

WILLIAM "BABA" RIDGLEY
Reel I--Summary--Retyped
June 2, 1959

Draft: Betty B. Rankin
Elizabeth Snapp
First Check: Marjorie T. Zander
Second Check: Richard B. Allen
Retype: Diana C. Nadas
Date Completed: February, , 1978

Also Present: William Russell
Ralph Collins

William Ridgley was born in Jefferson Parish on January 15, 1882. [His mother ?] had three children younger than he was. She died when he was ten years old, and he had to go to work. Some German people he knew ran a country grocery about two city blocks from where he was born, and they gave him a job. He worked for them for eighteen years. Most of the men in the country gathered around [there ?] in the evening, sat around and talked. A lot of young boys [came, too.] Ridgley used to entertain those men at night by dancing, singing. Some of the boys played banjo. Six of them, including Ridgley, made up their minds to set up a string [i.e., orchestra, not brass] band. The people Baba worked for bought him a bass violin, the first instrument he started on. The instruments the six boys in the band used were bass violin, banjo, clarinet, cornet, and drum. There was no trombone player at that time. Professor James Humphrey, of New Orleans, was their instructor. They lived in Jefferson Parish, one and a quarter miles from the city limits. They used to meet Professor Humphrey every Sunday morning at nine o'clock. They had a little road cart they would carry him in. The people Baba worked for gave the boys a place to practice and take their lesson. They practiced almost every night. Baba took Professor Humphrey back and forth. Professor Humphrey advised Baba to get a trombone. Humphrey bought Baba a trombone, a Silver Bell, for which he paid \$8.00, a method and

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catechism. Baba would take bass violin on Sunday, and one day during the week he would go to Humphrey's house on Liberty Street in New Orleans with his trombone. Humphrey told him there wasn't much difference in the music, he would just have to learn the positions and how to blow.

Shortly after this the band Baba was in broke up. Probably about two months later Henry Lambert, an old tuba player, organized the bunch again. Lambert played valve trombone in the band. They had another professor, Frank [Welsch ?], an old cornet player whose son was the drummer. Welsh taught them and played cornet along with them. They had two cornets in the band.

Later this band broke up. Professor Welsh then brought them to New Orleans and joined them in with the Silver Leaf Band, then under the leadership of Albert Baptiste. This could have been about 1910. Baba was still living in Jefferson Parish. He moved to New Orleans in 1911. He was still with the Silver Leaf Band.

Mr. Welsh was a sickly man, and gave up cornet playing. They got hold of Hypolite Charles, who played cornet for them a while. Then he gave up the cornet playing and Old Man Welsh came back. Welsh introduced Baba to [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin. Welsh told Baba that Celestin was a very fine fellow, that he thought he'd made a good cornet player, and that they would try to use him. Celestin played along in the ^{ily} Silver Leaf Band with Baba.

Later Celestin got a job in the old [red-light] district, playing at the 101 Ranch. Celestin and Baba went into the district to

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play together and joined in with another bunch of fellows. When the old district closed, [after "Gyp the Blood" killing? See Russell Levy's thesis] Celestin and Ridgley organized the Tuxedo Band with another bunch of fellows. Celestin was playing there [at the Tuxedo Dance Hall], but Ridgley never did.

Around 1914 they were still in the old district. Then Ridgley thinks around 1914 it came to a close again. They got their band out in the field, called it the Tuxedo Jazz Band. They had Celestin, Ridgley, Johnny Lindsay, Ernest Trepagnier, Lorenzo Tio [Jr.?], and Peter Bocage. They did pretty well. Then something happened, and some of those men left, but Celestin and Ridgley were still together.

Ridgley got himself a band headquarters on Howard Avenue, between Dryades and Baronne Streets. He was running a pressing shop and a shoe black stand. That was their headquarters, and from then on they began to grow faster. In working there, Baba got to know a white gentleman named Sim Black who was Scoutmaster for Boy Scout Troop 13. He used to visit the band quarters pretty regularly. He suggested that they wear black tuxedos, derby hats, and white shirts. It was just about time for the debutante season to open. The late Henry Zeno was playing drums for Ridgley, and Zeno took it upon himself to find the tuxedo suits. He found them at a tailor shop. They cost the band members \$15.00 apiece. From then on "our band just went on like a blaze of fire." During the war-time [no doubt

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first World War] they played at Heinemann Park every Sunday during the baseball season. They played every January 6 for the Twelfth Night Revelers at the Athenaeum; they played all of the great balls "mostly for all of the Carnival Clubs." They were well thought of by the people.

In 1923 the band went to Fort Worth, Texas, with the Pelicans [baseball club] of New Orleans on the Southern [Association ?] season. The Police Band of New Orleans went, too. Some ladies from Texas who knew that their band was coming asked them what they would charge to play half an hour--they were raising a \$25,000 milk fund. The band agreed to play for them for nothing. The ladies treated them well, taking them all over Fort Worth. The Police Band was very nice to them, too. On their way back to New Orleans they played in the largest chair in the world, which had been all around the world. They took the bass violin, drums, and the whole band, and put it up on a truck [i.e., with the chair ?].

