

Unedited first draft

MACK & MACK--
(MARY & BILLY McBRIDE)
REEL I, Track 1
July 1, 1959

INTERVIEWER: William Russell
NOTES: Richard B. Allen
SUMMARY: Dan Weisman
TYPING: Dan Weisman

[WR asks them both to give their names, please...]

My name is Mary McBride of the team of Mack & Mack. Mary and Billy Mack.

And I'm Billy Mack....The full name is McBride, but we were known as Mack & Mack.

I was born in Mobile, Alabama, BM says, in the year of 1884...February 26. It happened to be on a Mardi Gras Day....

[I was born] in Algiers, Louisiana, ^{MM? ?} (BM) says, that's west New Orleans, on July 28, 1891. That makes me 68 [years old] this birthday, July 28.

Before I forget it, WR mentions, Professor [Manuel] Manetta has mentioned Mary Mack. I didn't know if you were known by that name. Mary Mack, yes, MM interjects.

At that time, WR continues, he mentioned that a Mary Mack came from Algiers, and was a wonderful singer, and entertainer. I know he would send his regards. He didn't know I was going to see you. Well, I declare, MM says.

I see him almost every Tuesday night, WR says. I go over to his studio, where he teaches. I record a little interview with him when he teaches some of his lessons, talking about music. He's still active. I'm so glad to hear that, MM says.

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He'll be glad to hear your voice, WR says. If you don't mind, I'll play him this tape sometime. I think he would enjoy hearing your voice again. Well I would be glad for you to play it for him, MM says, to hear Me and Mack.

Yes sir, we were known in show business, MM continues, as Mary Mack's Merry Makers. Oh yes, WR says. That record that you made with Kid Punch [Miller] is called [as] I remember..."The Merry Makers' Twine", MM says.

No, that was a Lovie Austin record wasn't it, WR says. No, Lovie Austin played on it, but that's our...No, I know, WR states. But, I mean, she made a record of it once. Yes, MM agrees. Oh yes, she did, BM adds. That's quite a while back. [on Paramount 12391. Reissued on Riverside RM 8808.]

Now what did that mean, that "Merry Makers' Twine?" WR asks. Well, you can see here, BM says. This is the name of our company.

We called it, at first, the Southern Comedy Company. But, after we got a little better organized, and more people added to the show, we did name it after the wife--Mary Mack's Merry Makers Company....

And Billy Mack presents, WR reads, that Whirly-Girley Jazz Comedy Jubilee. This was the little program...That we had, MM says...That you had, WR continues.

This was back in 1926, in November. Which city was this in? I think that was in Youngstown, Ohio, BM says. Federal Street, WR

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notes....Yeah, Federal Street, BM says. That's Prince's [Family] Theater.

Now can you tell me, WR says, when you first met your wife, Mr. McBride. Oh yes, BM recalls. It was in the latter part of 1908, 1909....

I started out with this little company that she joined later in 1908. But, I didn't actually meet her until 1909. I took the company out--it was all men, all boys. Of course, I was nothing but a boy myself.

But, somehow I had the -- there were no show people in my family -- but, I just had that inclination to be a showman. I got together these boys, and started out with a little minstrel-style show which later became, a kind of, a presentation show.

We didn't have any girls, whatsoever, until we met a man that was stranded down in a little town called Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

There was a little theater there. He had a theater in charge, but he couldn't carry on so very well. We joined up with him.

He come around to tell me we would still want to make the show a little larger. In fact, we needed a girl that could talk.

So, I went to New Orleans to see if I could get some girls. [New Orleans], which was about 51 miles from Bay St. Louis, and that's where I met my wife.

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Somebody directed me to this girl, and I found her early one morning. She had come from a singing engagement out at the Fairgrounds, was it? Lincoln Park, MM says.

Did you play, or sing, with [John] Robichaux out there? WR asks. Yes, MM replies. I know he played there for many years, WR states.

Before he got popular, he did the balloon ascension, MM notes. Professor Manetta has told us all about those too, WR adds.

One time he went up too far, and...he got lost, MM says...And he went over in the Lake [Ponchartrain], WR says. Yes, yes, yes, MM says.

Well then, that's how we met, she continues. Then, we went to Bay St. Louis. He taken me to Bay St. Louis. Then, we went to Mobile, and that's where we married. Mobile, Alabama....1909. The Haley's Comet was along that line there.

When I was a boy, WR says. It was one of the first things that I can remember. I was in my teens then, you know, MM says. Her 18th birthday had just passed about then, BM says.

Can you tell me more about your act? WR asks. Just, I know you sang. All I know is the record that you made with Punch.

And one other question that I wanted to ask while I think of it. There was a record with Louis Armstrong. I tried to get every record that Armstrong ever made, and there was one with a Baby

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Mack singing. Was that you? That wasn't me, BM says...no relation.

Well now, we, in 1914--that's the first time we were supposed to come up North, MM says. We went to Memphis Tennessee. Wasn't it, Mack?

No, we went to Memphis in 1911, BM recalls. But, it was 1914 when we came back to New Orleans and organized this company.

And then went to New York, MM notes. Yes, BM continues. Went everywhere along the line, stopping at different towns.

At that time, we didn't have any booking agent. We'd just write to theater managers...just booked direct all the way along from New Orleans to New York.

Later, there was that TOBA [Theater Owners Booking Association], WR notes. Were you ever on that?

We organized it, BM replies, yes. We knew Mr. S.H. Dudley, and Mr Sam Revin of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Mr. Martin Klein of Chicago, and Bailey of Atlanta, and Tim Owsley of Indianapolis.

They got together, and organized this. They first called it the Owsley-Dudley-Klein Circuit, but later they called it the Theater Owners Booking Association. We were in there, and all that.

We did a vaudeville act for them around...just a team singing, dancing, and talking. We played all these towns, first

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from New Orleans into New York, and back, as a team.

Then, we went back later and organized this company. That's when I got Johnny Dodds. Mutt Carey told me he came up to Chicago with you, WR says. Yes, BM agrees.

