

DEDE PIERCE
I [only]--Digest--Retyped
November 20, 1963

1

Also present: Richard B. Allen

Joseph LaCroix "DeDe" Pierce was given his nickname by a female cousin with whom he grew up. His father was a brickmason; DP also followed that trade. Before DP took up music, he had no particular trumpet player or musician as his inspiration; he began playing a little while before he took lessons; he then studied with Paul Chaligny, a letter carrier, who played in brass bands, strictly [from] music. DP was later attracted to the playing of Kid Rena; DP took lessons from him during a period of 6-8 months. DP studied with Chaligny almost a year. DP's first job was with a drummer, Arnold DePass, [leader] of the Olympia Band; DP replaced Elmer "Coo Coo" Talbert, brother-in-law of DePass, in that band. DP remained with DePass about 2 years. DP didn't play with brass bands until some years after he was with DePass; he began playing in brass bands before the Depression [1929], however.

DP was born February 18, 1904, on St. Ann Street between Claiborne and Derbigny, which is in the Tremé section of New Orleans.

DP began singing "Eh, La Bas" when he was with DePass; the Creole-speaking members of the band used the phrase as a greeting, etc. and DP decided to add more words and form a complete song.

DP got the tune "Tie Me To Your Apron Strings Again" from the sheet music.

Some brass bands DP worked with were the Eureka Brass Band and the brass band led by D'jalma Ganier; DP worked with any brass band which needed a trumpet player at the moment. DP also played in the Young Tuxedo Brass Band, led by John Casimir, the the Zulu parade when Louis [Armstrong] was king of the Zulus.

DP and Paul Barnes once had a band called the Sunset Syncopaters.

DEDE PIERCE
I [only]--Digest--Retyped
November 20, 1963

2

DP has made recordings with Emile Barnes for Alden Ashforth and David Wycoff
[sp ?] [and also other recordings].

End of Reel I

[Interview made in connection with recording session for Barry Martyn?]

BILLIE PIERCE

I [only]--Digest--Retyped

November 20, 1963

1

Also present: Richard B. Allen

Billie Pierce is from Pensacola, Florida; she was born June 8, 1907 [in Marianna, Florida? Cf. other interviews]. When she was a little girl, all the New Orleans bands-- e.g., [Oscar] "Papa" Celestin, Buddy Petit, and Chris Kelly--came to Pensacola to play. BP didn't know DeDe Pierce [q.v.] until she came to N.O.; she met him through her sister who was playing piano with him; when BP and DeDe got married, many N.O. musicians attended the wedding; some were George Lewis (and his first wife, Jeanette), McGee, the drummer working with BP at the time, "Jim Crow" [Robinson] and Kid Howard; BP and DeDe were married in about 1935 [Cf. other interviews]. At the time, BP was working at places around Decatur and Ursulines [streets]; she began at the Kingfish, went to the Popeye, then to Stell's [Wiggly?] Wagon, and finally, to the "Old Folks Home" (correctly, Luthjen's) the latter two not in the same area [Cf. other interviews]. Before BP went to Luthjen's, [Emile] "Mehly" [Barnes] and Lawrence "Toca" [Martin] were working there. BP also worked at the Harmony Inn. BP worked with Alphonse Picou and his band at the Pig Pen and [with another band?] at the Cat and the Fiddle. Before she met DeDe, BP worked with "Toca", Picou, Ernest Milton and Johnny Davis. While in Florida, BP worked with Mack's Merrymakers, a band from N.O.; she worked with Joe Jessie, from her hometown. BP says the famous blues singers during her years in Florida were Mamie [i.e. Ma] Rainey, Bessie Smith and Ida Cox; BP worked with Ida Cox and with Bessie Smith; BP was about 10 years of age when she worked with Bessie Smith; she worked with her for 2 weeks, as long as Bessie was in town.

BP mentions her sister, Sadie [Goodson]; there are 4 of the 7 sisters of her

BILLIE PIERCE
I [only]--Digest--Retyped
November 20, 1963

2

family still living. They all played piano; Sadie was the only one who took lessons.

End of Reel I

[Interview made in connection with recording for Barry Martyn?]