They called it the Tuxedo Jazz Band before they started wearing tuxedos, but Mr. Sim Black suggested that they call the band the Original Tuxedo Band. That was the name of the band at that time. Mr. Black was a big help to them. During his vacation, the band went down to Kentwood [Louisiana] and spent a day in the swamps with Mr. Black's Boy Scout troop [playing music--See Reel II--April 11, 1961 for fuller account]. When they came back to New Orleans, they played a dance at the house of each of the boys. The band was well thought of. It played at the New Orleans Country Club, Southern

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Yacht Club, all the hotels: Roosevelt, St. Charles, Louisiana [i.e. La Louisiane restaurant?]. They played almost everywhere in the city of New Orleans and state of Louisiana that a colored band could go. They never had any trouble. Everybody treated them all right.

[Machine off while Ridgley rests.] He is tired.

William Russell asks Baba to name the members of the Tuxedo Band who went to Fort Worth: Paul Barnes, saxophone; [Abby] "Chinee" [Foster], drummer; John Marrero, banjo; Simon Marrero, bass; Celestin, cornet; William Ridgley, trombone; Emma Barrett, piano. Celestin was leader [i.e., musical director]. Ridgley was booking agent and business manager.

The band went along like this for a long time until the climax came in 1925. That was when the Original Tuxedo Band split into Ridgley's Original Tuxedo Band and Celestin's Tuxedo Band. Both bands went big for about six years. After that Ridgley gave up playing altogether, and he joined the Methodist Church. He has been there ever since. He is class leader in the church, St. Peter's A[frican] M[ethodist] E[piscopal] Church No.2, 3424 Eagle Street. The present pastor is Reverend Tillman Thompson. Ridgley is a trustee, serving on the Board of Stewards. They have a junior choir and a senior choir in the church. It is not a very large congregation, but they are spiritually strong. They use either an organ or piano in church, but no other instruments. When Baba was a boy, they had no music in his church, not even a choir. The people sang old-time hymns and made some up themselves. Baba at-

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tended Ross Chapel A.M.E. Sunday School in Jefferson Parish when he was a boy. Baba has been working in the church for about twenty-eight years and nothing can stop him.

The Tuxedo Band that Mr. Sim Black named included Henry Zeno on drum; Tom Benton, banjo; Sam Dutrey [Sr.], clarinet; Celestin, cornet; George ["Pops"] Foster, bass; William Ridgley, trombone; Emma Barrett, piano.

William Russell questions Baba about the first records he made for Okeh "Careless Love", "Black Rag", "Hoye [Whoa!?] Nellie" and [lead by WR] "Original Tuxedo Rag". Mr. Russell says he doesn't think "Hoye Nellie" was issued then. The band was composed of: Manuel Manetta, piano; William Ridgley; Celestin; Johnny St. Cyr; Tom Benton; "Chinee" [Abby Foster], on drums; Simon Marrero, bass violin; John Marrero on guitar. [Charters personnel differs somewhat--p. 137] [compare other sources] on "Careless Love" Chinee played a little slide whistle, bazooka, he thinks, they called it. He was the first to blow in his drum (Ridgley demonstrates), and when they went to Texas, the people went wild over it.

"Baba" never played in the Tuxedo Dance Hall in the district. He was playing with the Silver Leaf at the time when Celestin was playing there. The band was named after that hall [leading by WR]; Celestin and "Baba" got together and agreed to organize a band called the Tuxedo Jazz Band. The name was Celestin's idea; he had been playing there and he thought it would be a hit and it was. It was several years later [check dates] before they started wearing the tuxedos. They really got into the money when they started wearing

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the tuxedos. They played all the big dances, all the school dances at Tulane and Loyola, and practically everything they could.

"Baba" went up in an airplane on Friday, June 13, 1924 for Gates Flying Circus which came here from California every summer.

"Baba" was playing at that time at Tranchina's Restaurant at Spanish Fort, and Mr. George Gates engaged them to play in the airplane. The band was composed of Celestin, William Ridgley, John Marrero, Simon Marrero, Paul Barnes and a fellow called Willigan [See Louis Dumaine records], on drums. Only two at a time could get in the plane, and they mostly played "Maryland [My Maryland"] and "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More". It was a dry season. Celestin and Ridgley went up together; the saxophone and banjo went up together then the [saxophone and banjo ?] and [clarinet and bass fiddle ?] went up together. [Confusing here.] Ralph Collins and William Russell ask if Sam Dutrey was the clarinetist who went up with them. Baba says Eddie Cherrie was the one who was playing clarinet with them then. [See clippings in folder.]

