

FRANK "BIG BOY" GOUDIE
I [of 3]--Digest--Retyped
June 2, 1960

Also present: Grayson "Ken" Mills

[Recorded at Goudie's Upholstery Shop; 1491 McAllister; San Francisco]

FG reminisces about the growth of his birthplace, first called Royville, later [and presently] Youngsville [Louisiana]. The first time he heard "St. Louis Blues" was at the Youngsville railroad station, presented by personnel of an excursion from New Iberia [Louisiana]. Walter Simon had a four-piece string band (on the order of the band of the Hot Club of France) which played for the Negroes around FG's home; the music was not like that of Armand J. Piron (as suggested by KM), but "was what you call really self-made, country music." FG guesses he was four or six years old when he heard Simon. FG liked the music, and tried to make himself a violin, but didn't succeed until some time later, when he made a violin-shaped thing on which he could play a little. His father took pity on him, and brought him a violin box [i.e., the body?] and FG added the other necessary parts and learned how to play it. FG's brother got a guitar, and FG got a better violin; they began playing then. The Evan [Thomas] band, of Crowley, Louisiana, would come to Youngsville; then Mutt Carey began coming, and Bunk Johnson; FG was still quite young, and could hear those musicians only in the afternoon, as he was not allowed to go where they played at night. Years later, when FG was twelve or thirteen years old, he met Bunk Johnson; FG had acquired an old broken trumpet, and had decided to meet Johnson, who heard FG play the violin. FG mentions the Washington Band, of Erath, Louisiana, led by "Enfay"

[phonetic spelling], who gave FG some ideas. Then FG met Bunk Johnson, who helped him very much with his music. Johnson was a fine musician; he was known all over; people would wend for him when they needed him, as they knew what he could do. FG next met Bunk in Houston, Texas (where FG's father had moved his family), sometime after the [World] War [I]. Bunk encouraged FG further. Bunk then had the "Red [Back] Books" [i.e., Standard High Class Rags], the first FG had seen; Bunk told FG he would be a musician when he could read the books. Bunk introduced FG to a teacher, Heywood, and FG studied with him. Then FG played trumpet in a cinema in Houston, with an organist. FG played in the cinema at night, and out hair during the day; although still a minor, he could get away with working, as he was quite tall (he says he passed for a man ten years before the time of manhood). FG says he and Bunk were the only trumpet players in Houston, although Evan [Thomas] came to town occasionally. FG soon became known to all the musicians in the area; he began playing weekends in Beaumont, Galveston, Houston and the vicinity, in dance halls. During this time, he was invited to go to Mexico [with a band]. [See below.]

Bunk's tone was always good; he was a musician, which he proved when he came back, after not playing for twenty years [?]. KM says "Slow Drag" [Pavageau] said Bunk could move one to tears with his playing, with no effort. During FG's growing-up time

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in Texas, Bunk was known as a good musician, a dependable one. FG also met Freddy Keppard, [in Houston?] but he didn't know him as well as he knew Bunk; FG went to Bunk's room several times, as he wanted to learn from Bunk, and to play like he did. FG also met Charlie Love there [in Houston?] and "Spider," who was from Baton Rouge. "Spider" was a different style trumpet player, not like Bunk, Love or Evan Thomas; FG says he played with more swing than a lot of those like the ones mentioned. FG enjoyed "Spider's" playing, although he doesn't think he was the kind of musician that Love and Bunk were; "he didn't have the culture that they had." Love had a style of playing blues that nobody else had. Love was in his forties when FG met him

FG was invited by a trombone player from Houston to go to Tampico, Mexico and play; FG went, but the job didn't last but a few weeks, less than it was supposed to last. At the same time "Spider" was playing with Frank Matthew; "Spider" became homesick and returned home; Charlie Love was sent for to replace him; Love was prone to go off on benders when he had acquired enough money, so overtures were made to FG to replace Love.

End of Reel I

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Also present: Grayson "Ken" Mills

FG replaced Charlie [Love] in Frank [Matthew]'s band in Mexico; FG was already working in Mexico, so he went with Frank when his other job was finished. Love returned to the United States.

