

DOLLY ADAMS

April 18, 1962

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Also present: William Russell, Mr. Adams, Justin Adams

The interview was conducted at Mrs. Adams' home, 1560 North Johnson St. in New Orleans. Dolly Marie ^{Douroux} Adams is the daughter of the sister of Professor [Manuel] Manetta; ^{the} mother played piano, violin and trumpet. DA's father, Louis ^{Douroux}, was a well-known trumpet player who worked with [among others] the Eureka and Excelsior brass bands. He was 74 years old when he died 12 years ago, October 1, [1950?]. He had retired from playing music when he was about 50 years old. DA was born January 11, 1904; she first started playing music when she was 7 years old, her first numbers on the piano being "Casey Jones" and "Steamboat Bill." DA says she had been thinking about a piano for a long time, and when her family finally got one, she just went to it and began playing. She got her first lessons from Manetta, and later studied at St. Mary's Academy, where she went to school. Her father was still playing when she began; she says that she played with him. Her mother played piano and sang at a party at DA's sister's house the night before January 1, 1962, the day she died. DA says she didn't need any help on piano ^{because} she was so interested in it; she just began playing and working out things for herself. At nine years of age, she began playing parties with her brother, a violinist. At thirteen, she joined Manetta's band. The personnel changed almost every night the band played; some of the occasional players were Louis Armstrong, Kid Ory, Joe "King" Oliver, Kid Howard, Alec Bigard

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and Raymond Dugas, the last-named a drummer. When she was about 15, DA joined Peter Bocage's Creole Serenaders, and remained in that group several years. Then she had her own group, which played at the Othello Theater, in the third block of [South] Rampart Street. Both vaudeville and movies played at the theater. In DA's band were Dominique "Ti Boy" [Remy] (who played in the Eureka Brass Band later and who now lives in California), trumpet; Joe Welch, violin (deceased), and "Kid Face-o" [Eddie Woods], drums, besides DA on piano. DA was about 16 years old at the time. [Sometime] after DA left Manetta, when he retired from playing to devote his time to teaching, DA began playing with her brothers, Irving (trombone) and Lawrence (trumpet and arranger) ^{Douroux}, she played with them until Irving died and Lawrence became very ill. Placide was fourteen. [Born Fall, 1927. RBA.] Then DA organized a group, a trio, with her sons, Justin and Gerald, later enlarging it to a quartet when Placide got out of the army.

DA says her father played with brass bands and dance bands. She and WR speculate that "Norm" [Manetta], uncle of Manuel Manetta, may have been Louis ^{Douroux's} teacher, as Norm was playing Eb cornet when ^{Douroux} was "coming up." ^{Douroux} and his ancestors all were born and raised across the river in Algiers, and DA says ^{Douroux} played with all the brass bands [particularly the ones on the Algiers side of the river], so he probably did play with the brass bands of Henry Allen, [Sr.]. DA remembers the name of only one dance band in which

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her father played, that of bass player Charlie De Verges, whom Manuel Manetta studied with. WR says De Verges came from Arkansas originally, played guitar and banjo and eventually bass, evidently had some music published, as WR found an incomplete copy of a De Verges song called "Algiers Girl." WR says Manuel Manetta didn't even know De Verges had his music published. ¶ Douroux was a butcher by trade. Since the market closed at 12 o'clock [noon], he had plenty of time to play. ¶ Justin Adams says his grandfather Douroux, played some with "Big Eye" Louis DeLisle "Nelson," the bass player [later a clarinetist], and also with Chris Kelly, and used to talk about them often. WR tells about recording DeLisle two weeks before he died in 1949.

¶ DA says her mother never played professionally, that she just played at home [and in other private situations--see p. 1]. DA is the third generation in her family to play music; she has a grandson, age 9, who is studying drums; she hopes her group, including her sons, is playing when the grandson is old enough to play, so that they can have a three-generation band going.

DA used only the James Belloc [sp?] beginner's piano method when she studied with Professor Manetta; she went to him to learn how to read music, not how to play music, which she could already do. WR mentions rags, such as those by [Scott] Joplin, and asks if DA remembers having learned any of those, or like those. DA remembers

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and names a few such as, "Red Rose Rag," "Sensation," and "It's A Plenty" [i.e. "That's A Plenty"?] DA says her style of playing has changed with the times, going from Dixieland to swing to more modern. She has taught her sons the Dixieland tunes they now play in their band. DA says she has just taught her sons the fundamentals of music, that they have picked up the rest themselves, although Justin took guitar lessons from Manetta. Placide, the drummer [also plays bass], taught himself. Gerald got a bass one day and played a job the next night; he had played around on the piano a little, but he taught himself bass; he practiced all the first day and night and all the next day, then went on the job; he was 16 years old at the time. Gerald is still a very good pianist, too. J.A. now plays with "a modern band, you know, a rock-and-roll band."