William Russell asks Baba about a picture (William Russell says he has a copy of this picture) of a group including [Ridgley], [A. J.] Piron, [Tom] Benton, and [Johnny] St. Cyr. When the red-light district first closed, Clarence Williams was here then, and they had these pictures made to play on the Orpheum Circuit. Piron and Williams didn't agree; Clarence Williams went off and left them here. If they had gotten this job, they would have been the first colored band to play the Orpheum Circuit [over] forty years

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ago. Baba feels that Piron was the cause of their losing out on this job. Baba says this is long before the Original Dixieland Jazz Band left here. They were playing at the 101 Ranch at the time, around 1914. Pictures made before that.

William Russell asks about what Tom Benton played. He is pictured holding a mandolin-banjo. Did he play guitar, banjo, mandolin, or what? Baba says he played "either", and he was a good rag-time [i.e., by ear] piano player, pretty good singer, a very good band man. "Him and Johnny led together".

William Russell asks about Clarence Williams. He sang sometimes, played piano sometimes, but [mainly ?] acted as booking agent.

Piron never was a member of "our band." Peter Bocage was a member of the band (WR: "Played violin?" Baba: "Yeah."), but when the picture was made, Piron was in it, even though he was not a member of the band.

Some of the cornet players who worked with Baba are: Louis Armstrong, Mutt Carey --

Louis Armstrong was never a regular member, but he "jobbed around" with them sometimes "in Celestin's place. He was young, very young, he hadn't started playing with no bands hardly yet."

William Russell thinks he saw a picture once taken on one of the river boats, showing Baba with Fate Marable, and Armstrong was in that band. Baba says the first year Louis Armstrong played with Fate, they were together. That band consisted of: Louis Armstrong,

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William Ridgley, George ["Pops"] Foster, Joe Howard, [Warren] "Baby" Dodds, Davy Jones (playing melophone at that time), St. Cyr, banjo, John Porter, bass violin (also played bass tuba). Porter was with them the first year they went to St. Louis, but Baba doesn't remember what year it was, probably around 1918, 1919.

Louis stuck with the boat, but Baba came back to New Orleans and worked with Celestin at the Suburban Gardens. Later Baba had "face trouble" and couldn't play trombone any more so he played drums out there [on another engagement]. He didn't like it. The people didn't believe it was he. He felt like he was too old and was getting ready to quit anyhow. He and Celestin had done so well and had such a good reputation. He took on a younger bunch of fellows, but he couldn't handle them like the older bunch so he gave up. He was afraid they would ruin his reputation. At Suburban Gardens he had two of them, a cornet player who is now dead, and a saxophone player. They would drink and were very contrary. They would run their instruments down while playing, [means what ?] it would sound bad. Mr. Sheehan had a keen ear for music, he knew too much about it. He told Baba to get rid of those fellows, or else lose his job. They were both very good players, too. After this Baba Ridgley gave up music and went on into church. [He doesn't account for time gap--on boat 1918 or 1919, quit music about 1931]

Ridgley believes he is just about the oldest "musicianer" still living. William Russell says Willie Humphrey [the elder] is about Baba's age. Baba says he's older than Willie. Albert Glennly, who's

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dead, was older than Baba. Baba states that he was older than "that bunch that I came along with. He was about six years older than Peter Bocage, and Piron was about the same [as Bocage]. He is referring to the picture, c. 1914 again. Everyone else in the picture is dead. Baba thinks he is still alive because he stopped playing; he believes that prolonged his life.

Baba was with the Silver Leaf Band when he traded his bass violin for a trombone. When he started with the Silver Leaf, the Band had an old man with them a while, he (the trombonist) practiced on the bass violin. He took the bass violin; Baba played trombone. Mr. Welsh thought the slide trombone was more exciting to the people than the valve trombone, and Baba agreed. It was something new and different then.

You did not play the same kind of part on the slide trombone as the valve--had a little more work on it [slide?]. It was nothing like nowadays. It was a little bit different from the valve trombone. At that time, it was more sliding, [i.e., they played more portamenti] things like that were more exciting. "But those guys now. . . .cutting them trombones like cornet players."

In Baba's day the trombone mostly played bass parts.

William Russell recalls a group of trombone pieces that [Henry] Fillmore published: "Slim Trombone," "Rastus Trombone," and "Sally Trombone." Baba thinks he played "Slim Trombone," but he never heard of "Sally Trombone." [Pronounced "Sully" locally. RBA] He played "Sliding Jim" and various others that they'd made up themselves. It was mostly sliding because that's what made a hit at that time.

END OF REEL

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Also Present: William Russell
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Date Completed: March , 1978

[Some hiatus between end of Reel I and start of Reel II--
question is lost, but when Reel II opens Ridgley is listing
music.]

