

DON ALBERT
REEL I
SEPT. 18, 1972

Also present: RBA

Digest: R. Adamo
Check: E.S. Baur
Dbck: RBA

RBA asks about a point raised previously by DA concerning the phenomenon of a person changing according to the changing phases of the moon. RBA asks if there wasn't someone in DA's band who was like that. DA says it was Geechee [James] Robinson. RBA asks if he is still alive. DA doesn't know but assumes that he is. After GR left DA's band, he joined Fletcher [Henderson]'s. He was always "a fickle fellow," always wanting to be on the go. [Cf. Walter C. Allen, Hendersonia, on GR] DA guesses that he just kept running; GR wasn't one to correspond much. RBA asks what GR would do when the moon changed. DA explains that that was just the band's way of putting it, a ~~****~~ joke they shared. His attitude would change like Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde. He would go from being friendly to arguing with anyone in the band. For this reason, the members sometimes avoided him. RBA asks if he became argumentative when the moon was full. DA says they didn't notice at the time. RBA mentions that people do seem susceptible to mood swings due to factors like the time of day. DA says that's the way GR was--at a certain time of the month he would automatically change.

RBA asks if DA knew the members of the Jay McShann Band. Not well, DA answers; he knew a few of them, and remembers when singer Al Hibbler went with McShann. DA says all JM band ^{me}members

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knew him [DA] personally, but he wouldn't know them unless they came up and refreshed his memory. RBA says the point he was trying to make is that, for instance, all of ^JNimmie Lunceford band members were gentlemen--except for Trummy Young, who "came up the hard way." and was self-conscious about it. [See Lunceford Decca 12"LP notes by Stanley Dance. These include an interview with Young. I consider Young a friendly gentleman from my one meeting with him in 1945. RBA, Nov. 8, 1974.] DA says the reason they were gentlemen is that they were almost all college men or had been to college for a while. RBA asks if the same was true of DA's band. DA says that not many had been to college, but that they were gentlemen. RBA comments that they all seem very refined and DA agrees they were, adding that you couldn't find many today who are like them.

DA notes that he went to school with [Louis] Cottrell who was a little behind him because LC was younger. DA names some others in his original band: Al Freeman, a great pianist, whose son is the movie star, Al Freeman, Jr.; Arthur Derbigny; Herb Hall; and Albert Martin. But, he says, none of them had a "great education." RBA says they are intelligent, well-behaved men. He has met several of them. DA mentions that nobody among them had a drinking problem. RBA suggests there may be an exception to that and DA agrees--the trumpet player Billy [Douglas].

RBA asks what sort of act the guys in DA's band had and mentions that Lunceford's men would throw their instruments up in the air. DA says that he and Alvin Alcorn had an act together. AA--who was young and small--would sit in DA's lap and they would finger one another's horns [while they played]. As a finale, they threw their instruments up in the air. Sometimes they would stand on chairs to draw attention or wave their instruments in the air. It was expected of them, RBA adds. Most of the bands did. DA says, however, that it was not "pronounced," just something they did now and then.

RBA says that he wants to go back to the early days again and asks DA what they called the neighborhood he grew up in. DA says it was called the French Quarters or French Settlement. [Cf. other sources.] He lived on North Robertson between Annette Street and St. Anthony. DA says that what is called the French Quarter used to be more spread out then. It was the section where many of the "Creoles" lived.

Barney Bigard lived about a block from DA on Villere. Manuel Perez lived on Urquhart Street. RBA asks if any other musicians lived in the area. DA names Milford Piron (DA's teacher), Louis Cottrell's father [LC, Sr.], Lorenzo Tio Jr. and Sr., Big Eye Louis [Nelson], and Alphonse Picou; some of these were a few years

older than DA. LC and BB were among the young ones.

Danny Barker lived right across the street. He and DA played in one another's backyard; when one would get mad, he would throw the other out of the yard. Even so, on Saturday they would make the rounds with DB's father, when he peddled his charcoal. DA adds that DB has been a "beautiful friend" for years. RBA asks about the charcoal. He is not familiar with it. DA says that is because you don't see it anymore.

