

JOSIAH "CIE" FRAZIER
I [of 2]--Digest--Retyped
December 14, 1960

Also present: William Russell
Ralph Collins
Recorded at: 2014 Onzaga Street
New Orleans

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Josiah "Cie" Frazier was born February 23, 1904. The Fraziers are related to the (Emile and Paul) Barnes and the (John, Simon, Lawrence and Eddie) Marreros; the mother of the Barnes was JF's father's sister, and the mother of the Marreros was also the sister of JF's father. JF's father played guitar years ago, in St. Bernard Parish; his occupation was mattress making, the same as that of Emile Barnes. JF's oldest brother, Sam Frazier, once was a drummer (lives at 1717 Forstall Street); Alec Frazier (died in 1949), another brother, was a piano player, who gave a start to pianist Dave Williams, and to a "cousin" of JF, Mitchel Frazier (youngest brother of JF's father). Dave Williams's mother is a cousin of JF's mother. Williams was in the [Barnes-Marrero] Band of last year, which went to Cincinnati. His [Williams's] mother's father was JF's father's brother. His [Williams's grandfather?] was named Rosimore [spelling?] John Frazier. JF's father had two brothers--Michel [Mitchel?] Frazier and John Frazier--and two sisters--Katherine Frazier and Jeannette Frazier; Jeannette was the mother of the Marreros. JF's father was named Samson Franklin Frazier; Rosimore John was oldest, Samson Franklin the second and Michel was the youngest of the brothers. Mitchel died about ten years ago. A younger brother of JF, Simon Frazier, who lives in the 2500 block of Dumaine, also learned piano from Alex Frazier. Sam

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Frazier and Paul Barbarin started playing drums about the same time, at Almerico's Wood Yard [?], North Rampart Street; Sam played with Kid Rena, and probably with Louis Armstrong, long before Armstrong went North. JF used Sam's drums to practice with an old wind-up Victrola, about 1919-20, right after World War I. After he became pretty good, he would play at house parties, where piano was usually the only other instrument. This was before the "radio times" [i.e., the popularity of radio?]. Later, in the first band "we" ever organized, there were: Lawrence Marrero, banjo; Eddie Marrero, bass; Bush Hall, (no relation to Edmond Hall) trumpet; Raymond Brown, trombone; Paul Barnes [alto saxophone]; [JF, drums]. The band was first called the Golden Rule Band; the name was later changed to the Young Tuxedo Band--named for the Original Tuxedo Band; "Ben Ridgway, 1st trombone and manager; "Papa" Celestin, [trumpet and leader]. The Young Tuxedo members: Dwight Newman, piano; Paul Ben, trombone; Dennis Harris, saxophone and clarinet; Louis Cottrell [Jr.], tenor saxophone and clarinet; Lawrence Marrero, banjo; Eddie Marrero, bass; JF, drums.

The Young Tuxedo Band played a variety of jobs: New Orleans Country Club, Boston Club (in Carnival season), (they were given some by the Original Tuxedo) the Atheneum, the Spanish Fort Country Club (known as the Jewish Country Club [and now as the Lakewood Country Club]). Bush Hall was leader of the band, Lawrence Marrero was manager. Prices for jobs varied, from about \$5 up; the union

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was not very active in the early Twenties. JF joined the union in about 1928; George Augustine, old-time bass [guitar in some interviews?] player and Willie Bontemps, banjo [were union officials?] headquarters in St. Katherine's Hall, Tulane Avenue; he [one of the two preceeding] was president; headquarters later moved to LaSalle Street, opposite the Jung Hotel; the father of Adolph "Tats" Alexander Jr., Adolph ["Taton"] Alexander, Sr., was the financial secretary at that time (the elder Alexander played alto horn in funeral bands, like [Isidore] Barbarin did). When Bush Hall died, Dwight Newman took over the band; Hall was replaced by Albert Dominique, better known as Don Albert [now living in San Antonio, Texas]. (WR mentions Albert's father, Ferdinand Dominique, and his uncle, Natty Dominique.)

