

[Drag:] Now I want you to look at this here.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Drag:] That's my birth certificate.

[Allen:] Well this is all good.

[Drag:] Yeah, well that's good. It took me two years and a half till I got it.

[Russell:] That's your baptismal certificate?

[Allen:] Now, this is from the health department.

[Russell:] Oh, that's your birth certificate? And you were born in--

[Drag:] See, I was born in March, 1888, but they ain't got 1888. They got me born in May, second of May, ain't it?

[Allen:] Second of May, 1889.

[Drag:] '89, see.

[Allen:] And you were born March the what?

[Drag:] 1888, March the seventh. But the papers, I mean the place got burned, you know what I mean.

[Allen:] Oh, I see. Where were you born.

[Drag:] In New Orleans. Well, you see, I got to go by this now, you see.

[Russell:] Yeah, you better go by that.

[Drag:] That's what I'm saying, you see, yes, that would be best, you know.

[Allen:] Your father's name was--?

[Drag:] Fereol.

[Allen:] Fereol.

[Drag:] Pavageau, yeah.

[Russell:] How is that spelled?

[Allen:] F-e-r-e-o-l, and Pavageau just like he spells it.

[Drag:] Yeah, Fereol Pavageau.

[Allen:] And your mother was called Alicé

[Drag:] Alicé Phil--Alicé Pavageau.

[Allen:] Alicé Phillippe Pavageau.

[Drag:] Pavageau, yeah, uh-huh.

[Allen:] She was--P-h-i-l-l-i-p-p-e, I see. Now did your father play music?

[Drag:] My father use to play the cornet. Yeah, but my father [was most a--that cornet ?] He was a cigar maker. [Work at Hernsheim ?] in New Orleans, you see. And then he took a fishing pole and made a flute out of it. Yeah, my Pa [started round ?] and my pa died at the age of six--in 1933, I believe it was November 13th., yeah, I was in Columbus, Mississippi, me and my wife.

[Allen:] You were where?

[Drag:] Columbus, Mississippi, me and my wife. That's my wife's home. And my pa died here [unintelligible].

[Allen:] And what was he like, was he what you would call a classic type musician or a musicianer or would you call him a ragtime player.

[Drag:] Who is that, my father?

[Allen:] Yes.

[Drag:] No, more he was--more he used to play with the boys around there for a good time, you know what I mean, around there. [They didn't nothing ?] like no band, but he used to go around with them boys, like birthday or sometimes about two o'clock in the morning or one o'clock in the morning and knock on your door (knocks) and surprise you. [Unintelligible] and [you'd be your

birthday] and your wife wouldn't tell you nothing and then you'd be sleeping, your wife turn around, everybody knocking, [go bom bom (knocks)] and time your wife opens the door [unintelligible] they'd surprise him, you know how it is. [That's why ?]

[Allen:] Do you remember any of the tunes he played other than "Happy Birthday"?

[Drag:] Well, no, that's been some years back, you know. I forgot that. Might be after work. Always was that, you know what I mean. Yeah, see. I don't know. Unless, well, my cousin, his name is August, August is his name, August is French, well he was playing in '28, playing bass.

[Allen:] Was his name Pavageau?

[Drag:] No, that's my ma's sister's son. The oldest son, yeah. They call August, his name was you see, used to play in '28. Used to play guitar and bass. And then he had a room in the back, but he didn't give his mama the key [unintelligible--the key ?] and we had this guitar trio and that's where I learned, myself, the guitar.

[Allen:] Oh yeah.

[Drag:] Yeah, nobody showed me guitar, neither bass.

[Allen:] What was his last name, do you remember?

[Drag:] Well his name was [unintelligible] August. August you see his name was. I believe his name was August Phillip. Phillip I believe his name was. I believe it is. August Phillip. Yeah. And from there when I [start till ?] one day, I believe it was on a Sunday night, they had a supper home and it was a boy come there and playing and my pa was playing, taken a fishing pole and made a flute out of it, was playing and my cousin, August was playing bass and my other cousin, [unintelligible] was playing

guitar. They had a fellow called a--was playing violin, Fortuné was playing violin and my cousin made wrong chords on the guitar.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Drag:] And I told my cousin, I told my cousin, August, I says he doing wrong. I says [unintelligible] he made a wrong key. I said my cousin, [unintelligible] he ain't making the right chord. He said how do you know. Say you can play. I say sure. And my ma and my little sister, was small, you know and I was about 14, 15 year old. I grabbed the guitar. I said play the same piece over again. And I run my cousin out. He stopped playing.