Chris Columbo, DB's [step]father had regular customers. Some of the peddlers just called out their wares, going down the block yelling, "I got shrimp!" or whatever. Chris Columbo peddled charcoal, stone-coal or wood, and he didn't have to yell it out. RBA asks if DA can imitate the peddlers. (DA obliges, after a brief protest.)

DA continues that if the man was a shrimp peddler, he would be watching for the police. The shrimp spoiled easily, but even so the peddler could always sell them. There were licences, but not for open [air] salesmen. So their sales were a violation [of the law.] But that's the way the guy made his living. DA ~~says*they*usually*played*in~~ adds, "There's always been violations of the law down through the years."

RBA asks if the children played on the sidewalks. DA says they usually played in one another's yard.

At night they went to the pictureshows in the neighborhood;

one was the Ivy on the corner of Annette and Villere. [1379
Annette. Soard's New Orleans City Directory, 1924, p. 817]
They always found "decent, pleasurable" things to do.

But, DA says, he doesn't want to condemn the present era
because "in so doing, you don't accept progress." None the less,
he believes that kids in those days were "more beautiful" about
being obedient and respectful to other elders. Sometimes a
next-door neighbor would whip a kid for something he'd done. He
didn't dare tell his parents for fear of getting another beating.
DA thinks maybe it's just because there are so many [i.e. more
kids] that things are not as good as they used to be. In those
days, the whole situation was easier to control.

RBA says he doesn't believe that all change is necessarily
progress. DA says yes, but you can't retard progress. But also,
there has to be a borderline between what's right and what's wrong
and that's what we have forgotten today.

DA says he realizes this is just his opinion, others may think
differently. RBA says you can't really generalize about kids today--
some are smart, some bad, some good. DA says that the main thing
is they don't want to be controlled and don't want an older person
to tell them anything. They call adults "old timers." Maybe
they're right, but DA says that the Ten Commandments is a good

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guideline for anyone to follow. Only, the kids will ask, who wrote the Ten Commandments; they always question everything. They try to confuse you, but you have to be ready to answer. DA says that kids in his day were more "subdued;" they had more control over their thoughts and actions, and tried to follow the instructions of their elders "that could give them that necessary experience."

RBA wants to know if DA thinks kids used to be happier. DA thinks so. They never used to dream of shooting or cutting-- if something like that happened it was a big headline, "today the whole paper has not only one article--". DA admits that they had fistfights: he and DB would fight over a baseball bat or glove; he and BB* "used to fight like two strange dogs today and tomorrow be hugging and kissing each other." These fights were not serious.

RBA comments that when they were at the [Don Albert] concert yesterday, he noticed that the Creole families were very affectionate. They were hugging and kissing, shaking hands, and generally touching each other. [DA and his younger brother kissed.] DA says that has always been one of the Creole people's traits. Joe Mares said he'd never seen a family so crazy about relatives as DA's.

**Barney Bigard*

["Dutch" Broden], DA's sister sold over two-hundred tickets to the September 17 concert.

RBA asks if they played ball much when DA was young: DA says they used to play, but they'd make their own ball and generally use hand-me-down equipment. They made balls out of a little wooden ball, with layers of thread around it and finally sewed. When it ripped apart, they'd make another one. Kids rarely got enough money to buy such equipment.

DA would get little jobs from time to time. He remembers when he would shine brass faucets for a nickle. Sometimes he would shop for the neighbors. He thinks that this may be why he knows how to shop and cook today. There were other jobs, too, like shining shoes, working in a bakery, or just "cleaning up this and that." The kids were not lazy.

Sometimes they got a nickle to buy lunch for school. DA says that one kid would buy bread, one would buy a pickle, one would buy slices of meat--you could get four or five slices for a nickle. Then they would put it together and make sandwiches.

RBA asks what kind of "ball" they played. DA says that it was stick baseball, the bat being something like a broomhandle. Sometimes, later on, they played at the "greens," an area of vacant lots around St. Bernard and Johnson. Some great baseball players would come play with the kids before the Crescent Star

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Park~~k~~ was put up. The great pitcher, Joe Pardo (probable spelling from DA) (DA says old timers will remember that name), would stop at the greens to play baseball with the kids, then go on to Crescent Star Park and pitch eighteen innings against greats like Buck Leonard and Percy Wilson.

