

ALFRED WILLIAMS
Reel I--Summary--Retyped
February 3, 1961

Others Present:
Richard B. Allen
Barry Martyn

This interview was made at 418 N. Prieur Street. Alfred Williams is Alfred's full name. He was born September 1, 1900. [Denial by other musicians. They say he is older. RBA] Alfred is the only one in his family to play music, and he just picked it up. Alfred didn't have a teacher as such, but followed Kid Ory's band and the drummer was Henry Martin. Alfred used to go to dances all the time and sit on the bandstand with him [Henry Martin], and when they had intermission Alfred would get to play drums. That was around 1913 or 1914. Henry Martin played jazz when they used to call it ragtime.

Alfred's first job was with Tig Chambers's Columbia Band. Also in this band was Ernest Kelly on trombone, Tig Chambers on trumpet, Zeb Lenoir [sp.?] on clarinet, Duck Ernest [Johnson] on bass, Emmett Scott on guitar. There were six in that band and the date was about 1916. They were playing at that time at a place called Butcher Hill's on Protection Levee and Oak Street. The band got all dance jobs. They didn't play to advertise that job, but Alfred has played on trucks for advertising. For instance, that is when Alfred started playing for Sam Morgan's band.

Alfred started out at first beating on tin pans in his mother's kitchen, then to the front steps.

Alfred remembers early drummers like Red Happy [Bolton] and "Face-o" [Eddie Woods], and a little guy named Mack Lacey whose whole family Alfred knew. Mack has a brother named Joe

Lacey who drives a cab for the Rocket Cab Co.

Red Happy played with quite a few, but he played at the Lyric Theater for quite a while with old man John Robichaux. In that band was Happy, Andrew Kimball on trumpet, John Lindsay on trombone, Miss [Mrs.?] Margaret [last name unknown] on piano (she was from a big family), John Robichaux on violin. They played in the Orchestra pit. Happy was a jazz drummer, but he was a fine drummer--a show drummer. His drums were Leedy [drums] which were all the go here. They had overhead pedals at that time. Alfred Williams is left-handed, and he describes how he would hit his bass drum and cymbal together. [They were both connected to the foot pedal.] If you wanted to play soft, you could release it and take it off [the cymbal]. In those days when you were "going out" [finishing a tune] you would hit the Chinese crash cymbal; they used it rather than the Zildjian [brand name.]

Alfred remembers little Abbey "Chinee" [Foster] who played around in brass bands, the Tuxedo Brass Band and with the Original Tuxedo Orchestra with Papa Celestin. At that time it was called the Tuxedo [Band] because Baba Ridgley was the manager then. "Chinee" played with both bands--snare drum with the brass band and trap drums with the orchestra.

Alfred made a trip to Los Angeles in 1919 with "Fess" Manuel Manetta. Wade Whaley and Mutt Carey. Ory got a job out there working in a nightclub and he sent for them. Ory didn't send for Alfred, but he got in because of Little Mack. Little

Mack was supposed to go, but he got sick. Ory was already out there. He played at a place they called the Cadillac Nightclub, a racially-mixed club. Ory didn't have anyone with him when he sent for them. There were just the four [five with Ory] pieces. They played the same things they were playing here, jazz. They went wild over that; they had never heard that. They had the Black and Tan Band out there which was a fine band. Ernest "Nini" Johnson [real name Coycault] from here was playing with them. They also had Paul Howard on tenor, Dink Johnson on drums, the trombone player was the manager--Harry Southern [or Sothern?] "Nini" was the only one whom Alfred knew. There ~~were~~ were about six in the Black and Tan band. Alfred knew "Nini" through Ory; Alfred was too small when "Nini" left here. They say that Dink Johnson was from here, but Alfred didn't know him. They had a nice band. Harry Southern was surprised at Ory playing trombone when he couldn't read music. Ory was such a fine trombone player and couldn't read. They [the Black and Tan] was a reading band. It was a puzzle to them, to see how Ory played different numbers in different keys, even though he didn't know music. One night, Ory went to a place where they were playing; the people there asked Ory to sit in. Harry Southern took his trombone and put it in his case at intermission, wouldn't let Ory play. Ory played so much more trombone than Harry, and in a different style.

Alfred stayed out there from 1919 to March, 1921. They played about a year, and then the nightclub was closed. Ory

went to San Francisco and played with Curtis Mosby, who was a drummer. This shut Williams out.

Fess Manetta came home before Alfred did. Fess came home as soon as the band broke up when the nightclub was closed. They never did know what became of Wade Whaley. Mutt Carey stayed out there; he and Ory had a band.

In 1921, when the band broke up, and Williams came back home, he started playing with Buddy Petit. At that time Buddy Petit had Williams, Yank Johnson on trombone, Zeb Lenoir on clarinet, Buddy Manaday on guitar and banjo (Buddy is in a picture taken of them, over in Slidell or Covington), and Simon Marrero on bass. Buddy Manaday also played banjo. [Barry Martyn asks if the had to play lighter when they played with a guitar than with a banjo.] In Tig Chambers' band they had a guitar, but no banjo [Williams says in Tig Chambers' band Emmett Scott had a banjo--this is confused.] They played loud, did not have to tone themselves down unless he [the guitarist] took a solo.

Alfred stayed with Buddy about a year. Some of the numbers they played were: "Rose Leaf Ray," "Fidgety Feet," "Wang Wang Blues," "Milneberg Joys," "San," "Panama Rag," "Sister Kate," blues, and "Carless Love." Buddy Petit himself was a nice trumpet player, not a high trumpet player, but he was fine in the staff. He never was a high note man like Kid Rena and those fellows, but he had a nice tone.

When Alfred left Buddy Petit's band he went with Sam Morgan.

