

## Guide to the Charles E. Banks Papers

Sean Dickerson

African American Museum & Library at Oakland

659 14th Street

Oakland, California 94612

Phone: (510) 637-0198

Fax: (510) 637-0204

Email: [aamlo@oaklandlibrary.org](mailto:aamlo@oaklandlibrary.org)

URL: <http://www.oaklandlibrary.org/locations/african-american-museum-library-oakland>

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## Guide to the Charles E. Banks Papers

### Collection number: MS213

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Oakland, California

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### Descriptive Summary

**Title:** Charles E. Banks Papers

**Dates:** 1956-2000

**Collection number:** MS 213

**Creator:** Banks, Charles E.

**Collection Size:** .75 linear feet(1 box + 1 oversized box)

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

**Abstract:** Bay area blues musician and artist Charles E. Banks (1938-2000) was born Charles Edward Banks in Taylorville, Illinois, December 4, 1938. The Charles E. Banks Papers include assorted biographical material, concert flyers, posters, programs, song lists, club advertisements, entertainment calendars, reproductions of artwork, photographs, handwritten poems, and three audiocassettes featuring Blues on Tap's live and studio recordings.

**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

Charles E. Banks Papers, MS 213, African American Museum & Library at Oakland, Oakland Public Library. Oakland, California.

### Processing Information

Processed by Sean Dickerson.

### Biography / Administrative History

Bay area blues musician and artist Charles E. Banks (1938-2000) was born Charles Edward Banks in Taylorville, Illinois, December 4, 1938 to parents Edward and Grace. His mother, Grace Drasdale, played piano at the local Baptist church, and his father was a day laborer who sang in the church choir. Banks graduated from Taylorville High School in 1956 and joined the United States Air Force. While completing his tour in Spokane, Washington, he met J.J. Malone who taught him to play the electric bass. Banks was given a room to rent at Malone's home and would take guitar lessons from him on weekends. Together they formed their first band, The Rockers (later the Tops in Blues), playing radio stations, and hospital wards and frequently for Nez Perce audiences across the Idaho State line. After leaving the service, Malone and Banks formed the Rhythm Rockers in Fresno, California, adding C.A. Carr, Calvin Peele, and former rockabilly Troyce Key to the lineup.

By 1967 Malone, Carr, and Key had left the Rhythm Rockers. In 1968 Banks relocated to Oakland, California, to join Malone, attending college at California State University, Hayward. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in geography in 1975, becoming employed as a health worker for the City of Berkeley and continuing to play with Malone. Banks would feature on

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Sonny Rhodes' 1977 I Don't Want My Blues Colored Bright, and the Rhythm Rockers' albums I've Gotta New Car (1980) and Younger than Yesterday (1982). In 1986 Banks formed two bands, The Bluesmen and Blues on Tap, a 1940s-50s-sounding jump band in the Louis Jordan style, which were featured weekly at such Oakland blues venues as Eli's Mile High Club, The Fifth Amendment and Louis KeeSee's Your Place Too (previously the Don Barksdale's Sportsman Club and later The Grove). Throughout the 1980's Banks was active with the Oakland Arts program "Blues in the Schools." His music career ended in 1989 as the result of debilitation due to spinal stenosis. Banks took up and devoted the last decade of his life to painting, watercolors, and mixed media artwork, exhibiting and winning several awards in international contests for disabled artists with his series The Fish of Charles E. Banks. He passed away on December 20, 2000.

#### **Scope and Content of Collection**

The Charles E. Banks Papers are arranged into six series: Biographical material, blues career, the Fish of Charles E. Banks, photographs, poetry and audiocassettes. Biographical material includes various diplomas, business cards and Banks' Parks Air Force yearbook. Banks' blues career material consists of concert flyers, posters, and programs, song lists, club advertisements, entertainment calendars, and assorted printed material. The Fish of Charles E. Banks series includes Banks' artist statement, exhibition mailers, juried art show programs and reproductions of artwork. The poetry series consists of eight original poems handwritten by Banks. Included in the photographs are group portraits of Banks in various promotional images and performing on stage, as well as documentation of his visual art. The papers also include three audiocassettes of Charles Banks and Blues on Tap's live and studio recordings.

#### **Arrangement**

Series I. Biographical material Series II. Blues career Series III. The Fish of Charles E. Banks Series IV. Photographs Series V. Poetry Series V. Audiocassettes

#### **Indexing Terms**

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

Blues (Music)--California--San Francisco Bay Area.

Blues musicians -- United States -- Biography.

