

WILL SHADE, DEWEY CORLEY, JENNIE MAE CLAYTON (sp?) *Retype* 1
II [of 3--N. B. Reel I missing] *See Mose Allison Sr interview for reel I*
May 25, 1960 *[See Allison folder for notes]*

Also present: Richard B. Allen,
William Claxton

(Will Shade talking first)

[See Memphis folder.]

Some of the bands playing around [Memphis] when WS was a boy were led by W. C. Handy, Howard Yancey, and Bea [sp?] Smith. Yancey was a man when WS "was a kid in Knee pants;" Yancey, who is now at [operates?] the pool room just around the corner, had a musicians' headquarters, a club, at one time. The bands of that time were playing ragtime music and Dixieland, tunes such as "Way Down Yonder In New Orleans." [Perhaps suggested by the fact that RBA was from N.O.]

When WS began playing music for money, instrumentation and personnel of the band were: "Roundhouse" (real name, Elijah), jug; Ben Ramey, kazoo; WS, lead guitar and harmonica; Will Weldon, second guitar. WS made up his own tunes and wrote his own songs. The group was called the Memphis Jug Band. The first records WS made were with the persons listed above; the recordings were "Newport News," "Memphis Jug Band Blues," [Cf. discographies] "Stingy Woman Blues" and "Sunbrimmer's Blues." The original personnel have been replaced in the last ten or fifteen years as they died; Weldon was replaced by Robert Carter, guitar [Cf. discographies.]; Jones joined the band to play jug and piano.

[Jab Jones?]

WS recorded with Sleepy Hohn Estes around [19]26 or [19]27; they titles included "Diving Duck" and "[] Jail." Estes was in Brownville [i.e., Brownsville?], Tennessee, the last time WS heard from him; Estes is now blind.

Charlie Polk "was the second one that was with me after 'Roundhouse' died." Polk played jug. Jab Jones succeeded Polk when he died. Jones played piano and jug when he was with Estes; when WS and Jones had an argument, Jones left him, formed his own band, and later joined Estes.

Ham Lewis, who came to town with a show, was stranded when WS allowed him to stay with him; Lewis played jug better than Jones; Lewis had played jog with the Dixie Jug Blowers of Louisville, Kentucky. RBA mentions that Lockwood Lewis played saxophone with the Dixie Jug Blowers. Bozo Nickerson, who played piano, sang, and was a comedian, came to town with the same show Ham Lewis did; he joined WE's band at the same time as Lewis. Nickerson made [i. e., sang] [Everybody's Talking About] "Saide Green" [a recording by the MJB]; WS says the comment at the end of "Saddle Green" was "Get on out of here, Too Sweet." Too Sweet was a dog.

Charlie [^{W: lson?}Weaver] and Tome Pinson had good bands. Johnny Dunn, who played "saxophone, guitar and things," had a good band. [Cf. literature.] Buster Bailey "was an all-around man; he could pick up most anything and play it 'cause he was well-acquainted with them." [Cf. literature.] Otto Gilmore, who moved to Denver, Colorado eight or ten years ago, played washboard with WS; he was good. OG didn't record. WS now has Robert Burse, also called "Dooley" and "Good Kid," playing washboard. "Memphis Minnie" [McCoy] is now in Memphis; she has had a stroke, so that she can't talk or walk, and is confined to a wheel chair. [Her husband (Little Son Joe Lawler)?] had a stroke before Memphis Minnie, and is in the same condition as she. Frank Stokes, Dan Sane and Jim Jackson are all dead. Jim Jackson featured "Kansas Ckty Blues" and other blues; Jackson played guitar. Furry Lewis, who also played guitar, made records some time ago for Vocalion; one title was "John Henry." Furry Lewis lives five or ten blocks from WS.

WS has not been working much lately, as there is not much work. He and the other singers can't sing on the streets anymore, as the police won't allow it; RBA says, "I think that's what they call public

relations;" WS replies, "I'm pretty sure it is, some kind of relations." WS says if a person is caught singing on the streets, trying to make some money, he is "...penal farm bound." Talk about the singing at the penal farm. The term "Lawyer Green" is mentioned; WS says that means "making the bushes" [i. e., escaping].

