

Don Albert Digest
Reel I
August 6, 1973

1

Also Present: Hazel G. (Mrs. Don Albert) Dominique, Timothy
C. Gibson of the New Leviathan Oriental Fox-Trot
Orchestra, Richard B. Allen.

[Real name is Albert Dominique]

Don Albert is asked how the band's music was kept. D.A. says that each man kept his own book of parts, then, at the end of the night, all of the books were put in one trunk. They had two valets, or maintenance men, who took care of this. Don Albert says that as many as twentyone people traveled including wives and prospects. DA says the two valets were Wilbur ^{E. USA} ~~Usand~~ [spelling?] and Luther [other name not given] from Little Rock, Arkansas. These two men were responsible for setting up and taking down the band, driving the bus and "things like that". DA said things rarely got misplaced or stolen. Each man took care of his own personal effects. DA says that in those days everybody more or less had to take care of their own stuff and it wasn't like it is now when there's practically a valet for each musician. DA said that they would generally try to get into town early in the morning so they could find places where they could rest, clean up, etc. They usually left the town right after a show so they could be at the next town by the next morning -- they'd drive 150 to 200 miles after a show. They usually dressed for their shows at private homes where they stayed. Sometimes the dance halls would have facilities

Don Albert
Reel I
August 6, 1973

2

but not often. DA thinks his was one of the best dressed bands on the road. They had three or four uniforms, mostly suits.

The suits were tailor made [see photos - DA refers to photos].

✓ The first one was made by ^{an man associated with Bernard]} ~~[Bernard]~~ Goldberg who DA feels was one of the best tailors in Texas, perhaps in the U.S. The suits would nowadays sell for three hundred to five hundred dollars but DA says they paid sixty dollars for them. The band also wore matching ties and shirts, also shoes.

DA says that the lighting used was just ordinary electric lighting, none of the fantastic lights they have today. DA says they played some theaters such as the Palace Theater in up-state New York and a couple in New York City, as well as in other parts of the country such as the Earl and the Fox, and usually the lighting was all right. DA says they had spot lights and footlights that were fantastic for those days, but nothing like today's. DA says the band had music stands with "Don Albert" on the front and they had small lights on them for their music. These lights were concealed so that they were not visible to the audience. DA said most of the time the men had memorized the arrangements and just had put music up there for a guideline unless there were three or four new arrangements. DA says they knew the book.

DA was asked about when they were on percentage. DA said that there were many reasons why he stopped playing as he did

and that was one reason. DA said he had to stand around the door and watch the proceedings to make sure he got everything he was due. He said thats what happened when they were on the verge of being lynched in Thomasville, Georgia. They were playing a percentage dance and a school teacher had charge of the dance. DA said that ✓naturally he was up there checking the door which him when police-men came in and arrested everybody there including the band and him. DA said he took the money out of the drawer and put it in his pocket to make sure he wouldn't be on the losing end all the way around. DA said, though, that he did lose when the policemen tried to shoot me [six of them in the hall - check previous tapes on this. Ask DA!] DA said the police got them down to the jailhouse and he gave most of the money to one of the girls in the band that used to dance - her name was [Grace?] James. The jail was small and the police put nineteen of them in a room. DA said that [Alvin] "Mickey" Alcorn and [Lawrence] Cato, the ✓bass player, had gotten away. DA says "they" [ie, the police] had torn up all the instruments, thrown chairs and so on, that ✓"they're" [ie, the police] the ones that started the fight. DA says the police officer there told him to put all his money on the table, which he did, and it amounted to about thirtyfive or forty dollars. DA says the officer said that wasn't enough and that he wanted all the money they had been "charging those niggers", they had been charging them too much: seventyfive

cents a head to hear that rotten music. DA says the officer said he knew DA had to have more money than that and he wanted all of it. DA said that more money might have been taken in but that was all he had. The officer insisted on all the money so DA told the girl to put the money on the table. DA said he then asked for a receipt for that money, but the officer said it was going to be their fine. Then the officer called DA a "smart nigger from New York". DA says this shows that the officer was stupid because the license on the bus was a Texas license. DA said he asked for a trial before a judge, but the officer said he was setting the fine just where he was sure the judge would set it. DA said that the officer then told him there was an entrance and an outlet to Thomasville, Georgia and that they had already used the entrance so now use the exit. DA said he told the officer "thank you" and got in the bus. DA said his father-in-law was traveling with them and acting as bus driver and valet and they stopped at a service station on the way out -- they were going to Macon, Georgia for the next night. DA said they were busted and didn't have anything so he asked the attendant if he would trust him for 150 gallons of gas because that was what the bus took, seventy-five gallons in tanks on each side, also five gallons of oil. DA says the

Don Albert
Reel I
August 6, 1973

5

attendent asked if they were the fellows who were in the trouble that night and he said that was correct but said that if he would trust him for the gas, DA would send him the money as soon as DA got into Macon. The attendant said "O.K." and filled both tanks and gave him five gallons of gas [oil?]. As soon as DA got into Macon he went to a friend, Doctor Frazier, who also had something to do with the promotion of the band, and explained what the situation had been and Doctor Frazier said sure they'd send the money so they sent the money to the attendant right away. [From the nature of the incident?] the Pittsburg Courier took up the complaint from DA and wrote a massive story on it. That was one of the incidents that DA had always wanted to talk to R.B. Allen [interviewer] about. [check previous DA interviews] DA said that that was one of the sad parts of being a Negro band and traveling through the South.