[Allen:] Do you know the piece?

[Drag:] No, that was a mazurka [waltz ?]. Long time ago it'd be mazurkas. See, long time ago. See that music we got now, we [ain't ?] got mazurkas. And from there they pick me up and brought me inside and really they gave me a whole lot of pleasure. [Unintelligible] you know what I mean. I surprised them, you see, and they was satisfied by it.

[Allen:] What kind of dances did they have then?

[Drag:] Oh, that time [man ?] we had a mazurka, polka, waltz, schottische, quadrille, "pim pom", ^{ping pong?} [K C ?], "slow drag", and [two other more ?] I really forgot, you know what I mean.

[Allen:] What is this "pim pom" like?

[Drag:] "Pim pom"? Well it's just an ordinary dance, you dance around, you know what I mean. Like this dance you got there now, but it's different step. See, yeah. And schottische dance was a nice dance, waltz is another nice dance. But today, you can't get no waltz dance or schottische dance, mazurka, polka, you can't

find it, cakewalk, you may, I don't think. You got to have a couple, see. You really--I'm telling you there were really some nice dances at that time, see. 'Cause I used to follow many parades and they had many parade bands, they had Golden Rule Band and there they had Buddy Bolden's Band. [Unintelligible] you see. [Unintelligible] they had was guitar, by that time they had-- [Allen:] Well, did you know any of the guys in these different bands? Did you know people in Perez's and the Golden Rule and Bolden, you know any of the other men.

[Drag:] Yeah, I know the men. Fihle's [George Fihle] Band was Manuel Perez, Alphonse Picou, there was Billy Marrero, bass; Jimmy Palao, violin; and they had this MacMurry on the drums. Trombone was get the man straight, Fihle, his name was Fihle, and that's my first wife's cousin, Fihle.

[Allen:] Was he related to George Fihle?

[Drag:] I don't know.

[Russell:] What did he play?

[Drag:] Trombone, big Fihle.

[Russell:] Well, that's who it was, wasn't it, George?

[Allen:] I guess. I was trying to find out. And, now who was in the Golden Rule?

[Drag:] Adolph [unintelligible] and "Bubu" [unintelligible].

[Allen:] Now what did Adolph^e--

[Drag:] Adolph^e was playing cornet, he was a shoemaker, played cornet, he was playing trumpet. And Bubu was playing slide-- playing trombone, playing valve trombone. That time they didn't using no slide trombone like they use now. And they had this fellow they call, let me see, was playing guitar, I believe it was,

[Alexander, Sr. ? of Johnny St. Cyr reel see below, RBA] ?

not Willie Santiago, no, it was, that's been so long, you know,
let me see, I believe it was Raymond [Quinn ?]

[Allen:] Raymond?

[Drag:] Raymond Quinn. No, you don't know him. You wasn't born
yet. I was about 17, 16, 17 years old. [Unintelligible]

[Russell:] What was his last name?

[Drag:] Raymond Quinn. He was a fellow about your color. He
had his hair--nice hair. And he'd be drunk, he's playing guitar
and he'd never make a missed note.

[Allen:] Did he look like me or something?

[Drag:] I mean--your color. I mean he had nice straight hair.
[Unintelligible] guitar playing. [Unintelligible] like Willie
Santiago, boy, wouldn't of compared with him at all.

[Allen:] No?

[Drag:] That Joe Brooks, I know all of them. See.

[Allen:] Joe Brooks? Who did he play with?

[Drag:] Joe Brooks. Banjo with Manuel Perez. See, Manuel
Perez changed the name of the Imperial Band, changed the name three
times. First name was the Boys In Blue. That was the first
band come out in uniforms. And then they come to be the Superior
Band and then, after that, the Imperial Band. You see they
changed three times. That's Manuel Perez's band.

