

Christopher Goldston was born in New Orleans on Dryades Street between Washington and Sixth. The date was November 27, 1894.

Goldston's mother was a pianist and a songster. Goldston's father didn't play anything; he was a Methodist preacher. Goldston's mother sang only hymns, but he doesn't remember any of them. She sang in the Union Bethel [AME Church] choir. She didn't play piano in the church, just at home.

Goldston started on drums; he used to beat on people's steps with chair rounds until they would run him off. They would run him off with a bucket of water. Goldston's mother wanted him to play the piano. All of his brothers and sisters could play the piano. His mother taught them. She tried to teach Goldston, but he couldn't go for any piano. Goldston liked plenty of noise so he just stuck to drums.

They made up a band on Thalia, between Howard [now La Salle] and Freret at a boy's house named Richard Taylor. The band consisted of: Goldston, Louis Armstrong, George Washington, Joe Rena, and Henry Taylor. There were others in it, but Goldston has forgotten. It was a brass band. Joe Rena was trying to play clarinet then; Joe hadn't started the drums. [Compare Joe Rena, Reel ?] George Washington was the trombone player. Louis Armstrong played the cornet. The band would rehearse at Richard Taylor's house on Sunday evening. They would eat there. They would all throw in and buy a small keg of beer, \$1.25, for after the rehearsal. Well, then they would practice until they began to play pretty. The older musicians would come around and listen to them play.

The first job Goldston played was for the Zulu Parade. Goldston was so happy to play that parade; he was glad to get out in the street to show himself. Goldston was about fifteen at this time.

The rehearsals at Richard Taylor's began when they were all about eleven years old. [!!! Compare other birth dates.] Henry Taylor played the alto horn. Richard Taylor was a boy crazy about music and bought every instrument there was to buy because he was able. Today Richard Taylor is a man who can't play anything yet. He never did learn to play one; he would change from instrument to instrument until he couldn't play any of them.

Goldston at home on the piano only learned to play the blues. He can play them still, but it has been a long time. Goldston's father had died by this time--he died when Happy was quite young--and his mother wasn't home when he played the blues.

Goldston's brothers and sisters never played in an orchestra or professionally. They would go out to parties and play among themselves. They were all full brothers and sisters; all named Goldston. They all died except Goldston; he is the last Goldston. There were ten children in all.

Goldston got the name of "Happy" because as a kid he was always jolly. He used to play in concerts and different things where a boy started calling him "Happy," and now people all over the world call him "Happy." The boy was a piano player named Tom who is dead now. Mr. Russell asks if that was Tom Benton. Goldston doesn't answer directly. Goldston used to play with Tom Benton years ago.

The old musicians who used to come to their rehearsals would help them out. Fellows like Tig Chambers and Amos Riley. They were doing so well on their [own ?] [horns?] that the old musicians would take them out and put them with their bands. They were all so glad to get to play with the old fellows. Amos Riley took Goldston out to play the drums in his orchestra, and that was the first good band

that he ever played with. Goldston joined Amos's band; after joining the orchestra, Amos put him in the brass band. The brass band was called the Tulane Brass Band. The dance band consisted of: Goldston; Amos Riley on cornet; Ernest Kelly on trombone; Charlie Moore on banjo; Alec Scott on bass; Sam Dutrey, the old man, on clarinet; at that time young Sam was a little boy. The above personnel was after Blind Freddie [Small] was with the Tulane Band.

The Zulu parade that Goldston first played with, the band was made up of kids. The band he has spoken of. Armstrong was supposed to play, but didn't. He sent someone else. The Zulu's only hired one band then like they do now. They just got them because they were kids and could pay them anything. Goldston played for the Zulu Club years ago; they [Zulu Club] had been going for some years before Goldston first played for them.

Goldston always lived uptown. He lives the furthestest down now that he has ever lived. [At 1833 Terpsichore Street]

When Goldston was as small as he can remember, the best drummer was [Louis] Cottrell [Sr.]. There was another drummer Dee Dee Chandler who played on the street [i.e., with brass bands]; he played the snare drum. Dee Dee couldn't play unless he was half high. Happy used to second line behind him, and always said he wanted to play a small drum in a brass band. He adopted Chandler's style, how he wore his cap, and how he walked. Chandler "played a lot of rolls and everything." Chandler and Cottrell made the drum roll sound like they were tearing a piece of cloth. Those fellows used sharp drums; they tuned it up sharp. Goldston has a flat drum [which can be tuned up to be sharp but won't hold it ?] and two sharp ones.

The black drum Goldston uses in funerals is a sharp drum; it is sharp as a razor. Goldston always liked the Leedy snare drum and a Ludwig bass drum. That goes for street or orchestra either. Years ago they used to use overhead pedals; they didn't have the short pedals yet. The overhead pedals had a rod on them and a ball [at the end ?], and the pedal part was made out of wood set on the floor with a spring on it. [And they used to pat that and the ball hit the bass drum] Cymbals weren't attached to his pedals; they were hooked on to the bass drum on the side of the pedal. It had a rod with a knob which was connected to the pedal. Goldston used about a 10" cymbal. Goldston likes medium sticks, 5A sticks, a standard size. Chandler used the same kind of sticks. They aren't too light or too heavy. Cottrell used the same kind of sticks, too. Goldston used the same sticks in the street that he used in the orchestra.