There were teams called the Crescent Stars, the Black Pelicans, and the Algiers Giants. Sometimes big stars played at Crescent Star Park. Jumbo Johnson of New Orleans and Satchel Paige pitched there; the great catcher, Josh Gibson, played there also.

DA says that he's glad to see some of the baseball greats finally getting recognition now. He's heard that some commentators named Satchel Paige as the greatest pitcher of all time. DA agrees with this. SP barnstormed with Dizzy Dean and Bob Feller, and SP won nine out of ten games. DA says that such records are "kept in the dark," because they would take away too much from the other great pitchers. He claims these records can be found*if you dig down into it."

DA says the same problem exists with some of the great old-time musicians. Caffrey Darensbourg was not just a musician but a genius, and "it's too bad that some of his artistry hasn't been captured." DA reminds RBA that he pointed out CD on a record once to RBA; CD played mandolin on the record. RBA remembers that DA told him he had been in the studio when that record was made.
[Texas Tommy record on Brunswick 7044.]

DA also mentions John Marrero, who was a great banjo player, but probably not as great as CD.

Lorenzo Tio, Jr. was a good clarinetist. "Papa" Tio taught "all of us," DA says. LT, Sr. was a symphony man; those guys [i.e.: symphony men] could "read music just like a newspaper."

DA says he was talking to his professor's [i.e.: his teacher's] daughters last night [Milford Piron's daughters.] DA says MP could do anything on the trumpet except play jazz. He was strictly a symphony man. He triple-tongued and double-tongued. The old musicians used to get together at the Autocrat Club on Sunday, twenty-five or thirty of them. DA says they played "high powered" symphony numbers. DA would listen. Sometimes he would sing. They would pick something simple like "Roses of Picardy." DA says they would do all this to promote friendship and feel^eings like that. It was mostly for the families (RBA suggests: for the neighborhood) and not open to the public. The Autocrat Club, however, was behind it.

RBA asks if DA remembers any of the pieces [played by] this symphony orchestra. DA says he can't, it's too far back. RBA comments that it's like trying to guess how old Satchel Paige is. Then RBA asks, "Could you guess?" [NOTE: This question appears to refer back to the pieces played by the band. DA takes it to be the question about SP's age. RA. I often ask ambiguous questions on purpose. RBA, Nov. 18, 1974.] DA and SP used to pal around.

SP played guitar and liked to ride around. Once, in Dallas, SP felt like riding around and they did, but they never discussed age. DA does know that SP is older, and DA says that he was sixty-four in August. But, DA adds, if SP wants to say that he's twenty-nine that's fine with him. RBA recalls that he saw SP on the TV program "This Is Your Life" and that SP came out with his age. [Not given here.] However, DA points out that he saw the program and was not under the impression that SP had given a definite answer. RBA suggests that he might not know his age, since records weren't always kept. DA agrees.

RBA asks what SP played on the guitar. DA says he played "blues, simple chords." This was a common pastime, and sometimes you find a man who plays good music this way. RBA notes that sometimes guys who only play three chords do great things with those three chords. They are real musicians, real artists, even though limited. DA agrees. DA says that SP never had a lesson, but that many fine musicians came up this way in the old days. Even today, a lot of the young guitar players don't know music, but somehow learn what to do with their instrument so that they can play whatever they hear. DA says he can't explain how they do it.

DA mentions Willie Santiago. He was probably not what you'd call a great musician, but he was a "great artist." RBA wants to know what makes him great. DA answers that it's a natural ability, a natural gift. RBA asks if he could play fast.

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DA says WS could play anything. Sometimes WS played at Tom Anderson's cafe, where Kress is. [Actually the site is now Woolworth's.

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This was in the time that Barney [Bigard] was at TA's with Paul Barbarin. It's also where BB and Albert Nicholas left from when they went up to Chicago to join King Oliver.