[Allen:] Back to this Golden Rule, this Adolph who played cornet,
did he have a son who played or anything?

[Drag:] Not to my knowledge.

[Allen:] I was wondering if that was Adolph Alexander's father.

[Drag:] I know Freddy Keppard and Louis Keppard. Yeah, see they
had a band, too. You see.

[Allen:] What was it called?

[Drag:] Well, I don't know, I believe it had--a makeup band. You know what I mean. [Unintelligible] Freddy Keppard was playing trumpet, Louis Keppard playing guitar. He was the one turn around took a sandpaper, (makes sandpaper noise) put his guitar down and [unintelligible] this.. (makes another noise).

[Allen:] I never heard that. That's Louis Keppard, you say?

[Drag:] Louis Keppard, yeah. He's the one who come there and he's the first one took a piece of sandpaper--was playing guitar and when they come to his part, he'd put the guitar down, take the sandpaper up and rub it down. [That's where "Sandpaper George" got the idea ?] Oh [about ?] my bass, now that [little ?] bass I had, what I made, well I took a soapbox and put twine around it and I, on a Monday, it would be "blue Monday" and people around there, they all used to laugh at me. You can laugh all you want, but I know what I'm doing. By me playing guitar, I showed this boy Joseph Davis, how to play guitar; well we had Picou singing and he's the one composed "Eh, La Bas."

[Allen:] Picou?

[Drag:] Yeah, Ulysses Picou. I'm talking about his brother.

[Russell:] Alphonse's brother?

[Drag:] Yeah, his brother. See, "Eh, La Bas" don't go like that. (sings his authentic version of the song) You know what it is. Just like wife and husband be fussing. And he tell her--she tells him: ["No you didn't tell me to go there" ?] She said: "Yes, you told me." "No you didn't." "Yes, I told you." You know what I mean, just fussing, see. That's the way "Eh, La Bas" goes, see. It's an old Mardi Gras song. On Mardi Gras Day they used to play that. And then after I learned, and went and I

*[See Alan Loma, Mr. Jelly Roll
Duell, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1950, p. 73, for more on Ulysses Picou]*

heard the boy [unintelligible], I believe it was Billy Marrero. Billy Marrero said give me the A string. And I took a pencil, I put A.

[Allen:] You took a pencil?

[Drag:] Yeah, marked A.

[Russell:] Marked it on.

[Campbell:] Marked it on the--

[Drag:] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Said give me a D string, I said and I put D. Now give me G. Put G. Put G. Now E. Mark E. That's all I want, you know. Well like Monday, we had blue Monday. Well where I used to stay, a lady called me, she's dead now, [Miss Charlotte ?] on a blue Monday around in there, beer, and, oh a lot of stuff, chicken cooked box. Robichaux, yeah the old bass was broken up and I was watching him, you know, he used to like wine.
(bass tuning: E,A,D,G - tuned in forths)

That bass was all broke. I said: man. I Said: wait a while. Give me that nick here. Give me a nic here. I said all I want is the keys. Gave him fifty cents. See, looking for the key on that bass, see. That's what I turn around and put on my piece of wood. That what I used to tighten my string up. Well I know the A on the guitar, same thing as on the bass. The D on the guitar, same thing on the bass, G on the guitar, something on the bass. So one night we turn around, we start playing, I didn't tune up at all, I said "Wait a while, brother" I said: "Give me A." I tell you, I was thinking about that piece of paper in my pocket. "Give me A." Boom, boom, boom, wang, wang, that old string kept on going, the key, you know. I got that three [notes ?]. I tune up my D and my G. "Lets all play something, alright." [By ear ?] we started playing and turned around there. [Unintelligible.] First

thing then I know the key. You know the hardest key for me to make on that bass was B flat, that's the same thing you make there for C. Well it come to me--I says--then they was playing a piece they throw in G. When I was--I says: "I don't know." I was just making good time. I says: "Hit your G." I say: "Oh, you make this a [bounce ?] that's open strings. D is open strings, too." You see. It come to my mind. And that's where I turned around and come home. That's where I made that one. From there, well I went by Martin's Grocery on Orleans near Robertson [Streets], and I picked up on those barrels, one of them round barrels, upright barrel, I mean with them upright boards; that's when I made that little bass.