There were three Happys: Red Happy [Bolton] who used to play at the Lyric Theater. "Black Happy" Goldston people used to get confused with Red Happy, whence the Red and Black. Red was about the same age as Goldston. The third Happy was Remus Matthews. He was Bill Matthews' and Bébé Matthews' brother. Remus was just called Happy. He just died a couple of months ago. Bill Matthews used to play drums also; he was a good drummer. All the Matthewses were good drummers. Goldston remembers Walter Brundy. During that time Walter Brundy was up in Cottrell's category; they were reading drummers. Goldston has heard of John McMurry [sp ?], but doesn't know anything about him. His [favorite] drummer was Henry Zeno. Zeno was one of the very best. Zeno was playing with the [Original]

Tuxedo Band with [Papa] Celestin. Zeno played with the Eagle Band also. The Eagle Band was a dance band; Goldston heard the Eagle Band play. He thinks Frankie Duson had the Eagle Band. Frankie Duson played the slide trombone. The only musician Goldston knew who played the valve trombone was [Willie] Cornish. Goldston was a big boy when he first heard Cornish; Goldston was fifteen or sixteen years old, doesn't know when Cornish switched to slide. Goldston worked with Cornish. Cornish was a "routine-er" [ear musician]; but he could play pretty good.

Goldston doesn't remember John Vignes.

Uptown there was Zutty Singleton who went to California who was a good drummer. Zutty's uncle was Willie Bontemps.

Goldston used to play with Black Benny [Williams]. Black Benny played traps and bass drum. Black Benny had perfect time on the bass drum. He could put beats on the bass drum. he didn't get away from the band in making his beats. In the old days they would use the 14" by 28" bass drum. They were pretty heavy. Goldston says that the drum change was made in the factory; now they are building smaller bass drums with as brilliant a tone as the old big bass drums.

Black Benny usually played two beats to the measure, but it depended on the piece he was playing. Black Benny used the cymbal on the after beat. Black Benny used the wire beater.

Clay Jiles used to use two cymbals. Clay Jiles played with the Excelsior Brass Band. He had a great big bass drum; [I thought ?] "he could play it, too,"

Allen and Goldston discuss double raps which were used to fill in gaps. Goldston does that way now. The double raps fill out the music on the spaces between the trumpet leads. The guys

improvised a whole lot on drums when Happy was young. He "used to improvise my can off."

Goldston went to play with the Golden Leaf Band after Amos Riley's band broke up. Jessie Jackson on banjo was in that band. The Golden Leaf Band was a dance orchestra. Goldston stayed--

Happy gives the date as April 10, reading it off a newspaper he believes to be "this morning's paper" but which is in reality from the day before. It is Wednesday, April 11, 1962.

RBA reminds Happy that when WR and RBA last interviewed him, they stopped just as Happy mentioned the name of Jesse Jackson. Jesse Jackson was the manager of the Golden Leaf Band. Happy played with them a long time. The band consisted of Jackson [guitar or banjo], Happy [drums], Bud Russell [sp?] [bass], Lee Collins and Arthur Williams on clarinet. Arthur didn't play any other instruments. RBA doesn't know Arthur. Happy says Arthur is a little, cross-eyed fellow, who is still alive. He played with Tig Chambers. Arthur is older than Happy; Happy thinks Arthur will soon be 70 years old. Happy doesn't know where Arthur lives, but it's up around where Willie Bontemps lives; Willie can probably tell RBA where Arthur lives.

Lee Collins was playing trumpet in the Golden Leaf Band; Bud Russell played bass violin. They didn't have a piano, unless there was a piano where they were hired; then they would hire different piano players, but there was no real member of the band who played piano. Sometimes they used Tink [Baptiste] on piano. Freddie "Boo Boo" [sp?] was their trombone player. They never used a violin.

They played at the [New Orleans] Country Club, and at different places all over. They played a lot of dance halls; St. Elizabeth, St. Monica, Miss Betsy Cole's. They played lawn parties. They played at the Palm Gardens, at the Royal Garden on Gravier Street between Dryades and Rampart streets, upstairs. They also played at the Co-operators Hall, the Economy Hall. Happy played with this band about 1920, 1921--after World War I.

When the big storm of September [1915] came up, Happy was just playing around, not playing "out" with anyone. He was mostly playing

drums at house parties where they were just using two pieces, drums and piano.

The band which put him on the market was Amos Riley's, the Tulane Brass Band. Amos Riley was the one who picked Happy up; he played with Amos a long time. Amos put him in the Tulane Brass Band. [Robert] "Son" Lewis was playing bass drum. ["Dad"?] Cato was supposed to be the drummer, but he was getting old and couldn't keep up in the brass band, so they put Happy, who was younger, in the brass band. Happy says he learned years ago in the Tulane Brass Band with Amos Riley to play all the funeral marches they are playing now.