"Maryland, [My Maryland]," "Hoye [Whoa] Nellie," "liza
Jane," "Down Home Rag," "High Society," "Tiger Rag," and
"Clarinet Marmalade." William Russell asks if he played many
blues. They played "St. Louis Blues," all kinds of blues,
and all the blues. Louis ["Kid] Shots" Madison, a cornet
player, made a hit out of most anything he played. He was
good at ragtime [i.e., jazz], very sweet, and not too noisy.

William Russell asks about Baba's split with Celestin.
Baba says the band played at the [Pythian] Temple Roof Garden
on a Wednesday night. Celestin, the two Marreros [John and
Simon], and Paul Barnes had a morning meeting and decided to
pull out from Baba. Louis Madison was out among them, heard
it, called Ridgley up at 4 a.m., and told him what they had
done. They had gone out to the Southern Yacht Club and told
the Secretary Mr. [W.H.] Parham and the President, Mr. [Garcia ?]
[Soards City Directory lists W. Milton Miller as Commodore
1924-1926] that Ridgley had quit playing music and turned every-
thing over to them. Next morning Baba went to the Southern Yacht
headquarters, across from Beekman's [in the Whitney-Central Bldg.],
where they used to meet. He got there about 11 o'clock. Mr.
[Garcia ?] asked him what he was doing down there. Baba told

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him he had not quit playing music. Mr. [Garcia ?] described Celestin, "that heavysset, dark fellow . . . used to smoke those cigarettes and go out on the porch all the time . . . He played cornet." He and the banjo player [i.e., John Marrero] had gone down and told the Yacht Club people that Baba had quit playing and turned everything over to them. The Yacht Club had drawn up a contract with Celestin's group. Mr. [Garcia ?] asked Ridgley how many out of the band he still had, was that girl [Emma] Barrett still playing with him? Ridgley said that the girl was still playing with him, and that he had a drummer; he named five. The man called his stenographer, told her to write Celestin a letter telling him not to show up Wednesday night, that they had made different arrangements with a different band. Mr. [Garcia ?] wrote [told ?] Ridgley to come out Wednesday night with whomever he had. Ridgley went out with seven pieces. They did pretty good, but not like the other band. He used "Kid Shots" [Louis Madison] on trumpet who had been playing second to Celestin and knew it all well. He could play "Maryland, My Maryland" as well as Celestin.

When they knocked off at the Yacht Club, some people thought it was the same band, and they didn't tell them otherwise. "He" [who ?] told Ridgley to come out and practice until he was able to build up another good band. He got David Jones and a lot of good men. Baba would run Celestin off the Temple every time he came up there. Ridgley's Tuxedo Band used to play at the Pelican

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[Club] at Gravier and Rampart where there was a big dance hall, and "They" had the [Pythian] Temple Roof Garden, and his band played against every band in the city of New Orleans on the Pelican. They whipped every band there; they whipped Jack Carey at the National Park, [Kid] Ory at a parade and at the National Park that night, and Rena when they were playing for a white dance. They had the privilege of whipping every band in the city.

Baba kept his band on the spot all the time, didn't allow his members to drink till after the dance or at lunch and no one could smoke, no one could leave their seat till intermission time. Ridgley thinks that this helped to build them up. He thinks other bands were as good as his, but people liked the way they carried themselves. Ridgley whipped every cornet player: Rena, Ory's. (Mutt [Carey] was playing with them). Ridgley had a souvenir from each of the dances that he played. Sometimes they would give cups; Ridgley thinks he still has one.

(Machine off while he looks.)

Baba Ridgley cannot find it apparently.

Ridgley was one of the trombone players in the street with the brass band, but Celestin was in charge of the brass band. Neither had anything to do with the other unit, but they'd split the leader's share of the money. Ridgley took care of the orchestra. The brass band was as old as the orchestra; they were organized about 1917. They used to whip everyone on the street. They had more than one trombone in the brass band. The other was [Charles]

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"Sunny" Henry, who has had his leg cut off. "Sunny" Henry played with Ridgley for years. The band consisted of "Sunny" Henry and Ridgley on trombone, Peter Bocage on cornet, Celestin on cornet.

Actually, when they first started playing they were with Henry Allen [Sr.] over the river, and then they pulled out and organized the Tuxedo Band and nearly all the fellows came into it with Celestin as leader. The members were Peter Bocage, "Shots", (Baba Ridgley thinks there were three cornets) Lorenzo Tio on Clarinet, Eddie Jackson on tuba, Ernest Trepagnier on drums, Henry Zeno till he died and then [Black] Happy Goldston, [Isadore] Barbarin on alto who is about Ridgley's age and is living (at time of interview--died June 12, 1960), Joe [Payant ?] on alto horn and Adolph Alexander [Sr.] on alto. The young [Adolph "Tats"] Alexander [Jr.] played with Ridgley in his orchestra: He didn't want to, but he made good on it. Arthur Derbigny used to play with Ridgley also. The Alexander in the band was "Tats" [Alexander]'s father. Ridgley says "Tat's" father was very good.