This was about 1922-1925. This was Sam Morgan's original band, not the one with his brother that recorded later. When Sam Morgan left his first band, he took over his brother's band and named it Sam Morgan's Band. Jim Crow [Robinson] "and all them" were in the second band. Yank Johnson was playing [trombone] with the first band. The first band consisted of: Alfred Williams, Yank Johnson [trombone], Sam Morgan [cornet], Joe Watson [clarinet], Butler "Guy-A" Rapp [banjo], Eddie "Ti-boy" Gilmore [bass]. Simon [Marrero] played a while too, but Gilmore took his place. Simon went with Celestin or somebody, because his brother John [Marrero] was playing with Celestin. This original Sam Morgan band did not make any records. The records were made with Sam's brother, Isaiah Morgan's band, with Earl Fouche. The original band played only dance jobs. Sam was playing nice trumpet in those days. He wasn't a high note man either, not so good a trumpet player as Buddy Petit and Kid Rena, but he had a big name. Sam got a better name when Alfred and Tank and Joe Watson and Simon Marrero all were better known, better musicians than Sam Morgan. When they joined his band he got a better name as well as a better band, because they gave him a good background.

Alfred had a Leedy 14" x 24" [bass] drum outfit in those days (not the one he has now) and a 5" x 15" snare drum. They didn't use Zidyin [sp?] cymbals, but had the Chinese crash [cymbal]. They played the same numbers as Buddy Petit's band, they all played the same stuff. At that time they didn't play

hymns. [Martyn observes that they recorded a lot of hymns.]

Williams says just the brass bands played hymns then; that that has come lately [into the dance band repertoire]. "Saints" was about the first one they played. Sam never used two trumpets with his original band.

There was some misunderstanding in the original Sam Morgan band. The band broke up. All the members but Sam took Willie Pajaud [on cornet] in with them and stayed together a year or so. Williams left them in 1925 to go on the [Pythian] Temple Roof Garden with Manuel Perez. Joe Watson heard Alfred was going on the Roof Garden and fired him even though Alfred wasn't sure at the time he was going. Joe Watson was the manager of the band which had been Sam Morgan's originally. They were playing a parade one day, and Joe said, "Well, Alfred, I heard you're going on the Roof Garden; I can't use you no more." Alfred said, "Well, I heard it too, but I haven't gotten no definite answer that I'm going. . . but if you feel that way, it's perfectly all right." Maurice Durand was playing in the brass band with them-- in the Onward Brass Band with Manuel Perez as manager. Maurice told him if he wanted to play on the Roof, if he wanted the job, Joe Lindsay was fixing to quit. So, Williams took the job, stayed up there from 1925 until 1927, with Manuel Perez's band. The band consisted of: Alfred, Buddy Johnson [Yank's brother] [trombone], Manuel Perez [cornet], Eddie Cherrie, clarinet, Caffrey Darensbourg, banjo; Jimmy Johnson, bass. [See photo Jazzmen,]

The Temple was at Saratoga and Gravier streets, where the bank is now. The Roof Garden was on top. The Temple belonged to the Knights of Pythias; that's what it was called the Temple; it was the Knights of Pythias Temple. The Knights were a secret order, colored organization. The roof was closed in; it was a beautiful dance hall. Williams played there with Perez two years. From there he went over to the Pelican with Walter "Fats" Pichon. Pichon had about a ten-piece band then. It consisted at that time of: Alfred, Raymond Brown, trombone; Walter Pichon, piano; Bat Brown, trumpet; Red Allen, trumpet; Sidney Carriere, alto; George Augustine, banjo; Old Man [Henry] Kimball, bass. There was a tenor player too; Alfred can't remember his name. [Probably another sax also to add up to ten.] Alfred stayed with this band about a year.

In 1929 Alfred went to the taxi dance hall, the La Vida, and worked down there. The band there consisted of: Alfred, Raymond "Clifford" or "Cy" Brown, Jr., (in San Francisco now--his father Raymond Brown, the trombone player, died in 1934), trumpet, who is a Red Allen scholar; John Handy, saxophone; Louis Givens, piano; Sidney Pflueger, guitar. They didn't have a bass. They did have Ernest Kelly on trombone. Alfred stayed with them about a year from the latter part of 1928 until 1929.

In the meantime, Celestin and Ridgley had fallen out; their band had split. Alfred went with Ridgley. They worked at Pete Herman's place. This band consisted of: Alfred; Baba Ridgley,

trombone; Shots [Madison], trumpet; John Handy, saxophone; [Manuel] Sayles, guitar; Emma Barrett, piano. He thinks they didn't have a bass. The band was called Ridgley's Tuxedo. Alfred says Ridgley was the originator of the name Tuxedo, although both he and Celestin used it. Celestin was using Happy Goldston on drums then [Check, compare Happy Goldston Reel and discographies.]

Alfred's mother died at Christmas time, 1928. [Does he mean Ridgley's band acted as pall bearers?--Yes. RBA] Alfred stayed with Ridgley through 1928, 1929, 1930. [Compare above.] In 1931 he went to the Pig Pen with Steve Lewis. They played there two or three nights a week--every Sunday, Wednesday or Thursday, Friday. That band consisted of: Alfred; Alvin Alcorn, Trumpet; Herbert Richardson, piano; Charlie Bocage [banjo?] and his brother, and Pete's brother, ^{Charlie Bocage} on bass horn. They played there at the Pig Pen from 1931 to 1932. It was a dance hall. Herbert Richardson was the piano player; Steve Lewis did not play; he just ran the place, sometimes sat in. It was called Steve Lewis's band, but he did not play except every now and then like when a lot of white people, rich white people he had known from playing with A. J. Piron so many years, would come around. They would ask Steve to play. He had a couple of nasty songs he would sing for them, would sit there and play for them. In response to Martyn's question, Alfred says they're still playing the same numbers.

