



## Guide to the Garwood and Joan Van Family Papers

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
<b>Creator:</b>	Van Family
<b>Title:</b>	Garwood and Joan Van Family Papers
<b>ID:</b>	MS-00825
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1920-2003
<b>Date [bulk]:</b>	1930s-1970s
<b>Physical Description:</b>	7.27 Cubic Feet (15 boxes)
<b>Physical Description:</b>	14.88 Linear Feet
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English
<b>Abstract:</b>	The Garwood and Joan Van Family Papers (1920-2003) contain scrapbooks, photographs, newsletters, correspondence, and newspaper clippings collected by Garwood Van and his wife Joan Van. The collection includes material on Garwood's music career as a popular band leader in New York, California, and Las Vegas, Nevada as well as material about Joan's early life as a model and dancing career.

### Preferred Citation

Garwood and Joan Van Family Papers, 1920-2003. MS-000825. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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## Biographical Note

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Born in 1910 in Newark, New Jersey, Garwood Van was a well-known band leader who was active from the late 1920s until the 1970s. Van performed all over the United States, most notably in California, New York, and Las Vegas, Nevada. In 1952 Van moved to Las Vegas, Nevada permanently and served as conductor of the house band at the Last Frontier Hotel. In 1952 Van married Joan Rodriguez, who was known professionally as Joan Manning. The couple met in Lake Tahoe, Nevada while Garwood was conducting the orchestra for Nat King Cole and Joan was performing as one of the back-up dancers. Prior to meeting Van, Joan had danced at a number of

Las Vegas hotels including the El Rancho Vegas, the Last Frontier, the Silver Slipper, and Flamingo Hotel. Their son Gary was born in 1953, and Joan transitioned to modeling at various Las Vegas hotels. In 1954 Garwood opened the Pussy Cat a' Go-Go nightclub on The Strip, which featured a dance floor and rock and roll acts. He was also working as the entertainment director for the Castaways Hotel and Casino. In 1959 Garwood and Joan opened Musicworld, a musical instrument and record store. The store operated for twenty years until its closing in 1979.

Van was an active member of the Rotary Club, Las Vegas Better Business Bureau, Greater Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, and the Las Vegas Variety Club. He and ran unsuccessfully for the Clark County Commission in 1974 and again in 1976. Garwood and Joan lived for many years at the Desert Inn Country Club before moving to the Las Vegas Country Club in the 1980s. Garwood passed away on April 1999, and Joan in November 2015. Their son Gary died in April 2009.

Source:

"Former Big Band Leader and Activist Dies," accessed September 16, 2018, <https://lasvegassun.com/news/1999/apr/28/former-big-band-leader-community-activist-van-dies/>

"Joan Van Obituary," accessed September 16, 2018, <http://obits.reviewjournal.com/obituaries/lvrj/obituary.aspx?n=joan-van&pid=176471809>

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## Scope and Contents Note

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The Garwood and Joan Van Family Papers (1920-2003) contain newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, photographs, correspondence, and newsletters collected by Garwood and Joan Van during the 1930s through the 1970s that document Garwood Van's career as a band leader in New York, California, and Las Vegas, Nevada. In addition, the collection includes information on the Van's personal lives before and during their marriage including childhood scrapbooks and a baby book for their son, Gary Van.

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## Arrangement

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Materials are arranged roughly by topic.

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## Administrative Information

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### Access Note

Collection is open for research.

### Publication Rights

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### Acquisition Note

Materials were donated in 2017 by Julie Von Tobel Gleason; accession number 2017-001.

### Processing Note

A rough inventory of the accession was created by Maggie Bukowski and Tammi Kim in 2017. In 2018, Joyce Moore arranged the materials and revised the collection description to bring it into compliance with current professional standards.