Ridgley had a clarinet when he was a boy, but he never tried to play it; he never took lessons or fooled with it much. Jim Humphrey was Ridgley's only teacher when he was young; he was Ridgley's starter and "everything" because he helped him a whole lot. When Ridgley was around ten years old just after his mother died, he started to work in a grocery store where the owner was nice and always had a bunch of colored fellows around. This group

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who were older than Ridgley organized a band, about twelve of them and Ridgley thinks the owner of the grocery store bought them all instruments. They kept the store crowded all the time. They "rehearsaled" at the store a couple of nights a week, and on Sunday. This is how Ridgley got to know Professor Jim Humphrey; Jim Humphrey used to come up to the store to teach the band and Ridgley had to "haul" him back and forth. When that band broke up, Ridgley was still at the grocery store and still was six or seven years later when he started playing. He was in his twenties when they started another group, and he would haul Professor Humphrey the same way. Ridgley would drive Professor Humphrey in a two-wheeled spring cart, not a dump cart. Professor Humphrey helped him a lot, talking while going back and forth. Even after Ridgley stopped taking lessons from Professor Humphrey, they would still meet. He was a fine old man.

When Ridgley decided to play trombone in the band, his people bought him a C.G. Conn one-valve slide trombone for eighty-five dollars. Ridgley's first instrument was the bass. The one-valve trombone went out of style; it didn't make too much of a hit. It was sometimes called a trill valve. Ridgley had three trombones in his life. His last was a Holton, a brass [?] which he didn't have long before he quit. A fellow who played trombone and used to go through here with the circus bought it from BR for twenty-five dollars of which he only paid five. This fellow came back from Tulsa and played trombone for Ridgley while Baba tried to play drums.

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The reason he sold it so cheaply was because he didn't have as much work as he thought for the other trombone player.

The Silver Leaf Band used sheet music. Albert Baptiste lead the Silver Leaf Band for a while when Ridgley first started. Baptiste was a coffee parcher for O'Keefe on Magazine Street and the band began to get more work which interfered with his job so he turned it over to Oscar Randall who was a pretty good violin player. "They wasn't much on the ragtime [i.e. playing by ear]." [Changes to discussion of another band. See below.] They used sheet music, but they played by ear many times on advertising wagons, bucked on the corner, gut bucket style. They played plenty of blues: "St. Louis Blues," "Hoye [i.e., Whoa] Nellie," which was a piece of music they fixed by cutting the name off so the other bands wouldn't know what it was. Tom Benton played it with them. One night when they were playing a colored dance and [all of them?] had a couple of drinks--Ridgley scats to show how they would make the break in "Hoye Nellie" [i.e. "Whoa Nellie"], but at this dance Tom got half drunk, and when they made the break he shouted "ooo-ie," they continued that break from then on, and it made a hit. None of the other bands could play it. This was the Original Tuxedo Band that did the latter, not the Silver Leaf. The Silver Leaf Band sounded much different from the Original Tuxedo; the me had improved and had different ideas for arrangements; they would get a gramophone and practice.

Ezabe ^{Lanorrie}
Ezebe [sp-?] ["Zeb"] Lanorrie [check spelling] who played C clarinet with them could catch [the tunes from] the records. Sometimes the bands would get together to practice, and Ridgley's bunch would always have something new.

The Silver Leaf played straight [not jazz] from sheet music including waltzes but no quadrilles for they had gone already. ^{The band} they would play them for special dances if the people would ask for them which they learned from books. ^{They came along during} ^{of} the Charleston ^{and} could play that. ^{The time} They played blues. All the bands had to.

⁴⁰³ Early bands that Ridgley remembers hearing: John Robichaux. ^{BR} He heard them all because whenever they ^{gave} dances the bands had to pass by the store where he was working to get to the place they were playing and would stop there to advertise by playing a couple of tunes, ^{at} ^{that} ^{time} they would get a couple of drinks. ^{Robichaux's} ^{from us [i.e. who?]} ^{to hear this band at different places.}

⁴¹⁵ ~~band played somewhere else~~ and Ridgley would go there. Tucker was the first slide trombone that Ridgley saw. Ridgley was then about eighteen. Tucker was in John Robichaux's band then. That was the time they had Bab Frank playing piccolo ^{from memory}. ^{BR thinks} Robichaux also had Andrew Kimball ^{[on cornet] and} Bud Scott on banjo. ^{They} [Bands?] didn't have a trap drum at that time. Trap drums came in at Lincoln Park. Louis Cottrell [Sr.] was the first ^{trap drummer} Ridgley saw. Robichaux's band was good. Ridgley knew almost every musician in New Orleans. Louis Cottrell played a while with Ridgley till he went with [A. J.] Piron to Chicago for a while. Louis, Piron, and George Baquet went to Chicago, about four or five of them. They didn't stay there long.