After Happy quit the Tulane Brass Band, he joined the [Original] Tuxedo Brass Band, and that's where he stayed, in the brass band. RBA asks Happy to tell a little more about the Tulane Brass Band. Amos Riley was the leader, the manager and the cornet player. He was a kind of old fellow, and tall. He is Theodore Riley's father; Happy knew Theodore when Theodore was a "little bitty" baby. The Tulane Brass Band was a reading band; they were all readers. Happy read his part. RBA asks Happy how the drummer held his part up to read. Happy demonstrates, saying that the lyre clips on the far edge of the drum rim. Son Lewis, on the bass drum, didn't read, "but he had his ear, that Son has really got his ear."

When Happy [] and joined the [Original] Tuxedo [Brass Band], Ernest Trepagnier was with them; he was a reader and a player! He is the one who taught Happy how to play the bass drum. Happy worked with him for a long time, and he used to say, "Happy, why don't you learn bass drum: You don't have to learn it; you know it by walking with me for so long." Happy didn't want to carry the bass, though. Ernest explained that he might get sick and couldn't play, and they say a bass drum is more important to a band than a snare drum. It is

possible to pick up any kind of a snare drummer, but you can't pick up any kind of bass drummer. Ernest said that sometimes they could switch. Happy looked into it and decided to learn the bass. One Sunday they were playing a parade together and Ernest told Happy to go ahead and put the bass drum on and to give him the snare. They worked like a clock together. But Ernest carried the drum for so long that he had to have an operation on his left leg, where the drum hit his leg, and this stopped him from playing for a long time. Then Celestin [the leader], asked Happy to start playing the bass drum, which he did until he got hot and tired, and then he decided he wasn't going to play the bass any more and he told them to get someone else. Happy tried to think of someone, and he went and talked to "Groundhog", who is also known as "Little Jim" [Mukes]. That is when Little Jim joined the band. At that time Little Jim had been playing with the Eureka Band, but he was wild. Oscar "Papa" Celestin told Jim he would put him in the band, but he made Happy his boss. Jim was so happy to be in the Tuxedo Band [that he wanted to do well?] Happy broke him in, and Jim and Happy were the talk of the town. [?] Jim and Black Benny [Williams] were good friends; they were raised together in the same neighborhood with Louis Armstrong; they went to the same school. Jim never played with a dance band. Jim couldn't play in an orchestra; he never played the snare. When Happy picked up the bass drum, Ernest didn't show him even how to hit; Happy figured it out just by walking with Ernest and watching. Happy already knew, in general, when to come in, lay out, [take a solo?], etc.; he had learned that before he took to drums. One time Happy was playing with a band on a parade at the same time Ernest was playing with another band at the same parade. Ernest's band was up in the front. Happy "burned Ernest up" and he cursed Happy out!

Ernest played all kinds of beats, put all kinds of raps in. Happy has Ernest's drum now; everything Ernest had Happy got, because Ernest always told his wife that if anything should happen to him he wanted Happy to have all his things [i.e., his bass drum]. When Ernest died, the widow called Happy. The bass drum has a cymbal which is about six inches in diameter on top of it. The drum itself is about 24 inches.

In the Tulane Band besides Happy, Son and Riley there was Ernest Kelly on trombone. They didn't use saxophones then; they used E flat clarinets. They also had alto and baritone horns. The old bands in those days had everything a brass band called for. Today brass bands use alto saxophone and a tenor saxophone. Bass, trombone, alto, baritone and E flat clarinet were used in the old days. The band would have eleven pieces. The men could be added to the band to make it larger.

The Tuxedo Brass Band, when Happy was in it, had Celestin, [Louis "Kid] Shots" [Madison] and Willie Pajeaud on trumpet; Lorenzo Tio [Sr.], clarinet; August Rousell [sp?], trombone and Sunny Henry, trombone. Old man Adolph "Taton" Alexander, Sr., the father of the present-day saxophone player, played baritone; he used to write [arrangements] for the band, and he could write, too. Old man [Isidore] Barbarin played alto. Ernest Trepagnier played bass and Happy played snare. [Who played sousaphone?--RBA] After Ernest left, they got different ones to play the snare, as Happy switched to bass; Happy played bass until he quit the band, and then the band broke up. Happy was in the Tuxedo shortly after Louis Armstrong; however, Happy played quite a few jobs with Louis in that band.

They used to call Papa Celestin "Zost", "Sonny", "Dog" and "Nostrils". The white people either called him Papa or Oscar, and all of them

knew him; he knew some of them when they were babies.

The Tulane Brass Band had no connection with the Tulane Club, but they used to play for the Tulane Club. That is an old club. The Tulane Band would play funerals, parades, dances; they had a string [i.e., dance] band and a brass band and sometimes they would use the brass band for a dance. Sometimes they would use the Tulane Brass Band at the Fair Grounds. They also used the Tuxedo and the Excelsior sometimes at the Fair Grounds. There was a band upstairs and a band downstairs at the Fair Grounds.

Jessie Jackson lived out "front of town" [toward or near the river]. Most of the guys in Jackson's band were from uptown.

A flat drum might not correspond to the music because it is too flat, but sometimes it can also be too sharp. Sometimes a fellow would give you a note to tune the drum with. Black Happy tunes his in A with getting a note [Does he have perfect pitch?--RBA]. Happy tunes his bass drum to the G string of the bass violin. Some of the old tom-toms could be tuned; some of them had keys.