Late in 1932, Alfred went with A. J. Piron, where he stayed

until 1935. That band consisted of: Alfred; Eddie Pierson, Joe Phillips, trumpet; Leo Dejan [trumpet], Piron, [violin]; Manuel Sayles, [guitar or banjo?], Arthur Derbigny, saxophone; Elliott Taylor, saxophone; Simon [Marrero] [bass]; a boy named Harry Wells used to sing with them. In 1934 they made a trip on the steamer J.S. This Joe Phillips is a dark fellow, who now is playing with [William] Houston. Phillips is a trumpet player. Elliott Taylor played saxophone. They had three saxophones: Elliott Taylor, Arthur Derbigny, and a fellow who is in Los Angeles now, a bright [i.e. light] Creole, there are two or three brothers, one who plays clarinet and saxophone around here--not Clarence Hall--his brother was playing with Celestin a while, back before he started playing with Piron. Little Joe Rouzan was the third saxophonist.

Piron played some of his own compositions. "Purple Rose of Cairo" was his theme. Another one was "West Indies Blues," [cf. Sheet music] the one they call "Going Back to Jamaica." ↑ This was a reading band except for Alfred and Simon [Marrero].

After Alfred left Piron, he stayed around here and just played with different fellows. In February, 1936, Alfred left here with the Georgia Minstrels. They were strangers. The only one Alfred knew was Kimball Dial [sp.?], who got him the job. Williams stayed with the Georgia Minstrels from February until April, 1936. They got to El Paso, Texas. He made his home there for sixteen years. Stayed on a job ten years.

In the minstrel show they had a brass band, had to make a parade every day. They played 6/8 marches. The comedians had their own songs they would make up. The brass band was fine. Most of the fellows were brass band players. They would sit in the pit and play for the shows, but it wasn't "the real stuff" except for Kimball Dial, Alfred and a fine trumpet player named Jack, who later went with Earl Hines. Alfred saw him once in 1943, when he was passing through El Paso.

Alfred came back to New Orleans on December 18, 1951. He and his wife had separated in Texas; he had married out there. His family wanted him to come back here; he was getting old. He jobbed around then.

Alfred got into the Eureka Brass Band [on snare drum] when Arthur Ogle lost his leg, in 1952. Alfred does not remember Eddie Richardson playing trumpet with the Eureka then; he recalls the trumpet section as [George] "Sheik" [Colar], Percy [Humphrey], and Willie Pajaud. Williams played with the Eureka Brass Band until 1958, Robert "Son Fewclothes" Lewis was on bass drum [all this period and before and after. RBA].

END OF REEL I

February 3, 1961

Alfred left the Eureka Brass Band in 1958, and started playing with John Casimir in the [Young] Tuxedo Brass Band. From 1954 to 1957 he also played with Earl Anderson's rock and roll band. They did not always play loud, but they played all the recorded tunes. They had a fine piano player; although he couldn't read, he had a good ear. They played Fats Domino's records and others. They played for teen-agers at the CYO (Catholic Youth Organization), up on Magazine Street every Friday night for about three years. The teenagers went wild. From there, he went with John [Casimir's] dance band. They have been changing around some; [John] Handy had been playing with them; now they have Harold [Dejan] on alto sax. A mailman named Vernon [Gilbert] used to play trumpet with them. Williams now works with John Casimir in both his brass band and his dance band. Emile Knox plays bass drum in the brass band.

Alfred knows that Baby Dodds played on the boat with Fate Marable for a long time, but he never saw him there. He probably saw Baby drumming in the streets with Oscar "Papa" Celestin. But his best [i.e. favorite] drummer was Henry Zeno. Zeno was a little, frail fellow. He worked with Celestin and Ridgley too. [i.e. in the Original Tuxedo Brass Band and orchestra?] He had a very fine, light roll [supplied by Barry Martyn], like in an orchestra. Alfred says the drummers don't use that roll anymore; in fact, the young ones can't roll a drum, don't know what that is, just like bass players can't use a bow.

Alfred played in the Onward Brass Band with Manuel Perez. From time to time, the personnel changed, but the men Alfred knew, who played in it when he did, were Yank Johnson, Earl Humphrey, trombone; Manuel Perez, Maurice Durand, Ricard Alexis [trumpets?] Old Man Tat (Adolph Alexander, Sr.), baritone; Old Man (Isidore) Barbarin, alto; Alphonse Picou, clarinet. They played funeral marches and 6/8 too, but Alfred can't call the names--they cut the names off the music. It was a reading band. Henry Martin was their bass drummer for a while, and then Black Benny [Williams]. They wore brass band uniforms, blue coats with the high [collars?] like the soldiers used to wear, military caps with the name "Onward." In the summer, they wore white pants and blue denim shirts.

Henry Martin had a Leedy drum set: snare drum, bass drum, small Chinese tom toms and an 18 inch Chinese crash cymbal. He used a wood block, but did not use a cow bell. He did have a triangle. They used to use the triangle on waltzes on the second and third beats. You don't see the triangle now; it went out in the twenties. Alfred had one when he was playing with the Original Tuxedo Band [i.e. orchestra] and on the [Pythian Temple] Roof Garden. He discontinued using it when he left the Roof Garden.

Henry Martin played both drums. They didn't play on the cymbal until they went out. They would hit crashes in spots, but when you went out, you'd go out on the crash [cymbal]. All

the bands did that; it was routine; it put life in it. They would be hitting the after-beat on the snare, just like they do now. They always carried that after-beat. Alfred believes that's where New Orleans got that swing from. All the rock and rolls have that after-beat; that's what gives them their swing. The after-beat in a dance band, whether it's light or heavy, gives it the swing. When you hit the crash going out, it livens them up. The white musicians say they can't get that swing; they don't know what's the matter--Sharkey [Bonano], Louis Prima, all of them, say "I just can't play like y'all; I don't know what's the matter." The matter is that they can't get that solid steady beat. Some guys run all over the drum, but they either increase or slow the time; that would knock them out. You would hear a trumpet player say, "Oh, man, that drummer gets on my chest." The drummer holds back the time or rushes the time. If he has a solo, he may start at one tempo, wind up "way up high as the ceiling." Alfred himself maintains a steady time, has a reputation for this. Alfred says Slow Drag [Pavageau] was rushing the time the other day, on his bass, but couldn't get away from Alfred. Alfred doesn't watch the other players; some drummers watch the others, when the others go faster, the drummers do too. Joe Robichaux used to like to play with Alfred because he knew he himself was prone to rush the time, especially when he took a solo, but he knew Alfred would hold him down. If you have a good drummer, to hold you down, when you go off, you got to come back.