⁴⁴³ ^[other data.] Ridgley heard Buddy Bolden. He believes that Bolden and John Robichaux were perhaps the only two bands at that time--at least, that he knew of. They were bucking at each other. Buddy Bolden was very good. Ridgley heard Bolden in Jefferson Parish and

down here. Ridgley used to go to Johnson Park where Bolden played for dances and to Lincoln Park where Robichaux played. There were many places where they both played. Ridgley believes Bolden had a valve trombone player by the name of Ed Jones, a good valve trombone player. ^{He} played plenty of "head work" and Bolden had plenty "head work." ^{WR's prompting:} Ridgley remembers [Willie] Cornish when he played with Bolden, too. ^{Probably Jones was first, followed by Cornish} They both were good. Ridgley doesn't remember if Frankie Duson played with Bolden, but he was a good old trombone player by head, not much of a reader.

Baptiste Delisle went out of his mind, and he stayed in Jackson [La.] for about fourteen or fifteen years. ^{and then he} came back ^{with} his ~~trombone~~ ^{trombone} and played again. His wife wouldn't send for him, but he got home somehow, and she died soon after. Ridgley knows another case where the same thing happened. ^{He was a good} musician ^{fine band man.} He has been dead for about ten years. Ridgley didn't know Delisle when he played valve, but he thinks that he did. He was a good slide man. ^{BR} Heard him at Lincoln Park. ^{he}

There were about four blocks separating Lincoln Park where ^{Robi} Bolden played from Johnson Park where ^{Bolden} Robichaux played. [Check this]

Ridgley visited those places while he was still living in Jefferson ^[Paris]. ⁵⁰⁰ Ridgley remembers a guitar player Brock ^[Mumphy 21] in Bolden's band. ^[Bands ?] ^{then} used four or five pieces, six at the most, always string bass, banjo, ^{and} cornet, ^{maybe} clarinet. *Ridgley thinks perhaps they were using the drum when Bolden played.

The first seven-piece band Ridgley saw was ^{when} John Robichaux's ^{with} went out to Lincoln Park and Louis Cottrell was playing trap drums. Bolden was a good cornet player, loud, strong, and could play a long time. King Bolden always had a crowd when he played. Bolden played plenty rag [time, i.e., jazz] but on the same order ^{to-} as ^{day} []

almost. It would sound a little different from today's bands with the double beat which is fast 4/4 time. The Bolden band played slower, two beat.

(C) Davy Jones was on the boat with Ridgley, and when Ridgley came back to New Orleans, ^{DJ} he went from there to New York where he learned a lot of that fast double beat, ~~and~~ when he came with ^(cap) Ridgley on saxophone, he knew a lot of stuff that the rest of the band didn't. The people liked it. Davy was very good and Ridgley thinks that he is teaching in California now rather than playing in a band. He is out near Johnny St. Cyr.

(S) Jim Humphrey taught ^{"that old"} ~~Ridgley's~~ brass band and would write out the music for them.

END OF REEL II

P Jim Humphrey would bring a new piece each week written out. He could teach a band fast. ^{the piece} They were marches; the brass band hadn't started playing dance music at that time. He had them doing pretty good. They lost a good [cornet] player. Ridgley thinks his death broke up the band. *The same white people who helped BR helped the bank.*

Ridgley worked at the ⁱⁿ grocery store from the time he was about twelve for about eighteen years. He worked in the grocery as a porter, yard boy, ^{and} milked cows, and ^[sell - ?] [serve ?] in the grocery. ^{at the} ~~in the~~ mornings. ^{IC BR F} That is why when he took over being the manager of the Tuxedo Band it wasn't strange to him because he had been working with white people all his life. He was well trained: "that good old Dixie training." He knew his place ^{and} "tried to be a nice colored fellow." He could talk pretty good. He even nursed the children. All that helped him a whole lot.

Ridgley's father didn't play, but he had two brothers who played. They were older than Baba; they were in the Spanish-American War. They played in "Uncle Sam's" Band. Ridgley doesn't think they played any dance music. ^{[Lou-?] Usan} [Lee-?] Sam Ridgley played baritone ^{Usan was older BR's father's name.} and Manuel Ridgley played alto. ^{Usan} Lee Sam was a pretty good baritone player. They didn't fool with music much.

Baba tells how he got his nickname. Not too many people know his name is William. Even the white people call him Baba. When Ridgley started he used to play all the little white parties in Carrollton where he lived, and they called him Baba and now some children call him Mr. Baba. It is spelled "Baba". Ridgley's sister used to call him her baby. It came from that. Wherever people would say that Baba Ridgley's Tuxedo Band was playing, he'd draw a crowd. There were thirteen children in Ridgley's family. His mother died when he was the largest one at home. Two brothers had left home. **[The two who played music ?]** The others died before

his time and he didn't know them; he only knew six of them. He had [three] sisters and a brother younger than he. His mother had twins after that, but they died as babies. His mother died in childbirth from the twins.