[Allen:] Out of a barrel?

[Drag:] Yeah, out of a barrel. And I had that bass for, whoo, a good while. Me and my wife, I showed my wife how to play guitar. She can play guitar and play my little bass, too. She played piano and organ, also. Well, we'd be playing at the Autocrat [Club] on Fridays and Sundays. Me and my wife and Picou, Ulysses Picou, and "Sandpaper George." Used to play on Friday night and Saturday and Sunday night, that's the time we used to play there.

[Allen:] What happened to "Sandpaper George"?

[Drag:] He's been dead. He died. He died before Ulysses Picou died.

[Allen:] Oh, I didn't know that.

[Russell:] That's all, only sandpaper, he couldn't do nothing but sandpaper. [Unintelligible] like one day, it was Albert Glenny (he's dead, too), Albert Glenny, Ulysses Picou, Alphonse Picou, Joseph Davis [sp.], and "Sandpaper George." They went to a birthday, and they all was dancing, and the meantime round [they was were

dancing around, in the meantime], when they got through playing and Albert Glennny had his bass and everybody was drinking.

"Sandpaper George" had a glass of wine, he said: "That's a shame. Everybody's drinking and that poor thing, like that [unintelligible] laying up there--give him a drink." And George took a glass of wine and poured it in Albert Glennny's bass, and Albert Glennny, he got hot. Yeah, he got hot. (all laughter) Yeah, if it wouldn't be for Joseph Davis [sp.], there'd have been a humbug. Ask Alphonse Picou, he can tell you about that. And that's where I turn around. Well, I was not there, not there but they told me about it, you know what I mean. Yeah, it was a time. George--Albert Glennny would have killed George, about that bass, yeah.

[Allen:] Did the Golden Rule Band, and the Imperial, and Buddy Bolden's Band--

[Drag:] Was the same, at the same time, yeah.

[Allen:] Did they sound alike at all, the bands, or would they sound different?

[Drag:] Well, I'm gonna tell you, Manuel had what you call a swing band.

[Allen:] A swing band?

[Drag:] Yeah, and Buddy Bolden had a blues band. More of the blues, you see. They had a contest on the Globe Hall on time. Manuel Perez and the Buddy Bolden Band. Well at that time, "Big Eye Louis" [Nelson] was playing with Manuel, you see. And first thing you know, Buddy Bolden didn't show up. No, see Manuel, Manuel was a trumpet player. Buddy Bolden didn't show up.

[Allen:] He was afraid?

[Drag:] He was scared, sure, because Frankie Dusen, Frankie Dusen was playing trombone with Buddy Bolden. Bob Lyons, used to shine shoes on Rampart--he was bass player. And that's all I can tell you about. Well, I'm glad you all came to see me and I appreciate that you all [got here ?] and had a little talk. Well, I'm not much of a speaker.

[Russell:] Oh, you're a fine speaker. You're a wonderful speaker, Drag. Tell me--

[Allen:] We like it. You tell good stories, man.

[Drag:] I'll never forget now, I used to dance.

[Russell:] I was going to ask you about the dancing and where you used to--where were these--

[Drag:] I dance--I mean at Economy Hall, Hope Hall, Globe Hall, Masonic Hall, New Hall, Francis Amis Hall, I didn't bar nobody.

[Didn't bother ?] if it was mazurka, polka, or waltz. But I [unintelligible] used to dance more and get my kicks out of, that slow drag dance and, by me dancing that slow drag, the people [would] say: "Hellow, Slow Drag, they dance the slow." Well they kept that name and called me: "Slow Drag," you see and that's why they kept that name. Yeah, I used to have a nice time. Well, let the Lord bless you all and I'm glad you all come to see me.

[Russell:] I was gonna ask a little bit more if you have time.

[Drag:] I have time.

[Russell:] About the slow drag, did you dance that with just one girl or did you go around in a circle?

