
Finding aid for the Morrie Turner Papers

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MS 24

African American Museum & Library at Oakland
Oakland, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Morrie Turner papers

Dates: 1924-2014

Bulk Dates: 1965-2014

Collection number: MS 24

Creator: Turner, Morrie

Collection Size: 6 linear feet(4 boxes + 2 oversized)

Repository: African American Museum & Library at Oakland (Oakland, Calif.)
Oakland, CA 94612

Abstract: Morrie Turner, the first nationally syndicated African American cartoonist, was born on December 11, 1923 in Oakland, California. In the 1960's Turner created "Wee Pals" a comic strip about an ethnically diverse group of friends. The "Wee Pals" originally appeared in only 5 newspapers but that eventually grew to over 100. In 1972 ABC produced 17 episodes of the "Wee Pals" as an animated series for their Saturday morning lineup.

Physical location: African American Museum and Library at Oakland

Languages: Languages represented in the collection: English

Access

No access restrictions. Collection is open to the public.

Access Restrictions

Materials are for use in-library only, non-circulating.

Publication Rights

Permission to publish must be obtained from the African American Museum & Library at Oakland.

Preferred Citation

Morrie Turner Papers, MS 24, African American Museum & Library at Oakland, Oakland Public Library. Oakland, California.

Biography / Administrative History

Morrie Turner, the first nationally syndicated African American cartoonist, was born on December 11, 1923 in Oakland, California. Turner attended Oakland public schools including Cole Elementary and McClymonds High School before transferring to Berkeley High in his senior year. After graduation he joined the Air Force, where he had his first opportunity to draw a comic strip called "Rail Head" for Stars and Stripes magazine. After leaving the military he returned to Berkeley and married his sweetheart Letha. The couple have lived and raised their family in Berkeley ever since. Turner's first civilian comic strip "Dinky Fellas" was modeled after his mentor Charles "Sparky" Schultz. In the 1960's Turner created "Wee Pals" a comic strip about an ethnically diverse group of friends. The comic strip made Turner the first African American cartoonist to be nationally syndicated. Turner and the "Wee Pals" gave back to the community by working with organizations including: the USO, The Boys Club of Oakland, and the White House Conference on Children. The "Wee Pals" originally appeared in only 5 newspapers but that eventually grew to over 100. In 1972 ABC produced 17 episodes of the "Wee Pals" as an animated series for their Saturday morning lineup. In addition to his love of drawing Turner has been committed to raising awareness of African American history. In 1965 Turner became one of the founding members of the

East Bay Negro Historical Society (EBNHS).

Scope and Content of Collection

Morrie Turner Papers consist of five boxes, original drawings and comic strips of the Wee Pals as well as copies of those clipped from the newspaper. Also included are coloring books by Turner, family photos, professional correspondence and contracts as well as an oral history interview with Turner and original hand puppets based upon the Wee Pals. The collection has been arranged into five series: Comic strips, publications, correspondence, biographical material, photographs and artifacts.

Arrangement

Collection is arranged into series and chronologically within the series. Series I. Comic Strips 1964-1995 Original Strips, 1965-1995 News Clippings, 1964-1993 Art Originals, 1985, 1989, and undated "Wee Pals" published compilation books Series II. Publications, 1969-2007 Series III. Correspondence, 1965-2005 Series IV. Biographical material, 1924-2014 Turner family photographs, 1924-1991 Series V. Artifacts, Undated Miscellaneous, 1968-2011

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.
Turner, Morrie

Multiculturalism -- Caricatures and cartoons

Cartoonists--African-American

Oakland (Calif.)--History--20th century

Oakland (Calif.)--Culture

Ericsson, M. K. (1986). Morrie Turner Creator of "Wee Pals". Canada and United States: Regensteiner Publishing Enterprises, Inc. Turner, M. (2002, April 2). Oral History Interview with Morrie Turner. (N. Thompson, Interviewer)

Other Finding Aids

Jesse W. and Marcella Ford Papers, African American Museum & Library at Oakland; Eugene and Ruth Lasartemay Papers, African American Museum & Library at Oakland; Morrie Turner Collection, Syracuse University Library
http://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/t/turner_m.htm

Comic Strips 1964-1995

Physical Description: 59 folders

Series Scope and Content Summary

Includes original comic strip drawings, published Wee Pals comic strips clipped from newspapers, Wee Pals books, and other original Morrie Turner drawings.