Sometimes a drummer loses the time, watching people dancing out of time. Alfred doesn't pay any attention to anyone else; whatever tempo the leader kicked off, that's what he maintains. Mr. Allen comments that Alfred is famous for being a metronome. Henry Martin was that kind of drummer; that's why Williams liked him. Henry Martin and Henry Zeno were both great drummers, and old man Louis Cottrell, Sr., was the finest snare drummer in the street Alfred ever heard. And he was a musician [i.e. reader] too. He played with [A. J.] Piron for years, in Piron's original band, with Peter Bocage, Lorenzo Tio, [Jr.,] Louis Warnick. Cottrell had a collapsible drum, but Alfred never saw it. Cottrell used to be an agent for Grunewald Music Company. He had some fine drums. That's where Williams first saw the Duplex.

The old drummers, Henry Martin, Henry Zeno, Black Benny, Red Happy [Bolton], all those guys would make explosions and still keep time. The "explosion" is properly called a flare. Alfred thought Red Happy was fine for being all over the drum, making a flare, and still keeping time. He was fast, too. He didn't take many solos, but he'd make those explosions, make an ending, go all over the place. He was a fine show drummer, expecially for a man who couldn't read. They rehearsed the shows. A lot of guys, no matter how much they rehearse, it wasn't in them. But all of "us," started on nothing, just a gift. They just followed older fellows, when they got off their drums, the youngsters would sit down and try them without a teacher.

Sometimes they would get run off, but that's how they learned.

"Face-O" [Eddie Woods] was a fair drummer. Alfred didn't hear him much, but sometimes they would be advertising, on separate trucks, and would meet.

Happy's endings, when he was "going out" were not solos, but he would be making three ending with the trumpet, [Andrew] Kimball. Mr. Allen asks if Red Happy had a large drum set, anything extra to make these sounds. Alfred says he may have had a single cow bell, that he had his triangle, hung by a string right down on the side of the bass drum. Mr. Allen thinks the Cajuns still use a triangle for waltzes.

The Odd Fellows [I.O.O.F.] still celebrate on a Sunday in May (usually Mother's Day) but they used to always have their big parade on May 10th. They used to go out to the Fairgrounds, have a brass band and an orchestra but the building there was changed and there was no place large enough. Celestin would play with his brass band, the Original Tuxedo. Sometimes, Sam Morgan, or Sidney Desvignes, or Buddy Petit--every year there would be a different dance band. Mr. Allen thought the Onward Brass Band played that date [compare Paul Barbarin Reel?], but Alfred says not when he was in it; that it was always the Original Tuxedo. They had a big parade that Monday, ten or twelve bands. He tries to explain how the band and orchestra were situated in relation to each other and the grandstand. There would be five or six thousand people. The brass band would play marches and dance

music because most of the men were orchestra players. Celestin had both a brass band and an orchestra. Ernest Trepagnier was playing bass drum at the time, and [Abbey] "Chinee" [Foster] was playing snare drum. Before Chinee it was Henry Zeno. "Ninesse" [Ernest Trepagnier] always played bass drum with them. Both bands would be playing dance music. When one band would stop, the other would play.

Alfred doesn't think he ever played with the Excelsior Band, even just to fill in. After Bebe Mathews died, his brother Remus Mathews took his place. The Onward Band and the Excelsior Band would sometimes play funerals together. Alfred says he has played funerals where they had three brass bands: Tuxedo, Onward, and Excelsior. These were the three leading brass bands at the time. Alfred played with the Tuxedo Band lots of times.

Alfred recalls the personnel of the Excelsior Band as: Bebe Mathews, and [Clay?] Jiles, on drums; Buddy Johnson, trombone; Harrison Barnes, trombone; Peter Bocage, Arnold Depass (Arnold Depass was a drummer), trumpet and a third trumpet player. Williams says if it wasn't Arnold, it was another Depass. He used to wear black glasses all the time. Barry says Arnold Depass used to play drums with Punch Miller's band. Mr. Allen says he also had his own band, and way back, he used to play with the Eagle Band. Alfred now recalls (with some memory association bringing in Johnny Metoyer, King of the Zulus), that the trumpet player was his relative, Arnold Metoyer. George McCullum also

played trumpet with them. Joe Payen played baritone; George Hooker, alto; Williams is trying to recall name of the clarinet player. Suggests that Pete [Bocage], then leader, might remember who was on clarinet at that time, back in the early nineteen twenties. Tio was playing with the Tuxedo Band then. "It wasn't Picou, because he was playing with us." Baquet was gone by then. It could have been the clarinet player from Piron's original band, a man who used to work at the Cotton Exchange. It was not Sidney Vigne, who got run over. The tuba player was a little, short, old man who had a knot over his eye. Alfred can't recall his name.

Williams rented his first drums from Dave Perkins. Dave Perkins played with white bands. He played with the Reliance Band. He looked white. Eddie Cherrie used to play with them, too; so did Metoyer. [Compare Johnny Lala Reel] They didn't care then. The musicians and performers always got along; it was just the outside people that didn't. When Williams was in Texas with his band, after the war took some of his colored musicians, the white locals let some of their boys come down there and play with Williams for three or four years. Williams couldn't join their union; he had gotten out of his local, because they didn't have a [colored] local in El Paso. "The president was very nice. He said, 'Well, Alfred, they ain't got nobody around here to play, go ahead, give them boys a job; they ain't working.'" Williams mentions picture he believes he has given to the Archive,

with a white boy named Jack, playing tenor.