[Drag:] One girl, one girl, she suppose--everybody got to have a company. I mean a couple, see. Just like you have a lady, you have

a lady to dance with, and the one that dance the slow drag the best wins the prize. You know how I win my prize, Gasoon ^{Joseph} ^{Philip (L.G.) Jr?} [unintelligible], use to--he's a good dancer, too. Then we had a boy called ^(A.D.?) Etienne [unintelligible], he went all around showing me that he could be dancing. I was working painting. I stuck a piece of pine wood in my foot, for--must have been about two weeks.

[Allen:] A piece of what?

[Drag:] Pine wood, I mean a little sliver, coming out the ladder, you what I mean. It was sticking out.

[Russell:] A splinter.

[Drag:] Yeah, and my brother-in-law go ahead and Garson went and told him: "What are you gonna cancel this [unintelligible].

He said: "Uh-uh-uh, that ain't got nothing to do with it that. I'm gonna win this bet and [don't want to give me the money, you got to shut up" ?] So I went and turn around and my mother took off ^{a piece of} rag and took a needle and dig, dig [inside there ?] I thought about me pull, the whole would come out, but a piece broke in there. About five, days, six days after it make a corruption, you know what I mean. It was dark. You remember I told you I saw my Ma, I couldn't walk on it. My ma told me--I said to my ma I couldn't walk on it. My ma told me: "Lay down ther" and pat me and my sister pat me and she run that needle in there, and that stuff come out and she squeeze it and I pass away for a while, got weak, you know. Two--about a day and a half after that, turn around there and more I walk on it, I feel better, you know. Well I kept on walking, I felt good you know. So my brother-in-law say-- I say: "Look, just let that go on 'cause I got it." Garsoon say-- I say: "Garsoon, I say, let it go." I say: "One thing I want

you to do." He say: "What?" "Guess where me and my lady is gonna be, I wish you take a chalk and mark right down there. Him and his lady right there, you know just take a chalk and mark it down. When the band start he gonna be in fromt--I'll be in front, but when the band stops, when the man stops, I'm gonna stop just where the chalk is. (knocks) See. Now if he stops [right there ?] well it will be a draw bet, you see. Now if he before him--I stop--I mean pass by marked chalk and he stop there, that make loss. And the first thing the band start a-playing la-de-la, I knew I know the time, I know when the band gonna stop and I ain't no fool. Then I turn around there and fell [where ?] the [band is going to stop] and I slide down off of there and I turn the lady round, the band stop, on the--just like there on that chalk, right here. [What you think, he like this ?] way over there [unintelligible]. What you think the bet was?

[Allen:] How much?

[Drag:] Fifteen dollars.

[Allen:] Wow!

[Drag:] And what he got, the man won nothing. But the bet was all outside. An umbrella--the lady gets the umbrella. Everything [unintelligible] the bet's the umbrella, you don't get nothing, the lady get's the umbrella.

[Russell:] The umbrella was the prize?

[Drag:] The lady gets that, you don't gets that (laughs).

[Russell:] So you got your fifteen dollars, anyway.

[Drag:] Yeah I did. And then I believe after that, I believe after that, I believe about two or three weeks after that, that boy drowned himself in the old basin.

[Allen:] He did what?

[Drag:] Drowned himself in the basin. His name was [Etienne ?],
[A. D.]
A. D. the name they called him was [Etienne ?].

[Russell:] Drowned himself in the basin, huh?

[Drag:] In that basin, that old basin there, Right there on Carondelet Street--

[Russell:] Yeah, by Basin Street.

[Drag:] Yeah, they used to call it along time ago Carondelet
~~wharf~~ ^{walk} Now they call it Lafitte [Avenue], but it used to be
Carondelet ~~wharf~~ ^{walk}.

[Allen:] I was going to ask you about Esau McGhee [sp.] and the Undertaker Band. Who was Esau McGhee?

[Drag:] Esau McGhee? The Undertaker Band?

[Allen:] I thought you were the one who told me about that a long time ago.

