

MOSELEY, BATISTE  
I [of 2]--Digest--Retyped  
September 23, 1961

Also present: William Russell  
Ralph Collins  
Recorded at Batiste Moseley's  
home 1334 Pacific Street, Algiers

John Batiste "Bat" Moseley was born December 22, 1893 [died July 28, 1965--see obituary], at the present site of the Naval Station on the Lower Coast of Algiers [section of New Orleans]. He is older than his brother [Edgar Moseley], and says he taught him drums. BM's father played guitar but not in bands; BM says his father started him (age about nine years) on snare drum, and that he and his father would go around together making money by playing together. His father has been dead about ~~6~~ forty-three years; he was forty-one when he died [according to calculation, his father was born about 1877, and would have been about sixteen years old when BM was born]. BM didn't really take up drums until he was about thirty years old; when his father died, he quit playing and didn't begin again until he was about thirty. BM and his father played for penny parties. BM later played in a "field band," which consisted of piccolo [possibly tin fife;RBA], bass drum and snare drum; they played for parties. They also played for the Grand Army of the Republic organization, which would go to Chalmette [National Cemetery] every year. In the field band were: Jack "Pie Eater" [Williams? Compare Bill Matthews, reel], piccolo; Albert Silvy [Spelling?], snare drum; BM, bass drum. Pie Eater and Silvy are long dead; BM was a youngster when they died. BM later became member of a six-piece band; personnel: "Pie Eater," trumpet; BM, trap drums; Julius Granderson [spelling?], string bass; Ernest Silvy, clarinet; ["Boozeville"?] guitar; [one other, probably trombone]. BM quit playing when the others in the band died;

he didn't resume until he was around thirty years old; he was about sixteen years old when he first quit playing. The six-piece band played for dancing, with emphasis on Dixieland music. The field band, previously mentioned, played marches; BM tells of going with the GAR (Civil War veterans, he says) to Chalmette, every year; they would travel by a train (called "Smoky Mary" [!!!RBA] or by boat. BM worked in Bucktown, playing with the six-piece band. BM later played with the big band of Percy Humphrey.

Talk of drums used during BM's early career. BM mentions that snare drums had only one head then BM used only cymbals, snare drum and bass drum in the early part of his career; he began using all other accessories (cowbell, cocoanut shells, etc.) when playing with the ten-piece dance band of Willie Humphrey (the elder), saxophone and clarinet, and Percy Humphrey, trumpet, in the Thirties after BM took up drums again. BM also had a xylophone; he was taught how to read music by Joe Howard, who played [horn] with the band. BM tells about the apparatus he had to make a tiger's roar for "Tiger Rag"; it was a galvanized bucket over which cowhide was stretched on one end, with a resined rope inserted in the middle of the hide; when the rope was pulled, the sound was made.

BM began teaching his brother, Edgar, drums about 1934; Edgar had "fooled around" with drums a little, but BM taught him then. BM showed him how to play bass drum, and then put him in a street band, the original Tuxedo [Brass] Band, which had been led by [Papa] Celestin originally, but was led by Eddie Jackson, who was manager; BM was assistant manager. BM was given Jackson's

sousaphone when Jackson died, but he sold it. Jackson lived on the Algiers side, on Monroe Street, when he died. He died about 1938; he was around seventy-one or seventy-two years old when he died. Jackson was also manager of the Tuxedo Band when Celestin was leader.

BM says Henry Allen, Sr., lived in the 600 block of LaMarque Street [Algiers] when he died; BM played with him. BM says he played with almost all the old-timers. Some members of Allen's Brass Band: BM, bass drum; George Allen (brother of the leader), snare drum; Wooden Joe [Nicholas] and Allen, Sr., trumpets. (Henry "Red" Allen, Jr. sometimes played trumpet in the band when he lived in New Orleans, and Alvin Alcorn played trumpet sometimes); Willie Humphrey [the younger], clarinet; Isidore Barbarin, alto horn; [Herman] "Bassie" [Mitchell], now in California, bass horn; Harrison Barnes, Jack Carey, trombones; Frank Joseph (who was also a cook on a river boat [tug?], baritone horn. Later, John [Porter?], who lived on Loyola Street, played baritone horn. Most of the men in that band are now dead. [This spans many years--RBA].

