

Lynn Evans Mand, 95, Lead Singer of the Chordettes

Voice on 'Lollipop' And 'Mr. Sandman'

By DANIEL E. SLOTNIK

Lynn Evans Mand, who was plucked from obscurity to become the lead singer of the Chordettes, performing with them during the height of their fame in the 1950s and '60s on songs like the instantly recognizable hits "Mr. Sandman" and "Lollipop," died on Feb. 6 at a care facility in Elyria, Ohio. She was 95.

Her grandson Robert Evans II said the cause was a stroke.

The Chordettes began in the 1940s in Sheboygan, Wis., as an all-woman barbershop quartet. They appeared regularly on Arthur Godfrey's popular radio and television shows.

In 1953 Ms. Evans, as she was known at the time, was a case worker for the Red Cross and sang with an amateur barbershop quartet in Youngstown, Ohio. One day the Chordettes came through town for a performance, and Ms. Evans had a chance to sit in.

The members of the group were so impressed with her voice that when the time came to replace one of the original Chordettes, Dorothy Schwartz, who was leaving to have a child, Ms. Evans was asked to audition for the spot. She won it.

"She sang so beautifully and expressively, very clear," Marjorie Needham Latzko, another Chordette and a close friend of Ms. Evans's, said in a phone interview. "You could understand every word."

A year after Ms. Evans joined, the Chordettes had the first of several hits on Cadence Records, a label formed by Archie Bleyer, Mr. Godfrey's former bandleader, after he and the host parted ways. (Mr. Bleyer later married one of the Chordettes, Janet Ertel.)

That song was "Mr. Sandman," a frothy pop tune written by Pat Ballard featuring rhythmic nonsense syllables ("bum-bum-bum-ba-bum...") and the memorable line "Mr. Sandman, bring me a dream."

"Mr. Sandman" reached No. 1 on the Billboard chart in 1954 and



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Lynn Evans Mand, bottom left, joined the Chordettes in 1953. The group began in the '40s as a female barbershop quartet.

sold more than a million records, and the Chordettes became stars. They had more hits, like "Born to Be With You" (1956) and "Just Between You and Me" (1957), before almost reaching the top again — they made it as far as No. 2 — with "Lollipop" in 1958.

Written by Julius Dixon and Beverly Ross, "Lollipop" was first recorded by Ronald & Ruby, an interracial vocal duo (Ms. Ross was Ruby), shortly before the Chordettes released their version, which retained the song's catchy refrain ("Lollipop, lollipop, oh lolly, lolly, lolly — lollipop") and added a loud popping sound.

The Chordettes remained in high demand throughout the 1950s and early '60s, appearing on "American Bandstand" and "The

Ed Sullivan Show" and performing for President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

"George Burns, Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, Lucille Ball — we knew them all," Ms. Evans told the Long Island newspaper *Newsday* in 1990. "It was wonderful, but it didn't seem that big a deal at the time. It sort of went with the territory."

The Chordettes' popularity waned as rock 'n' roll's grew. They had a few more hits, including a version of the theme from the television show "Zorro" and a vocal version of the title tune from the hit 1960 movie "Never on Sunday," before the group split up in 1964.

"It was a very tough and traumatic adjustment," Ms. Evans said. "I had led a rather unreal ex-

istence, and now I was faced with things I had never really done — like shopping, cooking and house-cleaning."

The Chordettes may not have survived the British invasion, but their two biggest hits lingered in popular culture. Their version of "Mr. Sandman" has appeared in films from "Uncle Buck" to "Deadpool"; it was heard in a Kia commercial during Super Bowl XLVI in 2012; and the trio of Emmylou Harris, Dolly Parton and Linda Ronstadt covered it. "Lollipop" has appeared in films like Rob Reiner's "Stand by Me" and John Waters's "Mondo Trasho."

The Chordettes were inducted into the Vocal Group Hall of Fame in 2001.

Carolyn Marie Hartgate was born in Youngstown, Ohio, on May 2, 1924, to George and Caroline (Williams) Hartgate. Her father was a steel mill supervisor, her mother a homemaker. She used the first name Lynn with the Chordettes because one of other singers in the group went by Carol.

She studied piano as a girl, graduated from high school in Youngstown in 1942 and earned a bachelor's degree in education in 1946 from Ohio Wesleyan University, where she took voice lessons.

She married Robert B. Evans that year. They divorced in 1964, after the Chordettes broke up. Her grandson said her fame and success had strained their relationship.

A second marriage, to Charlie Fell, ended with his death. In 1997 she married Jack Mand. He died two years later.

In addition to her grandson, she is survived by a son, Robert H. Evans; a daughter, Carolyn Evans; three other grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

After the Chordettes broke up, Ms. Evans went back to school, earning a master's degree in special education from Hofstra University on Long Island in 1969. She was a special-education teacher in Brentwood, also on Long Island, until retiring in 1989.

Even as a teacher, she kept on singing. She recalled reaching her students by creating songs out of words as she pointed to them on a chart.