[Drag:] Uh-uh. I got Esau McGhee [sp.] used to play at--play banjo and guitar. Esau McGhee used to play guitar and banjo. Him and I used to play together. But I didn't belongs to the union at that time, then. [We used ?] were around, you know. Played around them bar-rooms, different places--[take ?]up a collection [pick ?]

[Allen:] And he would play the banjo, he was a banjo--

[Drag:] Banjo and guitar and bass player, too.

[Allen:] And what would you play?

[Drag:] Well see, he was playing banjo, I was playing the bass. Sometimes he'd play banjo, I'd play the guitar. That cause sometime we'd be three or four. Go in that bar-room like Conti and Bienville [Streets which do not cross], I mean Dauphine and Conti, all through them places go all through there. All up on the Tulane Avenue, all around there, you know what I mean,

that big bar room, turn around in there and take up a collection. Sometimes would pay maybe six dollars a piece, collection money, that was big money, you know what I mean, we--at that time we used to get in the car, electric car [street car], with your bass. But now you can't get in there; no more electric cars now [for bass players], you have to have a cab sometimes, yes. Yes, indeed.

[Russell:] Did you ever have to carry your bass to a job?

[Drag:] No, indeed. [I used to walk like close distance, like we was up there--]. I had to get a license for my bass to get in the car--didn't charge you nothing, free.

[Russell:] Didn't charge you extra for the bass?

[Drag:] No, no. I didn't turn around there, see. You can get the car with your bass, but it have to go in the back. Didn't charge you nothing, but now it's different; ain't no more car, the Canal [street car] is on Canal, that's all, you see over there--

[Russell:] There's buses now.

[Drag:] Yeah, buses, see. I went to--we was playing at Mannie's place on St. ^{Rock} ~~Rock~~--.

[Allen:] Benefit and St. ^{Rock} ~~Rock~~?

[Drag:] Yeah, [you remember Mannie's ?]? We used to--I used to catch the electric car with my bass, see. That's the time, the time we was playing [when] I'd catch the electric car with my bass; I'd [jump ?] down on that corner, I had to walk a block and a half with the bass, see.

[Russell:] That's where you--your bass was in the flood, too, wasn't it?

[Drag:] My bass--it sure did, it [did in New Orleans ?] and that same bass there. I had it down like this here. Had water that high over it.

[Russell:] Oh they had about four feet I think or three feet, anyway.

[Drag:] Yeah, and Lawrence Marrero, he had his amplifier and his, I believe, his guitar, yeah, Well, couldn't get out of there, took me [eight days ?] till after I got out of there and I told my wife, I said; "Oh baby, what you worried about?" I said: "I might have--if something happened to our instrument." ["Oh, my."?] When I went out they were sweeping the water. When I took that--same time I got, when I went and took the cover off, the water "shusssh" [and the head, ?] the neck come clean off [in] my hand [unintelligible].

[Allen:] Yeah. What year was that now?

[Drag:] Well I--let me see what year, now.

[Russell:] It wasn't so long ago.

[Drag:] Let me see, 19--right before we went to New York, huh, no after we come from New York, huh?

[Russell:] 1947 I think it was.

[Drag:] 1947 I think it was, yeah. 1947, yeah. I think it was 1947. And I come there and Lawrence [was showing ?] me [the bass,] [a place,] well I couldn't fix that bass. And we had to play St. Joseph's Night. Now it was about five days or six days before St. Joseph's night. Said: "You need [an] iron clip." I said: "I don't need no iron clip, I know what I'm doing." [how to do it ?] And I took my wood, make my own ^{lamp} [unintelligible]. Yes, see my bass; see I took a piece of wood like and cut it out like this [unintelligible.] I made about six with wood.

[Russell:] While I think of it, Drag, what other jobs have you done, slater or different things, you used to tell me, what other jobs did you do?

SLOW DRAG PAVAGEAU
Reel I--retyped
December 10, 1958

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[Drag:] Oh yes, I used to work--first I used to work for [Al
Maestri ?], 919 North Robertson Street, chicken man. [Well ?]
I used to do all the slate work; paper hanging and plastering
is my trade. I'd do carpenter work.

729 Union Street

END OF REEL I
SLOW DRAG PAVAGEAU
DECEMBER 10, 1958

