

Antonetta Cowsert, Social Worker and Musician, Scrapbook A&M 3622

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1942-2007



Title Statement

Antonetta Cowsert, Social Worker and Musician, Scrapbook A&M 3622

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English .

Abstract

One scrapbook of newspaper clippings, photographs, newsletters, and other material regarding the life of Antonetta (Toni) Canacari Cowsert, a blind musician and social worker. Born in 1932, she earned a bachelor's degree in music at West Virginia University, and a degree in social work at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. She worked as a social worker and teacher for social service agencies and public school districts in the Philadelphia area while participating in many local choirs. She returned to Morgantown, West Virginia in 1979 where she continued her community service and musical activities.

Creator

Cowsert, Antonetta, Compiler

Extent

0.21 Linear Feet Summary: 2.5 in. (1 document case)

Physical Location

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Repository

West Virginia and Regional History Center

Administrative Information

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Processing Information

In 2022, in order to preserve the material, all content was removed from the scrapbook pages when possible. A few items were so adhered to the scrapbook pages that they could not be removed; they were left on the adhesive pages and a sheet of acid free paper separates them from other materials. To preserve the original arrangement, photocopies were made of the scrapbook pages as they were originally. The original binder with the empty "magnetic" pages (covered in adhesive and plastic) was discarded.

Preferred Citation

[Description and date of item], [Box/folder number], Antonetta Cowsert, Social Worker and Musician Scrapbook, A&M 3622, West Virginia and Regional History Center, West Virginia University Libraries, Morgantown, West Virginia.

Biographical / Historical

Antonetta C. "Toni" Cowsert was a blind musician and social worker who worked in Morgantown, West Virginia and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She was born May 30, 1922, in Fairmont, West Virginia, a daughter of the late Leo and Angelina Cortez Canacari; she passed away Thursday morning, Jan. 24, 2008, at Monongalia General Hospital.

Toni lost her sight in an accident at the age of 13 months. But growing up in a home with a father who had a beautiful tenor voice, she became quite precocious at music. Her family always had a piano and she constantly absorbed the ever-present sound of opera music playing in the house.

She studied Braille and entered West Virginia University in 1942.

She began practice teaching at University High School in 1944, and finally received a bachelor of music degree in 1945.

She spent a year as a graduate student and then obtained her master's degree in specialized work with the blind from the University of Pennsylvania. While there, she also helped several other blind students from all of the United States, who came to the University for an education.

She trained to become proficient with Optacon, an electronic reading aid for the blind which helps a person to read typing and computer printouts.

She attended a world conference in Rome, and returned to Philadelphia where she met her husband, the late Harris Reed "Red" Cowsert. At the time they met, she was working on site at veteran's hospitals helping injured soldiers.

Toni embarked on several careers throughout her life, as an entertainer, teacher, counselor and advocate. She sang and played on the radio, at civic clubs, in solo performances, with choirs at churches and in schools, and with the WVU Chorale. She also sang the national anthem at state functions hosted by Gov. Gaston Caperton.

She also served on the Commission for Disabled Persons in West Virginia and Pennsylvania with Governor Jay Rockefeller and Governor Richard Thornburg, and was honored in 1997 with an Award of Accomplishment by the West Virginia Italian Heritage Festival for her outstanding achievements.

Her relatives included her sister, Beatrice Galli, her husband, Alfred, of Morgantown; and great-nieces, Jennifer Galli, of Philadelphia, and Christina Galli, of Ogden, Maryland.

In addition to her parents she was preceded in death by a nephew, Allen Galli.

The Hastings Funeral Home, 153 Spruce Street, Morgantown, provided cremation services. Friends gathered in the Great Room of Heritage Point from 1-2 p.m. on Wednesday, January 30. A memorial service was then held at 2 p.m. with the Reverend Violet Petso officiating. Interment took place at a later date at East Oak Grove Cemetery.

Keywords

Social workers