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## Names and Subjects

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- Entertainment -- Nevada -- Las Vegas
- Big band music
- Big bands
- photographs
- Van, Garwood, 1910-1999
- Van, Joan Marian, 1933-2015
- El Rancho Hotel and Casino (Las Vegas, Nev.)
- Thunderbird Hotel and Casino (Las Vegas, Nev.)
- Hotel Last Frontier

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## Collection Inventory

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Title/Description	Containers
Photographs, 1930s-1980s	

Garwood Van conducting his orchestra in later years, undated	box 01
Black and white family snapshots, 1939-1985	box 01
Garwood and Joan with their families, 1930s-1980s	box 01
Garwood Van and his orchestra, black and white, undated	box 01
Garwood Van with his orchestra and Joan dancing in several shows, 1940s-1980s	box 01
Entertainment performers and shows, black and white, 1940s-1980s	box 01
Joan Van, modeling, 1950s-1960s	box 01
Garwood Van golfing, undated	box 01
Hotel souvenir photographs, undated	box 01
Celebrity head shots, 1980s	box 01
Autographed Hollywood headshots, undated	box 01
Press and publicity for Garwood Van at the Mark Hopkins Hotel, San Francisco, California, 1948	box 02
Orchestra recording, 45 rpm records, undated Physical Description: 2 Items	box 02
Childhood scrapbook, Joan Rodriguez, 1930s	box 02
School yearbooks, Joan Rodriguez, 1947-1950	box 02
Marriage certificates, 1947, 1952	box 02
Las Vegas Country Club Newsletters, 1983-1994	box 02
Music Newsletters, 1932-1938	box 02
Las Vegas Rotary Club Newsletters, 1972-1985	box 02
Musicians Union of Las Vegas Directory, 1987	box 02
The Thirtieth Year - A Major's Retread (Guess Who?) - Randall McElhone, book written by Roland I. Hill, 1973	box 02
Certificates of Appreciation to Garwood, 1969-1990	box 03
Golf tournaments and awards, 1985-1987	box 03
Correspondence to Garwood from Ed Sullivan, 1943-1944	box 03
Letters to Joan from George and Corrine Sydney, 1943-1944	box 03
Postcards to Garwood, 1930-1952	box 03
General correspondence, personal and business letters to Garwood, 1940-1986	box 03
Newspaper clippings regarding Garwood's public services, 1939-1999	box 03
Las Vegas entertainment programs, 1949-1982	box 03

Musicland, Articles of Incorporation, stock certificate, and press releases, 1959-1976	box 03
Campaign advertisements and invoices, 1974-1976	box 03
Investment papers for Twin Palms properties, 1994-1997	box 04
Papers regarding the swindling of investors by Harley Harmon and his incarceration, 2003	box 04
Investigation of fraud against Harley Harmon in regards to Twin Palms properties, 1997-1999	box 04
Joan Van scrapbook with black-and-white photographs from the 1940s-1950s, Joan and Garwood Van scrapbook from the 1970s including vacation photographs, Joan modeling, various personal photographs, 1940s-1970s	oversized box 05
Van family scrapbooks including personal photographs of Joan, Garwood, and Gary Van, 1940s-1960s	oversized box 06
Scrapbook with newspaper clippings about Garwood and Joan Van and Musicworld, 1970s	oversized box 07
Scrapbook with newspaper clippings about Garwood and Joan Van, 1970s-1980s	oversized box 08
Bronzed baby shoes, tokens from Pussy Cat a' Go-Go, Garwood Van nameplate, 1950s-1960s	box 09
Garwood and Joan Van scrapbook, which includes newspaper clippings, postcards, advertisements for Van's band, Joan's high school ephemera, Las Vegas, Nevada casino ephemera, 1920s-1960s	oversized box 10
Scrapbook about Van's early career in the 1930s, includes fan letters, newspaper clippings, telegraphs, and advertisement about Van's orchestra, 1930s-1940s	oversized box 11
Celebrity photographs and Garwood Van head shots, 1930s	oversized box 12
Gary Van baby book and Garwood and Joan Van family scrapbook, 1953, 1970s	oversized box 13
Garwood Van scrapbook with newspaper clippings, 1930s-1950s	oversized box 14
Garwood Van scrapbook about his career, 1940s	oversized box 15