The drummer was Little Mack [Robinson.] Mutt Carey on the trumpet....They all were kids.

[Some discussion ensues between WR and the Macks over the last name of the drummer, but they insist it was Robinson, and they called him Little Mack.]

We had Steve Lewis on the piano, MM continues. Johnny Dodds on clarinet. Mutt Carey on cornet. Who was the trombone player? Well, at that time, we only brought four, BM replies. That's what Mutt told me, WR adds, only four pieces.

We were the first company that had a jazz band on the stage with them, MM explains, on the stage. Not down in the pit, but we put them on the stage. Right here at the Monogram Theater, [Chicago.]...1918. That's when the flu [epidemic] was. That's when Armistice Day was signed.

We were here. Yeah, we were here all through that time, BM agrees, 'cause we stayed here quite a while. Yes, ah-huh, MM adds.

We used to stay as long as two years in just one theater....[That was on] 35th [Street.] The New Monogram, BM notes. The old Monogram was up at 31st. They didn't have any

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vaudeville acts.

I never got to see that, WR says. I knew some of the theaters like the Grand. They tore that down just a few weeks ago out here.

We had the style of presenting the show, BM says, what they later called a presentation. But at the time, I didn't name it that.

The man Downtown at the Oriental Theater called Paul Asch. He come out to the Monogram, and saw the style of show I was doing. He took it Downtown, and he got credit for this presentation show.

I remember I was here in 1924, studying music, WR recalls, and he had a show at the [McVicker's?] then. You originated that style of presentation? We really did, BM says.

And the "Royal Garden Blues," MM adds. Clarence Williams wrote that, BM says. Yes, MM agrees. Clarence Williams, he wrote that, and I featured it before it was published.

You know, when I first met Jimmie Noone, WR states, or one of the first times I saw him, back in 1937 or [19]38; I'm quite sure Jimmie told me that he helped write that. He, and Joe Oliver, and some members of the band worked that out over at Royal Gardens. At the Royal Gardens, MM says.

But, Clarence Williams, I guess, bought it, and published it. Did you know about that? No, no, MM insists. He didn't buy

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it. He wrote that, BM says, and she sung it at Pete Lala's Cabaret in New Orleans.

Clarence Williams really worked on the number then? WR asks. Clarence Williams, he lived on Tulane Avenue, MM continues. We'd go in. He'd write our music for us. Mack would hum it to him, and he would write it, and Mack would write the words.

So, that "Royal Garden Blues," Clarence Williams, he was the instigation of that. When we got here [in Chicago] in 1923 - I was here in 1923 - then we featured it here on the stage at the Monogram.

Joe Oliver, and they sent for Louis Armstrong, and Lil [Hardin], and all of those. We were at the Royal Gardens, and that's where we featured it....

Over on [Cottage Grove?], she did [appear] BM states...this was a little later, say, a couple of years. We went back down South, and went back to Chicago; worked our way down, and back again.

We played the Grand Theater which was owned by Mr. Miller, the man that owned these Monograms. He sent her to...That's when I worked at the Royal Garden, MM interjects....Then, performers would entertain in the center of the floor, and Joe Oliver, and them would play....

[That was] like a nightclub...and dance hall. [People would dance, too.] Entertain on the floor. The band was elevated, BM

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states. Yes, MM agrees.

You'd entertain on the floor instead of going up there to sing through the mike like the entertainers do now. You'd go around to the tables, and then your dancers - the chorus - would come out in the center of the floor, and dance. It was our chorus, BM notes, from the show.

I always wondered what the Royal Garden [was like] WR says. If it was just a dance hall where you paid admission. Or, go in, and buy drinks. What it was like, you know. No, no, MM notes, it was that entertainment. A floor show, and dancing.

I did once go to the Dreamland, WR says. Richard M. Jones took me over to the Dreamland. I remember they had a big glass, or mirror, or something in the floor there, too.

She worked there, too, BM says. I worked there, too, MM says. Willie Humphrey...the father was a [sacker?]. We used to call him 'liver belly.' He was so fat you know.

They both [Willie Sr., and Jr.] played clarinet, WR states. They're both living, too. They had one son that played trombone, BM states. Yes, Earl, WR agrees.

And another who was a drummer, BM adds. We brought him here, too, MM says. We brought him here, BM adds. Percy, the drummer, now plays trumpet, WR says. He's the leader of the Eureka Brass Band in New Orleans. He's still active.

Both of them are still active. Earl plays bass. He's over in

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Virginia, they say. We brought Humphrey here, too, MM says...the old man. We brought him here, too.

Oh, by the way, BM notes...I made a list of some of the people, maybe you can think of more.

Now, the different piano players that we had from time to time from 1909 on. The first was Johnny King. He was of Mobile, of course. Then: Clarence Williams, George Thomas, Marigny Jones, which is Richard Jones, of course, Buddy Christian. Yes, he's in New York, WR says. I think he may be dead now, I believe.

Bud Scott used to be our [professor?], MM says. I got him down here too, BM says. L.C. Tolan, now that's a piano player...Jimmy Clark, of course he wasn't of New Orleans. Neither was James Austin. Gus Irey was from Birmingham.

And Ferdinand Mouton, who was Jelly Roll...[worked with our show too.] He lived with his grandmother in Bay St. Louis. That's his home, Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

The trumpets we had, from time to time, was Joe Oliver, Tom "Mutt" Carey, Ernest "Punch" Miller, Sidney DeParis Jr., was called Gabriel; Louis Armstrong, and...D.C. Nelson....He passed as Joe Oliver's nephew, MM notes. He was a cornet player, a little trumpet player.

He was just learning then....Louis called him uncle too, BM notes, [of Oliver]. But, Nelson was supposed to be [Oliver's] nephew, MM adds, but wasn't.

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Then, the trombone player, MM continues, was Wilbur DeParis. That's right, BM agrees. Eddie ["Kid"] Ory was with us once, MM says. Kid Ory, he was one of the first, BM says.