Arrangement

Items are arranged chronologically.

Original Strips 1965-1995

Subseries Scope and Content Summary

Includes original strips drawn by Turner including production notes.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Box OM14:1	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1965 and undated
Box OM14:2	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1966
Box OM14:3	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1967
Box OM14:4	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1968
Box OM14:5	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1969
Box OM14:6	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1970
Box OM14:7	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1971
Box OM14:8	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1972
Box OM14:9	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1973
Box OM14:10	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1974

Box OM14:11	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1975 and undated
Box OM14:12	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1976
Box OM14:13	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1977
Box OM14:14	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1978
Box OM14:15	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1979
Box OM14:15	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1980
Box OM14:17	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1981
Box OM14:18	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1982
Box OM14:19	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1983
Box OM14:20	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1984
Box OM14:21	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1985
Box OM14:22	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1986
Box OM14:23	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1987
Box OM14:24	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1988
Box OM14:25	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1989
Box OM14:26	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1990
Box OM14:27	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1991 May-Aug.
Box OM14:28	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1991 Sept.-Dec.
Box OM14:29	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1992 Jan.-June
Box OM14:30	Wee Pals daily comic strip originals 1992 July-Sept.
Box OM15:1	Wee Pals Sunday originals 1989
Box OM15:2	Wee Pals Sunday originals 1990
Box OM15:3	Wee Pals Sunday originals 1991 June-December
Box OM15:4	Wee Pals Sunday originals 1992 January - June
Box OM15:5	Wee Pals Sunday originals 1992 January - June
Box OM15:6	Wee Pals Sunday originals 1992 July - December
Box OM15:7	Wee Pals Sunday originals 1992 July - December
Box OM15:8	Wee Pals mock up color strips 1992, 1996

News Clippings 1964-1993**Subseries Scope and Content Summary**

Includes newspaper clippings of the Wee Pals comic strips.

Arrangement

Arranged chronologically.

Box 2:1	Wee Pals Sunday scrapbook 1976-1985
Box 2:2	Wee Pals Sunday scrapbook 1978-1984
Box 2:8	Wee Pals Sunday clippings 1970
Box 2:9	Wee Pals Sunday clippings 1971
Box 2:10	Wee Pals Sunday clippings 1972
Box 2:11	Wee Pals Sunday clippings 1974
Box 2:12	Wee Pals Sunday clippings 1975
Box 2:13	Wee Pals Sunday clippings 1976, 1977
Box 2:14	Wee Pals Sunday clippings 1979
Box 2:15	Wee Pals Sunday clippings 1980
Box 2:16	Wee Pals Sunday clippings 1983, 1984, 1985
Box 2:17	Wee Pals Sunday clippings 1989, 1992, 1993
Box OM15:9	African American Chronicle, student newspaper 1991 January - 1992 March
Box OM15:10	Eastbay Negro Historical Society clipping poster 1968
Box OM15:11	Eastbay Negro Historical Society clipping poster 1981
Box 2:50	Morrie Turner press clippings 1964-1969
Box 2:51	Morrie Turner press clippings 1970-1979
Box 2:52	Morrie Turner press clippings 1980-2002
Box 3:1	St. Louis Library newsletter i-94-454 1992 September

Art originals 1985, 1989, and undated

Subseries Scope and Content Summary

Includes original drawings by Turner that were not published in books or newspapers.

Box 2:6	Animation cells circa 1985
Box 2:7	Thank you drawing undated
Box 2:31	Wee pals with police undated
Box OM15:1	Wee Pals Soul Corner originals 1989
Box 3:8	Puffy the Train original art nine drawings circa 1970s
Box 3:8	Wee Pals original drawing undated
Box 3:8	Wee Pals framed original with Ruth Acty Undated
Box 3:7-8	Wee Pals sketches, Archbishop Mitty High School in San Jose, California circa 1980s

Publications 1969-2007

Physical Description: 25 folders

Series Scope and Content Summary

Includes Morrie Turner publication projects beyond the "Wee Pals" comic strip. Projects such as the St. Patrick Day Parade, coloring books, calendars and posters by Turner.