The Bungalow was out at the West End. Williams never played there, but some of the men who did were: Piron, Willie Pajaud, Henry Martin. Ory didn't play out there. When Henry Martin was playing with Ory he would send somebody else out there to take his place. Frankie Duson played out there, and several others. Mr. Allen asks about Pajaud's style, when he took Sam Morgan's place. Williams says Pajaud never was a jazz trumpet player; he was a legitimate trumpet player, straight, a fine musician, "something like Pete would be." He went over, but not like Sam.

Sam's trumpet playing didn't come up to that of Buddy Petit or [Kid] Rena, or any of "them boys." Sam did have a mute he used --"I don't see them make them mutes like that anymore." The mute was brass, shaped like a top, had round holes in it. [made by Conn. RBA]. Sam was the only one Williams ever saw with a mute like that. That gave it a different sound. There were certain numbers he would use it on. He wouldn't have to work it, would just play it straight, put it in and blow on it. It gave a fine tone.

The first mute that came out was a little, round black mute; "They're white I guess, now. . . just a small mute. And then they had aluminum, like you see,. . I don't know what they call them. And then they had another one. Oh, it gives a fine tone; I like those now; I forget the name of them, but it really gives the horn a good tone. Most all trumpet players

use them. I don't know what they call them."

Mr. Allen asks about home-made mutes. The only ones Williams remembers is Punch Miller's Chris Kelly's flusher [plunger].

"When Chris Kelly played 'Careless Love' with that flusher, man, it would knock them off their feet." People would get their kicks out of it, too, to see a man playing with a toilet flusher. Buddy Petit "went over" with a derby, as did Joe Oliver. They started out using real derby hats. Then the company started making them. They must have taken the idea from Joe and them because they were the first ones who started using the derby.

Mr. Allen says Herb Morand and Wooden Joe [Nicholas] used a cocoanut shell for a mute. Williams has never seen that, but realizes it would make a "wa-wa" sound.

Mr. Allen asks about the Roof Garden, whether they would have more than one band. Williams says they would, that sometimes they would have Perez's band, Celestin's band, Fate Marable's band, that different clubs would hire the band. But Perez's band, in which Williams was playing then, was the house band.

Mr. Allen asks if Williams remembers who was with Fate's band then. Williams recalls Dewey Jackson. He can't recall the name of the banjo player, a bright boy who killed a man and went to the penitentiary.

Percy Severe [sp?] was a fine banjo player who played with Sidney. He has been up in Natchez since in the twenties, Mr. Allen says he is still playing. It was Sidney Desvignes he

was with.

Barry asks if Alfred remembers anything about "Ratty" Jean Vigne. Alfred says that was before his time; he just heard of him. Manuel Perez used to talk about him. His wife, who was living right around the corner from Williams, has just recently died. Lived right behind the filling station, on St. Louis Street. She died last year. She was very old. She gave Alfred an old pair of sticks, told him to keep them, to remember her husband. [his grandson?] Alfred gave them to "that kid." They were too heavy; he couldn't use them. He believes they were made out of "blackjack" (ebony). All the drummers used to use ebony sticks. They didn't break.

END OF REEL II

Barry Martyn leads Alfred into a discussion about and a description of his drums. Alfred has two snare drums and one bass drum. One snare drum is a Leedy, as is his bass drum, and the other snare is a Duplex (which Alfred thinks is made in Kansas City). Alfred got the Duplex snare from Ernest Trepagnier's wife in 1954, as also his cymbal, size 15 or 16, which is an American Zildjian, when he was collecting insurance on his route on which she lived. Alfred paid her \$10.00 for both snare drum and cymbal. She had just been keeping the drums since Ernest's death in 1945 or 1946. Alfred was not here when Ernest died, but was here [in 1945] and went to see Ernest when he was sick. This Duplex drum, size 4 x 14 has twelve tuning gears.

Ernest used to use the drum in the dance band. Ernest played a bass drum in parades. Alfred is still using the original hoops, but he has changed the head two or three times. The drum weighs between seven and ten pounds.

A lot of men in tuning their drums run them down but old man Dave Perkins told Alfred never to run the drum up and down. Once you tune it and get it like you want it--just leave it that way, and you will always have a nice tone. Alfred uses kangaroo skins on the snare drum and Angora goat on the bass drum. According to Barry, Baby Dodds had an Angora snare--only the batter head though, not the snare head, was Angora. At one time Alfred used two snare heads, but he doesn't do that anymore.

Alfred's Leedy bass drum is size 14 x 28.

Alfred got his ebony hand sticks from Jean Vigne's [wife]. Alfred tried to use the sticks one day on a funeral, but he could not use them because they were too heavy. Alfred is used to playing with 7A's or 5A's, Ludwig sticks. The 7A stick is what they use in brass band in schools. Alfred did not know Jean Vigne or ever see him play.

Alfred has heard about single headed snare drums, but he has never seen one. They were before his time.

Alfred does not know what year they started using mufflers (dampers) on drums--like he has on his bass drum. They did not always have them. Alfred does not remember using them when he left here in 1936. Buddy Petit's band didn't want anything on their drums. Mufflers were put inside the snare drums first. Alfred had a muffler in his snare drum in 1934. Nearly all snare drums have them today--dance band drums.

Alfred put a light in his drum. Regular heaters are made for them. The light was for the heat not the show. If it was rainy and damp the bass drum would wear you out, pulling you. Alfred put a 40 watt bulb in his, using blue, red, or green. Alfred had scenery on his drum, and it was beautiful with a green light. Then, later on, they would make the lights blink. If the night was bad (i.e. the weather) they would leave the light on all night, thus giving it a nice tone. Alex Bigard puts one in his snare drum--the small Christmas lights of different colors--all around the rim. He still uses them. Alfred never put one in

in his snare, because you could always keep tuning it. Barry remarks that on the bass drum you had to go around to the other side when you were playing a job to tune it. Alfred does not like the double tension on the bass drum; he uses single tension.