And we met a man in New Orleans that was an all-around man. He played all instruments. He played trombone for us a while. Peter Bocage.

Oh yes, he's still active, WR says. He still plays cornet. He plays violin, too. He still plays violin. Yes, any instrument, BM adds. Then, Wilbur DeParis that she named. And what was the trombone player...Dutrey, MM says. [Honore] "Norah" Dutrey, WR says. I never knew him, but I know of him.

Then drummers that we had from time to time, BM continues, was Baby Dodds, and a boy named Happy, I never did know his other name.

There were two Happys, WR states. One was called "Red Happy," and the other "Black Happy." "Happy" Bolton

Benny, MM notes, Benny the drummer..."Black Benny" [Williams.]...[The drummer was] Red, BM says, and WR continues, saying, [Happy] Bolton the very short fellow. I never knew him. The other Happy was Happy Goldston. He still plays down there.

Well, this Happy, he must be dead, BM notes. He was a, kind of, red black-skin fellow with freckles. Bolton, yeah, WR says. He played with Joe Oliver, and Ory. That's right, BM agrees. He was considered one of the best drummers in town at that time.

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Then, there was a fellow called "Two Bits." Oh yeah, WR says. Bunk Johnson once mentioned him. I never...Do you know his name? Nothing but Two Bits, BM says.

That's all Bunk called him, WR says. Two Bits. He said Two Bits.

But, he went North too, BM continues. He married in Lynchburg Virginia. I guess he's still there.

Did you ever know Bunk Johnson? WR asks. Oh yes, BM and MM say. Surely. Did you ever work with him, too? WR follows-up.

He worked with us only once, BM replies. He was down in Houston Texas. He came over and played with us. He went over to Texas in 1914, I think, WR states, and he stayed over that way.

We got some Texas musicians, too, from there, BM adds, from Houston. L.C. Tolan and Marquis[vois?] Spriggs, and who else, I don't remember.

Well, then, there was a drummer we had called "Toot Man." He was from Mobile. And another New Orleans boy was Red Dugas. I heard the name, I never knew him, WR says.

Yes. He was a real light fellow, BM states. And Little Mack, we'd call him, and Black Benny. Did Black Benny travel with you? WR asks. I didn't know he ever went any place.

Yes. Yes. We taken him, MM says. Yes. Mack would be the only one he'd go away with because he knew that Mack would send him back home.

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I didn't think he ever went any place, WR says. Yes he did, MM says. He was afraid he couldn't get back home, BM adds.

Most people tell that he just played bass drum, WR says. But he played the whole drum set? Yes, yes, MM says. He was good.

I rented a set of drums to carry around with me, BM says, so he'd have drums to play. He had a bass drum, but he didn't have the outfit, you know.

The funniest thing about it, MM continues, is when we came here with our band, we thought the band could sit in the pit. We didn't know...about the [musicians'] union.

They said, your band can't play. So, Mack say: well, I'll put them on the stage as performers, [as part of the act.] So, that's what started.

Then, Bruce come in. You know Bruce? He had a show, too. Benny come. He was a second with the orchestra on the stage.

Well, I'll tell you what happened around 1914, BM says. I think the government called the Red Light [Storyville] District in New Orleans out-of-bounds for the Army and Navy.

All the nightclubs couldn't do any business then, and they closed up. That's how we were able to get all these people to go out of town. They wouldn't have had anything else to do, would they?

No, MM continues. Now, we were at the Pete Lala's working there. Joe Oliver, and Johnny Dodds, and Mutt Carey, and oh, just

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the whole bunch.

They were going to take some of them to [World] War [One], too, wasn't they? Well, they did it, BM says. They left town. They were glad to leave. Then, so many of them joined up with MacI, MM notes. That's why they joined us.

This place of Pete Lala's, WR says, was that Marais and Customhouse? Right, MM says, and BM agrees.

I think Professor Manetta said he opened another place on Villere someplace, WR mentions. Villere, MM says. Well, that was a little theater. A little theater he built for me, BM adds....

It was a little theater, ah-huh, MM says....[It was] on Claiborne between...the old Basin and Conti, BM states.

I know about where it is, WR notes. Yeah. It's not there now, of course. There's a cemetery in there...across the street from the theater, BM interjects. Or rather, the theater was built across the street from the cemetery.

Louis Armstrong. He was out to Mr. [John] Joseph [s Colorad Waif's] Home, MM says. That was a home for bad boys.

He would come out to the cabaret at nights, put on long pants, and play with Joe [Oliver], and them. Sneak in, and play.

At first, though, BM says, this man Lou Rose that we were talking about, who was the manager of the Dauphine Theater. [Note: Lucien Rose, according to Al Rose, his grandson. RBA 19 December 1975.] He had a company, then, in New Orleans, called

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Lee's Creole Belles, run by Ed Lee. Well, Ed Lee had heard so much about us, he wanted to get us to work with him. So, we did.

After he saw that I could produce shows, I was his producer. I stayed with him. How long did I stay with Ed Lee up there for Lou Rose? Oh, for years, MM replies. Years, BM notes. Three, or four, years.

You know, we just get tired of being there, MM adds, just like at the Monogram. We just get tired.

They just keep you, and the people would go to the show, and say: is Mack & Mack here? No. Mack's Merry Makers? No. Then, we're not coming. Then, we have to come back. Just keep coming back, coming back, coming back.

We worked there at one lot, BM continues, at Louisiana Avenue and Howard, oh, 14 weeks.

And then, there was another man named Schroeder. He was from Algiers. Mr. Schroeder. He built an air-dome over on Jackson...and Robertson....

This was a tent for Lou Rose. We worked around in this air-dome for quite a while. Louis [Armstrong], then, and this Little Mack [Lacey], and little Georgie Grey, and [Red] Happy [Bolton]-- they had a little quartet.

Now, at this time, none of them were playing drums, or horns. [That was a vocal quartet.] They'd go up there, and sing amateur nights - some night when I'd have them - and that's when

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I first met Louis.

Later on, when he started playing horn, then I used him, too. But, he didn't take up this horn until after he went to this home. They give them these instruments, you know.

