

**INTERVIEW OF IDA GOODSON
BY DICK ALLEN ON MAY 6, 1961**

DA We're recording today in Pensacola, Florida. What's the address here?

IG 1410 North Railroad, Tarradonia, either one.

DA Tarradonia or Railroad, either one? I see.

IG Uh-huh.

DA Today's date is May the what? I can't remember.

IG Today is the 6th.

DA 1961. May 6, 1961. Now, let's get your name.

IG Ida Goodson.

DA And you over here?

BP Billie Madison Goodson Pierce.

DA And what's your name, Dee Dee?

DP Joseph de la Croix Pierce.

DA And better known as "Dee Dee." And your last name?

RT Royce Thomas.

DA And how do you spell it?

RT R o y c e . T h o m a s .

DA I see. And what do you play?

RT I play a clarinet.

DA I see. And how old are you now?

RT Fourteen.

DA You're fourteen? Can you fake?

RT Yes sir.

DA You can fake and read both, uh?

RT Yes sir.

DA Can you read?

RT Yes sir.

DA Oh, well that's wonderful.

IG My little boy sings. Now don't forget to put him down.

DA Where is he?

IG He out back -- Sammie Lee.

DA Sammie Lee, uh?

IG That's right. Sammie Lee Thomas.

DA O.K., well, I'll just start asking personal questions right away.

IG Uh-huh. That's right.

DA Are you older than Billie or younger?

IG I'm the baby. No, I'm younger. Don't put my age at 60 years old. Oh, no.

DA Well, how old is Billie?

IG Billie, well we is two years of difference in our ages. In other words, Billie is 61, 62, 63. She was born in 1907. I was born in 1909. So she's gonna about 64, 65, 66

DA Well, what's your exact birthday?

IG Mine?

DA Uh-huh.

IG 23rd of November. This 23rd of November, I will be 52 years old. I'm 51. That's Sammie Lee Thomas.

DA Spell your name.

ST S a m m i e L e e.

DA Sammie Lee Thomas, uh? And what do you play?

ST Sing.

DA You sing, uh?

ST Yes sir.

DA Do you want to sing a song for us now?

ST Yes sir.

DA O.K. What would you like to sing?

ST Uh,

IG Ah, sing that, uh

ST _____ (indecipherable)

IG No, sing that other one that's so pretty. Sweet Chariot. That's very special.

DA You play the piano with him?

IG Oh, yes, uh-huh.

DA Alright, well, let's give it a try and I'll tell you what, Sammie Lee, I'll move this and put it right down here, the microphone. Say something now.

ST Hi.

DA Again.

ST Hi.

DA O.K. And you hit the piano a little bit so I can see how it's going to record.

IG (Plays some chords.)

ST (Sings "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" -- Ida accompanies on piano.)

DA Wonderful, Sammie Lee. That's beautiful. I love your voice boy. You can really shout it out, do you know? That's wonderful. That's great. I sure appreciate your singing for me boy. How old are you?

ST Ten.

DA You're ten now, uh?

ST Yes sir.

DA Well, you do alright. You do alright for a man 50 years old, a man 20 years old, (laughter) any age. Any man that can sing like that, you know, you know that's something.

(Laughter among all)

DA You're a man already at ten years old. I declare. What else do you sing?

ST Sir, I can sing, uh,

IG You want some kind of

ST Anything I like

DA Anything you want to sing, boy, just. This is just for fun.

ST (Sings "Everything Is All Right" -- Ida accompanies on piano)

IG Let's sing, "When the Saints Go Marching In." Do that now. You want him to sing

DA Yeah fine. The Saints will be fine.

ST (Sings "When the Saints Go Marching In" -- Ida accompanies on piano)

DA That was nice.

DP Nice try.

(Talk among all, but couldn't pick it up)

IG Yeah, that's it. All of us.

DA What's the name of it?

ST "You Can't Beat God's Giving"

(Singing of "You Can't Beat God's Giving " by all)

DA That's wonderful.

IG Ain't that pretty?

DA Where do ya'll sing those?

All At church.

IG Mount Olive Baptist Church.

DA Mount Olive what?

All Mount Olive Baptist Church.

DA I see.

IG And the fact that I own that particular church, that's the one they belongs to but they goes around and sings at different churches, you know, performances and things.

DA Different churches, uh?

IG Yes sir.

DA Well, that's wonderful.