Arrangement

Series is arranged by format and chronologically within the folder.

Books

Box 2:36	'Wee Pals Salutes African-Americans in the military' 2000
Box 3:2	<i>The Rubber soled kid</i> comic book 1976

Coloring books

Box 2:18	Wee Pals "Black and White" coloring book 1969
Box 2:19	"Wee Pals Make Friends with Music" coloring book 1982
Box 1:1	"Go BART-ing" coloring book 1984
Box 2:23	Wee Pals Black History Trivia Quiz and Game book 1986
Box 2:24	"People Living Together" coloring book 1987
Box 2:25	It's Okay to Say No! to Strangers 1988
Box 2:25	Wee-Pals meet Officer Packy Bell and other pals 1989
Box 2:25	Getting in touch with me 1991
Box 2:26	Wee Pals "Latch Key Kids" coloring book circa 1990
Box 2:27	Morrie Turner - Wee Pals - "Learn to Say No" circa 1991
Box 2:28	"Doing the Right Thing" coloring book 1991
Box 2:29	AIDS: Color me deadly coloring book 1987
Box 2:42	AIDS: Color me deadly coloring book correspondence and research 1989
Box 2:30	"Oakland: the accessible city" coloring book 1985
Box 2:33	"AIDS and the Black Community, one on one" coloring book 1989
Box 2:34	

Brochures and pamphlets 1962-2004 and undated

Calendars

Box 2:35	Soul corner 1983
Box 2:44	African American Museum & Library at Oakland calendar 2007
Box 3:7	African American history calendar 1997

Assorted drawings

Box 2:3	Wee Pals Eastbay Negro Historical Society anniversary drawing 1983
Box 2:4	Woman history jumbles and Soul circle undated
Box 2:21	St. Patrick's Day Unity Parade program featuring Wee Pals 1984
Box 2:22	St. Patrick's Day parade- Wee Pals- Morrie Turner grand marshal 1985
Box 2:5	Alien comic strip 1971
Box 2:32	Dellums portrait Project - solicitation, stationary and comic strip 1997
Box 2:45	Wee Pals stationary undated
Box OM:8	Ethnic images poster 1986

Correspondence 1965-2005 1965-1991**Physical Description:** 5 folders**Series Scope and Content Summary**

Includes correspondence and contracts from Turner's agent, Toni Mendez Agency, as well as letters from fans and other general correspondence.

Arrangement

Each folder is arranged chronologically.

Box 2:40	Toni Mendez Agency correspondence. I-94.956 1971-1991
Box 2:41	Toni Mendez Agency contracts circa 1971-1992
Box 2:46	New American Library (NAL), correspondence and contract 1965-1979
Box 2:47	Turner fan letters 1962-2005
Box 2:48	General correspondence 1968-1992

Biographical

Biographical material 1937-2014 1940-2014
Subseries Scope and Content Summary

This series includes report cards and programs from elementary school productions, biographical information, a VHS copy of the documentary "Keeping the Faith with Morrie", an oral interview with Morrie Turner and the Turner Family history printed for the family reunion.

Arrangement

Items are arranged chronologically.

Box 2:37	School assembly program - Cole school 1937
Box 2:38	High school report cards 1941
Box 2:39	Berkeley High School hall of fame 1990, 1991
Box 2:43	Morrie Turner 80th birthday tribute, program 2003 December
Box 2:53	AAMLO and Morrie Turner 2002
Box 2:54	Biographical information 2003
Box 2:55	Interview with Morrie Turner by Nancy Thompson [2 CDS and transcript] 2002 April
Box 2:56	Turner family history 2003, 2010
Box ART1	VHS tape of documentary "Keeping the Faith with Morrie" 2001
Box 2:53	Funeral service program 2014

Turner family photographs 1924-1991 1942-1978
Physical Description: 21 folders**Subseries Scope and Content Summary**

Includes Turner family photographs and photographs related to his work as a cartoonist.