When we come to St. Louis there, MM says...Louis come up on the boat with Red...Fate Marable. We called him Red Marable, see, BM notes. Red Marable.

When we come from the...was going to the theater, MM continues, to rehearsal--there was Louis setting on the steps. Where were you? He got off the boat, sitting, waiting for us.

He played with us a while there in St. Louis, but he had to go back on the boat. But he waited there, waiting to see Mack & Mack.

You know, there's so much to think about after you think back. But, my goodness, there's so much we've forgotten.

Well, we had no reason to mention him, BM notes. Nobody to talk to about him. All of those times, they all gone.

And so, during this organizing; if we talking too long, let me know. No, no, no, WR replies, I don't want to take your whole afternoon, but if you have a few more minutes, I'd like to hear some more about your travels, and all.

Sure, BM says. I used to...in organizing these shows, at first, sit down, and write my material. So we had...everything we had was original. That's why we could come back, and also stay so

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long whenever we played an engagement because we always had something new to offer.

I was the originator, see, with her help. She could always sing. There was a singing act.

I was wondering, WR says, because on the record you all both sang some, but your act was mostly a comedy act, or singing, or just what did you do?

Yes, I sang, MM recalls. We sang together, comedy songs. I could dance a little. But, I was leading lady, you know, where you look pretty, and dance a little, and sing.

But, we did our act. We had an act. Not an act, acts. When you'd go to New York, if you were doing vaudeville.

(Phone rings.) Go ahead and answer, WR says. I can turn this off for a minute, unless you want to keep talking. It's alright.

When you go to New York, MM continues without stopping, you know you get...the first half, and then somebody else had the second half.

Well, instead of us just getting the first half, we'd get the first half, and they'd say: can you change your act for the second act? Yes. Then, can you change for next week?

Well, you see, in New York for the Lincoln Theater; and Washington at the Howard Theater; and all of those theaters. Instead of keeping us just for three days, for four days; well, they'd keep us for two, or three, weeks. And a southern act, too,

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you know.

If you want to answer the phone that's alright, WR interjects. I can turn this off for a while. No, that's alright, BM says. She's gone now.

I was telling about the vaudeville, MM says. And "String Beans"...Oh yeah, Bud LeMay, BM notes...He was a great comic.

He said, Mack come to New York, MM says. You come to New York. That was 1914 when we went to New York. We were so scared, you know, that we were going to get fired, or canned, get the hook. You know, they had a hook that they would grab you. (MM laughs.)

The Whiteman Sisters. They were there with us. They were not there with us, but they were in New York. They would come with their suitcases, so when they canned an act, all they had to [do] was come out of the audience, and come on, you see, ready.

So, we just thought we were going to get canned. I did, not Mack. Mack was always saying, just do the act like we've always did it. I said, well they don't have acts like. He said, do the act like we've always done our act.

And we did. When the man come to the dressing room door, and knocked; you know, because he was putting the pictures up on the door (laughing) and he asked about...for the next half.

We had a repertoire of changes, you know, BM says. We could always stay as long as they'd want us. Usually, we'd always get

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three, or four, weeks by being able to change our act.

Those Northern acts--we called them Northern acts because they all turned their noses up at us at first. But, when they saw us, what a riot we were, then they started to act right.

Then, they come up at you to try to be friends. So, they used to come around, and pat you on the back, and tell you how fine you were. Oh, I really enjoyed your act.

Once, in 1911, that was right after the comet, Haley's Comet. We were in Atlanta. Now, this is where we got the Mack & Mack from. We were at Bailey's. They'd bill us as McBride & McBride, you know.

But, there was a man named George Freeman that was doing some shows over at...on Peters Street in Atlanta at a theater called the Paradise Theater.

When we went over there to work, he said, now I'm going to have to change your billing. He said, I tried to get that McBride & McBride, but that's too long, see. Why not just call yourselves Mack & Mack? So, George Freeman was the one that gave us that tag.

I'm wondering, WR says. Back in those days, what kind of music, or band...did you carry any band with you? Any of the New Orleans musicians that early, or when did they start going out with you?

No. Eddie Haywood [Sr.] used to play, MM replies. Eddie

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Heywood used to play with us in Atlanta. And Professor Calhoun, Lovie Austin's father, was playing where? Chattanooga, BM answers. Chattanooga, MM continues.

Mandy that works on television now...who she working with, "Father Knows Best?" She work for lots of different show, BM notes. "Amos and Andy," different ones.

Well, Amanda, MM continues. She was the mama. Now, she played piano in Annapolis [Md.] They had good piano players everywhere.

So, whoever...in each city, you'd use their own musicians? WR asks. You didn't carry your own? No, not until...[1918 about,] BM replies.

Well, 1914 was when we took out this, BM continues...This is when we took Johnny Dodds, and them, around. But, we did go directly....

No, MM disagrees. We took Johnny Dodds, and them, in 1918 when the District closed in New Orleans for the Army. They were going to take them for the Army. I remember, BM says. You remember? MM asks.

Pete Lala's. They come around the cabaret to get them to sign up, and all that. So, that's when they decided to go away.

What we wanted to say there, in answer...to Mr. Russell's question, BM says, is that each theater had their own piano player, and drummer. Some, just the piano player. And we got to

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meet all these fellows.

After we started our own show, why, a lot of times when we needed a piano player, any one of them would leave any house to go traveling.

I wondered if any of the men from New Orleans had gone with you as early as 1914, before Mutt Carey and Dodds, WR says. Yes, BM states, to Bay St. Louis. And up, and down, that coast from Mobile to New Orleans. We'd play, and coming up northward in Mississippi as far as Laurel Mississippi, and in there. Yes. Pass Christian and Laurel, MM says.

Bud Scott. Well, I didn't tell you about the banjoist we had from time to time, BM continues. We had on guitar, and banjo, Buddy Christian. He could play the guitar too.

Then, there was John Ramsey, and Bud Scott, and James Arnold who is here now. We call him "Banjo" because he used to play the banjo....James Arnold, John Lindsay.

