

EDGAR MOSLEY
I [only]-Digest-Retyped
September 3, 1958

Recorded at 1131 W. 46th St., L.A., California
Also present: William Russell

Edgar P. Mosley was born in the Algiers section [West Bank] of New Orleans, on November 12, 1895. He played harmonica from childhood until he was a young man; he began taking lessons on drums in 1925, and began playing with Kid Howard in 1926. He has a brother, John [Baptiste?] Mosley, 2 years older than he is, who also plays drums. His father played harmonica and guitar, but not with bands; he and one of his friends, [Newt?], who usually played guitar, played together. The family was Catholic. EM remembers that his father, who died c. 1905, played "After The Ball Is Over" and "Chicken Reel", among others. (WR bought an orchestration of the tune from Maurice Durand, who got it from the estate of John Robichaux.) EM doesn't remember a lot of the numbers the old bands played, but he says he played a lot of them with Bunk Johnson, in later years, and that Bunk knew more tunes than anyone; EM mentions the recording session he made with Bunk for WR. EM first tried to play clarinet, but put it down because he got tired of holding it; then he took up drums, and Kid Howard, who was [or had been] a drummer at the time, would show him how to play; EM began with Howard, and played with him until EM left New Orleans, in late 1943, to move to California. [Cf. discographies.] EM didn't play in California until 1954, when he was persuaded by Paul Barnes to resume playing; he bought a new set of drums, having left his old set in New Orleans, where his brother John still has it. WR says he saw John playing a parade with Howard about April of this year, and that the bass drum had inscribed on it, "Silver Leaf Brass Band"; EM says it was a small, black drum, belonging to John, that his own old bass drum was considerably larger. EM went back to New Orleans in 1949, remaining for 1 year and 5 months before returning to California; when his mother died in 1952, he returned for a short time, and has not been back since then. When EM learned

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drums, he was living in a section of Algiers called McClennonville, which is just a little way past where George Lewis now lives [3327 DeArmas Street]. He moved to [East Bank] New Orleans in 1923; he lived at 1121 St. Philip when WR met him. Kid Howard lived just across the street; Jim Robinson lived nearby, on Marais Street, and lived with Howard during the [World] War [II]; Sidney "Jim Little" Brown lived nearby. EM played with a lot of bands, including those of Kid Rena and Chris Kelly-- with Kelly only on parades, but with Rena on dances and parades. He could play trap drums, snare drums, and bass drums. In Rena's [brass] band were Rena Hawkins (who didn't continue in music) and Joe (a short, "bright" [i.e. light-complected] fellow), trumpets; Sunny Henry/ Joe Avery, trombones; [Professor Delmas?], tuba; Ernest Rogers, snare drum; [EM, bass drum]; George Lewis, Eb clarinet. Sometimes EM's brother, John, played instead of Rogers, and sometimes Remus Matthews was the replacement; EM sometimes played bass drum in the old man [Henry] Allen's [Sr.] brass band, in which Matthews was the regular snare drummer. Chris Kelly didn't have a regular brass band; in fact, none of them were very regular in their personnel; EM says that a man might get a deposit from a leader for one job and another leader would offer the man more money for the same time, so the man would return the deposit and go with the highest bidder; consequently, personnel changed constantly. Nobody played like Kelly; Kid Howard played the closest to his style of anyone. EM says a lot of New Orleans trumpet players were good; he names Kid Howard, Kelly, Rena, Punch [Miller] (saying Punch has died, but WR assures him that Punch is still alive, and in New Orleans [as he is now, November, 1964]). EM says he also played with Buddy Petit, who was also

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good, and had a style different from any of the rest; EM talked to Petit on the corner of St. Philip and St. Claude, the night before Petit died; EM, along with Kid Howard, George Lewis and others, played for Petit's funeral; Louis Armstrong was there, too [1931]. EM thinks two bands played that funeral. Brass bands EM heard across the river [West Bank] when he was young were Allen's, the Atlantic (he thinks Allen led this one), and the Pacific; there were two bands in Algiers [of which he is speaking, so he probably means Allen's, whatever its name, and one other]. The bands worked a lot; Allen taught his son [Henry "Red" Allen, Jr.] how to play trumpet so he could play in the band. [Cf. Manuel Manetta, reel?] EM heard the Norm Manetta [uncle of Prof. Manuel Manetta] brass band, which was good; EM was young then, as was M. Manetta. The musicians in the old days were good, but they got better as the years passed; in the old days, trumpet players played straight; it was when Chris Kelly and others began coming up that "that fancy stuff" appeared [i.e., more variations, etc.]. The old-time trumpet players all played like [Alcide] "Big" Landry, who never changed his style of playing. (WR says he heard him at Luthjen's with "Big Eye" [Louis Nelson]) Among the drummers EM noticed, in his earlier years, was Sam [or George?] Allen, brother of Henry Allen, Sr.; Sam was only a street drummer. EM knew "Red Happy" Bolton; he knows of "Black Happy" Goldston, who played with Papa Celestin and with Bill Matthews. EM says "Little Jimmy" [Mukes?] has died. EM heard [Louis] Cottrell, [Sr.], drummer with [A.J.] Piron's orchestra. Another one he heard was Klebert [Cagnolatti?]. EM remembers Henry Zeno, who played with the Eagle Band and with Joe Oliver. "Royal" [Roy Evans?] was Sam Morgan's drummer. EM's brother,

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John, showed him some of the tricks of drumming, but Kid Howard showed him more. Discussion of the standard brass bands in New Orleans discloses that there are only two, the Eureka, led [managed] by "Red" [Clark, led by Percy Humphrey], and the Young Tuxedo, led by John Dasimir. EM played some with the Eureka, but as he was traveling with Kid Howard, he didn't have time to be a regular. EM also worked funerals and parades with Howard. EM says it is a hard thing to pick out who was the best drummer in the old days; [Freddy] Kohlman is good but not old style; Bill Matthews was good (he played his first job when still in short pants, on Belleville Street in Algiers; he later switched to trombone); [Josiah] "Cie" [Frazier] is good. Chester Jones is a late-comer. There is talk of Chester Zardis, a good bass player, and of "Slow Drag" [Pavageau], also a good bassist; EM remembers Slow Drag from 1923, when he played guitar with "Sandpaper" George playing sandpaper and Hudson playing a bazooka, picking up what money they could; later, Slow Drag make himself a bass, and now has a regular one, which he plays with George Lewis. There is talk of advertising wagons and trucks; EM says an old bass player used to have a wagon which he'd rent for that. Trucks were better, faster.

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