DA was asked about Floyd Snelson. DA said that Floyd Snelson was his publicity man. DA said he was a great newspaper man, RESTRICT

DA says that in one of his band pictures you can see Floyd Snelson leaning out of the window. [see Dick Allen, "Don Albert...", Storyville, no. 31]

Don Albert
Reel I
August 6, 1973

6

DA is asked about Alvin Alcorn's nickname "Mickey".

DA says it was just a nickname and that he doesn't know why they called him Mickey. DA says that Louis Cottrell had visited him the night before [August 5, 1973] and [Miss?] Simmons, DA's school teacher, was asking him why he continued to call him "Bucks". DA says he told her LC called him "Bucks" and also "Rhiny" and that everyone in the band had nicknames and that DA was called the "Old Man", and he was twenty-one years old. DA said that the nickname "Bucks" was shortened from Fatty Arbuckle and "Rhiny" was [probably?] due to his color. DA said that Floyd Snelson had never handled any bands, that he had been dropped as a writer by the Pittsburgh Courier and DA picked him up. DA's band was the only one he worked with. DA said Floyd Snelson would also write stories about the band, about his travels, and other things which the Pittsburgh Courier would buy. RESTRICTED

~~END RESTRICTION~~ DA said the

Pittsburg Courier, which still exists, and the Chicago Defender, which DA thinks doesn't exist, were the only papers he can remember carrying stories regularly. DA said most of the Negro papers carried stories, and every white paper carried stories when they came to town. Unfortunately he didn't keep all the write-up, but he does have some scrapbooks.

Usually the dance halls had pianos in them but he had a very peculiar pianist. DA thinks his pianist, Lloyd Glenn, was one of the best around, but he was picky about his pianos. DA said that a lot of times the piano was so low [too flat] they would have to tune up with the piano and change their whole way of playing because they couldn't reach the piano with ordinary tuning so they'd tune with the piano and Lloyd Glenn would have to transpose a tone or two above that which they were playing. [Often New Orleans pianists transpose to compensate.] This is called "cross-chording" - RBA August 22, 1973] Lloyd Glenn didn't like that, and he just wouldn't play so they would play without a piano. [Mrs. Dominique interrupts briefly.] They would get their chords from the guitar or banjo then. They did not have amplifiers during the early days. They used megaphones for the singer. They did not have anything like the high powered mechanisms they have now. They possibly used one crystal mike only before they broke up, but that was mostly for the singer. They used a rack on the top of the bus for trunks of clothing and such. There were racks inside the bus for their instruments. In those days they did not realize how dangerous that could be. No one ever missed rehearsal so he never had to fine anyone, etc. DA said the men were more interested in rehearsals than anything else, especially when they had new arrangements to

Don Albert
Reel I
August 6, 1973

8

learn. They would be up all night and get up to rehearse some more. They carried the whole book [ie, entire library] of about 150 to 200 arrangements, and the books [ie, folders] were about three inches thick. The books [ie, folders] were kept in a trunk for storage. DA said they were placed in the trunk in sequence according to instrument sections such as brass, reeds, rhythm although rhythm did not necessarily carry books. The arrangements were numbered one on up. They played them so much they knew the numbers pretty much by head. DA said they knew about ninety percent of them by head. DA said they had no printed program, but since they played nearly every night they had a format they followed unless they had a request which might change things a little.

DA said he had planned a format for yesterday's program [August 5, 1973] but that was a different thing all together. Since they played for dances, they would be in a different town every night so they used the same format every night. They'd possibly stay in a big city maybe two weeks, and this was considered a big contract and a real rest for them. DA said that he had a list made for the concert they day before [August 5, 1973] because of the new master of ceremonies, Mel Leavitt, and DA was trying to familiarize him with the program. Plato Smith had been master of

Don Albert
Reel I
August 6, 1973

9

ceremonies. For the concert they did not rehearse at the place, but they rehearsed on the telephone. DA said he called Freddie Kohlman and told him to do the same thing he had done last year: bring his tambourine and DA's tempos, where to cut in and cut out and just listen to DA. He did the same thing with Walter Lewis, but he had just played a concert with DA in San Antonio so WL was familiar with him. DA said mostly he just had to set the numbers in the spots where he wanted to play them. DA said he did the same with Louis Cottrell. Placide Adams is just a good man. [Therefore, he didn't need rehearsal is the implication?] They had no trouble playing three part harmony and sid so on two selections, "Mood Indigo" and "Look Down That Lonesome Road". [ie, The Lonesome Road] DA says these were the only two that required three part harmony. DA said that all the others were "go as you see" or "go as you feel". DA said they used the tambourine on just one number because the tambourine was fitting into the story of jazz, how it began with the slaves and this was one of the few instruments the slaves had to play. The tambourine was to give it a Holy Roller effect and to demonstrate the way the slaves used to go from one thing to another. This was what he was trying to tell Mel Leavitt so he could put it into his own words.

