

LAURENA DIGGS (WITH CARRIE BOOTE)  
I [only]--Digest--Retyped  
September 3, 1960

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Also present: Richard B. Allen

(Interview recorded at 1926 Harmony Street [New Orleans])

RBA mentions Archie Martin.

LD quotes from the lyric of a song popular during the Spanish-American War, "Over The Garden Wall."

LD says the Alliance Band of New Orleans began coming to Mobile [Alabama, her home] when she was about twenty-one years old; she is now 89, so the time would have been around 1895 [sic], says RBA. Parade followers in Mobile pranced more sedately to the music of their hometown bands, the Excelsior and the Eureka, than to that of the Alliance Band, which played more jazz.

LD was five years old when she first came to New Orleans [around 1876?]. She talks a little of her recollection of that time. Her father, who worked for a railroad, was transferred from Mobile to New Orleans. LD attended school in New Orleans in the earlier 1900's; she mentions singing with a group of students for [the erection of the statue of General Robert E. Lee] [see pamphlet on loan from RBA] at Lee Circle; they sang "Praise Him, All Ye Nations." LD was eleven or twelve years old when she made her second trip to New Orleans; she attended school there, returning to Mobile, with her family, to live until 1916; she says they returned to New Orleans during the Big Storm [1915?]. CB says she was alive when her mother [LD] moved back to New Orleans, and that LD had made hundreds of visits to New Orleans.

Bands from New Orleans made excursions to Mobile. CB says the jazz bands were string [i.e., dance] bands, not brass bands. The brass bands [of Mobile?] were not "hot". CB was born in Mobile, but reared in New Orleans; she says she

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and the family moved to New Orleans the week after the big storm, which LD identifies as the September [1915] storm.

LD says the Veterans of the Spanish-American War used to go to Chalmette [National Cemetery] for their celebration on May 31st, but they no longer go. [Cf. Noah Cook reel].

The benevolent societies, Odd Fellows and Spanish-American War Veterans [of the Republic] in Mobile had celebrations like those in New Orleans; they employed brass bands for the function. The brass bands in Mobile played the same kind of music the one in New Orleans did; they played sad music for funerals, but played jazz when returning from the funerals [at some in time?]. LD says the people would dance the "rock-a-by do" to the jazz music the bands played coming back from funerals.

CB says she used to be in minstrel shows when she was trying to be an actress; she sang songs she's never heard since, such as "Dying Rag" and "Dollar Bill", although RBA says the latter is still being recorded. (CB says some of the words of "Dying Rag," and some of "Dollar Bill") [This is not the folk song.RBA] CB agrees with RBA that Buddy Christian composed some songs; CB says Christian has died recently. RBA says Richard M. Jones, composer of "I Ain't Gonna Tell Nobody" [among others], died several years ago; CB says some of the words of that song. CB mentions Freddy Keplo [no doubt Keppard], a fine trumpet player; she thinks he died in Chicago. RBA says Jones never copyrighted "I Ain't Gonna Tell Nobody," which was recorded by Joe Oliver. CB remembers pianist Glover Compton, who was in Europe for a long time; she says he was once in New Orleans

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to open a lounge on 51st Street. [Perhaps she means New York. RBA] RBA says Compton and Tony Jackson wrote a song called "The Clock of Time," and that Compton's wife, Nettie, wrote one called "You're Such A Pretty Thing." CB says she thinks pianist Walter Johnson, who played with Erskine Tate, died in India; RBA thought she might have been referring to Teddy Weatherford. CB says Johnson played with Tate when Louis [Armstrong] was with him; RBA says Weatherford did, too. CB read in Ebony [magazine] that Johnson/Weatherford married an Indian princess; she thinks she read the report about 1956.

Joe and Eddie Crusette [sp?], brothers, had the Pickwick Brass Band of Moss Point, Mississippi, which used to play in New Orleans. They advertised in wagons or trucks. The brass bands in the Moss Point area played mostly for dances; the two sections, Mississippi and New Orleans, would swap bands sometimes; a New Orleans string [i.e., dance] band would play in Mississippi, while a Mississippi brass band played in New Orleans.

CB says the Whitman Sisters were a (minstrel?) group who traveled all over the United States; there were about four of them; there are now three; one is a spiritualist in Chicago; two of them were Essie and Alice. There is nice money in spiritualism according to CB.

RBA mentions Johnny Dodds, clarinetist; his brother, Warren "Baby" Dodds, drums; Bill Johnson, bass; Johnny St Cyr, banjo; Doc Cook, band leader; Honore Dutrey, trombone. CB knew Zutty [Singleton]. CB says Ernest Whitman, who "played" [?] "Bill" with Ethel Waters, was married to one of the Leggett Sisters of New Orleans. CB explains that Whitman, an actor, played "Bill," a radio series, with Ethel Waters [see Tom Fletcher, 100 Years of The Negro..., p. 323, 791.12 F 615 o]. CB mentions Hattie McDaniel. Two of the Leggett Sisters were named

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Anna and Lena.

Punch [Miller] broadcast on the radio when he was with Francois Mosely [on recordings as Frankie Franko's Louisianans made November 12, 1930]; they first worked at the Rhumboogie [sp?], and then at the Golden Lily; Punch made several records at the time, which was around 1935-36. This was about the time the [world War I Veterans] got their bonus. The Golden Lily was a Chinese restaurant, where various acts, including the Mills Brothers, played. Garbage, a comedian who was with Billy King, played at the Golden Lily. Gladys Mickey [sp?] was mistress of ceremonies.

End of Reel I