The band Happy had with Louis Armstrong, Richard Taylor and Joe Rena was when Black Happy was still in short pants. Happy was born in 1894; he is older than Louis Armstrong. Joe Rena is younger than Happy, as was George Washington. Happy was about the oldest one in the band, but not many years older, perhaps two or three or four. When they started the band, they used to rehearse at Richard Taylor's house. Richard Taylor worked for Leamann's [sp?] Grocery; he started there as a little boy, and he is up there yet with the same people. The grocery is located on Peters [now Jefferson Ave.] Ave. near St. Charles.

END OF REEL I

April 11, 1962

April 11, 1962

Reel II of IV--Summary

Richard Taylor used to buy all kinds of instruments. Richard Taylor tried drums, horns, but he could not play even though he loved music. They used to practice together as kids. The other kids didn't have instruments. George Washington played [brass] bass. They weren't using the tubas [i.e., sousaphones] like now. They had the upright basses--the ones you hold in front of you. Washington used Taylor's bass. [Black Happy remembers when George Washington also played bass, and he could play a bass too! George Washington also played the trombone. George played the bass in the brass band. Black Happy can't recall any brass band which George played steady with. When Black Happy started with Amos Riley, he was in short pants. But after he started with Amos Riley, he put on long pants. In those days they wore short pants until they were around sixteen or seventeen, perhaps even eighteen sometimes.

Black Happy had been playing for a good while before he went out professionally. When he did go out professionally, he knew his instrument; he knew all about it; they didn't have to show him anything about it. Davy Jones was Black Happy's teacher; he taught Black Happy how to read. Black Happy just picked up his rolls. If you were to watch Black Happy play, you would never see his hand move; he plays directly from his wrist, which is the reason he can roll so good. Everything is in his wrist. Black Happy picked it up from old man [Louis] Cottrell, [Sr.]. Cottrell [talked! ?] he was a drummer too. Black Happy used to second line when Cottrell was playing with the Excelsior Band. Black Happy would second line right beside him and keep his eyes on him. Dee Dee Chandler was another one--they were two men! Their drums would talk. Dee Dee would be so drunk he didn't know what to do, but he could play.

He could play drunk or sober; sometimes they would go get him from a bar. Black Happy just watched those two fellows, and said that he always wanted to play like them. Black Happy walks like Dee Dee Chandler: "fly," with his cap on the side, his head up, not looking at the drums because he knew what he was going to do already. Mr. Allen asks whom Dee Dee Chandler played with.

Black Happy remembers the Pacific Brass Band which played in those days, but he doesn't remember much about it. However, it was a tough [i.e., good] band; that was a long time before Black Happy's time. Black Happy never saw Dee Dee Chandler with a dance band orchestra. At that time Black Happy was too young to go around dances.

Black Happy played with Punch [Miller] a long time in Punch's band. After Jesse Jackson Black Happy went with Punch and stayed with Punch a long time, a year, and then left to go with Bebe Ridgley's Tuxedo Band which is the band Black Happy started to read with. Ridgley and [Oscar] Celestin started the Tuxedo Band years ago, and they stayed together for a long time and then had a falling out about one dollar--one dollar broke those two men up. [Compare Baba Ridgley reel?] Ridgley took some of the men and Celestin took some of them. Emma Barrett stayed with Ridgley. Ridgley had been the manager of the Tuxedo Band; he had handled all of the business for the band. The people knew Celestin, but it was Ridgley whom they had done business with. Celestin kept the band, and Ridgley made up a band and named his the Tuxedo, too. [Compare Ridgley Reel?] Ridgley made up such a good band that

the white people didn't know who had the best band. So, they drew up a big contest between Ridgley's band and Celestin's band. At that time Ridgley had Davy Jones who had just come in here from New York where he had been playing with the big bands. After Davy Jones joined, Davy got John Porter on sousaphone. Those are the only two men who changed. The contest or buck was up on Pelican Roof Garden. They had advertisements. [Abbey] "Chinee" [Foster] was playing with Celestin then, and Black Happy was playing with Ridgley. (RBA says Chinee can still play). Chinee came from the old school like Black Happy did. They put placards [i.e., advertisements?] out in the paper about the two bands which were going to buck. That night the Loew's State man [band leader? RBA] was up there. [John] Robichaux, [A.J.] Piron, and Dave Perkins were the judges. Davy Jones was smart. When they were rehearsing, Davy Jones wrote to the music house in New York and told them to send him ["Estonia" ?], "[By the] Waters of the Minnetonka," "Louisiana Bo Bo." He sent for great big copies. They rehearsed those numbers. The rich white people parked their cars on the side where they could hear the music. Celestin's numbers were "Josephine," and "Maryland, [My Maryland]". "Maryland" and "Josephine" were his best numbers when he was playing with [Louis "Kid] Shots" [Madison], but Ridgley had "Shots." "Shots" wanted to slip those two numbers in before Celestin had a chance to play them. So, they played the great big heavy numbers and then played "Josephine" and then "Maryland." That same night