DA says her band was at the theater [Othello] for about a year; various vaudeville acts came through, and some singers, of whom she remembers two singers, [Adair?] James and Lou [Kenner or Kennon?] who were house singers. She played piano for the silent movies shown there. The theater was on the lake side of the street, and DA thinks it must have been torn down.

DA says there were not very many good pianists around when she was learning; she says she does remember that Walter Decou was good. WR says he is still around, but has not played in quite a while. WR

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asks DA how she "got out" to play, saying that it is unusual for a girl to go to places to hear or play music. DA says she was always well-chaperoned, having been first with Manetta, then with her brothers and now with her sons. She says Manetta, who was playing piano at that time, began playing clarinet so that she might have a chance to play piano with the band. She says Manetta was the best pianist in New Orleans, regardless of the fact that he is her uncle. WR and DA discuss Manetta's capabilities on the many instruments he plays, WR saying he has heard him play "Dixie" and "Yankee Doodle" simultaneously on the guitar, as well as on piano.

Justin reminds DA that she played with [Luis] "Papa" Tio and with Lorenzo Tio [Jr.], and also with Alphonse Picou. DA talks about the Creole serenaders, saying that the band consisted of Paul [Bocage? the father of] Peter, Henry and Charlie Bocage, Lorenzo Tio [Jr.] (who married a sister of the Bocage men) and DA. DA says Tio was "the very best you ever heard." ^(Mr. Bocage's son) DA says the Creole Serenaders was a different outfit from the orchestra of [A. J.] Piron, that Peter Bocage had played in that orchestra, but the Serenaders were the Bocage brothers. ^(Mr. Bocage's son) They played for parties, dances, etc. DA worked with the Serenaders for years, and left them when she got married, probably in 1922. She took 15 years out to raise a family, and then began playing again and has been at it ever since.

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Frank Adams was born in August, 1883. He was born on Dryades Street, between Sixth and Washington in New Orleans and raised out in the Irish Channel. He used to live on Religious Street, between Race and Orange and then moved to Fourth near St. Thomas and they moved from there to Washington Avenue when he was grown. Adams is not a musician as he never played any instruments, but he did hear a lot of the bands and he was a dancer. He danced a lot. He used to go to the Love and Charity Hall on Camp, near Valence. [See Soards', 1910, Loving Chaidy Hall, 1334 Eagle] Adams' father did not play any music instrument. His mother was not a singer. The first music Adams remembers as a little boy was "King" Buddy Bolden. "King" Bolden used to play the cornet and had about a dozen men in his band. [Compare Jazzmen] Bolden was tops at that time: famous, played for white and colored people. Bolden lived somewhere up town, above Napoleon Avenue. [See Soards' 1905] Adams danced not only at the Love and Charity Hall but the Globe Hall and another one on Eagle Street, near Poplar up in Carrollton. There weren't any other halls up in Carrollton then. The other ones were: on Camp Street, ^{Near Valence} the Love and Charity Hall; The Funky Butt Hall, near Basin Street; Economy Hall, on Ursulines [and it is still there, but is a church now; and the Masonic Hall. --All this from WR, RBA.]

Adams has some old friends, men older even than he is, that know these places and remember Bolden's band. One guy used to play music has a barber shop at First and Liberty, John Joseph. [Is interviewed.] His younger brother [Willie "Kaiser" Joseph] was a clarinet player, but he died several years ago. Adams knows

Buddy Bottley [spelling ?]; he wasn't a musician, but he used to go up in a balloon at the old Lincoln Park where there is now a grocery. Everyone used to go out to the park to watch him go up in the balloon. They had dancing at Lincoln Park and Buddy Bolden used to be out there, too. They didn't play a special tune when Bottley [spelling ?] went up, but they played for the occasion. Adams didn't see the late "Sunshine Money" go up in the balloon, but he knew him real well and his wife is still living on Third, near Tonti. FA knows the house. [Remembers many musicians, but can't recall names at the moment--starts to tell about humbug--Russell changes subject]

[Some of the white people treated Adams nice when he was raised down in ^{WR}the Irish Channel] [1306 Felicity--probably now] Eddie Stack and Walter Stack were real nice to him. Eddie Stack is an engineer for The Times-Picayune now. The white and colored got along well: they played together and they ate together. Adams' ~~mother~~ would beat Mrs. Stack cooking so they ate a lot with them. He was living on First between Rousseau and Tchoupitoulas. The neighbors would buy their meats at a neighborhood market on Soraparu Street and then come to his mother's garden and get all their vegetables and his ~~mother~~ would not let them pay for them. Adams' daddy planted the garden. There were only two colored families in that block. The other family, the Andersons, were closer to the corner.