The [original] Young Tuxedo Band played no brass band work; the Young Tuxedo Band of today is a brass band, led by [clarinetist] John Casimir; the latter band did not evolve from the former, which gradually disbanded. JF has played with practically every brass band in the city; the man who got him started playing with brass bands (1920's) was drummer Ernest "Trap" Trepagnier. JF played snare drum, Trepagnier played bass drum. Trepagnier was connected with Manuel Perez's Imperial Brass Band, with which JF played at times.

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Trepagnier, a veteran of World War I, played in most of the cabarets in town; his longest tenure was at the Hummingbird, which was located on Franklin between Iberville and Bienville (part of the old District). JF says Alfred Williams now uses Trepagnier's old Duplex snare drum (apparently all-aluminum), which JF also used a few times, on parade jobs with Percy Humphrey [Eureka Brass Band].

In 1928, JF was playing with John Robichaux's [number two] dance band; Paul Barbarin, who had replaced the deceased Louis Cottrell [Sr.] on drums in A. J. Piron's band, and [pianist] Walter ["Fats"] Pichon formed the Pelican Silvertone Orchestra (working at [the Pelican Club] Rampart and Gravier)--some members: Davy Jones, saxophone; Manuel Sayles, guitar and banjo--Barbarin had JF replace him in Piron's band, late 1928. (WR asks about The Alley, mentioned by JF; WR asks if it were called Eclipse Alley, as George Lewis made some recordings under the name of Eclipse Alley Five. JF does not answer question. [GL told RBA that Eclipse Alley was uptown.] JF says Maurice Durand, trumpet, had the band working there; some others members: [Don], banjo; probably Alex Bigard, drums. JF describes the location of the Alley, which was in an alley. JF then says he joined the [Piron?] band in February, 1928 [which is not late 1928]. JF was with Robichaux two years; he did not play at the Lyric Theater with him, that job being held by "Red Happy" [Bolton]. "Red Happy" was one of the fastest drummers in New Orleans; the next fastest was Zutty Singleton. A drummer with

Chris Kelly, [Eddie] "Face-o" [Woods] helped JF a lot with ideas for jazz drumming. One night at the old Economy Hall, when JF was quite young and had only been playing drums with the phonograph, he sat in with Chris Kelly's band; members: Emile Barnes, clarinet; Eddie Marrero, bass; Lawrence Marrero, banjo; Ike "Bajoong" [spelling?] Williams, trombone; Kelly, trumpet; Face-o, drums]. Kelly's band was considered one of the best "blues-type" band in New Orleans. The best dance band, for one [only] tempo, was Sam Morgan's band (six men at first, later eight, when Sam and his brother, Isaiah Morgan [both trumpet players] joined forces). The two "dangerous high-note men" were Kid Rena and Ricard [Alexis]; Rena had a lot of technique, and so did Alexis; they would frequently play as a team on advertising jobs. Another "dangerous" man, "freakish" on the trumpet was Kid Punch [Miller]. JF talks about readers and "head" musicians; the Young Tuxedo Band played mostly stock orchestrations; Piron's band used only stocks; some bands didn't read at all; it was all jazz, though. Chris Kelly didn't read too [i.e., very] much; Sam Morgan could read better than Kelly; Rena was a puzzle to many [i.e., could play so many things a lot of people didn't know whether he could read or not]; Alexis was a better reader than Rena. JF mentions tunes played; he mentions Scott Joplin's rags, and the [Stark Publishing Company] book of rag arrangements [Standard High Class Rags.]