April 11, 1962

Reel II--Summary

Celestin asked Black Happy if he wanted to join his band. Black Happy told him no. Celestin tried to tell him about Baba Ridgley, But Black Happy told him that Ridgley had never done anything to him. Black Happy did tell him though that if he should ever quit Ridgley that he would join with him [Celestin]. Celestin kept after him, till one night Chinee got drunk and didn't show up on the job which was close to where Black Happy lived; Black Happy went to play the job with them. The whole band tried to get Black Happy to continue to play with them. Finally Black Happy started playing with Celestin and stayed with him for twenty-eight years. They travelled around. Bill Matthews was the trombone player, but he showed Black Happy plenty on drums, too. Bill Matthews was a good reading drummer. Mr. Allen has heard Bill Matthews play the snare drum with the Eureka Brass Band at Chalmette [Memorial Day]. Bill Matthews played in Black Happy's place. Sometimes Sonny [i.e., Papa Celestin] and Black Happy had some battles, and had hardships sometimes. They would buy big second-hand cars to go on the road to play a dance. They would get good money and then have to spend it all to get the car fixed. They also saw some sweet times.

Mr. Allen points out a picture [of Ridgley's Tuxedo] to Black Happy; it is a picture with Black Happy on drums, Ridgley, Emma Barrett on piano, Joe Watson on clarinet, "Shots" [Madison] on

trumpet, an alto player whose name Happy forgets, Willie Bontemps on banjo (there are two banjos in the picture--one at his feet), Alex "Rock" Scott, Minor on C melody saxophone, and Robert Hall on tenor saxophone. The picture was taken when the Pelican place opened; this band opened the Pelican. [check newspapers] Joe Watson played clarinet and saxophone and played good E flat clarinet. He played E flat clarinet with the Onward [Brass Band] and the Tuxedo band some, and the Excelsior [Brass Band]. He was a street man!!! Mr. Allen has heard of Joe Watson mostly with Sam Morgan rather than as a street man. He played with Sam Morgan after he was with Ridgley. [check this] Alfred [Williams] was Sam Morgan's drummer.

The leader of Richard Taylor's first band was [Henry] Kid Rena, the trumpet player. It was a brass band. The first parade they played, that Black Happy played, was for the Zulu [Club] for which they made \$3.50 a piece. Black Happy was so happy. They had walked all day for the parade, and when they finished Black Happy wasn't very tired from it. The parade was on Carnival Day. Joe Rena played clarinet with them then. After that Rena switched to drums. They had a good little band; they played everything by head.

The Tulane band played a few numbers by head. In those days, however, they mostly played patriotic music, six-eighths [time signature] in the brass band. The Rena Brass Band, the kids, didn't play patriotic numbers; they didn't know how to read. They played

April 11, 1962

Reel II--Summary

"juke" music; they played regular old tonk numbers. As a kid, Rena couldn't play too high. In their younger days Rena was a better cornet player than Louis Armstrong. Rena was scared to travel.

He wouldn't go anywhere unless his brother was playing drums behind him. He loved his brother and they stuck together. [Kid Rena would

~~get so drunk~~ get so drunk he couldn't play.] Buddy Petit was the sweet one, soft and sweet.

END OF REEL II

Tom Albert had a string [i.e., dance] band and he played in the Eureka, too. Tom used to bring his own whiskey when Black Happy played with him in the string band; he didn't wait for the people to give him some. Some of the places where they played they didn't get any liquor. Tom would take his bottle and go behind the piano. In Tom's string band was Black Happy, Jules Barnes on trombone, Charlie Moore on banjo, [and Tom on cornet]. John Handy would play clarinet. "Jiggs" was the bass player.

George Washington played with Buddy Petit and sometimes he played with Chris Kelly.

Louis Armstrong played with them all. Black Happy never knew Louis to have his own band. Louis would play at all the different places until he started playing at Tom Anderson's Cabaret where he stayed for a long time. When he left Tom Anderson, he went on the boat with Fate Marable. Joe Howard broke Louis in and taught him a lot there. Joe was a trumpet player and a good musician. Mr. Allen asks if many of the trumpet players would help you out on drums if you made a mistake. Octave [Crosby] told Mr. Allen that the trumpet player sometimes would straighten Octave out when he was young. Black Happy says yes they could kind of straighten him by "seeing other drummers play." Octave [Crosby] was a drummer; he played with George McCullum.

Black Happy has heard of Clay Jiles the bass drummer who

used to play with the Excelsior [Brass Band]. He had a great big bass drum and could tote it all day and play it. He did not use a cymbal beater like Black Happy, but he had another cymbal in addition to one attached to the bass drums. The cymbals were hit on the off beat.

Mr. Allen asks again [from the first interview] about Tom, the piano player who gave Black Happy his nickname. Tom died when he was young. He didn't play with bands; he played piano by himself. He played parties and concerts. He was the first one to call Black Happy "Happy." He [Black Happy] was just a little boy then. There was another Happy, "Red Happy" [Bolton] who was a good drummer, too. To distinguish between the two Happy's, people called Bolton "Red Happy" and Goldston "Black Happy." Remus Matthews was also called ["Brown] Happy." He was on snare drum, and a brass band man. RBA heard him play bass drum in church [which was taped by RBA and Harry Oster]. He could play bass drum too, but mostly played snare drum. Practically all the Matthews brothers were good drummers--Happy, Bill, and Bebé. They had another brother who didn't take to music; he was a baseball player; he died young.