DA said that during the days of the band he did not pay for arrangements, in fact, they couldn't afford to pay themselves anything. DA said the band was like a family; all money was split evenly. DA said everybody wanted the band to be the best so everybody chipped in whatever they knew. DA said Louis Cottrell did one or two arrangements; Herbert Hall made some; Harold Holmes did a tremendous job of arranging. DA said that the first arranger he had in the band was Phil Tiller from Little Rock, Arkansas, and this was in 1929. DA said that there were no main arrangers. Harold Holmes, Billy Douglas and Herbert Hall all did. DA said that if a guy got an idea, he would write it down. DA said they had nothing like [Jimmie] Lunceford's band where Sy Oliver was main arranger or Duke [Ellington] where someone would write the score and Juan Tizol would abstract it. [meaning?] DA's guys would write the score and each individual part for each musician. They had no copyist.

The band had beautiful morale. He never ran into conflict during which someone would balk at doing things. Everyone got along well. DA said no one ever really got sick on the road except one time and that was Henry "Nick" Turner in Ashland, Kentucky. (Mrs. Dominique asks about [?]) DA said the undertaker wanted to bury him before he died! They

Don Albert
Reel I
August 6, 1973

11

had had to leave town and, when they came back, they had to take Henry "Nick" Turner away from there because they were getting rid of him faster than he was supposed to go, but he got over it. DA also remembered that Buddy Collins from New Orleans, a vocalist, once got sick, too.

Mrs. Hazel G. Dominique commented that they had seven trunks of uniforms and regular clothing stolen in Austin [Texas]. DA said he felt the Thomasville trouble was a put-up job.

Jimmy Johnson, bass player, was old but he was in good health and strong. Jimmy Johnson drank his whiskey but was never drunk on the job. DA's was one of the first bands to use string bass, and he finally got two bassists: Jimmy Johnson and Harold Holmes. He said that Harold was a different type of bass player and was more modern than Jimmy Johnson, but JJ was more of a true bass player *exceptionally good tone and* [i.e., had ^{truer} intonation?]. DA said that Harold Holmes made more notes while JJ played fewer, but more perfect, or truer notes. Harold Holmes was writing a lot of arrangements, too. JJ had a very good ear, and during the early years he played by ear, but he finally learned to read enough to read his part. DA was asked about JJ riding a bicycle with his bass on his back. He said he had heard about it but had never seen it and thought it might have been when he was younger. DA has heard that he rode a bicycle with his bass on his back. DA said Louis Cottrell, Sr. used to haul his

Don Albert
Reel I
August 6, 1973

12

drums on his back from his house up to Claiborne Street and Annette, and they were regular, uncollapsible drums. DA says he was told how yesterday's concert [August 5, 1973] was the best of the year. RBA said it seemed that everyone had a marvelous time, then says it was the first time he had ever heard a waltz medley at a concert. DA said that in the old days the band would play a waltz and then immediately go into a swing tempo. That was his reason for playing it. It was traditional for the audiences at dances to sing along, and that was why he got the audience at the concert to sing along. RBA says that this was amazing as he had never seen this done before at a concert. DA explained that he had announced at the first of the show that he was going to play old numbers and new numbers. DA said being as he was sixty-five years old yesterday, he could go back that far. HGD said that singing along was good for the people and it made them [give out?]. DA added that they were made a part of the program, and the band is not just sitting up there doing its thing. DA said it is a knack he has of studying the audience and trying to get them in with him, not them getting him in with them. DA said he never had to use tricks to attract the audience's attention as some singers and musicians did. (fainting, calling a doctor, etc.) HGD said he did comedy.

END REEL I

Don Albert
Reel II
August 6, 1973

14

They would rehearse the number til they had it then take it using only one microphone. DA said they were strongly encouraged to get it on one take. Yet DA says when he recorded for Southland, they made about six takes of "Roses of Picady" before it was accepted and, with the exception of one take on one tune with Emma [Barrett], they did two or three takes on all the others.

DA felt the 1936 recordings were true to band sound considering the equipment of the time. DA feels they gave more of an overall band sound rather than picking out or pinpointing brass, reeds, drums, etc. which the more advanced equipment of today can do. DA said it was the same thing with Troy Floyd because there was only a year or two difference. [see discographies]

In those days bookers worked as individuals rather than as agencies. DA said Bernard Goldberg was his first booker followed by a man named Rabinowitz. DA said he finally had Al Travis, RESTRICTED

END RESTRICTION DA said that he picked up Chauncey

Hyland
[Hyland or Howard?] as booker, RESTRICTED

END RESTRICTION DA said
the only major company that was bonded that he went with was

Don Albert
Reel II
August 6, 1973

15

Joe Glaser, ['s (Associated Booking Corporation?)], DA said that Joe Glaser wanted to hold out for big money while his band would work for forty or fifty dollars per night, so DA had to come back to where he could make a living with the band [ie, to the South, see other DA interviews]

Ella Fitzgerald had him interview Moe Gale at the Savoy Ballroom, but when Moe Gale asked him to surrender thirty-five percent when his earnings reached a certain point with a sliding percentage scale, DA refused the offer. DA feels this was a mistake as he would have gotten a lot farther with Moe Gale. DA said he was quite young, had no adviser, and was a bit wary because he felt he had been stung a few times. DA said another mistake was when he didn't take Ella Fitzgerald into his band when he was playing at the Vendome in Buffalo, New York. DA says EF made both the offer to join his band and the contact with Moe Gale as a favor out of friendship and he is sorry he did not accept the offers.