Baby Dodds was the first one whom Alfred saw using the double tension tuning on the drum. Other drummers would not use them; they did not like them. It was too much trouble to go from side to side to tune it. With a single tension drum, you would put the tension on the pedal side of the drum. Baby Dodds was the only one who had the double tension on his 41 x 28 drums.

Neither Henry Martin nor Henry Zeno used the double tension. Baby Dodds used it on the boat. If Alfred ever buys another set of drums he will have it made special with single tension, since they are making them all with double tension now.

Baby Dodds on his records with Bunk Johnson used a wood bolck. They all used to use them--Henry Martin and all that bunch. Alfred used a wood block then, also. They don't do that anymore. Baby played on the rims a lot. Alfred used to do that too in the early days. When they said soft, then you would get on the blocks or the rims. They would play some on the shell, too. Henry Martin used to get on the shell; he had a [crush?] roll on his shell--sounded good. Baby does the same thing. Alfred used to do it, too. You have to keep the cymbal going now; that is the way they want it. When Andy Anderson is up, he wants the sock cymbal open, let it ring, even when he takes

a chorus. All the band--rock and roll included-- on the television have the sock closed. It gives a better swing than the snare drum. If their [i.e. Jim Robinson] band had had a piano with a balance when they made records, like with Pete [Bocage] but not with Jim [Robinson] last week on Riverside Records, it would have been better. Alfred likes a piano with a short band. A piano takes the place of three men--or at least two, the guitar and the bass. They didn't have the piano at first though (in the early days); that is why the boy Herb Friedwald said he wanted it just like it was. The first time Alfred played with the piano was at the San Jacinto Club on Dumaine Street with Sam Morgan's band. The first one [piano player] who played with them was Walter ["Fats"] Pichon. Alfred would play the same with the piano--fill in. The piano is so much fuller. Pichon was young then, a fine little piano player.

The sock cymbal came in the twenties. The first one Alfred used was called the snow shoe--right on the floor. The next one which came out was called the low-boy--made like the high-boy but low on the floor. Barry calls the low-boy the Charleston pedal. It was about 18 inches off the ground. The snow shoe had two wooden pieces--one at the top and one at the bottom. Alfred bought the low-boy from Louis Barbarin which he kept for two or three years. You didn't beat on the low-boy with your sticks; you only started beating on them when you got the high-boy. Baby Dodds says in his book that the President of Ludwig

[Drum Company] designed it around Baby. Baby says that he was the first one to use it. Baby was with Fate Marable on the boat. Alfred doesn't remember that, but he was never on the boat. But when the picture was taken, Baby does not have a sock according to Barry. Baby said he never liked using them. Alfred got the snow shoe in the twenties when he was working at the La Vida [after he was in Manuel Perez's band]--1927, 1928, or 1929. Baby was in Chicago by 1923 or 1924, perhaps as early as 1922. [Compare the Baby Dodds Story.] He went up there right before Louis Armstrong who went in 1922. Minor Hall was in Chicago in 1921, 1922, according to Barry.

The wire brushes came out in the 1920's. Alfred used wire brushes when he was playing the [Pythian] Temple Roof Garden. They first came out with wooden handles. Alfred thinks he had them when he was playing with Sam Morgan in 1921 and also when he played with Buddy Petit. They used them for soft parts. They did not fold up like they do now. You had to put a rubber band on them to hold them in place when you put them in your case. Alfred used them for many years. Alfred doesn't like the rubber ones; they are too heavy.

They used to use mallets in the twenties. They had two, but they only used one to beat the choked crash when they played soft. They were made out of the same thing that the bass drum mallets were made out of. Alvin Alcorn used to like that when Alfred was playing with him at the Pig Pen--i.e. choking the cymbal which

was hit with a mallet, when Alvin would take a solo. They used to tell you what they wanted behind their solo, light cymbal, etc. Everytime a man would take a solo, he wanted the afterbeat (called by some off-beat, i.e. the second and the forth). Alfred hums and counts. The bass drum was hit [when?]. George Williams plays 2/4, but [Emile] Knox and [Robert] "Son Fewclothes" Lewis plays 4/4. The 4/4 fills in on jazz numbers. The 6/8 and 2/4 is good on marches.

They used the same kinds of sticks then as now: ebony, hickory, and rosewook. The rosewood had stripes on it; it was a very strong stick. Louis Cottrell [Sr.] used the rosewood sticks as did "Nenesse" [Ernest Trepagnier].

"Old Man" Cato used to play around with brass band. He played with old man George McCullum's orchestra. [Cato or McCullum?] was a little short fellow, he was old when Alfred was a kid. Cato was a fair drummer. Cato played the snare drum in the street. Cato was related to the piano players named Cato. Mr. Allen thinks Cato used to work with Willie Parker in the Old Eureka [Brass Band.]

Alfred describes how the overhead Leedy pedals worked--how they were set up and used. The first pedal Alfred saw like his, a Ludwig, Zutty Singleton had in the Lyric in the twenties with [John] Robichaux after [Red] Happy [Bolton] left. They don't use them anymore. After Zutty had his they were better for packing-- Alfred got himself one. They cost \$10.00 at the time Alfred got his, but at first they cost \$8.00. Now, they are a lot higher

ALFRED WILLIAMS

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Reel III--Summary--Retyped

February 3, 1961

and made better--faster with ball-bearings and wider.

END OF REEL III

For years Alfred played every Christmas night with [A. J.] Piron at the St. Charles Hotel. They played for some big, rich club. They would start playing from around November 1 for the introduction [into society] of all the debutantes at different places. They would be playing every night, spot jobs from November first until Mardi Gras night. Mardi Gras day and Mardi Gras night they would play at the Boston Club which was the same job that [Papa] Celestin had [later? RBA] The Monday before Mardi Gras day they played for the Boston Club. They had the Country Club at one time for every Saturday night--52 Saturday nights. By January they would be playing for teas. The teas ran from January 1 until the latter part of February--two hours, from five to seven. They had a large band, too, of ten pieces. Alfred wishes that those fellows should be living today, to make money. [i.e. salaries are higher today. RBA]

Alfred played a job with Pete [Bocage] on Mardi Gras day in the Monteleone Hotel. Pete had had this same job with the same people for about sixteen years. They used to play at the Patio Royal [now Brennan's], but after the crowd got so big they moved to one of the ball rooms at the Monteleone.