Happy now lives the furthest downtown he ever lived [at 1833 Terpsichore]. He was born on Dryades Street, between Washington Avenue and Sixth Street--at least, that's what his mother always told him. His mother showed him the house, after he got big, told

April 11, 1962

Reel III--Summary

him, "There's where you were born." The house is still there. Dave Perkins lived on Sixth Street, between Dryades and Baronne [streets]. Happy knew Dave when he [Happy] was a little boy. Before Happy had his own drums, he used to rent drums from Dave Perkins. He charged fifty cents or a dollar a night.

There were more parades in that neighborhood then than there are now. They had more organizations then. The organizations from downtown wouldn't want to go uptown, and vice versa.

Happy didn't know too much about Willie Hightower, the trumpet player, although he heard his name. RBA thinks Willie Hightower and Roy Palmer worked together. (Machine off as Mrs. Goldston enters.) Happy didn't know too much about Roy Palmer either.

Happy used to play with a piano player who went to New York, [may have died there?]. He has a music [publishing] house now. He used to play at a theater here, [names several places, unintelligible], The Rosebud, Vic Dubois's cabaret. He played piano and Happy played drums. It was Clarence Williams [indirect suggestion from RBA]. He was called "Scoophead" Clarence. Happy played with him at Vic Dubois's, which was at Howard and Rampart streets, now a place called the Sunset. It was a "tunk." Happy doesn't remember what numbers Clarence Williams featured then. RBA likes William's numbers. Happy says he could play, too, he

April 11, 1962

Reel III--Summary

was a good piano player. Williams left here a long time ago, before World War I, during the big storm of 1915. Happy says, in answer to RBA's question, that Williams played the kind of piano now called boogie-woogie. Boogie-woogie came out a long time back, when a fellow who couldn't play piano would just play a number, put a whole lot of stuff in it. They began calling it boogie-woogie. RBA mentions George Thomas, a piano player who was supposed to have been a friend of Clarence Williams's. He [Thomas] had a number that had some boogie-woogie in it, "The New Orleans Hop Scop Blues," way back. Happy doesn't know him. RBA thinks Clarence Williams played that number on a record, with Bessie Smith. [New Orleans Hop Scop Blues, Co 14516, 37577]

RBA asks about when Happy was with Jack Carey. Happy played with Jack Carey during the time Punch Miller was on trumpet and a little before Jack took Punch [Miller]. They had [Henry] "Red" Allen [Jr.], [Lawrence] Toca [Martin]. RBA says Toca is feeling better now. Red Allen was a young boy, going to 35 [McDonogh 35 ?] School then. Red's daddy [Henry Allen, Sr.] started him out on that horn. [compare Manuel Manetta.] Allen used to play drums, too. He used to play in his father's brass band, the Allen brass band.

Old Man Allen had a good brass band. Red played bass drum. He carried on all kinds of foolishness. When Old Man Allen died,

April 11, 1963
Reel III--Summary

Red came down to bury him; Happy saw Red at the wake. Red said to Happy, "They've been telling me how you used to scare my daddy." Happy used to kid him, carry on. Old Man Allen used to fire Happy all the time, more than anyone else he ever worked with, would fire him on the job. Happy would go to work, Old Man Allen would say, "I don't want you to play with me no more." Next job, Old Man Allen would ring him up, tell him to be there at such and such a time. Happy would say, "You done fired me, Allen." Allen would tell him, "Come on, that's all right." Freddy Kohlman would play snare drum while Happy was playing bass drum. Kohlman would start Happy teasing Old Man Allen; the old man would get hot and fire Happy. Old Man Allen had an old band cap "like a frying pan. That thing must have been a hundred years old. He used to wear it on every parade." One day Allen said he was going over to the cap shop on Rampart Street, buy himself a brand new cap. Happy told him-- and this just shows how you can say things and not know what you're saying--"I say, 'Allen, don't buy no cap. . . . That cap suits you. It's good enough for you. . . . Just as sure as you buy you a new cap you're going to die.' . . . Allen bought that cap and wore it a couple of times . . . and Allen died." Happy had no idea of that, he just spoke the words.

April 11, 1962

Reel III--Summary

Allen used to come over, when they weren't playing. Happy had a car then; he was living up on Louisiana Avenue. Allen used to drink wine, too. One morning Allen came over, wanted him to go out and have some fun. Happy got dressed; he and Allen went in the car, drank together. The next funeral they had, Allen fired him again. Happy said, "Here's an old man . . . me and him done went and had a good time together, and here you're firing me." Allen would fire anybody, then go hire them over. But he would have a good band. He had some of the hardest music, but he couldn't play it himself. He had some of the hardest brass band music of any band. He always would get men to play it, like Peter Bocage, Lorenzo Tio [Jr.]. Allen used to have a song he made up himself, "Oh, Lord, I'm Crippled." (scats this.) [compare Bunk Johnson, JM 17.] ^(10-78??) One time, Happy told him he couldn't say that, he couldn't be crippled, then he started to walk, "I done fired you." "Allen fired me more than any boss I ever had. But he was a good old man." Even after Allen's own band broke up, he was in demand. He was smart. If someone hired him, he would go hire the whole Tuxedo [Brass] Band, everybody but one trumpet player. He would always want to play himself. Sometimes he would hire the Excelsior [Brass] Band, or the Onward [Brass] Band. He would hire the whole band. He was smart. That always kept him with a good band.