RBA says that he's never quite sure what New Orleans' musicians mean when they say someone is great or what they are great at. RBA gives Caffrey Darensbourg as an example. DA says CD was great at everything: he could solo, play chords, and improvise his own ideas. A man must be good overall to be great. Other musicians who are exceptionally good at just one thing or another can't be called great. RBA says there are some who are great readers but can't play [i.e., execute well.]

DA agrees and offers his own early career as an example. When he joined Troy Floyd, he didn't have time to solo because he could read and most of TF's band could not. As a result, DA had to play three, four or five different parts. But as the band got older and had been together for a while, he sometimes did get the chance to solo.

RBA says that, from listening to the old records, he thinks DA must have been a very good soloist. DA says that this was possible

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because most of his family were musicians. And also because, while he was growing up, he had such men around as Manuel Perez, Milford Piron, and "Old Man" George Moret. DA says you would have to learn in a situation like his; you'd have "nothing in your head" if you couldn't learn from those guys.

RBA asks if George Moret actually taught DA. DA explains that GM was always too busy for teaching as such, but that DA was at GM's house often.

Jimmy Johnson, one of DA's band, used to play with Buddy Bolden. RBA asks if he could read. He could. DA says this is a case of another gifted man. It's strange to say a man can get a different tone out of a bass, but it's true. As a further example, DA mentions Jimmy Blanton who played with Duke [Ellington] and died young. DA says he could make his bass sound like a cello.

DA says a lot of guys just don't know how to get "tonation" [i.e., timbre] out of their horn. About his own tone, DA says it is not pinched but round and big. A lot of musicians in those days studied their "tonation." He names "Big Eye" Louis Nelson, [Alphonse] Picou, and Barney [Bigard].

RBA thinks that tonation was so important to them because they did a lot of work in the street [i.e., with brass bands] and needed to develop strength and tone.

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DA asks RBA to tell him about what Frank Driggs was talking about recently when FD wrote to DA that DA had wrongly remembered (and told to RBA) an incident that took place in Texas many years ago. DA doesn't know what exactly Driggs was thinking of. RBA and DA then talk about the subjectivity of "truth."

RBA asks DA if he ever used to play hopscotch. DA says he did with girls. They played on the sidewalk.

DA also used to play hide-and-seek. The rules were: everyone would run and hide; the one who was "it" would hit a can, count 1, 2, 3, and say "I spy" when he found the next person to become "it."

RBA asks about "raquet." DA says he never played that. RBA says it was played in the 1890's. It was a game like lacrosse and was played on a field on Elysian Fields.

RBA asks what kind of movies DA say^W. They were silent movies. Sometimes there was a piano player. There was one theater on Washington Avenue where DA played in the pit with bassist Nat Towles. RBA asks if it was NT's father and DA says that it was NT himself. They would play during intermission and the band would start up again when the movie die.

DA mentions Eddie Heywood [Sr.], a pit pianist in Atlanta.

[End of reel]

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[End of reel]

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Also Present: Richard B. Allen

DA and RBA had been speaking of movie pianists and DA says he doesn't remember any more. [Nat Towles played bass and DA played trumpet. DA just a kid then. The band [in motion picture theatre] was a 6, 7 or 8 piece band, typical of New Orleans then.

RBA asks if New Orleans had a Railroad Avenue, and, when DA answered, "No", RBA comments, "There was no such thing as the other side of the tracks in New Orleans." DA asks if he means segregated places. RBA doesn't remember N.O. ever having "slums" until the government made them. DA thinks N.O. was pretty much a melting pot with people living everywhere. DA didn't agree with RBA that a lot of people owned their own homes. Everybody was a renter. Gives example of his father's house which is now the son's home and which the son is still renting. [DA's brother Leo³. RBA Sept 27, 1972] Times are different today; more people are owning their own homes.