FM tells FG about Herb Moran and Octave Crosby's trip to Yucatan, about the same time FG was in Tampico, Mexico; movies were made of the band in Merida, capitol of Yucatan; the music was enthusiastically received; the musicians made a lot of money. [Compare Herb Moran, reel ? Octave Crosby, reel ?, Clarence Vincent, reel ? and other interviews. FG was taught by Frank and his brother to save his money; he began sending his salary (\$2.50 per day, working from seven in the evening until five in the morning) to help his sick mother; he lived on his tips, which were usually more than double his salary. Most of the clientele in the place where FG worked was not Mexican, but Anglo-Saxon, Nordic, French. The name of the place in Tampico was the Tivoli.

After about two years in Mexico, FG learned from reading magazines that a lot of American musicians and entertainers-- Noble Sissle, Will Marion Cook, Louie Mitchell, "Bricktop", others--were doing well in Europe; FG had plenty of money, so he decided to go to Europe. He had trouble getting his passport, as he had trouble getting his birth certificate; passport officials wanted to spell his name "Goody", but his name is French, and is spelled "Goudie"; his first name is Francis; Europeans have long spelled it "Goodie", as they assume his is an American name, and not French.

Before FG went to Mexico, he came to New Orleans; he played with a saxophone player (who was looking for him in California about two weeks ago; it was not Earl Fouché, formerly with Sam Morgan's band, now with a New Orleans styled band in Santa Barbara, as suggested by KM; FG's saxophone player no longer plays), and with Mutt Carey's brother, Jack Carey [trombone], and with another Carey brother who played bass. FG also worked with bass player "One-eye Ollie." He then returned to Houston. In New Orleans, FG played across the street from where George Lewis was playing; Lewis remembered FG [years later?]. Before he went to Europe, FG spent a month or six weeks in New Orleans, where he played with the musicians he had met on his previous trip. Then FG went to Europe, around May or June, 1924.

The Matthew brothers, in Mexico, taught FG how to read and how to transpose music. By the end of his two and one-half years in Mexico, he had begun to play clarinet a little, faking; he was playing it only for himself, not on a job. KM says that [Ralph] Gleason's notes for a Django Reinhardt LP [on which FG plays, Capital 12" LP alb TBO 102267] state that FG studied clarinet with [the] Tio []; FG denies it, saying that he could only fake when he was in New Orleans, that he studied with a teacher in Europe. FG took up clarinet because Freddy Keppard, trumpet player, also played clarinet; Keppard knew the latter instrument, and could play, "but he was a solid trumpet player." Keppard was a powerful player, the best hot trumpet player FG heard; his power wasn't of a blasting, loud nature. FG says

these men [i.e., the old-time New Orleans musicians?] played within the limitations of the instruments; they didn't try to overpower by blasting. Keppard, and Mutt Carey and their kind are mis-judged. "Spider" [of Baton Rouge--see Reel I] was another, although he didn't continue to play. FG heard Kid Punch [Miller] when he was in New Orleans; Punch's playing was "crazy;" he was "blowing so much." FG didn't meet [Omer] Simeon; he did meet [Johnny?] Dodds and Barney Bigard; Dodds was with [Kid] Ory at the time. FG also met [Albert] Nicholas. FG says, "People have the wrong conception of those guys; they think they was fakers [i.e., players who didn't know what they were doing?]." While in New Orleans, FG heard [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin, Paul Barnes--in fact, everyone except [A. J.] Piron, who was in Chicago [? Compare interviews] at the time; he wanted to hear Piron, as there were some fine musicians in his band. The year was about 1920. KM says Johnny Dodds hadn't left New Orleans then; FG says he can see him, settling down to play in the Elite Cafe, as plain as though it were yesterday. FG says the ones he mentioned were the creators of jazz; he didn't try to copy them, because they had their own styles, and he didn't think like they did; nobody ever played like they did. KM is reminded of Paul Barnes and George Lewis by the style of FG's playing. FG says one doesn't break his head trying to play the blues, or anything else, like Sidney Bechet, because the imitator would never be able to do it; Bechet was one of the creators, too; nobody played the blues like Bechet. FG has know Bechet since 1927 or 1929,

