

MITCHEL McALLISTER  
I [only], Track 1  
March 19, 1960

Also present: Richard B. Allen, Harry Oster,  
Mrs. Rita (Harry) Oster, Miss Guelma Brown.

(Interview recorded at MM's barroom and grocery store, Natchez, Mississippi.)

MM was born in Natchez 78 years ago [on March 15, 1882. See below.] The first music he heard was produced by guitars, mandolins, violins and pianos. The first wind instrument he heard was a trombone, played by a colored man named Frank [Breakley?]. Cornet and other instruments came later. The son of Bud [Scott] ran away from "the band" and asked his father to buy him a sax, which was done; the son was reading a little within a month; "he got to be a perfect wizard on that sax." He left town for some time; when he [the son] returned, he [i.e., Bud Scott] began adding musicians to the band, until they numbered eighteen. The band had played nothing but serenades and similar informal occasions until Mrs. [Trilby?] Poole [sp?] gave them their first important dance job, which was held at the Institute Hall; the band made \$1 per man that night. Jobs proliferated afterward.

Bud was a strong singer; he used only a small megaphone while singing; MM says if he had had [electrical amplification], "they could have heard him in New Orleans."

The band began playing in the various smaller towns surrounding Natchez. Then Mr. Peabody [of Memphis] came through. The band played in New Orleans at The Pup, The Haymarket, the Grunewald [Hotel--now Roosevelt] and the St. Charles [Hotel--now Sheraton-Charles]. "There wasn't any colored orchestras in there during that time [i. e., until that time?]." MM says excursions were moving by riverboat at that time; He thinks there were about four boats operating then; they all employed "heavy orchestras" using "heavy," i. e., difficult, arrangements. The band MM played in were taken to New Orleans on a riverboat; their first public appearance in the city was on the riverfront; Bud Scott sang so

MITCHEL McALLISTER  
I [only], Track 1  
March 19, 1960

2

loudly [and no doubt well?] that the mayor of the city had to make him stop because people were pushing others into the river in their efforts to get closer. The band then opened at the St. Charles Hotel, where they were dressed as farmers; again Scott and the band were so powerful that they were barred from playing in New Orleans.

MM was born March 15, 1882. Before he became a dishwasher on a steamboat he had fooled around with guitar, but just for his own pleasure. A cook on the boat, who played mandolin, taught him how to play chords; MM later learned to play mandolin and banjo. MM has played only accompanying guitar. The first tune he learned was "Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home." he was between seventeen and eighteen years old then.

MM says the bands in Natchez played jazz, the same as the ones in New Orleans, when jazz first began. It was called jazz from the time MM knew about it [Cf. other interviews]. He remembers playing jazz in 1909 or 1910, at the time of high water [i. e., a flood]. MM then played guitar. The band, Bud Scott's, consisted of voice, two guitars, three mandolins and violin. MM began [his musical career] with BS. MM was with Scott for 43 years. Wind instruments were added to Scott's band in the following order: trombone, cornet, cornet again, clarinet. Walter King of New Orleans played violin with the band. The trombone was added during World War I. Besides singing, Bud Scott played mandolin.

MM thinks Percy Severe [banjo, guitar and bass player] was playing with Harry Walker [of Alexandria, Louisiana?] at one time; then he thinks Severe went with a man from New Orleans; the leader

MITCHEL McALLISTER  
I [only], Track 1  
March 19, 1960

had a brother who played trumpet in his band. Percy Severe now lives in Ville Platte [Louisiana], and plays piano with Otis Smith.

MM had left the dance hall just before the fire broke out [the fire in which most of the Walter Barnes band, including Barnes, lost their lives]. He apparently quit music then.

Discussion of recording [folk] musicians.

MM was never much of a reader, but he learned easily, and could play in a powerful manner.

Bud Scott sang "Meet Me Tonight in Dixieland," Bill Bailey..., "Sometimes You Cause Me to Wonder," and "Dinah."

Louis Mazique [sp?] played sax with Bud Scott's band; ~~after World War I~~ ~~he~~ he is now retired. The saxophone came into the Scott band after World War I; Bud Scott's son was the first to play sax in the band. The son was killed in the fire. Griffin, a piano player with Scott's band, still plays and sings and entertains; he lives in Natchez. Griffin began playing piano with the band when Percy Severe came in on banjo.

End of Track I.