[Dubinsky?] What did we used to call him? MM asks. Well, just a nickname he had, BM replies....And then they called him "Banjo," MM adds. You might have heard them speak of Banjo.

Well, one of them they called this James Arnold [was] "Kokomo." He played a lot of records under that name. Kokomo? WR repeats. Oh sure, I heard him play with Johnny Dodds over at...down at the 29 Club, once.

Sure. That's Kokomo. Yes, MM says. He plays in his own

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company on guitar, BM adds....I never did know [where he came from, but not New Orleans.]

Kokomo. Yes, MM continues. He don't play anymore. No, BI: adds. He's got a steel mill job here now. Preacher now, I think, MM adds. That's another Kokomo, though, BM says.

I wonder, WR continues. Did you notice much difference in the bands - the early bands - between the New Orleans fellows, and the other musicians up North, or other places in the South? Was there a different beat? Oh yes, BM and MM say.

Some people, you know, say that jazz originated from that kind of ragtime, and all, they called it then, WR states, [and that it] started in New Orleans.

I wonder if you found that same kind of music up North, or other places, too? No, no, no, BM and MM reply. They didn't any take it up, BM says, until those fellows from New Orleans began to spread out up this way.

In Chicago, being the easiest way north, then most of the came here first. Then, from here, they branched out to Philadelphia, New York, and places.

We found, too, that a lot of musicians that already [heard?] that, didn't know, didn't have that beat, didn't understand what it was all about.

A lot of them were puzzled with it. Some of them, even, hardly, they wouldn't play it. It's nothing but a lot of junk,

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you know. But, they all come to it.

Yeah, Joe Oliver. He's the one that started it here almost, him, and Johnny Dodds, and them, MM says. Yes. That's why, at the Royal Garden, they would be so crowded [with] the musicians around--listening, and looking, and learning. Joe Oliver, and them, started it.

There was a couple of fellows around these other nightclubs, too, BM notes. Jimmie Noone, Freddie Keppard....He traveled with us for a while. Yes, well I declare, MM notes. Freddie Keppard, yes.

I never knew him, WR notes, but I know his brother is still living there, a very nice guitar player. He plays guitar. Louis Keppard.

Because we was about the only ones who had a show down there, MM says, didn't we, or wasn't we? Well, travelling shows would go anywhere out of the register of New Orleans itself, BM says.

Any times the musicians would...some of them would get hot-headed, or something like that, MM says, we would [dismiss them], and we'd go back, and show in New Orleans. Well then, we'd bring new ones out.

Then, eventually, when they come to their senses, and they'd want to come back, then we take them back. Always parted friendly. Yes.

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Quite a few of them got their start with us, BM recalls. That is the travelling start, the travelling way. They were playing music.

I was wondering, WR says. Some of the very first music you ever heard in New Orleans, Mrs. Mack. If you can remember the very first band, or dance music, or parade music, or any kind of music?

Oh, I heard that all my life, MM replies. All my life, I've been following, going to funerals. Go sad, and come back just (laughing) skipping. They still have those, WR notes. Oh yes, MM says.

What's the name of some of those bands that played around there? BM asks. Of course, we know about Joe Oliver, and that bunch, but there was two, or three, fellows that had pretty good bands around.

Buddy, Buddy, MM says. Oh, my goodness. I used to hear you talk about that, BM says.

I knew all of them, MM continues. Peter Bocage. He was in the band, too. He blew for funerals. He'd blow a horn.

Do you remember a band, a cornet player called Buddy Bolden? WR asks. Oh yes, BM replies. Sure. Sure. He died some place. Yes, he's been dead, WR says...

END OF REEL I, Track 1

unedited first draft

MACK & MACK--
(MARY & BILLY McBRIDE)
REEL I, Track 2
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INTERVIEWER: William Russell
NOTES: Richard B. Allen
SUMMARY: Dan Weisman
TYPING: Dan Weisman

[Track begins with BM saying:] they telling me [Punch Miller] is living with his sister now. He sent me the address.

Yes, Punch is...right now, he is actually living with his niece, WR says. His sister's daughter in New Orleans. His sister's out in the country. But, he looks quite well. He still plays.

You've seen him? MM asks. Oh yes, WR replies. I've seen him. He was down to see me about two weeks ago. Is that so? MM asks. Two weeks ago, last Saturday, WR continues.

Oh, you are from New Orleans? MM asks. Oh yes, WR answers. I live there now.

Well, you give our love to Punch, MM says, and tell him we got his letter. Alright, WR says. Maybe, I'll be able to play this record for him too. Alright, MM says (laughing). He'd say, listen to that Miss Mary, and Mr. Mack. That sure is Miss Mary.

Well, almost all those boys, BM says, those musicians we call them that were really born out in Louisiana. They come to New Orleans, and build up into these names for themselves.

Yes, Punch was born, I think, in Raceland, WR notes. Raceland, MM repeats. Mutt [Carey] was born out there too. And [Kid] Ory? Ory was born up in LaPlace, WR says. LaPlace.

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We passed through there, Mack, MM recalls. Looked like Jesus was coming through. A man in the country with a beard looked like Jesus.

It was Ory's brother, BM adds. He heard the...You see, when we were going to some little town up in Louisiana to play a show, a little show, and a dance.

We had Ory, and Joe Oliver, and Mutt, and oh, just a pretty good size band--about five, six, seven, maybe. When they got to this farm, this cane farm, where Ory's brother lived. Why, they played some music, see.

Then, Kid Ory's brother's running through the cane. That's what she's talking about. He ran through the sugar cane, you know, MM continues...parted the cane, running through, and that long beard.

Somebody, I think it was Joe Oliver, said, well here comes Jesus. (Laughing.) He looked just like Jesus.

I guess that's the brother that went to California, WR surmises. That had a chicken farm out there with Kid Ory until 1940, or so. His brother died that year, I think. Is that so? BM asks. I was out there at that time.