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After joining Piron's band in late 1928 [see previous, this reel], JF played with the band at Tranchina's night club on Jefferson Highway for eighteen months; the band then went to the Suburban Gardens on that highway, where they remained two years. They then went into the Venetian [now Blue?] Room of the Roosevelt Hotel, where they played from January 9, 1932 until April 22, 1932; they played for dinner dancing from six to nine in the evening, then back on [what time?] until ten in the morning [?]; they also broadcast every night except Sunday, twelve midnight to one in the morning, over radio station WSMB. Later in the Thirties, Piron took over the Sunny South Band, run by banjo player Sidney Cates [who presumably remained in the band]; others: Sidney Montague [check spelling], drums; Wilfred, trumpet; Emile Fritz, saxophone. In the previous Piron band, besides Piron and JF: Peter Bocage, trumpet; Henry Bocage, bass; Charlie Bocage, banjo; Steve Lewis, piano; Lorenzo Tio [Jr.], clarinet and tenor saxophone; Louis Warnick, clarinet and alto saxophone. That band used a few head arrangements, such as "Mama's Gone, Goodbye" (composed by Peter Bocage). JF mentions Piron and Clarence Williams publishing company. When Piron took over the Sunny South in late 1932, JF went with Sidney Desvigne's ten-piece orchestra, which played mostly field work [i.e., spot jobs]; before that, the Desvigne band had traveled up and

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down the river on the [Streckfus] steamer, Capitol. After that band JF played with one band or another. He later joined in forming a band; members: Emile Barnes [clarinet]; Bob Anthony, trumpet; Simon [Frazier], piano [possibly others?]. The band worked at Buras and also at Delacroix Island every Saturday night, plus casual engagements in New Orleans. JF joined the W.P.A. (which was formerly the E.R.A.); forming headquarters for W.P.A. bands was at Patarno's [spelling?] on Dumaine, between Decatur and Chartres, where a four-piece band already worked nightly. In it were: Alex Bigard, drums; Walter Decou, piano; probably Charlie Love, trumpet; perhaps one other. JF, then a laborer for the W.P.A., was notified by letter, signed by Louis Dumaine, to join the W.P.A. Band. Band headquarters later moved to the Tulane Club, Gravier between Roman and Bolivar (where the Jolly Bunch parades begin). JF remained in the W.P.A. from 1933 until 1942, at which time he joined the navy as a bandsman.

End of Reel I

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JF joined the W. P.A. Band in 1933, remaining in it through the years and as it was out in number to fourteen pieces; he was the last drummer left in the band. He left that band in 1942, when he, Henry Russ and Gilbert Young joined the Navy [as musicians] on September 4, 1942. They took basic training at Great Lakes [Illinois, outside Chicago], and remained in a Navy band there until returned to New Orleans. JF was discharged, August 3, 1945. JF showed the bass drummers in his Navy band how to play the New Orleans street beats. JF talks about the New Orleans beat. JF says recently deceased "Booker" Washington, bass player, taught a lot of the Navy musicians in Great Lakes how to play New Orleans style parade bass horn. Washington also taught bassist Frank Fields, a rock-and-roller [now with Albert French's band], how to play New Orleans style bass. Fields came to New Orleans with multi-instrumentalist George Williams, assistant leader of the Navy band [in which JF played]; Williams was the oldest son of Claiborne Williams [well-known old-time band leader], of Napoleonville [actually, Donaldsonville,], Louisiana. Williams and Bertrand Adams, of Tyler, Texas, did all the arranging for the Navy band. Harold Dejan was in the same band with JF. Immediately after discharge, JF began playing spot jobs; he worked some funerals with Peter Bocage, (leader) [he thinks] in the Onward Brass Band. (WR says the first time he

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met JF and heard him play was when JF made records [recorded by WR] with "Wooden Joe" [Nicholas], in May [10], 1945, when JF was still in the Navy; Baby Dodds was supposed to have been the drummer, but he had hurt his arm. JF recalls that the session was at Artisan Hall. Besides JF and Nicholas, [trumpet], there were: [Albert] Burbank, [clarinet]; Lawrence [Marrero] [banjo]; [Austin] "Boots" [Young], bass; Jim Crow [Robinson], trombone.) In 1950, until 1952, JF played with Papa Celestin's band. Afterward, he spotted with Percy Humphrey; that band evolved into the Sweet Emma [Barrett] band; JF has been with Emma more than six years now. Emma played at Sid Davilla's [Mardi Gras Lounge] with Kid Howard and George Lewis for a while, until they took a tour; then she and the Humphrey band played there for about two months; when they finished that job, they decided to stay together as a band. The idea of wearing bells was given to Emma by Mrs. [Steve] Valenti of the Paddock Lounge, who suggested Emma put the bells around her ankles [wears them about her knees now] to attract attention.