April 11, 1962

Reel III--Summary

RBA asks who Jack Carey had in his band. Happy says he had him, Punch [Miller], Georgie Boyd, [clarinet], Charlie Moore, [banjo guitar?] Jimmy Johnson on bass. Carey didn't have but six pieces. When he had a job where they had a piano, he always hired "Horse" [Manual Manetta]. "Hoss used to be a [?] good piano player." Hoss also used to like his liquor.

RBA asks about quadrilles, other kinds of numbers. Happy says they had blues, but mostly in those days they made up their own songs, call them anything. Sometimes about an hour after they had played something, if you asked them to play it again, they couldn't do it. The quadrille went out a long time ago, but not until after Happy had started playing. They had schottisches. "You can't [take ?] a band today that can play a schottische. It's got to be a good reading band, to play a schottische. In those days, them men played schottische by head. That just shows you how smart they were." They played "Three Little Words," [not the standard?] "Three Little Blackbirds," all those kinds of schottisches. They played them by head, like Happy plays a funeral march. Happy plays all those funeral marches by head now, because he knows them; he's been playing them so long.

MTZ asks about how many different funeral marches there are. "There's a world of funeral marches, different ones." The Eureka

CHRISTOPHER "BLACK HAPPY" GOLDSTON
April 11, 1962
Reel III--Summary

19

[Brass] Band has some they haven't played yet. "And they sound so pretty. . . . they're built up with harmony, so much harmony. . . . you'd think it's a brand new number."

END OF REEL III

April 11, 1962

Reel IV--Summary Retyped

Present: Richard B. Allen, Marjorie T. Zander

[Joseph] "Red" [Clark] used to send away for the music, buy the music for the Eureka Brass Band. Happy thinks Percy [Humphrey] got Red's music [Red Clark died November 30, 1960]. When they would dig out one of the old, old time numbers, it would puzzle anybody who wasn't reading music. Happy would sometimes be puzzled at first, perhaps recognizing the music at the second ending, sometimes at the obligatto part. It would come to him; he would think of "who used to make that part long years ago." The band leaders used to cut the name off when they got their music, to keep other bands from getting the same numbers.

RBA asks Happy who were his favorite men in the bands on the street, for playing funeral marches. Happy says he used to play with all of them; his favorites were in the Excelsior [Brass Band], the Tuxedo [Brass Band], the Onward [Brass Band] and the Tulane Brass Band. RBA asks who would have been Happy's favorite baritone soloist, and if there were anyone who specialized in playing "West Lawn Dirge" for instance. Happy says John Porter, who worked with the Tuxedo Band. John Porter was a good baritone man, and bass man too. He could play tenor saxophone, too.

RBA asks what Davy Jones played in the street. Happy says Jones played alto sax. But Davy Jones could play "them all." He also played "peck" [alto] horn. Davy Jones was from the same

April 11, 1962

Reel IV of IV--Summary Retyped

place John Porter was from, up the river, around Lutcher [RBA suggests LaPlace and Lutcher]--Davy Jones and John Porter were boys together. They traveled all over, with big bands. Davy Jones was with orchestras; John Porter and Percy Humphrey's dad [Willie Humphrey, Sr.] and a bass player called Davis, and Theodore [Drufus ?] used to play with the shows, like Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey--they played all over the world.

RBA asks Happy if they had any trombone solos in the brass bands in those days. Happy says they had trombone solos. They would be featured on a funeral march; Sunny Henry was good with a trombone solo as was August Roussell [Rousseau in Jazz Men], Bill Matthews, and Buddy Johnson--[they were the trombone men?]. RBA recalls how in the funeral marches when the trombone has the lead, there are usually two of them, a duet--first and second trombone. It is pretty when they play together right. RBA says that number "51" [dirge], featured by the Eureka, is good for that. Happy says that is really a good number.

RBA asks Happy if there was anyone special playing E flat clarinet on the streets. Happy names Lorenzo Tio [Jr.?], and Eddie Cherrie--who "looked like a white boy." He [Eddie Cherrie] played with white bands, as did Dave Perkins, but they were colored. Eddie Cherrie's brother is a doctor and has an office on Dryades Street. Johnny Dodds was an E flat man, too; he was hired by

April 11, 1962

Reel IV of IV--Summary Retyped

different bands, but perhaps didn't play as a regular member of any brass band. RBA used to like Johnny's playing on the records. Johnny's brother Baby [Dodds] could play some drums, too! Baby didn't play much with the brass bands; he played mostly in orchestras. Johnny and Baby lived in uptown on Toledano, between Howard [now LaSalle] and Liberty, with their sister. They have a nephew [Lawrence Dent] now playing clarinet; he is a [policeman?] also. He is a good player and can read, but he has doubts about his ability. Mr. Allen heard him, Lawrence Dent, with the Gibson band. He doesn't care about it [music] much; he doesn't think he can play well enough. He has a big cab company of his own with a lot of cabs, and he has his job, too [policeman]. Happy and others tried to get him in the Eureka [Brass] Band; they offered it to him, but he didn't take it. They play too much [written] music for him. RBA says that the Gibson Band had two clarinets uptown the last time [Sunday, March 18, 1962. See Miscellaneous Note File, Gibson Band] he saw them. They had Henry "Dog" Franklin [sp?] whom Happy says was playing clarinet in his time. They only used Henry "Dog" when they couldn't get anyone else.