WS says he can't remember the words or tunes of songs he recorded long ago; he says that playing by ear isn't conducive to remembering all those songs, and that he never learned how to read music.

Babe Barlow, now living in Buffalo, New York, worked with WS; she did a strip tease dance; she thought she was down to her last piece of concealment, but she was past it. She was doing the [hula?]. RBA says Babe Barlow was once with Mack and Mack [according to Punch Miller.]

Jennie Mae Clayton made records with "Son Brimmer," Benny Ramey and Vol Stevenson [or Stevens] in Atlanta, Georgia. [See discographies on Memphis Jug Band.] Stevenson played violin, says JMC; WS says he played mandolin, guitar and banjo; it develops that he played all of them, but not violin on the recordings. VS made "Kansas City Blues." JMC sang on the records; titles were: "State of Tennessee," "Cocaine Habit [Blues]," "Ambulance Man [Blues]," and "Bob Lee Junior [Blues]."

WS's band also recorded in Chicago, Atlanta, St. Louis, Dallas, and Atlantic City, New Jersey. The band was sent to [a convention in?] Atlantic City by Westinghouse and Memphis Power and Light Company.

The best jug blower WS ever heard was Ham Lewis. The best guitar player was Lonnie Johnson. Although there are electric guitars now, Johnson played "straight-out muscle guitar and make it sound like a electric guitar do now."

End of Reel II.

WILL SHADE, DEWEY CORLEY, JENNIE MAE CLAYTON

III [of 3]

May 25, 1960

Also present: Richard B. Allen, William Claxton

WS's nickname is "Son Brimmer," which he acquired because he was reared by his grandmother, Annie Brimmer.

Dewey Corley was born February 18, 1898 in Hallie [sp?], Arkansas.

RBA mentions Josh Altheimer, of Altheimer, Arkansas, who played piano with Washboard Sam. DC says he started [pianist and singer] Roosevelt Sykes on piano, although DC himself can't play piano very well. He says Son Brimmer started him in jug bands. DC says that contact with Sykes was in Helena, Arkansas. Sykes' first recording was "'44' [Blues]."

DC was reared in Memphis. He met Sykes on his travels around the area. DC began playing music in [19]27. He knew how to bang around on the piano a little bit, and WS taught him to play the jug.

WS plays guitar, harmonica, jug and "streamline bass," which is a one-string affair like a washtub bass. He has been playing the bass for about ten or fifteen years.

DC also plays kazook [i. e., kazoo]. (DC plays a blues on kazoo; WS accompanies him on guitar.)

WS doesn't use a pick; he says a pick breaks too many strings; he uses his thumb and forefinger for picking.

DC has played with Charlie Pierce, violinist; with Red Robie ^{MILTON ROBY} [sp?], guitarist; with "Stuff," guitarist; with Shakey Head Walter, harmonica player. He says "they" in Memphis taught Lil Walter, who now plays with Muddy Waters, to play harmonica.

The late Jack Kelly was a good guitar player around Memphis. Doc Higgs played jug in Jack Kelly South Memphis Jug Band. The late Will Bat played violin. RBA mentions Snooks [Friedman] and his Memphis Ramblers, a white blues group; WS says Snooks copied the Memphis Jug Band, the first jug band in Memphis, and that [Ralph?] Peer [of Victor record-

ing company] hired them to record.

The late "Curly" was a good jug blower. Willie Bee [sp?], played steel guitar; the instrument shone [made of metal?].

WS says Furry Lewis made [the recording of] "John Henry" using a bottle neck on his guitar.

WS mentions various guitar tunings, including [Se]vastopool," which is a tuning in chords, and Spanish. [See Paul Oliver book.]

The late Frank Stokes was a good guitarist; DC played with him. His son, Roosevelt Stokes, and Earl Bell learned from the older men --[i. e., Frank Stokes and DC?].

RBA asks about Dan Sane; DC says Sane is around somewhere [see **→ WAS LIVING IN CARUTHERSVILLE AT TIME & DIED OSCEOLA, ARK. IN '73.**]

Reel II--WS says Sane is dead].

Another good guitarist, a one-legged man who learned from WS and DC, is James Dewberry, now in St. Louis; Dewberry has made some records.

End of Reel III