Adams did not know the guitar player, George Sayles, but he remembers [John] Robichaux and that he was famous, a big band.

They played low down music like Bolden, but they also played refined music. played cabaret--Bolden played old barrelhouse music.

Adams liked the dances at that time: the quadrille, two-step, the schottische, and the mazurka. They used to waltz, too. ^{wr}
One other, FA can't remember. [Lancers? Varieties? - See other sources] They used to play the blues a lot; that was the time when they used to play the blues. The blues were played fast and slow. Adams doesn't remember the names of them now because he put it all down when he joined the church and hadn't thought about it since. He remembers the "slow drag" which they had in all the halls. The quadrille was not a ratty dance. They also had a dance called the "dip". He could remember more if he had time to think--was young and foolish then. Adams was a good dancer and the girls liked to dance with him; they would go to a hall if they knew he would be there. They had some fighting, but it was among friends and they would all shake hands. There was no cutting or anything like that.

The Robert Charles Riot happened on Saratoga, between Erato and ~~Clip~~ somewhere around there. It was said that he was waiting for his wife and a colored woman went and called the police and told them that he had been standing around there so long that she didn't know what he was waiting for: to kill her or hurt her or what, but he wasn't ^{bothering} hurting nobody. The officers came up there and called him "Black S. B. What you doing around here." The man said, "Now, don't handle me that way. Why don't you ask me what I'm doing around here and perhaps I might tell you," etc. The police didn't like that and they started after their gun and the guy shot them. [The police started for their gun first.] ^{WR says} He went upstairs

in an old house and everyone that tried to break in he would shoot them. They started to set the house on fire to make him run out, but decided against it. Then he got away by night [dressed in womens clothes--Russell-he agrees] and got out of the way. He was a Mason and an Odd Fellow. ^{And Everythas} Adams did not know him personally; he just heard about him. [He was supposed to be a nice, quiet fellow and wouldn't cause any trouble till that came up.-- Allen ^{Adams} Adams agrees] Adams heard that he died somewhere in Chicago.

Then the ^{Other} white people started going around the Irish Channel saying they were going to kill all the colored people. Mr. Stack came and warned Adams' daddy and invited them to go and stay with them. Adams' daddy didn't want that so Mr. Stack said he would walk the street with his shotgun and tell the gang they would have to go "over his dead body." ^[Machine off] Adams' daddy had a shotgun and a forty-five and plenty of ammunition. ^{HE STOOD ON TOP OF ADAMAS STREET,} They warned the gang not to go anywhere in their block and they didn't, ^{Said would fire off a warning shot if they came.} but they went around the corner where there was an old colored woman paralyzed in the chair for years and years sitting outside in the air ^{in the summer time} and they killed the old lady and broke up her chair and the old lady never hurt anybody and didn't know anything about the riot.

The Irish people in Adams' neighborhood were a tough bunch: always fighting and drunk. They worked right on the riverfront with you and when you passed by they might not even know you and fight with you before recognizing you were their pal. Adams never did pick on anybody as he liked friends, but if you picked on him he wouldn't run, he would stay in there and fight.

There was another riot when Adams was living on Melpomene between Clara and Willow over 20 years in which ^{THIS BOY} Percy had been. ^{"Charlie Percy Jackson"?}

arrested and taken to the jailhouse on Magnolia and the policemen were beating on him and he got a gun and in the fight shot about four of them. One of the policemen finally persuaded him to surrender and promised him a fair trial. Then they put him in a patrol wagon and took him out in the country and all shot him to death.

Adams remembers the parades when he was little: the kings and queens, the Rex parade. ^{WR asks a bout Colored parades.} A fellow that used to work for ^{LIVED ON SECOND STREET} D. H. Holmes put on parades during the carnival time; he had floats and everything.

They had funerals when Adams was a boy with brass bands. They had old time hearses with horses draped in black and brass lamps on each side of the hearse. Adams never did follow the funerals. The brass bands played jazz and there would be dancing in the streets behind the hearse. He had more respect for the dead than to follow the corpse.

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