I [only], Track 2  
March 19, 1960

Also present: Richard B. Allen, Harry Oster,  
Mrs. Rita (Harry) Oster, Guelma Brown.

Bud Scott [not the New Orleans guitarist?] was of medium height (c. 5'9") and weighed about 230 pounds, MM thinks.

MM says there were two or three [composed?] blues in the old times.

The late Tom Griffin who played piano with MM and Scott towards the end of the band's existence, is mentioned. [Edgar?] Simmons is mentioned.

MM never recorded, but he thinks Bud Scott (with MM in the band) recorded in Alexandria [Louisiana]; MM doesn't know whether the records were ever released or not.

All of the members of Scott's band remained in [or around?] Natchez; most are now dead. The first band comprised: Willie Holmes, bass; Charlie Laverton [sp?], mandolin; Fred [Pogehome?], mandolin; Bud Scott, vocals and mandolin; Ed Shaw, guitar; Mitchel McAllister, guitar; Sometimes another man was added to the group.

RBA asks about Douglas Williams, a clarinetist who featured slap-tongue style; MM says Williams came to Natchez from Baton Rouge, that he was killed at the corner of Pine and Woodlawn, where Guelma Brown's family had a store for years; MM then realizes he is talking about Walter Brundy, who, according to RBA, was originally a drummer until he became a clarinetist and took lessons from [clarinetist] Charlie McCurdy. MM then recalls that Williams left Natchez, and that he died somewhere when MM returned to Natchez from Chicago. A friend of Williams' is playing bass with Otis Smith. Brundy played clarinet with Bud Scott. RBA says Brundy played [drums] with the Superior

Band [in New Orleans], which included Bunk Johnson among its members.

MM was in Chicago sometime between World War I and the Depression; he heard King Oliver and Louis Armstrong there. MM says the music was changing then, becoming more swingy.

MM recalls playing "Maple Leaf Rag."

Discussion of "Jelly Roll Blues" and round dances.

Percy Severe was a good guitar player. Douglas Williams was a good trumpet player (not clarinet, as mentioned by RBA [not same man?]). Louis Mazique [sp?] was a good saxophone player. Bud Scott's son was about the best saxophone player there ever was in Natchez. Walter Barnes was a good saxophone player. Bud Scott was about the best singer. There was a good vocal quartet: MM, tenor; Bud Scott, lead; Walter King, baritone; Ed Shaw, baritone [King and Shaw, or King or Shaw?]; his [Shaw's?] son-in-law, bass.

RBA mentions Cicero Thomas and George Thigpen, who played with Walter Barnes; MM met them; he says they were not from Natchez. Barnes was not from Natchez, although he played with Scott's band at one time. Barnes joined the band led by the sensational drummer, Joe White of Jackson [Mississippi], who had been with the Rabbits Foot [minstrel show]; Barnes reformed his own band, taking most of White's men. Barnes played tenor sax, possibly doubling clarinet.

RBA mentions Ed Burke [sp?] and Bradley Bullett [sp?], trombone players with Barnes; he mentions tenor [saxophone] player Lucius Wilson, Irby Gage, alto [saxophone] and Wilson Underwood, alto [saxophone], all of whom played with Barnes. [See discographies.] None were from Natchez, says MM. MM doesn't recall that any of Barnes' men were from Natchez.

In the old times, all the bands from New Orleans played in or passed through Natchez; "Toots" Johnson of Baton Rouge also came to

Natchez. There was seldom a battle of music [i. e., bands vs. bands or musician vs. musician?]; MM says there was some sitting in [with Barnes' band] the night of the fire. MM says few bands came to Natchez/during Bud Scott's time, as Scott took care of everything [musical] including Carnival and big dances. The band traveled at least as far as Oklahoma and California, to Mobile [Alabama], North Mississippi, and other places. Scott has many good offers to travel, but he wanted to remain in Natchez.

Walter Brundy of New Orleans played in Natchez. Two friends from New Orleans came to Natchez together; one played trumpet and is now playing bass; Douglas Williams was one of the friends; he also played trumpet; the other is now playing bass with Otis Smith in Ville Platte [Louisiana]. Percy Severe, who played guitar and banjo, now plays piano [with Otis Smith]. A trumpet player with one arm is doubling trombone [with Smith].

(Note on tape box;....George Guesnon says the only guys that got him kind of scared were [Henry (i. e., Narvin?)] Kimble [i. e., Kimball?] and Percy Severe.)

End of Track 2