Eli's Mile High Club (Oakland, Calif.).

Key, Troyce.

Malone, J.J.

Sound recordings.

#### **Related Material**

Key (Troyce) Papers, African American Museum & Library at Oakland

Malone (J.J.) Audiovisual Collection, African American Museum & Library at Oakland

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### **Biographical material 1956-1975**

#### **Series Scope and Content Summary**

Includes various diplomas, business cards and Banks' Parks Air Force yearbook.

#### **Arrangement**

Arranged by format and date thereafter.

#### **Diplomas**

Box 1:1 **Taylorville High School diploma 1956-06-05**

Box 1:1 **Department of the Air Force certificate of training 1959-08-10**

Box 1:1 **Bachelor of Arts, California State University, Hayward 1975-08-29**

#### **The Grass Busters**

Box 1:2 **The Grass Busters business card undated**

Box 1:2 **The Grass Busters gardeners flyer undated**

#### **Park Air Force yearbook**

Box 1:3 **Parks Air Force Base yearbook 1955**

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**Blues career circa 1980s-2000**

**Series Scope and Content Summary**

Includes concert flyers, posters, and programs, song lists, club advertisements, entertainment calendars, and assorted printed material documenting Charles Banks' career as a blues musician.

**Arrangement**

Arranged by format and date thereafter.

**Band member biographies**

Box 1:4 **Blues on Tap [two copies] undated**  
Box 1:4 **Charles Banks undated**  
Box 1:4 **Carl "Good Rockin" Robinson undated**  
Box 1:4 **Chris "Trap" Daniels undated**  
Box 1:4 **Bernard Anderson undated**

**Calendars**

Box 1:5 **Rhythm Rockers' outside performance dates 1986**  
Box 1:5 **Charles "Lover Boy" Banks and Blues on Tap performance calendars circa 1980s**  
Box 1:5 **Eli's Mile High Club entertainment calendars 1987-1988**  
Box 1:5 **Your Place Too entertainment calendars circa 1980s**

**Discographies and song lists**

Box 1:6 **Handwritten discography undated**  
Box 1:6 **Song lists undated**

**Flyers and posters**

Box 1:7 **Three day grand opening Your Place Too featuring Lowell Fulsom and Blues on Tap circa 1980s**  
Box 1:7 **Blues on Tap promotional flyers circa 1980s**  
Box 1:7 **Charlie Banks and Blues on Tap at Your Place Too [two copies] circa 1980s**  
Box OM 23 **First anniversary at Your Place Too with Blues on Tap and guest Al King circa 1980s**  
Box 1:7 **First year anniversary celebration at Your Place Too featuring Al King, Freddie Hughes and Charlie Banks and Blues on Tap circa 1980s**  
Box 1:7 **Labor Day celebration at Eli's Mile High Club with Charles "Lover Boy" Banks and Blues on Tap circa 1980s**  
Box 1:7 **Your Place Too presents Chick Willis (The Stoopdown Man) with Charlie Banks and Blues on Tap circa 1980s**  
Box 1:7 **A night of celebration at Your Place Too 1989-02**  
Box OM 23 **Olympic Tavern reunion of Fresno's own Rhythm Rockers 1989-08-04**  
Box 1:7 **Charles Banks benefit 1990-06-11**  
Box OM 23 **Eli's Mile High Club benefit for blues artist Charles Banks 2000-02-13**  
Box OM 23 **Charlie's Corner posters 2000-02-20**

**On Tap Productions**

Box 1:8 **On Tap Productions promotional image circa 1980s**  
Box 1:8 **On Tap Productions business card circa 1980s**

**Recognitions**

Box 1:9 **East Bay All-Stars Best Musical Group certificate to J.J. Malone, Troyce Key and the Rhythm Rockers for Best Musical Group 1982-10-15**  
Box 1:9 **Bay Area Blues Society Bass Guitarist of the Year Award 1989-02-06**

**Assorted printed material**

Box 1:10 **"Roots," Express 1985-08-30**  
Box 1:10 **Monterey Jazz Festival souvenir program 1986**  
Box 1:10 **"Whole lotta blues at Monterey Festival," San Francisco Examiner 1986**  
Box 1:10 **"Blues in the schools underway," newspaper clipping 1987**  
Box 1:10 **Bay Blues Monthly vol. 2 1989-02**  
Box 1:10 **2nd Annual Blues Awards Show of the Bay Area Blues Society held at the Oakland Museum program 1989-02-18**  
Box 1:10 **"'62 Rhythm Rockers reunited for blues concert at the Oly," Fresno Bee 1989-02-18**