DA said most of the bookers were individuals who knew certain areas. Brady Bryant booked around Little Rock, Arkansas for example. Bernard Goldberg booked only in Texas and mainly in hotels where he knew most of the managers. BG now lives in Dallas, Texas where he was from originally. DA never went to the West Coast although he was offered a contract

Don Albert
Reel II
August 6, 1973

16

at the Cotton Club in Culver City, California. DA considers this a big mistake now, but at that time he wanted to go to New York City where he thought he'd have a better opportunity. Lionel Hampton's and Les Hite's bands came out of Culver City so perhaps DA made a big mistake. He feels he might not have had the intelligence to deal with bookers so perhaps the same thing would have happened if he had gone to the West Coast instead of New York. [Compare earlier DA interviews].

RESTRICTED

END RESTRICTION

DA talks about being stranded. DA said he had a friend in East Bernard, Texas who would send him money if he needed it. [see previous interviews with DA]. He was really stranded once in Carbondale, Illinois when they were with Al Travis. DA said they lived with an old lady who liked DA and the band. DA said they didn't have any dates lined up at all and were broke. So he took his wife's ring and hocked it for fifty dollars and bought an old Pontiac. He told the band members that he was going to drive to Texas and try to book the band. Meanwhile the old lady agreed to give them room and board. All had confidence in DA. The car broke down

outside of Kirksville, Missouri, and he had his wife and child with him. DA says his wife was rather skeptical of her color because hotels did not accept Negroes. "However...with my nerve and my craziness, I guess they say," he got a room for them. [Mrs. Dominique is a little darker than DA, but, if my memory is right, not a brown-skin. RBA, Sept. 28, 1973] He said his wife and child didn't leave the room the whole night because of their color.

The next morning DA went out hunting for a Negro residence for them to stay in. He asked a man where to go and was directed across the tracks which was the old way for telling him where to go for the Negroes. DA finally found a room with a lady and her elderly mother and moved his wife and child in. He said this developed into one of the most beautiful relationships he had ever had on the road. It took DA a week to get the old car fixed and during this whole time these ladies housed and fed them. DA said his son used to climb an apple tree in their yard, and the train which went by the home would literally stop and the conductor wave back to him. These ladies even gave them some traveling money when they were able to go. He said they have remained in touch through the years. The mother finally died a few years ago in her nineties. DA was able to book the band on through Texas after that. He

Don Albert
Reel II
August 6, 1973

18

said he had nerve in that he would send a collect telegram to the promoter to get booked!

RBA asked DA if he knew Aaron Bell's mother was from New Orleans although AB himself was from Muscogee. Aaron Bell is bass player with Duke Ellington. [see Stanley Dance's book on Duke Ellington.] DA doesn't think he knows Aaron Bell but says that Oscar Pettiford was also from Muscogee. DA was to have gone into the Pettiford band before he joined Troy Floyd. Richard McCarthy returned to New Orleans. He said the Pettiford band was a family band with the mother on piano, father on drums, sister on saxophone, Oscar P., "the young one", on bass and brother Harry P. playing tenor saxophone. DA says he knew Don Byas and thinks he was from Birmingham, [Alabama] because DA had always connected him with "Dud" [Wilbur and Paul] Bascomb and his brother. RBA feels D. Byas was also from Muscogee. DA says that Charlie Christian, the guitarist, was from Oklahoma City, but many people say he is from Tulsa where Ernie Fields is from.

DA says T. Holder's band singer was Pha Terrell. [compare other sources on T. Holder's singer] A.G. Godley was a great drummer for those days. He was left-handed and to DA's knowledge, always played in [Alphonso] Trent's band. DA said Jimmy Westbrook of Waco, Texas, played drums in the T.N.T. band along with Herschal [sp?] [Evans] who played alto

Don Albert
Reel II
August 6, 1973

19

saxophone. JW was another left-handed drummer. DA said the T.N.T. Band was fairly large for those days as it had ten pieces. DA says he was on the train with the T.N.T. Band. The baseball team was in the Dixie Series [the T.N.T. Band was travelling with baseball team] while DA was going to Dallas. DA said they had him playing all night on the train, [compare other DA interviews]. DA said it was at Dallas he seperated from Herschal² [Evans] who went on with the T.N.T. while DA, Lucian [Johnson] and Richard McCarthy stayed in Dallas. DA said they played in one of the roughest joints in Texas, and he stayed there for about six months before joining Troy Floyd's band. DA joined Troy Floyd's band when Benno Kennedy quit TF. DA, L. Johnson, and R. McCarthy filled out the group already playing at the Dallas joint, they joined a pianist, Berton[sp?] Johnson, trombone, and DA took Polite "Frenchie" Christian's place on the trumpet.

DA said another musician often overlooked by people is Fred Murphy whom he feels was one of the greatest alto players around. FM sounded much like Johnny Hodges but was not copying him because JH was just coming up at that time. DA said there are lots of really fine musicians who, like Joe Phillips, just won't talk or project themselves and become forgotten as a result.

Don Albert
Reel II
August 6, 1973

20

DA said his band made many auditions. He said they auditioned at the Three Deuces in Chicago where [Art] Tatum was playing and [they] must have played half a day for the "boss man". DA said they played in New Orleans at the Pelican and Captain Vern Streckfus brought his metronome to see if their tempos varied. This was done for the [Streckfus] Steamer President. DA said they only played the President for one night. DA said he also played on the Capitol, but he never was strongly connected with the riverboats. He also played the Sesquehanna on Lake Pontchartrain with "Big Foot" Bill Phillips and Buddy Petit.