WR mentions [Manuel] Manetta, and his talk of his uncle, Norm [Manetta] who led the Pacific Brass Band, which BM remembers from his childhood; he remembers hearing the band in rehearsal in the 600 block of DeArmas Street. BM says that George Sims [Spelling?] was the manager of the band; the bass drummer, also named George, lived in Algiers, has been dead ten or eleven years. The band may have been called Pacific because of the street, Pacific, or because of the near proximity of the Southern Pacific Railroad shop. Besides the Pacific Band, there were the Golden Leaf Band

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(the Tuxedo Band came later) and the Excelsior Band [and others?]; Peter Bocage, of Algiers, played in the Excelsior, which drew most of its members from the east side of the river [Algiers is west side]; another member, dead 13-14 years, was also from Algiers. The Pickwick Brass Band was from New Orleans, not from the Algiers side of the river. The brass bands were strictly reading bands at the time; they used the Red Book ["Standard High-Class Rags"]. They played the old hymns ("Bye and Bye," "In The Gloryland") without the music--"by head." If a new member [or substitute] of the bands did not know the old hymns, someone would write out his part; BM says some musicians could never play anything without the music; he says Peter Bocage's son, Edwin Bocage, could never play without music, not even the blues. The old bands also could play the old standard Dixieland numbers by head. BM mentions that Jim Robinson and George Lewis couldn't read, but could play from memory like so many dance band men then. He says bands would make up numbers, give them any kind of name.

Talk of clubs which were on the west bank in the old days: the Wolves, still in Gretna; Young Men [of Algiers], Young Men (of Oakdale). The Turtleback Hall, on a canal [near BM's home], is still there, but is now a residence; it was owned by the Friends of Progress. More talk of old halls, now gone. "String bands"--string bass, guitar, drums, trumpet [i.e. cornet] clarinet, trombone--played for the dances and other functions at the various halls. Banjo later replaced the guitar. They played quadrille, schottische, waltz, etc. The Eagle Eye Hall was demolished, but the organization still exists. Only the Young Men [of Algiers],

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the Young Men and the Wolves in Gretna use bands today. The Lions, also of Gretna, once used bands.

BM says he began teaching his brother [drums] in about 1938 [said 1934 earlier]. RC mentions the drums solos BM [and his brother] did, asks who plays them with BM now; BM says Chester Jones is the only one who can do them with him; says he could teach [Henry] "Booker T." [Glass], with whom he has played some, to do the solos with him. BM says he himself plays all the parts when he is playing in a dance band. BM says the drum solos he plays [speaking of the duets in the brass bands] just happened, one day on a parade. No one did it before.

BM had a bass drum, with Golden Leaf painted on it; it is his drum. He explains, says that after the Tuxedo Band ceased to exist, after the death of Eddie Jackson, the Golden Leaf was formed, with BM as manager. John [Casimir] formed the Young Tuxedo Brass Band, so BM changed the name of the old Tuxedo to Golden Leaf.

Continue talk of BM's drum solos. BM gave the drum to Kid Howard. WR thinks that Dave Bailey soloed [on bass drum]. [Compare E. Gibson Brass Band LP]. Abbie Williams tried the solo once in a Jolly Bunch parade; Booker T was on bass drum. Williams played with BM in bands Kid Howard would get up; Howard would hire Williams as a gesture of friendship.

Discussion of [Preservation Hall?]

