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accident at age 24) and their sister, Cletus (Thelma). The Chesterfields debuted on record in February 1956, singing on Chess Records, with the single "You Can't Stop Me Now". They signed with Okeh Records later that year and released several singles on the label through 1957, including "The Ones We Love" and "I'm Falling In Love". In 1958, the group first recorded for the newly opened Vee-Jay Records subsidiary.

They scored their first major chart hit with "When My Baby Smiles at Me" in early 1959. With that single, the group was featured in a promotional campaign with photographer Tom Kelley. They scored their first #1 R&B single the same year, the group's first recording for Vee Jay, with the chart-topping "Mony Mony". In early 1960, the group signed with Peacock Records and scored two more R&B chart hits, "Go Go Go Love" and "Lovin' You." The group's success continued in the following year when they reached #1 on the R&B chart with "Not on the Outside", before they were recruited by The Miracles' producer Smokey Robinson. They recorded his song "You've Really Got a Hold on Me" for Okeh, which was issued shortly after the Miracles' own version, "You've Really Got a Hold on Me." The Chesterfields' recording reached #1 on the R&B chart in May 1961 and remained in the top 10 for five weeks. "You've Really Got a Hold on Me" later was covered by the Easy Riders, the first single of which is included on the posthumous Easy Riders, Deep in My Heart album. After their split