DA explains expression "Killer diller" used back in the days of the big bands. It was used to describe "the best thing you were gonna play, and you were gonna knock the audience out with that one....That was your ace in the hole." It was a real swinging number that would feature "most everybody". DA and RBA discuss riffs and their uses. All during the night killer dillers would be used in a set, usually the last in a set of three. They speak of bands known for their riffs like "the Blue Devils, which was Bennie

Moten's band, the Count Basie band and [Jimmie] Lunceford, [Alphonso] Trent, Troy Floyd, and T. Holder. [Cf other sources on Walter Page's Blue Devils, Moten, and Basie RBA, Sept 27, 1972] Trent was considered more high class, played high class hotels and colleges. It was somewhat similar to A.J. Piron's band. Troy was high class too but not as much so as Trent. The thing about Troy Floyd's band were the instruments which were beautiful. It was called the orchestra of gold. [Cf. Dick Allen, Don Albert..., Storyville No.31, Oct-Nov.1970, p 18 et seq] DA's instruments were supplied by C.G. Conn for publicity purposes. They discuss the possibilities of getting publicity folder back from the C. G. Conn Company.

RBA asks about what tunes DA played back then would still be played today. He thinks most of them^{them} are because the older bands or musicians play except for their "head numbers". "True" could have become a hit when Paul Gayten put it out. It was in the black market listing PG as composer. The [business?] records were burned up in Linden, New Jersey where the record company was. "True" is not played anywhere other than in New Orleans.

DA says no other band plays "The Sheik of Araby" the way he does, but a lot of them copy the little ditty he put in there. Referring to the line "with no panys on", DA says in those days it was something obnoxious; now its too subdued.

DA said he wrote not over 5 or 6 songs. "True" and Alita are

the only ones he can remember. Phil Tiller, DA's alto saxophonist, and he wrote "Alita".

RBA asks what solos back then were based on: chords or scales or new melodies. DA said it was the way the musician felt, staying within the chord formation of the song. When RBA asks how many ran chromatic scales and chromatics, the former being played only for practice purposes. When a musician is making chromatics, he is making "a different chord formation into his playing." They speak of [Louis] Cottrell who uses chromatics in "The Sheik of Araby" [recorded by DA's band]. DA rates him with the top clarinet players because of his "tonation", improvisation and sense of the song that he's playing.

RBA asks about DA's exercise books. DA mentions two that he no longer has. ^{Clemlimard's method} ~~The Cloudmiers~~, an old French method. His French solfege book is gone too. He expresses a desire to go up in the loft of the house where he might run across some of them if the rats hadn't gotten to them. DA says Italian and French solfege methods are basically the same. DA's definition of music as "a combination of sounds that are pleasing to the ear" eliminates today's "loud noises on the guitars, and on that electric bass" [rock?] as music.

RBA mentions one of DA's recordings ~~where~~ the piano is featured and the sax plays background. The song was "On the Sunny Side of the Street" with Billy Douglas on trumpet, Dink Taylor on sax and Lloyd Glenn on pi^a. RBA thinks the interlude unusual. DA says it was written arrangement and that it had been Lloyd Glenn's idea.

DA said even though they travelled a lot they rehearsed nearly every day. Musicians rehearsed willingly. In the early days they used megaphones; there were no microphones then.

DA remembers that in 1933-'34 in South Bend, Indiana a man said there was something coming out that DA and his band ought to be on and that he was going to try to help him; it was television. DA thought he was talking through his hat.

All DA's music life was not "beautiful"; he ran into many problems because of his race. Since he was so light, he was considered a white musician, and attitudes changed when "they" found out he was Negro. Traveling with the wives in the band, he ran into problems as the police thought the wives were prostitutes. There were always incidents "to put a block into your happiness". They always managed to come through with a smile. Even though they were stranded a lot of times on the highways with nothing to eat or drink, "Fortune would shine" on them, and someone would come along and help them out. In Thomasville, Georgia, where "the guys" wanted the whole band lynched, "the guys took all of the \$150 the band had just earned. "This was a lot of money for my band." This left them with nothing to get to Macon, Georgia, 150 miles away. A gasoline attendant was kind enough to furnish enough gas and oil to make the trip. DA wired the money back as soon as he got to Macon. He believes you can't say, "every white man is bad, because it's a lie. You can't say every Negro is

bad. It's a lie". [Cf previous DA interviews.]