when Bichet left Germany to return to France; FG lost a job in "Bricktop's" because of Bechet. Bechet left Germany because he couldn't read, didn't know the tunes that were coming out, couldn't change his style. Bricktop knew Bechet in New York. Bricktop wanted Bechet for the job; FG heard Bechet play at Bricktop's (heard him "on the q.t."), and figured Bechet would get the job because he was so much better than himself. Bricktop paid a government official to certify that FG wasn't on the job (FG was at the bar, on a break at the time) so that she could fire him; FG told her she could have saved her money as he knew that Bechet was the best man, and that he deserved the job. Bechet heard about it, told FG it was not his own fault; FG said he didn't care whose fault it was, that Bechet was the best man for the job; they became fast friends then. FG was the only musician allowed in Bechet's hotel room when Bechet returned to France [from America?]. Bechet had had to leave France because of some trouble; when he returned about ten years later was the time of the hotel room incident. [Compare Sidney Bechet, Treat It Gentle, Hill and Wang, pp. 150-4, on trouble. Also compare Glover Compton, reel ?] FG made some records with Bechet, but they didn't record together with Noble Sissle. FG was on some Sissle recordings; "Black Stick" was one, on which FG played alto saxophone; they were made about 1929 to 1931. Bechet was with Sissle before FG was, in 1927 or 1928, or sometime around then. [Leading here. Compare discographies!!! Also Bechet, op. cit.]

FG was in Paris when Lizzie Miles, who was called something like "The Black Rose of Paris", was there; [La Rose Noire. Compare Lizzie Miles reel ?]. FG was in Paris when a lot of artists were there; he mentions Elizabeth Wells, Florence Mills, Isham Jones, (he thinks) Johnny Dunn (KM has recordings of Dunn, trumpet, with Garvin Bushell on clarinet).

FG kept up with U. S. music through records, which he heard through the Hot Club of France (started by ^{HUGUES} [~~Hughes~~] Panassié and Pierre [Nodine? Nolding?], of which he was a member.

When the [World] War [II] broke out, FG went to Brazil. He says he "never did follow the gangs". He would go to a place if he thought he could get there, and depend on his musical ability to keep him there. He was well-known in Paris two months after his arrival, as he was playing the real New Orleans style trumpet, something no one had done before his arrival. When trumpet began going out of style, and FG's teeth became bad, he learned clarinet [and at some point tenor saxophone]; he says all the cabarets in Paris were changing to three tenor [saxophones], two guitars, bass, violin and piano, so he changed to be able to make a living. Paris is the key place of Europe; all the other cities will follow the Paris lead. FG traveled all over Europe except Scandinavia, with various sized bands; he didn't like big bands because he didn't get to play enough jazz. KM says the German company, Telefunken, issued some of FG's records, including "Big Boy Boogie" or a similar title; FG recorded in Berlin in 1953, but was disappointed; one of them was "Frank Goudie's Blues", or something like that. [Compare discographies.] The first two

sides he made had the trumpet player playing as FG asked him to play; the records sold out; FG got a call to make six more sides; the trumpet player then wanted to play like Roy Eldridge, or Harry James; FG explained that what was wanted was trumpet playing like Bunk Johnson or Tommy Ladnier. Even trumpet playing in the style of Louis Armstrong wasn't what was wanted. Apparently the trumpet player played the way he wanted, as FG didn't make any more recordings in Berlin then; he says he couldn't play when he was dissatisfied, so he just didn't want to make any more records.

When FG came back to the United States, he began getting back to a New Orleans styled music; he didn't copy, but tried to recall the sounds he had heard from long before. KM says [Bob] Mielke sounds more genuinely like New Orleans style because he isn't trying to imitate anyone. PG says Mielke and P. T. [Stanton?] have helped him a lot. FG says Dick Oxtot's banjo playing makes it so easy for a person to play with him. FG comments about the trio [?], with Ericson [spelling?] on piano; he says it is very good. FG says he is lucky to have fallen in with such a group.

KM says Mielke could become a great trombone player; FG says Mielke doesn't seem to want to put in the time [required for that development?].

End of Reel II

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Also present: Ken Grayson Mills

FG says [Bob] Mielke is too good a trombone player to let himself go the way he has been. Burt Bales is FG's favorite piano player in that area; he is first a musician, then a piano player; he has fine tone, and is a good interpreter. FG agrees with KM that Bales is the last of the great band piano players. FG agrees with KM that Bales is the last of the great band piano players. FG says trombonist James Leigh is very original, and that he should practice more so that he could become even better.

FG didn't hear [Kid] Ory until they were both in San Francisco; FG didn't hear Ory in the earlier years, in New Orleans. [Compare reel II, p. 6]. KM says Ory should hire FG; KM says [trumpet player] [Andrew] "Andy" Blakeney is another one Ory should use, as he plays similar to Bunk [Johnson]. KM says there is good New Orleans jazz in Los Angeles, but it is "underground"; "Ofays" [i.e., whites] don't know about it, and if they did, "they would screw it up." Men like Johnny St. Cyr and [Ed] "Montudi" Garland are among the participants in playing good jazz. Ory could get a band from those men, but he is not interested. KM adds that Ory would have to create if he was playing with good men and he is lazy.

