



# **P.S. I Love You: The Story of the Singing Hilltoppers**

*Carlton Jackson*

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In 1953, the same year that Elvis Presley cut his first demo, Cash Box magazine named the Hilltoppers the top vocal group of the year. Hits such as "Trying" and "P.S. I Love You" raced up the charts and kept the group in Billboard's Top 40. The four fresh-faced singers appeared on The Toast of the Town with Ed Sullivan, who introduced them to the nation. On weekends the Hilltoppers performed in cities across the country, but on Monday mornings they were better known as Western Kentucky State College students Jimmy Sacca, Seymour Spiegelman, Don McGuire, and Billy Vaughn. The Korean War, military drafts, and changing public tastes in music, however, cut short singing careers that should have lasted much longer. Sacca was drafted in 1953, mere months before the end of the war. Vaughn left the group shortly after that for a career at Dot Records and found fame elsewhere with his orchestra. McGuire and Spiegelman were drafted as well, and despite a set of temporary replacement members, the group eventually called it quits. Fifty years later, historian Carlton Jackson revisits the Kentucky college kids who made it big between classes. He follows the group from their first hit, recorded in Western's Van Meter Auditorium, to their brief 1970s reunion. Their story recalls the nature of celebrity and youth in the early days of rock 'n' roll.

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