On the early records when Manuel Manetta played piano, [Louis "Kid] Shots" [Madison] played cornet with [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin on cornet, too. [Madison] "Shots" played the lead on "Careless Love". [Check aurally] "Shots" is very good and sweet, and on ragtime [i.e., jazz] he had a good touch. They always asked "Shots" to play the blues. [Careless Love] Wherever they went, there was always somebody asking Shots to play something. They didn't make records after that and Ridgley doesn't know who got the money on those. Those are the only records Ridgley ever made. John Marrero tried to get the money, but Ridgley doesn't know if he did. Mr. Russell says that Celestin made some more later for Columbia, but Ridgley wasn't on any of them. Ridgley says Celestin made dollars while he made pennies. Celestin was a good cornet player, nice man. Ridgley tried to get Celestin to stop playing when he got old, but he just loved it too much. Ridgley told him about his own quitting. Celestin's last words to Ridgley were: "Ridgley, if I ever get over this, I'll never pick up that horn again," but Ridgley thought to himself, "too late." When Celestin was in the hospital, he was really treated fine. Ridgley went to see him and sang and prayed with him. Ridgley thinks Celestin died from cancer of the blood, because ^{S. Ridgley's} his wife who had the same symptoms died of this. Celestin suffered a whole lot, and when they sent him home from the hospital after an operation, Celestin asked the doctor when he should come back, and the doctor said they would send for him, and he died in a couple of days.

[Willie] Cornish wasn't a good reading trombone player, but he had a good ear. Frankie Duson wasn't a good reader, but he had a good ear. [Kid] Ory at the time wasn't a good reader, but Ridgley thinks he picked up [?] He was good, though, [?] could catch things. Russell says he reads pretty well now, and he is still playing. Ridgley says Vic Gaspard was a fine trombone player along with Buddy and Yank Johnson. Charles "Sunny" Henry was also good.

Then an old-time trombone player Joe Petit who played the valve trombone was good. Joe Petit played with [Alphonse] Picou, the old, downtown, clarinet player. They were buddies. If they were hired and then invited to a ^{fraternity} supper, ^{or a} cowein [sp?], they'd send someone else on the job. Picou would drop anybody's job to go drink wine. He's good, a nice fellow. Ridgley says Picou was funny, comical. Bat Delisle was the master. Tucker from way back [See Reel II, p. 15] was good, too. Zue Robertson was also a fine trombone player. Mr. Russell says he knew Zue Robertson in California before he died fifteen years ago. Ridgley says Robertson wasn't a good mixer [?] but ^{was} a good musician. He never had much to say [?] but would play anything you'd put in front of him. Ridgley was playing with Roy Palmer when he left to go to Chicago where Mr. Russell knew Palmer. Palmer is still living, says Mr. Russell, and works in a steel mill and looks strong. He was a good trombone player, would catch everything. Mr. Russell says he has only heard ^{Palmer's} Robertson's records and adds, "He had a good head." Ridgley says George Filhe who played trombone with Manuel Perez was real good. Mr. Russell says Filhe died in Chicago. Ridgley says he thinks he was on the police force in Chicago, or maybe it was Tucker. [It was Tucker, possibly Filhe also. R.B.A.] ^D Ridgley really liked Vic Gaspard because he was so smooth. Those noisy fellows were

all alike. They could raise so much sand on a trombone, they'd really give the reading fellows a good time "especially out on the street and different things like that. . . ." Ridgley says Jack Carey wasn't a good reader, but could really "catch." Those are the kind of guys that wear you out. He could take a piece and add to it or take away. Ory, Frankie Duson, and Willie Cornish were like that.

In the beginning "Tiger Rag" was Jack Carey's speciality, but Ridgley played it, too. Jack Carey got it from a record which he bought and was the first one to start playing it from the record. Jack Carey played it before the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. Ridgley thinks he heard it first after the First World War. [O.D.J.B. recorded "Tiger Rag" in 1917] Carey would play advertising jobs on corners, using nothing but "Tiger Rag." Ridgley had to play it all the time. People used to like their style of playing.

Ridgley and the Tuxedo Band used to play most all of the big white parties and Carnival balls. He started [at the end of] World War I playing for Dr. [J. Phares] O'Kelley, playing for the Twelfth-Night Revelers every Carnival [Day] at the '7th [means 6th] of January. He played at the Boston Club starting on Thursday night. He played Monday all day and Monday night and Tuesday all day and Tuesday night. He played when the king would come in on the boat [First Day King?] They played that every year.

Ridgley also played for the sixth night Revelers [for the Twelfth Night Revelers] for Captain [military or of organization?] Cook. It was always on the sixth of January at the Athenaeum, but during the war when things were dull and people were crying, they had two dances a year: Twelfth Night Revelers. [Does he mean when

the war was over? Probably, ^{balls were} suspended during war.]