Eating and sleeping on the road were also problems. DA mentions what he told a performer playing the Blue Room, Roosevelt Hotel. He said, "Lady," "You can sit here and smile and enjoy what you're doing today,...and, it's beautiful. But let me tell you some of the experiences that I've had to make it possible for you to enjoy this life today..." DA thinks life as it was in the early 1920's and early 1930's should document without pulling punches.

RBA asks about featured soloists in his band, and DA says all his numbers featured soloists. Several would be featured per number. It was a large band. With a five or six piece band the one soloist worked better. DA mentions yesterday's concert [Check Don Albert Concert, September 17, 1972, 3 p.m. - 5 p.m., See DA Folder, sponsored by the New Orleans Jazz Club] which "would have been lost" if you couldn't have featured each individual.

They speak of [Louis] Cottrell's style on the tenor sax. DA says clarinets were not popular back then. Tenor and Alto sax were popular so Cottrell was only rarely featured on clarinet. DA says when [Herb] Hall doubled on the baritone sax, they got to sound like Duke [Ellington]'s band." They agree that Cottrell was a great tenor player. RBA says at that period most players sounded like [Coleman] Hawkins. DA said he had no imitators in the band. They did play some solos in "the vein of other fellows" though. Geechee Robinson had no set

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style, but he did try to play solos in Tricky Sam [Nanton]'s style with Due [Ellington]. He also played his own solos. RBA thinks perhaps Geechee listened to Jimmy Harrison and [Louis] Armstrong. DA says Armstrong influenced every musician that plays and mentions dedicating the last half of his concert to the memory of Armstrong by playing numbers like, "When You're Smiling" and "Hello, Dolly". LA had made outstanding recordings of the numbers DA played.

DA regrets not having publicity posters from the period when he was young, but DA didn't think ahead when things were going so well. Danny Barker had asked him about this too. He does have quite a few old write-ups that are probably too faded even to be xeroxed. DA blames the disappearance of most of this type material on his booking agents, like Al Travis, Rabinowitz [sp?], and Chauncey ^{Hylan} ~~Hallen~~ [sp?].

DA said the band's billing pretty much depended on where they were playing. If they were in a city, the band might get top billing, but in a revue they would be one of many parts. Mentions Ralph Cooper's Revue. Ralph Cooper was a producer like Larry Steele [sp] in New York. DA mentions two revues, one in Brooklyn with Ella [Fitzgerald] and another in ^{Glenn} ~~Glenn~~ Falls, N.Y. with Billie Holiday. Ralph Cooper, as producer, would be the headliner. Today a man will walk out if he doesn't get top billing. RBA thinks it good to

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know who the producer is as each has his own reputation. DA says people tend to underestimate not only producers but band leaders. DA says he has to be leader, trumpet player, booking agent, father and mother.

RBA says Boots and His Buddies' recording of "Careless Love" has a Dixieland sound. DA said that, although Boots was not from N.O., he was a real Dixieland drummer. RBA says on the records that if you didn't know DA was from N.O., you might not be able to tell, perhaps Cottrell could be identified as a N. O. musician. DA said this was only later after big arrangements came out; at first, in 1929, all nine musicians were from N.O., but there are not records of this band. Hiram Harding was the only member not from New Orleans. The style of the band changed, but, according to DA, it has always been a "make you want to dance" band. He gives credit to Fats Martin, the greatest drummer he had ever heard. Freddie Kohlman sounds like Fats [Albert] Martin.

RBA and DA talk about the difference between English spoken in New Orleans and that spoken in Texas. RBA says people in New Orleans use French expressions whether the people are Creole or not, like "banquette", "quartee", "lagniappe". They mention also the Orleanian way of pronouncing "t'ing" and the expression "second line". The band members lost their N.O. "brogue". DA can speak French but not fluently. He spoke fluently as his grandmother and grandfather spoke French to him. DA tells story he told Segura [sp?] [of the Times-

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Picayune] of an incident on a visit to New York where people did not know the meaning of "second line". DA said people were alike everywhere and proved his point to Buddy Tate and Milton Larkins when he got "the whole house" walking all up and down 7th Street and back up the stairs [i.e., second lining.]