RBA asks Happy if he could describe the differences in drumming from the way they used to play to the way they play now. Happy says if he was to go back to playing that he wouldn't play the

April 11, 1962

Reel IV of IV--Summary Retyped

drums that way, because "the book" will tell you that the bass drum is the foundation of any band, and you have to keep the bass drum going at all times to hold the band together. Today [and Happy describes by clapping his hands] they have open spaces and they get behind time, on the side of time. Most of the drummers today don't know what a drum stick is made for; they have it there to hit the cymbal [to keep from hurting their hands?]. Happy has gotten orchestration where the drum part was marked "sticks"--you play so many bars with the sticks; then the music would say brushes and you would pick them up and play them a while; then you might go back to sticks. Sometimes it said to make an eighth [note]--you can't make that with brushes, just as you can't make sixteenths with brushes, or thirty-seconds, or sixty-fourths; they have to be made with sticks. Sometimes you get a six or eight bar roll, and they can't roll [with brushes]. A grace note [as in a flam] is the easiest note to make on drums, but you have to do it with sticks. On waltzes a drummer has to roll "plenty." [Happy demonstrates]. There are times, too, when the drummer has to roll the band in. Happy's son Charles wants to play like they are playing today, but if Happy can't teach him right, he isn't going to teach him at all.

RBA asks Happy what he would play in the old style of drumming on the first chorus, i.e., on the snare, the cymbal, wood blocks, or tom tom? Happy would play rolls on his snare drum on the beat

April 11, 1962

Reel IV of IV--Summary Retyped

sometimes and sometimes off the beat. Then he would switch from that to a block, and from there to something else. When he would take a drum solo, he would work all his stuff. They have been playing drum solos since back in the olden days; if a drummer couldn't play a solo, he wasn't a drummer. Going out on the last chorus, Happy would play only cymbal and bass drum. Sometimes he would choke the cymbal and sometimes leave it open. Sometimes when they were advertising, Happy would leave it open [cymbal]. When they go out soft, Happy would choke the cymbal with one hand (no stick in left hand) and beat the cymbal with the right hand. He used to hit all kinds of raps. In all music the introduction should be heavy, then soft to the trio, and soft to the second ending and then go on up to the left hand corner [beginning] (only you are going out then) and you can go out [screaming ?].

RBA asks Happy when he would use his wood blocks. The music would tell you; it is written on the music. On a head number, you would just figure it out. When they used to have cow bells, it was written on the music, too. Happy used to have a cow bell which he would play when the trumpet had the lead. They used to have temple blocks (four big round ones), and they were pretty. When you were playing soft you played temple blocks. The one thing which was hard for Happy was the sliding whistle; he could play it but not good. Joe Strohter could play a sliding whistle, and it was pretty, too. They work like a trombone. RBA has seen [Abbey] "Chinee" [Foster]

April 11, 1962

Reel IV of IV--Summary Retyped

play his. Happy says Chineese could play, but he couldn't play like Joe Strohter; Joe was the best they had then.

RBA asks Happy if he made any records back in the twenties. Happy says no; Happy made his first record when he was with [Oscar] Celestin. Happy doesn't remember the tunes. They [Celestin?] played for the governor every Saturday for thirteen weeks, on the same program with Sharkey's band and the Xavier choir. Last year during Christmas time a man from WDSU bought one of the old records [probably an un-released tape, air-check type- PRC] which Celestin made. The WDSU people called Happy and told him to come down to the office (they called all of the musicians on the record). Happy and [unintelligible] went down together, and they [WDSU] gave them a check for \$65. Happy was so surprised, and during Christmas time, too! Happy didn't make any records with anyone besides Celestin, although he had chances to do so, and he tells why he didn't make any more. Happy tells about all you had to go through to cut records, such as being quiet, getting hot, cutting them over and over. They didn't want you to imitate anyone; you had to play your own style.

RBA asks Happy if when he used to go up to Richard Taylor's to play with [Henry] Rena and take a keg of beer along, the kids would drink the beer. Happy says yes, the kids in short pants would drink it. Then, you could get a little keg of beer for \$1.25. Some-

April 11, 1962

Reel IV of IV--Summary Retyped

times they would buy a ham, bread, potato salad, hot dogs, and after rehearsal they would eat and drink--every Sunday. Sometimes they would have a big plate of red beans and rice, ham, gumbo, and chicken. The little boys could drink beer inside [someone's home] then.

END OF REEL IV