Sam Morgan and Buddy Petit played parades with different brass bands. They were seldom hired to play funerals. Neither one of them could read well enough to play a funeral. They could play the ~~hymns~~ but not the dirges.

There were other brass bands: [Henry] Allen [Sr.], Tulane

Brass Band led by Amos Riley. Most of the bands tried to read the dirges. Allen would always get the men who could read. They always wanted to play the dirges. Some men, like Foster [Lewis], would get a brass band together to play for people uptown who had a club or barroom who were picking up some money to get a band--"like the Caldonia do." They will pick up anyone and go ahead and play a funeral--playing the funeral marches by head, like "Lead Me, Savior," "Nearer My God to Thee." And that was all they could play [i.e. hymns.]

Coming back in those days they would play "[Oh,] Didn't He Ramble"--it was before "[When] the Saints [Go Marching In]." "Sing On" was the first hymn Alfred heard them play. They never did play them for dances. "Saints" was the first hymn Alfred heard the bands play [for dances?].

Alfred worked at Pete Lala's when Pete was on Marais and Iberville Streets. Alfred worked there, he believes, in 1916 and part of 1917. Joe Oliver had the job and left to go with [Kid] Ory's band. Joe played Saturday nights and Sunday nights with Ory. Thus, Joe put in Alfred, Steve Lewis on piano, Louis Armstrong on cornet, Morris French on trombone, and Volteau [sp?] on violin. There were four or five pieces.

Joe Oliver's band at Pete Lala's had Volteau [sp?], violin, and Freddy Washington, piano. [Bocage?] Pete or Maruel Manetta would be better sources of information about the band personnel. Alfred was

too young at that time to go down there to play, and when he did go, he, as well as Louis, was stopped two or three times by the police. Alfred would tell them that he had a mother, no father, and needed to help make a living; they would let him slide. Louis [Armstrong] and Alfred were the youngest ones in there; they were the same age, Louis born in July, [1900] and Alfred born in September, 1900. They have known each other all their lives; they went to school together--at Fisk School on Perdido and Franklin Streets. The principal was Arthur P. Williams.

Louis and Alfred were both born in the Third Ward. Louis was a bad boy; out of one thing into another. He used to sell charcoal. There were charcoal schooners on the New Basin Canal. He wouldn't go to school. He would get picked up and put in jail--juvenile delinquency. The last time they put Louis in jail, they kept him there indefinitely. That is where he learned how to play the trumpet; "he come right out of the Waifs' Home playing the trumpet"--not reading. Mr. [Peter] Davis tried to teach him music, but [couldn't?] He [Louis] jived around with some of the boys around Third Ward, around Perdido and Liberty; they had a little quartet: Louis and Red Happy [Bolton] and Black Benny [Williams]. It was jive singing--"kids . . . like they would do in the streets."

Nicodemus was from around Perdido and Liberty. He didn't actually play anything. He pulled the hurdy gurdy through the streets "for money." They got a percentage for pulling it. They

would say: "Here come the Organ Man." You just turned the knob by hand. He would go from corner to corner, play three numbers for a nickel and go on. He would play one number just to draw the people. He always had his beer bucket hanging on his arm, and he would go in the bar and get drunk--then he would play for nothing. Sometimes he would get so drunk he couldn't pull the organ. The little kids would just run behind him. Alfred would run behind him too. Alfred was just a kid, eight or nine years old when Nicodemus was a young man.

Shots [Madison] was from the Third Ward. Alfred had known Shots a good while but not real well till Shots started playing music.

Alfred did not know Dink Johnson's brother Bill Johnson. Bill played banjo and bass. He was out in Los Angeles early, perhaps when Alfred was out there. R. B. Allen tells about when Bill went on the road with the [Original] Creole Band with Freddy Keppard, Big Eye Louis. This was before Alfred's time. Then Bill went to play with Joe Oliver in Chicago. Alfred has never been to Chicago even though he has travelled all around.

Alfred knew "Little Dad" [Vincent], the banjo player. They played a few jobs together with different bands, such as with Louis Dumaine. Alfred would sit in with Dumaine when James Willigan, Dumaine's regular drummer, couldn't play. This was in the twenties. Alfred doesn't remember the Liberty Bell Orchestra, but perhaps that was while Alfred was in Los Angeles. Little

Dad was also with the Nola Band [ck.]. Punch [Miller] knew Little Dad pretty well. Little Dad worked with Buddy Petit for awhile, too, around the time Edmond Hall was in that. Zeb Lenoir was with Buddy Petit when Alfred was with him.

Alfred describes how he "would come down" for a guitar solo. Playing a crush [i.e. pass] roll on the rim. Most of the drummers, Henry Martin and Henry Zeno, would play on the rims. It is "nice" with the beat off the cymbal on the bass drums--throw the cymbal beater off. Henry Martin was the first one whom Alfred saw doing it. The guys now don't want to scar their drums--it would make white marks on your drum. The drums used to be stained dark oak just like the children's snare drums are now. They had guitar solos way back there [apparently] as far as Alfred can remember.

Another fine guitar player who played in the Silver Leaf Band was Philip Nickerson. He couldn't read, though. Alfred never watched the guitar players close to see what way they would pick the guitar. Mr. Allen says [Manuel] Sayles' father [George] could play with his fingers. The guitar solos, back then, were just straight chords. That was pretty loud, except, of course, when they were going out on a crash [cymbal].

