

Collection #  
M 1340  
OM 0650

**ALONZO "POOKIE" JOHNSON  
COLLECTION, CA. 1947-2005**

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Processed by

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## COLLECTION INFORMATION

**VOLUME OF COLLECTION:** Manuscript: 1 half-size manuscript box, 1 OM folder  
Visual: 2 photograph folders, 1 OVB photographs folder, 1 color photograph OVB folder, 1 graphics folder, 1 OVA graphics folder, 1 OVC graphics folder  
Artifact: 1 artifact

**COLLECTION DATES:** ca. 1947-2005

**PROVENANCE:** Kevin B. Johnson, Indianapolis IN, 46222

**RESTRICTIONS:** Color photographs must be requested in advance and may be viewed by appointment only and with the assistance of library staff.

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**ALTERNATE FORMATS:**

**RELATED HOLDINGS:**

**ACCESSION NUMBER:** 2015.0027

**NOTES:**

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alonzo "Pookie" Johnson (b. 1927, d. 2005) was a saxophone playing jazz musician and music educator in the Indianapolis community. According to Chuck Workman's 2005 NUVO article, Johnson was an integral part of the Indiana Avenue Jazz scene as "the heart and soul who maintained that street's modern jazz or bebop movement."

Johnson was born in Indianapolis. He attended IPS Schools 37 and 26 and received his high school education at Crispus Attucks High School. Johnson went on to study music at the Butler University Arthur Jordan School of Music.

In 1945, Johnson joined the Air Force, but continued to pursue music by playing in the Special Services Band. After his military tour of duty ended, Johnson toured around the United States playing jazz with several different bands led by musicians such as King Kolax, Eddie Byrd, and Sax Kari.

Once Johnson's music touring ended, he took a job with the U.S. Postal Service from which he retired after 30 years. His work at the post office did not stop him playing jazz, and he managed an impressive 50 year music career. Johnson was known for playing the saxophone, but he also played many different wind instruments including the flute, but excluding the clarinet. He was the bandleader for several groups including The Wee Dots, The Pookie Johnson Quartet, and The Indy Jazz Company. "The Montgomery Brothers and Five Others", "Together Again" with Russell Webster, "Say What" with Jimmy Coe, "Legacy" by Pookie himself, and "Bock to Bock" with Wes Montgomery are a few of the recordings in which he had a part. In addition to playing clubs in the Indianapolis area, he also performed at many events such as The Children's Museum of Art's Centennial Celebration, the Indiana State Park Jazz series, and the Penrod Festival.

Johnson's talents and achievements were often recognized. In 1985, Sen. Richard Lugar honored Johnson as a Living Legend of Jazz, entering him into the Hall of Records of Congress. In 1991, Mayor William Hudnut presented Johnson with a key to the city. The City of Indianapolis declared August 24, 1996 as Pookie Johnson Day. That same year Gov. Evan Bayh awarded Johnson with "The Sagamore of the Wabash" award.

Outside of his music career, Johnson was actively involved in his community. He spent two years as a Boy Scouts Cub Scouts Leader before serving as a Scout Master for four more years. Johnson was active in the Indianapolis Public School's Parent-Teacher Association. He also served as president of both the Rosecrest Neighborhood Association and the Indy Jazz Connection.

Sources:

Lindquist, David. "10 Indiana jazz icons everyone should know." Indianapolis Star. September 13, 2017. Accessed January 05, 2018. <https://www.indystar.com/story/entertainment/music/2015/09/08/indy-jazz-fest-montgomery-hubbard-johnson-hampton-baker-indiana-avenue/71850642/>.

Materials in collection.

Workman, Chuck. "Remembering "Pookie"." September 7, 2005. Accessed January 05, 2018. [https://www.nuvo.net/music/music\\_news/remembering-pookie/article\\_d34e013f-8efa-5fb9-a350-4d9d3d83ec8c.html](https://www.nuvo.net/music/music_news/remembering-pookie/article_d34e013f-8efa-5fb9-a350-4d9d3d83ec8c.html)

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE**

This collection contains drawings of Alonzo "Pookie" Johnson and band mates. It also includes posters, advertisements, news clippings, and programs related to his performances (ca. 1984-2005). There are a few letters written to Johnson which date between 1980 and 2003. Several of the awards and proclamations presented to Johnson are in the collection including the Sagamore of Wabash Award from Evan Bayh (1996), the City of Indianapolis proclamation declaring August 24, 1996 as Pookie Johnson Day, and a Certificate of Achievement from Indiana University (1993). Also included in this collection are photographs of Johnson spanning from 1989 to 2003 as well as a few undated photocopies of photographs of Johnson as a young man.

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Alonzo Pookie Johnson, Alonzo & Band Sketch, n.d.; Colored Pencil Drawing, n.d.

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Alonzo Johnson, n.d. (For image stuck to glass, refer to digital image for use; See: M1340 Folder in Full Res Storage Non-CONTENTdm)

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Alonzo Johnson, Indianapolis Jazz Foundation Hall of Fame Award, Plaque, 1998

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