JF doesn't remember if his grandparents were musical; however, the father of the Marreros, Billy Marrero, was a bass player who worked with the Superior Band [among others, in which Peter Bocage played trumpet [?] and violin; Walter Brundy was on drums; Bunk [Johnson] says WR, was on cornet. JF did not play with Bunk in the old days, but worked with George Lewis when they came back from

New York. JF also went to [Los Angeles] California with Lewis in 1956, replacing Joe Watkins⁻⁵ [for about six weeks?], who went with Earl Hines in San Francisco; Watkins replaced JF [with consent of JF--see Watkins interview], and JF returned to New Orleans, where he joined "the outfit with Kid Howard" at Davilla's, and so on.

JF's father played guitar, was a mattress maker and a Baptist minister, but JF doesn't know what bands he played with, if any. His mother sang in church, from the time she was a little girl; she attended the Thompson M[ethodist] E[piscopal] Chapel] where trombonist Louis Nelson's mother played the organ and his father, Dr. Nelson, was a bass singer in the church "chorus." JF's oldest brother, Sam [Frazier], was a drummer until the late Twenties; JF "followed" his brother, taking up drums about 1919-1920. Sam played with Louis [Armstrong], Kid Rena, others. JF used Sam's drums until he got his own.

JF explains how he gets the tempo from various leaders, including brass band leaders. Much talk. Then he says he used to play snare or bass drums in parades; he would alternate with George Williams in Williams's brass band, Williams being a drummer, also; since a fall in the Navy injured JF's "left spine", he can't carry the bass drum in parades, so he plays only snare. Discuss role of drums in orchestra; mostly a time-keeper. Drummers in the old days would have short solo breaks, but not full choruses; "Red Happy" was the

only drummer who took a lot of solos, while he was playing [with John Robichaux] at the Lyric Theater--"Face-o" also took a lot of "flash" solos. JF agrees that New Orleans drummers use more bass drum than most drummers from elsewhere.

Doctor [of dentistry] Leonard Bechet [brother of Sidney Bechet] encouraged JF to study drums; he bought JF a drum method; JF got Louis Cottrell, Sr. to show him some things in the book. Bush Hall, trumpet with the Young Tuxedo Band, helped JF with his division [i.e., reading and interpreting duration of the various notes and note patterns]. JF also listened to big band drummers on the radio. JF practiced a lot after he began playing with bands; he remembers that he was living at 1718 N. Villere Street when he practiced quite a bit.

JF was born at 1123 Touro Street, between Marais and St. Claude; his family moved next to 1223 Touro, where JF remained until he was married, January 31, 1923. The Marreros (John, Simon, etc.) lived at 1125 Touro Street; the Barnes [Emile, Paul, etc.] lived at Spain and Villere. The Barnes and Marreros have always lived in the Seventh and Eighth Wards; JF has always lived in the Seventh Ward.

JF liked to practice with drum sticks to the Ted Lewis recording of "Patches," which he played on the "grafanola." JF talks about sizes of bass drums (uses a 26 inch diameter drum), about

muting [or, muffling] bass drum (do it on side where beater strikes); [Louis] Cottrell, [Sr.] told him to tune his snare drum by tightening the batter side more than the snareside, for better volume. When JF played with [A.J.] Piron, he tuned his drums to pitches on the piano, but doesn't do it now.

JF mentions old-time drummers Black Benny [Williams], "[Black] Happy" [Goldston], "Face-o" [Woods], [Jim] Willigan, Alfred Williams, Abbey "Chinee Bebe" Foster (original drummer of the [Original] Tuxedo Band), Henry Zeno, Red Dugas, Henry Martin (who played with the ^Creole Serenaders--Peter Bocage, Dwight Newman, Charlie and Henry [Bocage] and [others]--when Piron broke up his band). JF says Henry Martin and Henry Zeno were the same person, but it sounds as though he was not sure of the accuracy of his statement. ^{2 if other interviews} Henry Russ played drums, too--a nice drummer. Some Joe (sounds like Watson, but isn't) from uptown was a good drummer, too....

End of Reel II