KM mentions [Tony] Standish of Eureka [magazine]. Talk about a book FG is going to write, in collaboration with KM. Baby Dodds's book is mentioned. FG can verify that Bunk [Johnson] was as great in the earlier days as he is supposed to have been [see Reel I].

[Looking through scrapbook?] KM reads a clipping from Melody Maker [British magazine]; names mentioned: FG, Danny Polo, Bill Coleman, Dicky Wells, Benny Carter, Coleman Hawkins and [Herman] Chittison. [Compare discographies for date?] FG left [England? Brazil?] because his wife, to whom he was married ten years, six months, wanted to go back to Europe. The band FG had this time [names mentioned above] consisted of all good readers; the band he had before didn't have good readers in it. FG's later band had to play for shows, so they had to be good readers in it. FG's later band had to play for shows, so they had to be good readers. Nelson Williams, trumpet player formerly with Duke [Ellington], stayed in Europe [and played with FG's band?]. FG misses the fame he had in Europe and in South America; KM says perhaps his playing with Dick Oxtot and Bob [Mielke] will help him gain some fame in this country; FG's record with Burt [Bales] will help. KM says FG's recordings for German Columbia are not well-known, that they are not listed in the discographies. [See Archive's copy on (?)tape]. One tune mentioned is "Collector's Blues", which FG wrote for the trumpet player. FG says the trumpet player wouldn't play the way he wanted [see Reel II].

FG is glad to be in the United States, although the living he had abroad was better than that here; he would go elsewhere [out of the country?] if he couldn't live in San Francisco. FG says there is hatred all over the world, so it's not much sense to

try to find a place where there is no hatred, so he's glad to be in the United States.

[Restrict obscenity from KM here].

FG made clarinet his main instrument again when New Orleans jazz became very popular in Europe; he has always liked clarinet anyway. Talk about differences between tenor saxophone and clarinet; clarinet wins. FG likes tenor saxophone played by some others--Don Byas, Coleman Hawkins, Tex Beneke, and others--but he heimsel "never felt at home playing it."

[Charles] ^{DELAUNAY} ~~Delauney~~, "who called himself president" of the Hot Club of Paris, [check this] played some recordings by [Dizzy] Gillespie for FG; Delauney also mentioned Charlie Parker, Stan Kenton and others, explaining that they were modern musicians. FG replied that he himself would never be out of a job as long as there were musicians and bands like those around [meaning that the music he played would be in deman more than the music they played?]. FG studied harmony with Julian Fox, in Paris, for about six years; FG says Gillespie [et al] use dissonances without resolutions, but that the master of harmony, Bach, used dissonances with resolution. (Painter Bill Legrill [spelling?] enters.) As a result of his talk with Delauney, FG has gone back [musically] to where he started. He quotes Louis Armstrong on rock-and-roll: "Rock-and-roll is an old soup boiled over." KM says jazz is the only modern music. FG says Charlie Parker played a familiar tune on a concert in Paris, and that he [FG] never did recognize it for its real melody and chords. FG says people are like lambs, they need a shepherd. FG thinks it [modern music?] is a business

proposition, because people are always looking for something new; however, he doesn't see any sense in destroying something good and to make people swallow bad things. FG says he hears that Gillespie has changed his style, returning to more of a swing style, like that of Roy Eldridge, which FG is not against. FG says jazz doesn't die out, like symphonic jazz (Paul Whiteman) and other trends in jazz, because real jazz is true.

Talk about work on plantations.

FG studied music for twelve years; he composed music, but hasn't done anything with his compositions because a composer has to be in with the right group. When he came back to the United States, he opened a school, teaching theory, harmony, counterpoint, etc., and also singing, clarinet, trumpet and saxophone; the school was in San Francisco. The year was 1957. FG lost a lot of money. He says he told people he couldn't teach them to play; he could teach them their instruments, but the playing was up to them. KM says FG is pointing out that [Johnny] Dodds and the other old-timers [New Orleans musicians?] knew their instruments; FG says those men were not fakers, that they knew their instruments and [?], which was the reason they were able to play as they did. Knowing that he would need another profession, FG had prepared by studying upholstery in Europe.

End of Reel III