Ridgley also played parades during Carnival until he got the job at the Boston Club. Ridgley never played the balls at the French Opera House; that was before his time. ^{It} [burned ⁱⁿ 1919].
Ridgley played ^{for} the tableaux for all the balls at the Athenaeum. Celestin didn't know how to conduct a tableau. Ridgley would practice. Ridgley played an Oriental dance for Commodore Jahncke at the Athenaeum.

Ridgley had a grandmother who died at 103 who prayed for him and told him ^{on her dying bed} that he would never have bad luck, ~~on her dying bed~~.
~~bed~~. He has made a nice living, "never been convicted to anything," never been in jail ^{or in} ~~no~~ kind of trouble. He has always made a living among the best people, colored and white. Some of the band members didn't like it because Ridgley kept them straight, wouldn't let them eat until intermission and such, but they were making more money with him so Ridgley knew they wouldn't leave. You have to bluff a little bit with them. ^{He just allow smoking on the stand.} [Abby] "Chinee" [Foster] was with Ridgley and a good drummer, but he would get a little loaded sometime, and Ridgley would pay him and send him back home.

When Ridgley first started playing in the Silver Leaf they played all the white dances, etc, for ten dollars and a half for three hours. \$1.50 for each man and [~~\$~~^{2.50}.00 ?] for the leader. When they played in the district they only got \$1.50 a night, but they made tips. The colored dances used to run from eight o'clock to four in the morning, and they got \$2.50 a man and \$3.00 for the manager. When they got up to playing the white school dances and such, they got \$5.00 a man, \$36 for the band with one dollar over. That was the Tuxedo Band. When they stopped playing they were getting \$7 and \$8 on the job. They used to play a tea at

three and ¹⁰ tea at ¹⁰ 5:30 and the next job at 9:00. Thus they were able to make \$18 a man, and the other bands couldn't do that. That was big [money] at that time. ¶ When they would play the Carnival balls or at the Boston Club on Carnival Day, they would get \$15.00 a man and the leaders, Celestin and Ridgley, got \$25.00. Ridgley used to manage it, and keep everything in good shape, and never was late on any job. They went all through the state of Louisiana at all hours of the night. Sometimes they would have to sleep in the railroad station and the mosquitoes would eat them up, but they never had any trouble and no one bothered them, even in "cracker" towns. They played a job in the St. Charles Hotel one night and ^{when} they wouldn't allow colored bands in there, ^{"we" [i.e., Ridgley's band]} and they got in and the people would not let "them" put ^{"us"} them out.

Ridgley didn't save any of his old music. He got rid of all the music when he joined the church. He ^{says} said, "Gasoline and water do not mix." Ridgley made up his mind he was going to try to serve God; you have to be with Him or against Him. He gave all his music to a boy who played saxophone for him. The boy came with his automobile, and Baba loaded him up. Baba even refused to teach a boy the drum.

Ridgley did take one job after he quit music and joined the church. It was ^{at} Baton Rouge at L.S.U. He always used to have that job. The man was so nice to them, and always gave him \$25.00 to ^[haul-?] [hire?] the band. Baba did take that one job, but he had to sit right there with the band, didn't like it, thought he might as well be playing.

William Russell has a picture with ^{Clarence Williams} and all that ^{he} got from Johnny St. Cyr. Ridgley did have one picture, a good picture [of the band?], but he gave it to his cousin.

[that he took himself ?]
He has some [of himself ?].

Ridgley quit before the big WPA band; he was out of the music ~~band~~ and in the church by that time. He quit playing around 1931. He can't remember the name of the saxophone player he gave his music to. The boy asked him if he would let him have any of his old music, and Baba told him to come on up with his car, ^{on (B's)} gave him all of it. ^{BR} [^]Thinks he made the best move by joining the church since all the old trombone players from his time are gone except Sunny Henry [who died ^{he}]. [^]Thinks (le) quitting added something to his life.

Ridgley wants to show William Russell and Ralph Collins some of his references, especially his letter of reference from the people he first worked for, in the grocery store. Those ^{white} people helped him; he had nobody, no mother, no father. His father died when he was young, but he wasn't a good father. His mother was good.

He also has references from New Orleans Country Club where he played [^]all of their stuff, [^]Southern Yacht [Club], [^]Werlein's, i.e., Dave Frank. Dave Frank used to fix his business cards. Ridgley would read the telephone book and watch the papers in debutante season, when he saw a big party coming up, would send his card. ^{He} ~~Would~~ get about 500 of them ^{and} send them all over the city. ^{*} He's sorry he doesn't have the references to show them.

He's a self-made man. When Ridgley's mother died, he was promoted to the second grade. Then school closed; when it reopened, he never did get back ^{and} never did take a lesson in the second grade.

END OF REEL III

X *D. Frank ... (to Baba)*