End of Reel I

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Remus Matthews, now dead, of the Matthews brothers, played [bass drum] in church [Compare Harry Oster Tape]; BM says he lived on Belleville Street, back of the Mothe Funeral Home; his widow Emma Matthews, still lives there. "Bebé" Matthews has been dead a long time; Bill Matthews is the only one of the brothers still living [he is now dead--about 1964]. Bill was first a drummer [like his brothers; he later switched to trombone]; he first played with a band led by a good trumpet player, "Lagou" [spelling?], long dead. Bill got started on trombone with Punch [Miller]. [Compare PM, reel] The Johnson brothers, Yank and Buddy, were both good trombone players. Frankie Duson, trombonist, was also a barber; he cut BM's hair; he lived opposite the Catholic cemetery, with his father and family. Old man Dorsey [not Eddie [Dawson], still alive [and also a bass player]) was a bass player. Another old-timer was Bernie Dast, one of the Dast [family?]; he played with Frankie Duson. Duson died in New Orleans [on the east side of the river]; BM says he thinks Duson has a nephew still living; WR says he thinks a daughter of Duson is still alive. BM says he thinks Duson was living on Jena, around Freret, when he died. WR mentions Harrison Barnes; WR mentions Hooker, a cornetist. BM says the only cornet players of the old-timers he remembers is Peter Bocage. BM says Tom Albert [cornet] came from Algiers' Lower Coast; he Albert when he, BM, was a child; BM played with him, as a child, and later, in the Eureka Brass Band; others in the band then: [Willie] Wilson, trumpet and manager; [Johnny] Wilson, baritone horn. WR mentions Henry "Sleepy" Robertson,

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drummer (also works for an undertaker, says BM); BM says he taught Robertson drums. Robertson told WR of a Wilson, clarinet, non-union, still playing in a band; Wilson lives downtown. BM mentions [Emile] "Mealy" Barnes, also a clarinetist, and <sup>no longer in the Union; BM</sup> ~~also now dead.~~ mentions "Big Eye Louis" [Lieber], clarinetist and also now dead. BM played with Tom Albert in dances and also in the street. Most of Albert's work then was in Violet [Louisiana], where he got a lot of work; Albert also worked at Delacroix Island. In the band: Albert on trumpet; a guitarist, now dead; a clarinetist, now dead, the uncle of Fats Domino, called "Old Man" Baptiste [spelling?]; one other (no bass).

BM says most of the jobs were in New Orleans [east side of river]; the only functions using music on the west side were given by societies, and twice a month the Southern Pacific [railroad] gave a dance, at the same time the railroad employees were paid; the dances were held at a pavillion (near BM's home). WR says "Fess" [Manuel Manetta] mentions places such as the Ping Pong, on Brooklyn Street in Algiers; BM says it was a honky tonk. BM tells about the Green Tree, another honky tonk, corner of Lamarque and Brooklyn; another one was at Teche and Bringier. Most of the honky tonks like those just mentioned had player pianos, not being able to afford bands. Someone was hired to pump the piano, with his feet, for which service he received \$1 per night; later, coin-in-the-slot pianos were brought in.

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BM talks of jitney dances which began during the depression and paid \$15 a week [i.e., taxi, or dime a dance places] Yank and Buddy Johnson played jitney dances a lot; Yank played at one which was upstairs, corner of Burgundy and Canal. BM mentions the Budweiser, another jitney. . . . Talk of the aesthetics and technique of street drumming. BM says the most important thing for drummers is keeping time; the most important technique of snare drumming is the crush roll, which is the same as the press roll. BM says he learned all his drumming technique on his own. The second band job BM was ever on, with the Royal Jazz Band, was in Mobile [Alabama]; the leader, Joe Harris played trombone, and BM was on drums; others: Frank Johnson, ; Harry Vinet [Spelling?] (now living in St. Rose, his original home), trumpet. The band, 6 pieces, alternated with a 12-piece band; BM's band was so good that it was chosen to play the dance [apparently there were several events connected with the occasion], while the 12-piece band had to play outside, for children at a maypole. BM was praised by the leader of the larger band; BM didn't tell him it was only his second job. The leader of the larger band looked very much like Kid Rena. BM didn't know how to read at that time; he learned when playing with the band led by [Willie] Humphrey [the elder]; Joe Howard, ex-trumpet player, then playing tuba with that band, taught him how to read. BM says string bass in orchestras had all been replaced by tuba at that time. Howard also taught BM how to tune his drums; the