I think his sisters, all of his relatives, mostly are dead now. But, he's still in San Francisco, and still playing. I think he may go to Europe this summer. Is that so? BM says. Well, I declare, MM adds. He's still active, WR continues.

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I saw him in a movie here, BM states, in a theater. It was the story of this Chicago clarinetist...Benny Goodman, WR says, "The Benny Goodman Story." I never got to see that. You didn't? BM asks. No, WR answers.

Dry was in quite a few of those [scenes] in there, BM reports. What's this fellow's name in Philadelphia from New Orleans? George something...George Baquet had been there, WR replies, but he's dead now, too.

[Sidney] Bechet. He passed too, MM notes. Bechet, so many of those old-timers are gone, WR says.

Yeah, we knew Sidney Bechet when he was a kid, BM states. But, he was playing the clarinet then, too. He had all pieces of clarinet strung together with wire.

He come down to Pete Lala's, and they'd let him sit in there as long as the police didn't run him out because he was a kid. A little kid, I guess, in short pants, WR says. They would run him, and Louis [Armstrong] out, MM notes. They'd run them out.

Now, we're talking about these towns going through like that, BM continues. Punch, when he come into New Orleans, he played around with us.

They didn't recognize him so much because he hadn't been in New Orleans too long, and so, he kind of palled around with us because we always accepted any performer - musicians, you know - fixed meals, so they could have.

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He got [to] like us. When we had room for him, we took him on, and carried him around with us for a while. He travelled with you then, too? WR asks. Yes, he did, BM notes.

This record that you made. I think, on the record label, it says: recorded in New Orleans. So, I thought, maybe, he didn't go out of the city with you, WR says. Oh yes, MM says. He travelled all over with us. He went everywhere.

Then, he...here, he lived with us. [Here in Chicago.] Yes, he lived right in the house with us.

But, some of the records we made, BM continues, were made in New York, and Clarence Williams played for us. He happened to be there. He wasn't travelling with us at that time.

But, Punch. We were here, and needed a trumpet player, and Punch got left down South, or something. Oh, he turned out to be a kind of boozier, that's what it was, and we had to let him go. [MM agrees.]

Oh, I shouldn't say that, BM adds. We won't play that part for him, WR says. I'll just play the first part.

Well, anyway, BM continues. I know, WR notes. I've heard that, too, about him, unfortunately. He doesn't drink now. He's through with that forever. Well, that's what ruined his health anyway, BM says. We used to talk to him.

Anyway, we left him. We were playing in Texarkana, Texas, and he went to sleep in the pit, and that was too much. When it

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was time to play the show, he didn't raise his head. (Laughing)
He sure didn't, MM agrees. Then, alright we ready.

When we got up here [to Chicago], BM says, we found he was
in Houston, Texas. We wired him, and he sent a wire back. [He]
said, he'd like to come, but he didn't have a trumpet.

I told him, come on empty-handed, we'd give him a helping
hand. I got a trumpet for him. I bought one out of a pawn shop.

He stayed with us a long time after that. He stayed in this
house, sometimes. He used room here with us.

He'll be glad to hear from you, WR says. Oh yes, MM says. We
just got a...he writes to us all the time because he can always
find us, but we can't find him...because we have one address you
see.

He's a fine fellow, Punch. Oh yes, WR agrees. I've known
him, now, just three years.

I never could find him. In the years I used to travel
around, he was with the carnival. I could never find him. He
wasn't in Chicago, when I'd come through here.

But, he came back to New Orleans, about, almost three years
ago now. He's been working there. Sometimes, as a musicians. He's
had other jobs, too.

Now, he'll be on social security. He'll be able to get a
pension from the army too. He was in the army, you know. Yes, MM
agrees. He certainly was. He certainly was in the army.

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I was going to ask about when you would sing with the Oliver band, WR continues. Can you remember some of the other songs?

You mentioned "The Royal Garden Blues." I know it's hard to remember all those titles. But, what type of songs did you?

The blues, MM replies. The plain blues, and "Easy Rider" because, I learned all those numbers at [W.C.] Handy's in Memphis.

She would sing some songs that I wrote, too, BM says, like the "Oh Me [!] Oh My [!] Blues." That's along about 50 years ago that we practiced on it, and recorded it.

We had plenty of songs, MM says. I've heard of that, WR says. Didn't somebody else record that? Somebody made a record.

Henry Williams, MM replies. He took lots of ours. It must have been Henry Williams, BM adds. "Rubber Legs" [i.e., HW] took lots of our music, MM says, because he worked with our show. I've seen that title, WR notes.

Then, there was "My Heart-Broken Gal," BM continues, was a song of mine...."The Merry Makers' Twine? WR asks. Was that a dance? It was a dance, MM replies. Every word, they had a movement to it. The chorus did that. It was a kind of descriptive thing, BM adds. Very good.

And "The Devil Jazz," MM says. We had another number, "The Devil Jazz." That was a number where the chorus, for every line that you do, they done a step for it--chorus. We didn't record

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that, BM says.

Every night, we didn't record. So many good songs were in the show. Everything, MM says. Everything. Like, with Joe's band. Just everything they played. Some of our music.

All the late popular songs, WR says, anything that they'd play. Anything, MM says. They'd play, WR says, and you'd sing the vocal chorus, or two, with it.

Then, you didn't sing just the vocal chorus, MM states. Sung the verse, too. The verse, and the chorus. You sing the verse, and then you go on with choruses, many choruses.

At that time, such songs as "A Good Man Is Hard To Find," BM recalls, that was popular. "All Night Long." You remember that? Yes, I have the music, WR says. And "It Isn't What He Does That Makes Me Love Him, It's The Way He Does It," MM adds. All those kind of numbers.

Jasper Taylor, who I saw last night, WR states, said to ask you about the Robichaux's. If you played there at the Lyric Theater?

Yeah, Robichaux, MM repeats. John Robichaux, yeah. Sure, BM adds. He had a whole band of New Orleans stalwarts there, WR notes.