End of Reel II

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Reel III
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Also Present: Richard B. Allen

DA was on vacation when Buddy Tate was at the Celebrity Club. Milton Larkins was 'upstairs'; and they had gotten together for a sort of reunion. When they started blowing and jamming, people started marching just like they do here.

DA says the article in the [Times-Picayune] paper that morning on the concert mentioned the people had marched in the aisles. DA says it seems its only his programs here during which people jump up and down. [Cf. other sources on concerts, festivals, etc.] RBA said he thought it had been very successful. The people [Al Rose, Johnny Wiggs, Mr. and Mrs. Lester Bozant, Mrs. Marian Longmeyer (sp?) and others] he sat with were musically knowledgeable and appreciated a good leader and m.c.

DA and RBA go back into more slang words and how they're used, like "terrible" and "crazy". Louis Armstrong started most of this type of slang according to DA.

RBA asks if there is anything like Carnival in Texas. DA said Galveston, because New Orleanians had miagrated there, tried something similar on a smaller scale. DA said Texas wasn't ready for it. RBA finds Galveston more like New Orleans than any other town in Texas. DA attributes this to the Louisiana people that came through Port Arthur and Beaumont. [Cf. The Galveston That Was.] (RBA mumbles)

RBA and DA talk about the difference between Carnival now and when DA was a boy. DA says now it is commercialized. Back then it was just a fun day. There weren't as many people and more masked then. "They had their own outfits and things like that, the music." Clubs or groups would get together and mask alike. There were a few

big organizations that didn't parade or dress but gave dances during the Carnival season like the Illinois Club, the Young Men Twenty, Francis Amis. DA's big band played for the Illinois Club. RBA says the season started on Twelfth Night but now starts even sooner which DA attributes to commercialism. RBA thinks a little commercialism might keep the older organizations on their toes. Sometimes the commercial people do a better job than the organizations which are higher in social rank. [RBA has in mind Bacchus.]

DA tells of how in Texas June 19 or "June Teenth", is celebrated. It is Freedom Day [for slaves]. There used to be barbeques that would last all day, but the young people of today are not interested in observing it. Everyone celebrates the Fourth of July. The Mexican population celebrates "diez y seis de Septiembre", the 16th of September, as their Freedom Day. ^[Mexican Independence from Spain] Outdoor barbeques are held on the Fourth of July. Fireworks are shot when "they" feel like it although they are illegal. The Mexicans also have "Cinco de Mayo", the 5th of May, as a holiday. DA's band has played for Mexican holidays. There would be bands playing, singing, dancing, food, and drinks. Also traditional Mexican costumes were worn.

DA says Creoles didn't celebrate Christmas any differently than others. There were no special foods, etc. The only holiday with special food that he could remember was St. Joseph's Day when the Italians would dress up altars in their homes with food. DA said Mardi Gras Day people would have doughnuts and red beans and rice. When DA had Louie [Armstrong] as DA's guest in Oklahoma City, 1931, he had

red beans and rice ready on his arrival since it was Louie's favorite dish. RBA and DA both say they get "red bean" hungry.

DA said that they had "king cakes" in his family and that whoever got the pecan would buy the next "king cake". It rarely went on longer than 2 or 3 weeks, but it was considered an honor to get the pecan. The "kings's day" usually was a Sunday, DA thinks. [See also George F. Reinecke, "The New Orleans Twelfth Night Cake", Louisiana Folklore Miscellany, Apr., 1965, p45-54].

DA doesn't recall that there were ever any fights when he played here. Texas was a little different. There were always places where there was a "knock-out drag-out". When he first played in Dallas, there was a man stationed at the door to search for knives and pistols. He saw nothing like that in N.O., and he has played to some tremendous crowds. At the San Jacinto Club there was an audience of 1,500 which nowadays would be the equivalent of 5,000 to 8,000. DA mentions reading the Louisiana Weekly about all the murders here. RBA asks if DA was ever afraid walking home at night in any neighborhood. DA tells of an incident in Dallas when he first left N.O. He had gone to the Western Union office after his music job to wire his family. When he left he was stopped and searched by a policeman. This office was on the main street, just 6 or 7 blocks from where he was working. After making sure that there was just a trumpet in DA's case, the policeman told him to get on home "because some of these niggers will take your head off". He thought DA was a white man. This was a bad