DA said there weren't too many big name bands around Austin. The only white band he remembers was Herman Waldman while the main Negro bands were Troy Floyd and [Alphonso] Trent. There was the Oleander Orchestra in Galveston which was the band Claude ["Benno"] Kennedy went to. DA says that band didn't last long. DA doesn't remember where the Deluxe Melody Boys [or Band?] were. The Corley brothers, George and Reginald, were from Austin and attended Sam Houston College. They had a primarily local band and didn't travel much. DA worked with Eddie and Sugar Lou in Longview, Texas for one or two weeks before he went with Troy Floyd's band. He thinks he may have recorded with them also afterwards, but

Don Albert
Reel II
August 6, 1973

21

he isn't positive and can't find any recordings of it.

"...Vocalion...were the first ones; then went into Okeh..."

[Meaning?] Troy [Floyd] recorded for Okeh. DA can't remember

Gene Coy's Happy Black Aces band when asked about them. He

remembers the Blue Moon Chasers which had Budd and Keg Johnson.

He said their band was based in Dallas and the Johnsons had

wanted him in their band. It was a young band. He said the

bnajoist was killed in a train wreck.

DA thinks Clyde Kerr [Sr. or ~~3~~] is from Houston

and had a couple of brothers and they played together around

Texas. DA said that Buster Smith was and still is the greatest.

He has lost most of his teeth now. He plays the organ but

also still plays the saxophone. DA says Frank Driggs called

from New York asking him to come do a session with Buster

Smith and DA gave FD Buster Smith's number but DA hasn't

heard what's come of it yet. DA talked to John Hardee,

tenor saxophone, who is now teaching, about the session in

New York but he's not eager to go. DA will talk to FD when DA

gets back to San Antonio. Buster Smith was a tremendous arr-

anger and one of the first clarinetists to play like Buster

Baily and others like that. He doesn't feel he plays so

much like Charlie Parker to whom he has been compared, but

*to Bicknell and Eddie and Sonora. I am for
first piano; Eddie. DA is not and other about
of Troy. I think I can make this a 1979. DA is in
with B.D. 1979-76-2*

Don Albert
Reel II
August 6, 1973

22

BS had fantastic "tonation" [ie., tone] and knowledge of his instrument, "because [sic] he could also do good arranging".

RESTRICTED

END RESTRICTION

In those days Count Basie was around with the Blue Devils which had Orin ["Hot Lips"] Page.

END REEL II

[Real name is Albert Dominique]

DON ALBERT
Reel III
August 6, 1973
Digest

Also Present: Hazel G. [Mrs. Don Albert]
Dominique, "Dutch" (Mrs. Frederick) Braden,
Timothy C. Gibson of New Leviathan Oriental
Fox-trot Orchestra and the Archive of New
Orleans Jazz, Richard B. Allen
Notes by Richard B. Allen Digest by Annelisa S. Clark
Checked by Richard B. Allen Retyped by Evelyn W. Seidule
Proofread by Annelisa S. Clark

Buster Smith is mentioned. RBA asks DA about "Chock". DA says that it was homebrew which was sold in speakeasies. There were speakeasies in Texas. DA says that the neighborhoods in San Antonio are pretty much like they are in the rest of the United States. The East side in San Antonio is [predominately Negro], the North side predominately white, the West side predominately Mexican and the South side is mixed. Housing seems more segregated now than it was twenty-four years to RBA. [Leading by RBA]. DA agrees, saying it is going backwards. He doesn't know why this is so and he wishes it had continued to go forward as it had started. San Antonio is becoming more [integrated in some places?], but "they [are] still reluctant...to go into these areas".

DA says [Alphonso] Trent died in his hometown of Fort Smith, Arkansas. His band broke up in the early 1930's. One of Trent's men [Eugene] Crook, a banjoist, died recently in New York. Leo [Snub] Moseley is jobbing still in New York.

RBA asks DA about Trent's number two band. DA says some guy [must have] used Trent's name. He doesn't remember AT having a number two band. The New Orleans practice of having a number two band or a Young band, such as the Young Tuxedo Orchestra [named after the Original Tuxedo Orchestra], wasn't common in Texas. There were no [regular] substitutes. DA rarely got two jobs on the same

DON ALBERT
Reel III
August 6, 1973
Digest

night. He remembers only once when he missed a job at the Rhythm Club. Walter Barnes band played it, and the building burned up. [See Walter Barnes folder.] DA says he had played there before, and it was in Natchez, Mississippi. That time he had another job one hundred miles away. DA remembers that dance hall vividly, going in there on freezing mornings, and lighting that very stove, not knowing it might catch on fire. On cold jobs DA's band had to keep their mouthpieces in their pockets to keep them warm. They played in their overcoats. In Port Arthur, Texas, they put mosquito bars over their faces to play a dance on a pier.

Lloyd Glenn has a book with payments the band received nightly. DA says that RBA would be surprised to see how they lived on the amount of money. LG now lives in California. He visited DA in San Antonio recently. DA thinks LG is now getting recognition that he should have received years ago. DA's band only broke up once. This occurred in New Orleans when he got tired of being "gyped" by everyone. This was when Chauncy Hyland, the booker, asked him to revive his band. Beansy Fauria backed it. This was the only break up until 1940 when DA gave up. He thinks this may have been a mistake because about two years later a boom came. Count Basie stayed [in the music business] and was successful with his big band. DA went into the Civil Service. [Check date on this. See December 1973, January 1974 interviews.]