So, you didn't have your own band for that, you were just going, and singing. Well, yes we did, BM says. When we go into the Lyric, MM says, or any theater that had a band. Their band

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would play their overture, then our band would come.

[We'd still keep our own band.] We'd spot them on the stage, BM says. That was for the show. And that was a big drawing card....

Then we counted it. We'd say we had 30 people, 27 people. The band was counted in as part of the show.

Robichaux's music, MM says, was kind of a classic kind, you know. He didn't like jazz. He didn't jazz much.

Any theater that we went to that had an orchestra. When they play their overture []. Robichaux was crazy about our style though, BM states, and our music. He'd sit back, and fold his arms. Sit back...shaking, and laughing all through the show.

I might ask you just a minute, or two, Mr. Mack, WR says, about the music in Mobile. I heard that the old Excelsior Brass Band...

We talked to Mr. John Pope...Alexander Pope was the leader of the original band, and I talked to his son who's still living. He's about 80 years old now. [See, John Pope interview. Hogan Jazz Archive.]

Do you remember that Excelsior Band? Yeah, BM replies. I remember them for the reason that, in Mobile, being born there, they lived...what they called the Creoles in Mobile. They were Creoles, you know. Yes, yes, he's very light, WR notes.

Yeah, yeah see, BM continues, and they didn't really mix. too

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much with the rest of the colored people. So, that's why I remember them so well.

But, I think this fellow, one of the musicians who was named Willie, or something like that. I don't remember very well. We had a fellow that later became one of the...the leader of the Eureka Band named Charlie Lipscomb....

Well, he went on my first tour out of Mobile. I believe he's dead, WR says. Somebody told me he was Cootie Williams' teacher, I believe, too.

Did you know Cootie Williams who played with [Duke] Ellington? Yeah, sure, BM replies. I know him.

There's another old man whom I didn't get to meet, WR says. Who still is there. I'll meet him my next trip. They called him "Chicken." Some people said they could only remember his name was Chicken. Do you remember that name? Well, there was a fellow called Charlie "Chicken" Jones, BM recalls, but I think he's dead....

There was some more musicians there. Bell, and her father, used to run a barber shop on Davis Avenue right [in] town.

Oh, by the way, BM continues. In Mobile, there's a man - oh, I don't know, he's probably gone, too - by the name of Charlie Schreiner. A German fellow. He built the Pike Theater for me.

I just went around the country, and people; well, they liked me so well, they wanted me to stay around. So, he said, when you

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come back here, I'm gonna have a theater. I'm building it just because of you.

He used to loan me money whenever I organized, and needed costumes, and things. I could go to Charlie Steiner. He run a tavern, a kind of saloon. On account of me being always able to make enough money to pay him back, he got the idea: well, if you can make money like that, I'll build a theater.

All these musicians, Mobile musicians, they got their idea of jazz from Buddy Christian. He came over there...Buddy Christian. He come to Mobile, and talked to the Mobile musicians how to play that style.

And, of course, Johnny King. He went to New Orleans, and lived there a while. King was a Mobile boy.

How did those bands compare with the New Orleans bands when you heard them later? WR asks. That is, the brass band. Did they swing a good deal? You know. I mean, on the street?

Like the funerals. You talked about coming back, where they'd really swing. Did the Mobile bands play that same style?

They picked that up, BM replies, and got that idea after...Like I say, they came--you know, King, and Christian. They, kind of, give them a few lessons in it what it was all about.

I was trying, while I was talking, to think of the fellow named Ed Jones, I think he used to lead his band. He was the

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original, the leader of the original Eureka Band. Ed Jones...In Mobile.

The Excelsior was the Pope's band. [They had an Eureka Band, too.] Ed Jones used to lead the band with a baritone horn. One of them upright things, you know. He played jazz.

You could hear him for miles and miles when they was coming back from a funeral. They'd step it up (imitating). He'd carry his head like that while he was playing, looked like he was eating something good.

He has a son. Josh was the boy's name. He was a kid. He was younger than I, and he carried it on now. He was still in the music business there in Mobile.

I can't think of the other fellow that had a band. At one time, he had the Eureka Band.

There always was in Mobile the same thing that happened in New Orleans. It would later get to Mobile. They had the Mardi Gras, and everything, MM adds. The same type of music, and dance bands too, WR says.

I was going to ask Mrs. McBride a little bit more about the early bands when you were, even, a little girl. The first dances you'd go to. Or when you'd hear...if you can remember Buddy Bolden's band at all.

I do, MM replies. I do remember, yes. That was a band then. Because, the trombone player...Frankie Duson...He looked like a

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Mexican. Frankie Duson. He was of a dark complexion with straight hair.

Frankie Duson, now. He came from Algiers, too, WR notes, Professor Manetta tells me. I know the whole family, MM says. I'm trying to think of all of them, but I just can't think. It's been so long. It's been years. Frankie Duson.

A banjo player. I don't think he was from Algiers. A Brock Mumford, WR mentions. Who? MM asks. Mumford, Mumford. A Brock, WR says.

And then there was a Lorenzo Stahl. Yeah, MM says.. Yeah, I heard of him, BM says. But they were from over on the other side. Uptown. The other side of the river, WR states.

I knew Lorenzo Stahl for a brief period, too, there, BM says. He played with us once, too. I think he went up on this trip when you said about Ory's brother coming through the cane. I think, Lorenzo Stahl.

Yes, he was with Oliver, WR notes. Yes, yes, sure, BM and MM say. Lorenzo Stahl, yes, MM adds....He's not living, WR says, but people tell me about him.

Then they're down there, MM says. But, my goodness. We'd have to go way back, now, as much as I followed the band. Why, if somebody died, we'd wait for the funeral, for the band to play behind them. I'd know everybody that played in the band. But, I can't think of them now.

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Do you remember the Johnson brothers, over in Algiers? WR asks. Yank and Buddy Johnson, the trombone? That's who I was trying to say, who played what, MM notes.

Buddy Johnson, a little short fellow. You remember, Mack? I remember Buddy Johnson, BM replies. And Yank? MM asks. Yeah, I know all those fellows, BM says. Knew them then.