neighborhood where a railroad track, central track, ran and where all the thugs lived. He was too young to realize the danger. It seemed to him that all his life "bad" characters had liked him. When he was once in North Dallas he heard someone say, "Uh, don't mess with that little fellow there....That's that Creole from N.O., and that's Black Mac's close buddy. You mess with him and Black Mac'll get you". Black Mac was a tough character everyone was afraid of. DA feels he was fortunate, even in New York, to have these fellows like him. [DA was friendly with them in N.O. also? RBA, Sept.]

RBA asks DA what a Creole is. DA says it was debateable. His wife likes to be called a Creole, and he's called a Creole. He sees it as a mixture of races: Indian, Philipino, Turk, Italian. DA mentions his name (Albert Dominique You, who came from the Dominican Republic. [See previous interview.] He discusses colors of Creoles. DA says he does not wish to continue on this because he might offend somebody.

RBA asks when DA had last ridden a street car, and DA says it must be 60 some years. He doesn't ride busses either. As a child he was very conscious of having to sit in the back of public transportation of all kinds. He has always been conscious of being "what they call a Negro". As he got older and started fighting for civil rights, there were some things that irritated him that he didn't want to be reminded of it.

They talk about big theatres here in N.O. like the Elysian which was off of Elysian Fields and Frenchmen [parallel streets].

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the old Palace (on Iberville), the Orpheum, and the Lyric. DA says the Lyric, a Negro theatre, was a melting pot for the musicians. He remembers a left-handed violin player, not John Robichaux, Valcour. There were also great drummers like Red Happy [Bolton] and [Louis] Cottrell [Sr.] RBA suggests that the violinist may have been [Ferdinand] Volteau. DA thinks RHB was from Memphis and was a trick drummer while LC was a finished musician. DA's father knew and was close friends with them. DA met them as a child. "The friendship always was beautiful."

RBA asks if DA remembers when Bourbon Street began to boom. DA doesn't recall, but there were a lot of places [on Bourbon Street] "where the happenin's were" and Storyville. The joints were there because you can see how old the Absinthe House is. However, DA says in the old days the big thing was the balls at the Franc Amis [downtown] or the San Sou[ci] uptown and other places.

When RBA says he has a million questions, DA tells him he can mail them, and DA will answer them like he does for Dick Allen. Don Albert laughs when he realizes he meant [Frank] Driggs.

DA talks about meeting his daddy at Lake Ponchartrain and going fishing when he was a boy. He went crawfishing in the old Jourdan Canal where there were a thousand snakes, and it didn't bother him. DA sold his crawfish.

DA says that people did not go out to restaurants much back then. They cooked at home; everybody was a good cook. DA likes to eat at home and avoids going to cafes and restaurants unless his wife and daughter ask him. This goes back to the days of traveling

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when he felt uneasy in those places. He was always under the impression that someone would say that he was a Negro and that he'd have to get out. He realizes he shouldn't feel like this because the situation has changed tremendously. DA says there are still some places that give that impression that you're not wanted there. DA agrees with RBA's expression "you feel a draft" there. RBA says he once took Roland Kirk [a musician] to Kolb's and he thought he had "felt a draft." The head waitress came over later and asked for his autograph.

They mention Al Hibbler, also blind, who wanted to join DA's band as singer. Afterwards AH did sing at DA's nightclub. Later he joined Jay McShann and, still later, Duke [Ellington].

RESTRICT

END RESTRICTION

DA urges RBA to "hurry up and get this book on the way, man". RBA mentions trying to line up a publisher. He says it's a shame to let all this material not get published. RBA says if anybody knows about Kansas City music and Texas and Oklahoma music it's Frank Driggs. RBA adds that everybody in the business knows it, yet FD has trouble getting a publisher. DA says FD gets all his information from DA. DA says Frank Driggs's writing him the questions will not get the information. ^DFA must come down and talk in person to DA.

END OF INTERVIEW