Arrangement

Arranged by photograph identification number.

Box 3:4	Portrait of Morrie Turner in military uniform [001] circa 1940s
Box 3:4	Morrie Turner and three soldier in military jeep [002] circa 1940s
Box 3:4	Portrait of Morrie Turner inscribed, "To Pickle from yours" [003] circa 1940s
Box 3:4	Portrait of Morrie Turner [004] circa 1940s
Box 3:4	Cole Elementary School music class photograph [005/009] 1934
Box 3:4	Cole Elementary School music class photograph [005/009] 1934
Box 3:4	Morrie Turner, one year old, sitting in rocking chair [006] circa 1924
Box 3:4	Portrait of Morrie Turner and soldier in military uniform [007] circa 1940s
Box 3:4	Turner family standing in front of house, pictured (left-right): Morris Turner, Joseph Turner, Marion Turner, Edward Turner [007] circa 1940s
Box 3:4	Morrie Turner and three men standing in front of house [010] circa 1940's
Box 3:4	Publisher Dr. William H. Lee speaking at podium [011] circa 1980s
Box 3:4	Morrie Turner and mom standing in front yard of Aunt Sarah Williams [012] 1966
Box 3:4	Morrie Turner, Joe, Mother, Buster and Ed standing in front yard [013] circa 1940s
Box 3:4	Three boys sitting on front steps [014] circa 1920s
Box 3:4	Portrait of Morrie Turner [015] circa 1940s
Box 3:4	Portrait of Morrie Turner [016] circa 1940s
Box 3:4	Morrie Turner graduation portrait in cap and gown, inscribed: 'To Leroy T. Knox from Morrie Murphy Turner' [017] circa 1941
Box 3:4	Publicity headshot of Alice Scott, Channel 3 [018] circa 1980s
Box 3:5	Morrie Turner and children holding 'Good neighbors come in all colors' posters [019] circa 1980's
Box 3:5	Morrie Turner in drawing room with unidentified man [020] circa 1970s
Box 3:5	Morrie Turner and Charles Schulz standing in front of house [021] circa 1960s
Box 3:5	Morrie Turner drawing cartoon at desk smoking a cigarette [022] circa 1970's
Box 3:5	Morrie Turner drawing cartoon at desk [023] circa 1970's
Box 3:5	Morrie Turner drawing Wee Pals cartoon at desk [024A] 1991
Box 3:5	Charles Schulz and unidentified man standing next to cartoon [024B] circa 1970s
Box 3:5	Headshot of Morrie Turner [025] 1970
Box 3:5	Two men and woman sitting at dining table [026] circa 1970s
Box 3:5	Morrie Turner and unidentified man standing smoking cigarettes [027] circa 1970s
Box 3:5	Morrie Turner hugging two children sitting on couch [028] circa 1970s
Box 3:6	Colorized portrait of Morrie Turner [029] circa 1940s
Box 3:6	Morrie Turner talking to classroom of students [030] circa 1970s
Box 3:6	Morrie Turner appearing on Sunday television program [031] circa 1970s
Box 3:6	Morrie Turner and girl looking at Mexican statues [032] circa 1970s
Box 3:6	Morrie Turner surrounded by group of children at Wee Pals concert [033] circa 1970s
Box 3:6	Morrie Turner surrounded by group of children at Wee Pals concert [033] circa 1970s
Box 3:6	Exterior of Paramount theater, Wee Pals Oakland concert on sign [034] circa 1970s
Box 3:6	Morrie Turner drawing cartoon [035] 1978

Artifacts undated

Physical Description: 2 boxes

Series Scope and Content Summary

Includes "Wee Pals" artifacts, lunchbox, jewelry, desktop bobble, and 13 Wee Pals hand puppets

Arrangement

Artifacts are not arranged.

Box 1	Wee Pals hand puppets [13] undated
Box ART1	Wee Pals lunchbox undated
Box ART1	Wee Pals pins and rings [22] undated
Box ART1	Wee Pals desktop bobble undated
Box 3:3	Miscellaneous 1968-2011 and undated