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bass drum was tuned to the A string of bass violin, and the snare drum was tuned to the concert A? of the] trumpet. BM used orchestral drum parts as guides only; he would play the introduction as written, but would then improvise until near the end, when he would have to refer to the music for guidance. He also played any special parts as they were; when he had played a piece 2 or 3 times, he wouldn't need the music anymore.

The first funeral band BM ever saw was white, playing for a white funeral, in Algiers; BM says the colored bands picked up the practice afterwards, so far as he knows. Papa Laine, white band leader, is mentioned. BM says another [white] man, now dead, who lived on Alix street, had a street band. BM was about 8 or 9 years old when he saw the white funeral band. BM also saw white dance bands--string bands, 6 pieces; one was led by a musician whose father owned a jewelry store. BM mentions the Brunies brothers, who lived in Algiers, one of whom played trumpet [Merrit? Richard? Abbie?]; BM played in bands which "bucked" with the band in which the Brunies brothers played; they would chain together the wheels of the furniture wagons in which the bands would be riding on advertising jobs. BM says there was a lot of bucking on Sunday, when a lot of bands would be advertising dances. He says the tune, "Tailgate Ramble", was named for the way the trombonist rode the advertising wagons. It is mentioned that Richard Brunies, [trumpet player?] died just about a year ago, and that two of the Brunies brothers [Abbie and Merritt] live in Biloxi.

On Mardi Gras day, people from New Orleans [East Bank] would come to the Algiers side, where a lot of celebration occurred. BM played in a field band of 3 pieces (piccolo, snare drum and bass drum) which worked for a white Carnival club; the club paraded in Algiers and then went across the river to parade more.

Talk of the old times, when the city of New Orleans was much less developed than now. BM says Manuel Manetta played in cabarets on Rampart Street, in the "blue light" [i.e., red light] district; the "worst" [i.e., most?] work for "string" bands was in the District, in the cabarets, which had rooms in the back for dancing. There wasn't much going on uptown [how far up?]; most of the band work was in the French part of the town.

Old man [Louis] Cottrell [Sr.] was a good drummer; he worked with Peter Bocage in the Creole Serenaders, and in [A.J.] Piron's band, which went to New York, made a big hit, made some records. The Piron band had its picture in Maison Blanche [department store], and played on the stage at the Lyric Theater for a week. Bocage had two brothers who also played in the Piron band: Henry Bocage played tuba; Charlie Bocage played guitar. Steve Lewis played piano in that band. Other drummers BM liked were Bebe' and Bill Matthews; Bebe' played mostly in dance bands; Remus Matthews, another brother, played drums also, but only in brass bands, in the street; he played only snare drum. [Compare Harry Oster tape with RM on bass drums.] John McMurray and Dee Dee Chandler,

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drummers, are mentioned. BM knew Red Happy [Bolton], who died  
in Chicago [Compare other interviews, RBA]. BM also knew Black <sup>see history of Cotton Club, Aug 23, 1958, p 24 (last)</sup>  
Benny [Williams], who was killed by a woman. Walter Brundy,  
John Vigne, Henry Zeno (drummers) are mentioned. BM knew drummer  
Arnold Depass. Cottrell was BM's favorite drummer of the old-  
timers.

BM really enjoyed playing with the Humphrey band; they  
were nice fellows, and BM learned a lot. Joe Howard, then  
playing tuba, had lost his embouchure for trumpet while playing  
with Fate Marable's band, on the boat [Capitol?]. He got Louis  
Armstrong in the Marable band; during that time, Howard began  
playing alto horn and/or mellophone [with Marable]. Loss of  
embouchure mentioned again; BM says [Kid] Clayton has an unreliable  
embouchure.

End of Reel II