DA feels Fats Martin's style and Freddie Kohlman's style were identical. DA feels Fats Martin is the greatest. Freddie Kohlman is one of the finest drummers around. FK played shows at the Keyhole. DA says he retired from music until Joe Mares asked him to record for [JM's company] Southland. DA retracts this and says William Russell interviewed him and encouraged him to take up his horn again before Joe Mares did. But JM is mainly responsible for DA's activity.

DA was responsible for organizing both the Happy Jazz Band and the Alamo City Jazz Band. They [the Happy Jazz Band members?] came to DA to make an album. Jim Cullum [Jr.] was not even playing then. DA let the others do most of the playing. Frank Driggs of Columbia [records] was disappointed that there was not enough playing by DA. They had a falling out soon after. RESTRICTED:

END RESTRICTION: DA never played with the Alamo City Jazz Band and maybe only once or twice with Jim [Cullum, Sr.]. This was because he did not get the reception he felt he should have gotten. DA says Jim Cullum [Sr.] was a nice fellow. He does not feel JC was the greatest clarinetist but he had a soulful feeling and was very pleasant to listen to. DA visited JC's grave.

DA says he had to fight all the way up to Congressman Gonzales to get a job at the HemisFair. He was the only Negro that

DON ALBERT
Reel III
August 6, 1973
Digest

4

put on his own show there. Other Negro performers were there as singles.

DA feels Peck Kelley was a great pianist. PK was from Houston and died recently. PK used to sit in with DA's band at Shadowland [in San Antonio] during the 1920's. It is impossible to compare PK with other pianists. PK had his own style and played very fast. Allen Van, who played with Troy Floyd, was unlike PK but played ✓ compositions that PK played, e.g., "Kitten on the Keys".

DA ~~never~~ met Dan Desdumes or Clarence Desdumes.

DA knew both the Southern Melody Boys and Southern Syncopaters. ✓ Millard McNeel ~~had~~ had the Southern Melody Boys, and A.J. Johnson had the Southern Syncopaters. They had the same personnel but different names. Both bands were from San Antonio. RBA thinks they made a record about which [?] didn't know anything. DA thinks this may have been Boots and His Buddies as they were all the same people.

DA knew Jack Teagarden in Texas. His son, Jack Teagarden, Jr. is still in Texas. Last time DA talked with him, he was operating a motel. JT, Jr. plays a beautiful trombone. DA remembers Terry Shand's, Herman Waldman's, and Rex Preis's as being the old bands. DA doesn't remember when he first met Jack Teagarden; however, he does remember JT with Glen Gray and the Casa Loma orchestra at a theater in Indianapolis, Indiana. [Check J. Teagarden biographies.]

DON ALBERT
Reel III
August 6, 1973
Digest

Ziggy Elman, Jack Teagarden and others came to the Sunset when DA was playing there. DA says one time they came in to the Sunset saying it was snowing so JT, ZE, DA and one other took their horns out in the snow and just played for the fun of it.

✓ DA ne^{ver}~~x~~ met Benny Goodman or Tommy Dorsey. DA's band met Bob Crosby and His Bobcats. DA's band once shared food with them as Bob Crosby's band didn't have enough to eat. DA's and Don Redman's band worked alternating in various clubs in Detroit, Michigan. Big bands like McKinney's Cotton Pickers and Fletcher Henderson were also there. DA never met Guy Lombardo.

RBA asks DA what an "automatic player" is. DA says it is a musician who must have [notation of] music. Tim Gibson is this way. DA was an automatic player. In learning to improvise one must read a number, then put the music aside and try to play it. (Mrs. DA speaks)

✓ Upon returning to New Orleans, DA visits, because of his blessings, graves of relatives and the shrine of St. Jude are his first stops. He had made a promise to do this to his mother. His sister used to go but doesn't anymore. DA's patron saint is St. Jude, the saint of impossible causes. DA's sister "Dutch" says she is too busy selling tickets to DA's concerts to visit the shrine and graves.

✓ Hiram Harding is living in Dallas, Texas, his hometown. He is no longer in music. HH joined DA in Dallas. He had just left a band from Oklahoma City. Possibly it was the Alvin Walls band. AW was a great alto saxophonist and writer. He died recently in Detroit, Michigan.

DA says Frank Jacquet was strictly a section man. FJ was from Lake Charles, Louisiana and is cousin of the Illinois Jacquet. FJ played mostly with DA. Geechie (sp?) Robinson, another trombonist, played with Fletcher Henderson after he left Don Albert's band. RESTRICTED:

END RESTRICTION

DA says Henry "Nick" Turner stayed around New Orleans mostly. But he was bass player for DA's band for a while. HT died in Chicago after being sick in a small town. [Compare previous reels]
✓ RBA confuses him with ⁿanother Henry Turner. [Check discographies]

Arthur Derbigny was DA's first alto to play with Don Albert. AD played a lot around New Orleans. AD got sick and had to leave the band. He moved back to New Orleans. RBA thought AD had a
✓ restuarant. DA denies this and says AD lived by a restaurant.

