Evelyn; the Crosley Corp.

Home recording by Evelyn; the Crosley Corp.

Evelyn WLS 1<sup>st</sup> Show, Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>, 9.25

Evelyn, Happiness, WLS, Adobe, 2<sup>nd</sup> show

2 recordings: unknown, Wilcox-Gay Recordio Disc

Air Check, Barn Dance, WLS, Burr Whyland Recording Studio, Chicago,

"A Little Bird Told Me," Evelyn, Jan. 22, 1949

Air Check, Barn Dance, WLS, Burr Whyland Recording Studio, Chicago,

"I Love You So Much It Hurts," Evelyn, Jan. 29, 1949

Unknown, National Hollywood

**78 rpm, 7":**

Mother, "I Love You, Mother," (Jenny Lou Carson) Sung by Judy Martin  
Mother, "Just For Mom," (Jenny Lou Carson) Narrated by Jack Stilwill (reverse side)  
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33 1/3 rpm:

Unknown, Evelyn, Presto

Unknown, Evelyn, Presto

Musical Journey, To Mom on Her Day, WLS, 10-5-52, Odden, Part 1 and Part 3 on reverse

Musical Journey, To Mom on Her Day, WLS, 10-5-52, Odden, Part 2 and Part 4 on reverse

Musical Journey, "Miss Evelyn," WLS, 3-8-52, Part 1 and Part 3 on reverse

Musical Journey, "Miss Evelyn," WLS, 3-8-52, Part 2 and Part 4 on reverse

"A Musical Journey with Miss Evelyn," 4-25-53, Part 1 and Part 3 on reverse

"A Musical Journey with Miss Evelyn," 4-25-53, Part 2 and Part 4 on reverse

Musical Journey, "Miss Evelyn," 2-21-53, Part 1 and Part ? on reverse

Musical Journey, "Miss Evelyn," 2-21-53, Part 2 and Part 3 on reverse

"A Musical Journey – Miss Evelyn," WLS, 3-7-53, Part 1 and Part 3 on reverse

Unknown, Presto

"Musical Journey," Miss Evelyn, WLS, 2-17-51, Part 2 and Part 4 on reverse

"Musical Journey," Miss Evelyn, WLS, 2-17-51, Part 2 and Part 4 on reverse

"Miss Evelyn," Musical Journey, Part 1 and Part 3 on reverse

"Miss Evelyn," Musical Journey, Part 2 and Part 4 on reverse

**Arrangement:**

**Location:**

The manuscript materials are filed by accession number in the manuscript section of the stacks. The scrapbooks have been photocopied for research use and are stored with the original scrapbooks. The photographs are maintained in the manuscript collection with a photocopy and cross-reference in the Iconographic collection. The books are located in rare books, the serials in secondary serials, the sheet music in sheet music, and the commercial sound recordings were dispersed in the audio collection.

**Related Materials:**

The Center has other material related to the *WLS National Barn Dance* located in the reading room, rare books, sheet music, performance, and secondary serials. Information concerning the Three Little Maids can be found in secondary sources in the reading room. All collection categories are searchable by accession number or title in the Center's InMagic database. Sources in the reading room are cataloged on Voyager.

**MARC:**

**EAD:**

[LPC April 2003]