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- Box 1:10 **"'62 Rhythm Rockers reunited for blues concert at the Oly," *Fresno Bee* 1989-08-04**
- Box 1:10 **"Charles Banks: Musician, artist, dreamer," *San Francisco Examiner* 1995-06-05**
- Box 1:10 ***West Coast Blues* No. 14 1995-12**
- Box 1:10 ***West Coast Blues* No. 15 1996-02**
- Box 1:10 **"Blues vet sings song of survival," newspaper clipping circa 1990s**
- The Fish of Charles E. Banks 1988-1999**
- Series Scope and Content Summary**
- Includes Banks' artist statement, newspaper clippings, exhibition mailers, juried art show programs and reproductions of his artwork.
- Arrangement**
- Arranged chronologically.
- Box 1:11 **"Veterans show off their artistic talent," *The Post* 1988-04-10**
- Box 1:11 **Cuniff Studio-Gallery exhibition announcement *Charles Banks 'Creator of the Fish'* 1994**
- Box 1:11 **Gallery Concord exhibition *All-American Folk Art Gallery* 1994**
- Box 1:11 **Jack Wold Fine Art Gallery mailer circa 1995**
- Box 1:11 **32nd Annual Sister Kenny Institute International Art Show by Artists with Disabilities 1995**
- Box 1:11 **Sister Kenny Institute certificate of recognition 1996**
- Box 1:11 **33rd Annual Sister Kenny Institute International Art Show by Artists with Disabilities 1996**
- Box 1:11 **34th Annual International Art Show by Artists with Disabilities 1997**
- Box 1:11 **Charles Banks Artist folder circa 1997**
- Box 1:11 **Charles E. Banks artist statement [two copies] circa 1997**
- Box 1:11 **Two signed Fish prints 1997**
- Box 1:11 **Charles Banks Fish of Charles notecards [three] 1997**
- Box 1:11 **No. 3 painting documentation 1997**
- Box 1:11 **Charles E. Banks paintings 1993-1996 circa 1997**
- Box 1:11 **Charles E. Banks paintings 1997 circa 1997**
- Box 1:11 **Department of Veterans Affairs National Veterans Creative Arts Festival booklet, Grand Junction, Colorado 1999-10-11**
- Box 1:11 **"Veterans awarded for excellence in the arts," *Martinez Record* 1999**
- Box 1:11 **"The fish of Charles opens Saturday," newspaper clipping circa 1990s**
- Photographs 1957-1995**
- Series Scope and Content Summary**
- Includes various group portraits, promotional images, as well as documentation of Banks' visual art.
- Arrangement**
- Arranged by identification number.
- Box 1:12 **Parker Air Force Base class photograph, caption: "Hydraulics course" [001] circa 1990s**
- Box 1:12 **Group photograph (left to right): Sonny Rhoades, Al King, J.J. Malone, Charles Banks [002] undated**
- Box 1:12 **Group photograph of Troyce Key, J.J. Malone and the Rhythm Rockers [003] circa 1980s**
- Box 1:12 **Charles Banks with Oakland Unified School District student, caption: "Blues in the schools" [004] 1987**
- Box 1:12 **Photo collage of the Rhythm Rockers 1958 and 1988 [005] 1988**
- Box 1:12 **The Rhythm Rockers promotional photograph, (left to right): Chris Daniels, Troyce Key, C.A. Carr, J.J. Malone, Charles Banks [006] circa 1980s**
- Box 1:12 **Charles Banks performing on outdoor stage [007] undated**
- Box 1:12 **Blues on Tap (left to right): Chris Daniels, Carl Good Rockin Robinson, Charles Banks, and Bernard Anderson [008] circa 1980s**
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Box 1:12

**Photograph of Lowell Fulsom with Charles Banks [009] undated**

Box 1:12

**Twenty-nine Fish paintings [010-038] 1994-1995**

**Poetry undated**

**Series Scope and Content Summary**

Includes eight pages of original poems handwritten by Charles Banks.

Box 1:13

**Assorted poems undated**

**Audiocassettes circa 1980s**

**Series Scope and Content Summary**

Includes three audiocassettes of Blues on Tap's live and studio recordings

Box 1:13

**Charles Banks and Blues on Tap live with Chick Willis at Your Place Too circa 1980s**

Box 1:13

**Blues on Tap studio recordings circa 1980s**

Box 1:13

**Blues on Tap live at the Cotati Cabaret circa 1980s**