DA says the other reed players were Phil Tiller, Herbert Hall and Louis Cottrell. Phil Tiller died recently in New York. PT was from Little Rock, Arkansas and, before joining DA's band, he played in bands in Arkansas. He did not play with [Alphonse] Trent. When PT left DA's band, he stopped playing altogether. Dink Taylor was also from Little Rock, Arkansas and also played with Arkansas bands before joining DA. DT continued to play after leaving DA but DA doesn't know anything about him now. DA says DT disappeared. DA doesn't know DT's real first name. [Cf. Dec. 1973 and Jan. 1974 interviews]

Herbert Hall is moving to Texas within the year. HH's wife,

come over and watch FM while she was at work. However, she would often forget to leave the door unlocked for him so he would sit outside and talk to FM on the inside. Fortunately, he didn't die while Mrs. FM was at work. DA was talking to FM when he died in his family. [Cf. DA interviews, Dec 1973 and Jan 1974.]

Jay Golson was one of DA's arrangers. DA says JG was not related to Benny Golson and actually had no other family at all. DA says he's a great arranger and is still arranging for Motown [records]. He wrote part of DA's book. Lloyd Glenn was DA's first pianist, then Jay Golson. Lionel Reason was the pianist when DA reorganized his band in New Orleans.

RBA asks DA what his father's name was. DA says it was "Fernand" Dominique spelled in such a manner to distinguish it from "Ferdinand". DA said he had to send Ferdinand Dejan home. RESTRICT:

END RESTRICTION. DA feels he

had a great rhythm section, and that was what made the band so great.

It had a certain tempo no one had ever heard [before]. [Who replaced Ferdinand Dejan? RBA, August 22, 1973] *Dejan was with the band until it broke it. Then it*

End of Reel III

** He settled in San Antonio and became a beautician.
DA in conversation with RBA. Dec. 6, 1976.]*

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End of Reel III

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DA in conversation with RBA. Dec. 6, 1976.]

[Real name is Albert Dominique]

DON ALBERT
Reel IV
August 6, 1973
Digest

Also Present: Hazel G. [Mrs. Don Albert]
Dominique, "Dutch" (Mrs. Frederick) Braden,
Timothy C. Gibson of New Leviathan Oriental
Fox-trot Orchestra and the Archive of New
Orleans Jazz, Richard B. Allen

Notes by Richard B. Allen

Checked by Richard B. Allen

Proofread by Annelisa S. Clark

Digest by Annelisa S. Clark

Retyped by Evelyn W. Seidule

"Dutch" (Mrs. Frederick) Braden [DA's sister] and DA discuss DA being punished. DA's father chastised him severely when punishment was needed. He had to walk around the block in his underwear while his father held a shotgun on him. He was between eight and nine years old when this happened. DA says this would just about "break my heart". DB escaped these punishments as she was eight years younger than DA.

DA says one time the band was heading to Miami, Florida via Tallahassee, Florida to play. A bandsman, Dink Taylor, was driving too fast and a cop pulled them over. DA rushed up to the driver's seat so the cop would think a white man was driving, which he did. The cop let them off but warned them against going through Tallahassee as "they" were looking for a pair of black killers, and "they" might mistake some of the black musicians. They by-passed Tallahassee. They purchased a permit to travel in Florida and had to pay one cent per mile. "Nick" [Turner] was what one called black. ✓ DA thinks color should not play an important part in the world. DA had brilliant men in his band who were dark and, at the same time, met some men who were his color that he couldn't reach at all. [DA appears Caucasian. RBA, December 19, 1973]

DA thinks his band was the first in Texas to have a string bass in the band. He feels very lucky that he had Jimmy [Johnson].

String bass was a novelty in Texas. They used the tuba instead except for Noo Noon [sp?] [Louis Pitts?] of Houston, originally of Louisiana, who did not play too very much. [See RBA's notes on DA interviews of Dec. 1973 and Jan. 1974] Brent Sparks played tuba in Alphonso Trent's band. Charlie Dixon played tuba and trombone, but never string bass. RBA thinks Peck Kelley had string bass. DA says PK played solo mostly and he doesn't remember him having a string bass.

In September, 1929, when DA left New Orleans, there were many string bassists there. DA says that someone recommended Jimmy Johnson to him. He drove by JJ's house, asked him if would like to go, and JJ just packed up and came. JJ lived on Annunciation Street way uptown. DA says he did not get JJ from [Baba] Ridgley's band. DA remembers taking [Louis] Cottrell, Arthur [Derbigny] and Sidney Hansell, the singer, from [Baba] Ridgley's but no one else. ✓ Emma [Barrett] may have been the piano player in that band. BR stayed mad at DA right up until he died. [Cf BR interview in ANOJ.] Danny Barker recommended DA to BR.

HGD brings lunch. (She speaks.)

DA feels his punishment as a child may have paid off in later years because he has since lived by the rules that were given to him by his father and mother. His mother was a lovely person who never had much to say, as was the Creole tradition. His father was a disciplinarian who was hard on the children. DA knows that the father was hard on DA's sister after DA left. The sternness was one

of the reasons DA wanted to leave New Orleans. DA feels looking back now that it was a good thing and he learned right from wrong.

DA was allowed to go to dances. Friends like Manuel Perez and George Moret took DA to dances. Also [A.J.] Piron and Barney [Bigard] took him. BB was two years older than DA. DA says he went to the dances mostly to hear the music, not to dance. The dances he did were the one-step, the two-step, the waltz and later the Charleston. He doesn't do any of them anymore. When DA met his [future] wife and became engaged, they went to house parties.

DA says he never did too much with the second line. He was usually too busy carrying some musician's horn. RBA comments that DA was able to get people second lining at the [1973] [New Orleans] Jazz [and Heritage] Festival [Fair].