Yank was a drummer, MM adds. Yank played drums...Yank was the long-haired one. I never knew them, myself, WR notes. Well, we knew them, BM says. I remember them now.

I know Buddy Johnson, MM says. A little short fellow, he was. Then Yank, his brother, was bad. Yank was the bad boy when we went to school together. He had long hair.

I was trying to think. Well, I declare. We've had no reason, or occasion, to bring up all those names and so, BM says, you do forget. But, when we hear them again, [we] remember--well, I used to know him, sure, sure.

And the Lindsays, MM continues. Johnny Lindsay. And Herbert, [his brother]. They lived right around the corner from us. Mamie, the sister, she went away with us, BM adds. She surely did, MM notes.

In Memphis. She stopped in Memphis, didn't she? Was it Memphis? It was, BM replies. She come back there. She stopped there.

Can you tell me, WR continues...Johnny Lindsay, I know, is

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dead. Died in 1951, I believe, up here when I was here. I knew him. But, his brother. Somebody told me he had a brother still living here. Do you know?

He has a brother, MM says...twin, Herbert...He's here, somewhere. He was on South Parkway the last time I heard from him. I saw him.

Buzzy saw him. My brother. You see, my brother, he knows, sees everybody from home. I wish I could find him sometime, and interview him, WR says. I won't be able to, this trip, I suppose, but next trip, maybe.

There is so many that have passed, MM notes. Now, we have a theatrical chair club here. We met at...Jasper Taylor's house...and Jack L. Cooper...he's our business manager.

There were so many old performers there. But, there's none as old, hardly, as us, together, but Butterbeans & Susie, and they are out of town.

Oh, are they still around Chicago sometimes? WR asks. Yes, MM replies. They live here. They're still playing, BM reports. [They live at] 1322 Calumet Avenue.

I've seen them several times on the stage, WR notes. The Apollo theater in New York, and once in Pittsburgh. I think they're in Pittsburgh now, BM states. They went to Pittsburgh.

The Whitman Sisters, MM says. They're about the oldest, like us.

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What was this fellow's name? I think he was a trombonist, too? BM asks. Was he named Dutrey? Dutrey, yes, MM says. [Honore] "Norah" Dutrey, WR says.

We know Dutrey, MM says. He played over at the Lincoln Garden with us. He bought that [property at] 49th and Michigan, that big one. On the corner, but he lost it. He passed. Yes, he's dead, WR adds. His brother Sam is dead, now, too. He played clarinet.

Jimmie Noone, where...is he here? MM asks. He died in California, WR reports, 1944. Oh, MM says, he used to play for us at the cabaret too. Jimmie Noone. That's the Dreamland, BM notes.

And then, up on 55th Street, MM says. There was a bunch over to the Deluxe, BM states, that went over there. That's where Freddie Keppard played for us. It was an upstairs nightclub, you remember, up over the States Theater?

Can you tell me a little bit more about Jelly Roll Morton before we quit? WR asks. I don't want to take your whole afternoon, but if you can. When he travelled with you.

You say, he came from around Bay St. Louis. Yeah, BM says. He didn't come up here with us. He would go into New Orleans, and up, and down the coast...Biloxi.

He lived with us a little bit. We had always kept house, you see, and performers would just live there. His grandmother...we always lived with her when we'd go to Bay St. Louis, BM says.

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Room with...she'd rent us rooms. We got to...that's how we got to know Jelly Roll.

He went around in Mississippi, and in little spots in Louisiana, with us, from time to time. He was a fine kid.

He always did the things that he recorded later when he got to be a young man. He could play all that stuff when he was a kid..."The Pearls," ["Jelly Roll Blues,"] "Winin' Boy..." "Must I Hesitate"--I used to use that in a show. Do you remember? Sure did, MM says. Yes. All those numbers....1909-1910.

One other man I was going to ask about, WR continues, Tony Jackson. If you ever worked with him, or remembered?...Yes, yes, MM says [after a brief period of confusion between TJ and Frankie "Half Pint" Jaxson.]

He was from New Orleans, BM states. He used to play the Deluxe, too. He used to sing, and he used to sing a song.

He wrote "Pretty Baby," was one of his numbers, WR prompts. Do you remember that? Yes, BM says.

But, this thing. I don't know whether he wrote it, or not. I can't even think of it now, but "After a While," or "All in the While," or something about with the word while in it.

(BM sings:) In the cold wintry blow, snowing, blowing...You know I remember some of the rhyming. "Snow and Ice," that may be it, WR says. (BM singing) In the ice and the snow....It was published, WR notes. I have the music. There was another name

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they used for it, too. I forget that name, too.

Tony Jackson, BM continues. The first time I heard him, that's what he was singing. He sing right here at the DeLuxe.

It's good for people to think of those things, MM says, when you can think now. Who doesn't think of Tony Jackson, and all of them? Maybe, just, it would run across your mind.

I think of all these names, BM notes. Here's some 20 names down here that I never think of otherwise.

You have a good memory to remember those fellows because they were just, sort of, worked along with you, WR says, [in] the show--like hired help, you might say.

They weren't a real part of the show, always. I mean, they weren't as important as the singers, and dancers. I'm surprised you remembered all those musicians, really wonderful.

I don't want to bother you more. We're just about out of this tape here, so, if you don't mind, I'd like to snap a picture.

You don't have to worry about being dressed up or anything...Just have a picture here, at home. They can tell it's just home.

(MM laughing) Don't take no picture here. Take Mack. You don't mind? Do you, Mr. Mack? WR asks.

Oh baby, BM says to MM, you don't look bad at all. You're not looking bad. You don't look bad, WR agrees.

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I mean, BM continues, if it's a bust picture you don't have to show it. We can have the background, you know, WR says, so they can see it's in your home. They'll know it's no studio. Take it in the kitchen even. (WR laughs.)

We'll take it in the easiest place, BM says. Yeah, any place, WR adds. Well, I ought to have my dresser in it, MM says...

END OF REEL I, Track 2