Before Alfred went to California, when he was very young, the bands would all start off together, ensemble. Just like Sharkey [Bonano] and Al Hirt do now. The trumpet player would take two, then the trombone, maybe, and then the clarinet player

--but most was ensemble. They would play about three ensemble choruses at the beginning of a tune.

Alfred's idea, when they first started to playing the solos--when they got the banjoes--"Guy-A" [Butler Rapp] was playing in the same band as Alfred, i.e. Sam Morgan's; Buddy Manaday was playing with Buddy [Petit]--Caffrey [Darensbourg] was playing on the [Pythian Temple] Roof Garden. Caffrey was a fine solo man, but couldn't read, but he could play the banjo. This was after Alfred came back; before, they didn't have too much solo.

Before Alfred left here for California, when they finished the three choruses of an ensemble the trumpet player might want to take a solo. Mr. Allen expresses amazement at their strength. [Papa] Celestin would play so long--seemed like for hours. It was monotonous to the other players to play the same thing over and over, chorus after chorus. The only time they would play short would be on an orchestration. Occasionally if they especially liked the orchestration they would go back and play one or two choruses. Celestin always read music, as did Manuel Perez.

When Mr. Allen was out at Tyler's ~~Beer~~ Garden during the war, in 1945, Joe Avery and Wilbert Tillman had the band. Tillman was playing saxophone and Dude [Lewis] was playing trumpet. Dude would take down, but the saxophone would carry the melody and the trombone would still play tailgate. Then Dude would come back. Joe Avery was on trombone. But, Mr. Allen never heard a solo the whole time he was there. The trumpet would take down

and that would be the only guy who would ever take down.

Mr. Allen wonders if they had guys who played clarinet and trombone together who would really be featured like that--a duet. Alfred thinks it unlikely because they didn't know that much about music. Tailgate like Yank [Johnson] and them used to play. When Buddy would take a solo in their band, the trombone and clarinet would take down. When Alfred was playing with Ridgley,

if Davy Jones would take a solo the band, i.e. the other horns, would take down. Alfred used to get after them about that because when everyone would take down it would seem like the bottom would fall out. Alfred never did like it, but there wasn't anything he could do about it. Alfred always liked a background. They have been doing that a good while these days, but when Alfred was telling them about it, there were just a few playing background softly under them. Ridgley's band, the Tuxedo Band, and Petit's little band would all take down.

Mr. Allen states Jim [Robinson] and Geroge would keep up behind each other and help each other out. Alfred says that may have gone way back, but when Alfred played with Ridgley in 1928 or 1929 they would take down. They do the same thing in the funerals--all the trumpets take down. Then you haven't got any lead. Alfred told John [Casimir] to tell one of the trumpets to stay up all the time. Sunny Hanry used to get after [Willie] Pajaud and Percy [Humphrey] about the same thing. They wouldn't do it; they would listen for awhile but would go back to it again.

But the way Al Hirt and Sharkey play, they played like that "a-plenty." But when the guy would take a solo, everyone would put their horn on their lap and leave him up there playing with the drum, guitar, and bass--most of the time in the bands Alfred was with.

In the early days some bands took drum solos. [Abbey] "Chinee" [Foster] used to take them. Alfred used to take them too. They would play for one chorus most of the time. They would play snare drums. They used to stop the bass drum and just have snare drum or maybe hit a downbeat. Just like some of the drummers do today--like Zutty [Singleton] is doing. Cozy Cole the same thing, but he is using his bass drum. Gene Krupa was the first one Alfred heard use the bass drum; that gives a better balance and you don't lose time. Alfred would keep his bass drum going, but most of the players would get off the bass and just play the snare drum--no balance there.

At the end of a number today they do about four bard, tags, Martyn demonstrates. Alfred says they used to do that too; he used to do that a lot at the Pigpen. Alfred didn't do it with [A. J.] Piron because he didn't like that. Ridgley didn't like that either. They had musical bands. Red Happy used to do it as did "Chinee" on certain numbers about once or twice a night. "Chinee" didn't read. Alfred never learned to read; he just picked it up. Only old man Louis Cottrell [sr.] could read and people who studied under him like Sie who is a reading drummer. Ernest

"Nénesse" Trepagnier was a reading drummer.

Dave Perkins would charge 50 cents for an hour lesson. Then they went up to 75 cents and then a dollar. Dave Perkins played the trombone, but he would teach you anything. According to Barry he taught Baby Dodds the drums. Willie Humphrey [the younger] would teach you anything.

Alfred doesn't remember Jim Humphrey (who was the grandfather). Jim was living after Alfred got to be a man.

Alfred remembers Ernest Rogers well; they were very good firends. Ernest played with Pete Bocage for three or four years. Alfred took Ernest's place with Pete. Work is so bad now you have to work with two or three bands. Alfred played with Pete and John. Ernest used to play in parades with John. Alfred took Ernest's place with John also. After Alfred left Red [Clark] and the Eureka Brass Band, Ernest had died. John was using Paul Barbarin. Paul could make out, but he was never a street drummer. Alfred has been doing that [playing in the street] all his life. They made the record with Paul because Alfred was sick with the flu. Mr. Allen says they wanted to use them both. Nesuhi Ertegan, from New York, wanted Paul especially, and Mr. Allen wanted to use Alfred on the dirges. Alfred was just as much a parade drummer as a dance band drummer.

Alfred never played bass drum on parades; he never did like it--carrying that big bass drum. He liked the snare drum, perhaps more so because Henry Martin played snare drum in the street.

Henry Zeno was also a snare drummer in the street. They were fine drummers, as was old man Cottrell--he was tops--he was a musician, fully trained, and so was "Nenesse." Cottrell was the greatest street drummer we had around here. There wasn't any real professor after Cottrell died that used to teach. Louis Barbarin teaches some kids at the school [Grunewald]. Most of the drum tuition went out when Louis Cottrell passed on. Now the kids can learn in school.

END OF REEL IV.