DA says he went fishing as a boy. He would sell his fish to help the family. It has been part of his life. Now he fishes for pleasure. He has a summer home at Arkansas Pass. DA fished in Lake Ponchartrain as a child. DA shows his father's piece of cypress wood with line wrapped around it. His father used it for fishing when DA was a boy. DB found it in the house at 1719 N. Robertson where DA was born.

There were many fishing camps along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Fishing was an outlet for negroes. Milneburg, Twin Oaks, and Seabrook were places for predominately Negro gatherings. DA's family had friends who had camps in those places. DA says they would

spend the night at one of the camps. He would finish his paper route early, take the Gentilly car to the end of the line, and then walk the rest of the way to where his father was. DA says he wasn't afraid even though he went through dark swamps "with snakes and everything else". He guesses his fearlessness was because he was young and this was his "way of life". They could rent a boat for fifty cents. They caught croakers. DA's sister and brother-in-law's [the Frederick Braden's] present home, 2701 Paris Avenue, is on the site of the old Paris Avenue Canal. When DA was a child, they used to get crawfish and perch out of the Canal. DA says the last time he was in New Orleans he took a whole batch of crawfish back to San Antonio. They had a crawfish party for Barney Bigard, Lucille and Floyd Levin. DA would go crawfishing as a child and would often spend all night in the swamps.

DA says most of the streets weren't paved when he was a child. The children often helped push wagons out of chuck holes. DA always helped people. DA used to be paid twenty-five cents per week to "make groceries" for the neighbors. "Make grocêrcies" was the term used then for buying groceries.

DA also used to pound brick into powder, then sell the powder at a nickel per cup as a cleaning abrasive. DA says he never paid much attention to "hoodoo" [i.e. Voodooism]. People in Texas asked him to buy them a "hand" when he visited Louisiana and he didn't know what they were talking about. DA's mother also never paid attention to it. HGD says that her mother was paid to remove Voodoo

charms of rice and hair because she was unafraid of it.

DA says the gutters on the streets were "crazy," and he used to have to dig his hands into them to get his "Chinees", i.e., marbles, out of them. DA says Danny Barker told him that if he would wrap a white agate he had in a piece of rag, rub it with grease, and bury it in the ground, it would change into a beautiful color. DA believed him! DB still is a character! DA says you don't see gutters like those anymore, those were two and three feet deep.

DA says there were some tough characters in the neighborhood. There was one man called "Mr. Frog", who was a barber. He cut a head almost off with his razor. DA says he went with the crowd to catch "Frog", and they caught him the same day. He had apparently gone to Lake [Pontchartrain] and came back into town. DA doesn't know why the man came back.

There were also the "Gown Men." Men dressed in white gowns like women and went out at night to "get" their enemies. DA says his mother-in-law encountered them one night and she "got on them". They left her alone. Things have changed a lot since then in both music and violence. DA says, though, that history may be repeating itself because some bands are trying to get back to playing real music.

St. Joseph's Day was a big day for them. It was DA's mother's birthday. The Italian families had large tables of food which they called "St. Joseph's Altars" in their homes. DA still had his lucky bean and his St. Jude card. [DA shows RBA his card.]

RBA asks Da if he ever played "Purple Rose of Cairo" by A.J. Piron. DA used to play it but doesn't anymore. TCG thinks Bill Russell has an orchestration of it. [See New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra Arhoolie LP. Lars Edegran orchestrated it.] Perhaps some of the Piron numbers have never been recorded. DA thinks it would be a treat to hear them. RBA, TCG and DA discuss the New Leviathan Fox-Trot Orchestra program of New Orleans compositions. DA might like to organize a group to play old numbers as they were played in the "old days". RBA feels there was a sweetness to some of the music DA played in the August 5, 1973 concert.

One of DA's favorite tunes is "I'll Get By". When DA and Mrs. DA had an argument, he played "I'll Get By" or "I Surrender, Dear" to make amends. DA learned all the sweet tunes. He could play jazz but featured sentimental tunes.

DA says he likes to listen to Duke [Ellington]'s, Louis Armstrong's and Glen Gray's bands. He really likes Lawrence Welk's band but doesn't like Lawrence Welk.

DA says he never actually took lessons under Manuel Perez. He would get "verbal talk" rather than [formal] lessons. He and Manuel Perez were considered relatives. Mr. Piron made DA solfege for a long time before allowing him to get an instrument. When he was finally allowed to get his cornet, Mr. Piron showed him how to put the mouthpiece to his mouth. Then he was on his own on many aspects of execution. DA has natural vibrato from his cheek muscles, rather than the lips. Buddy Petit whom DA considers "one of the greatest" gave DA some tips. He got no actual music theory then. Trumpet

players were "naturals", i.e., Kid Rena and Louis Armstrong.

DA says he served largely steaks, chicken, chili and hamburgers at the Keyhole. He cooked the fantastic Louisiana dishes for the family only.

DA says the symphony at the Autocrat was attended by members of the club and their friends. They were segregated in that most of the members were of light complexion. Piron was the director.

[Mil ~~Frederick~~ Piron probably. Cf other DA interviews.] This band was made up of "finished" musicians. Lorenzo Tio, Piron, etc. Many others were great players, but they didn't know anything about music. DA would sing mainly popular songs, like "The World's Waiting for the Sunrise", there on Sunday afternoons.

End of Reel