DP Well, we were always that way, Dick, when we was little.

DA Is that right?

DP _____, church thing, _____ we's the same way.

(IG plays and sings "Baby Won't You Please Come Home")

DA You need, uh? Maybe a drink of water would help you? You were pretty sick, uh?

IG Yeah, I was pretty sick.

DA Pretty bad spell, uh?

IG Charlie took the dollar, give me one treatment and ya'll must have been (laughter) I worked hard for the dollar, about \$10.00 worth of medicine.

(Lots of laughter)

DA Let me ask you some more questions about your life?

IG Alright.

DA Where were you born?

IG Pensacola, Florida.

DA What part?

IG Right here in Pensacola, Florida. I was born on the corner of 7th Avenue and, uh, not I wasn't, I was born in the 400 block on Tarradonia Street during the time, uh, when they had that hotel down there for colored people, years ago.

DA How do you spell Tarradonia?

IG T a r r a d o n i a.

DA Uh-huh. That's the same street we're on?

IG We are living on, right today.

DA Ten blocks away?

IG Down further. That's when my mother first came over to visit my father and I was happened to be born in Pensacola.

DA Where's your mother from?

IG My mother was home from Marianna, Florida.

DA I see.

IG And my father was from River Junction, Florida.

DA Did your mother play music?

IG Yeah, she did.

DA What did she play?

IG She played piano.

DA And your father?

IG He played music, too. He played piano.

DA Well, I'll be. Do you got any other piano players in your family?

IG Oh, yeah. I have four more sisters, I mean, well, three more sisters that plays piano.

DA Living now, uh?

IG Yeah, well, there's Billie, Evelyn and Sadie. Three of them play piano. I'm the fourth one. All living.

DA And there are some that are passed, aren't there?

IG Well, yes, I have three passed. Two of them played, but the one passed while she was small. She was a baby. Maggie, she was quite small when she passed, but the rest of them played music.

DA How did you get started on the piano?

IG Well, it's just a gift. Talent.

DA You never took any lessons?

IG Never have.

DA Just, uh, just happens to you all, in this family.

IG Oh, yes, come right on in us and then I'm bring my children up in music talents.

DA Well, that's great. I can see they've got some talent. We're going to have to get Royce to play some clarinet.

IG That's right. She just started on her clarinet though, since Christmas. But she's been wonderful with it, I think.

DA What do you play, by ear?

RT By ear? Uh, let's see

IG "Red Sails in the Sunset" and so forth. I've been telling her not to have music because I do want her to learn music.

DA Make her learn both.

IG That's what I'm talking about. But she can get out pretty good, but I want her to learn that music.

DA Well, she doesn't have to worry about talent because she got it from all directions at once, I declare.

RT Uh-huh.

DA Who did your mother play with? Did she play with bands?

IG No, my mother played circle (sacred?) music, church music. No.

DA Circle music.

IG Church music. Circle music.

DA And your father?

IG Circle music. He never did play with no jazz outfits. In fact, they didn't believe in things like that. When a youngster came along playing the jazz

DP He was the devil -- (laughter)

DA And that's why you are so good at it. (Laughter) They're turning over in their graves. Now, that's a sin and a shame. (Laughter)

IG Listen, that's the first thing they said with me because they wouldn't want us to be playing jazz.

DA Oh, Lord. Let me see, I was going to ask you about what churches did they play in?

IG My parents? Well, I don't know. I couldn't remember what church they were playing in.

DA Do you remember Billie?

BP The church they played in?

DA Uh-huh.

BP They played in their church in their home town, I guess.

DA I thought maybe they told ya'll. They travelled around

IG They never did that. No. I know she was a school teacher, because I remember one time she said that they had this program that she played for, she played for some school there. It wasn't here though -- somewhere else and she said that she sung a solo on it and by playing it, she won the top prize on that particular song. I can't remember the song now. I remember my mother telling me that. I don't know whereabouts

DP Maybe in Georgia. She was birthed there in Georgia, you know.

DA She was birthed in Georgia? What part of Georgia?

DP Now, I really don't know where she born at. I think around Macon. I believe -- but her mother died in childbirth and her grandmother take

her and brought her to Florida maybe when she was -- And the home you see where she was raised at, but she was a White then.

DA Do you remember her name before she was married?

IG She was a White.

DA She was a White? Fantastic. When I was a little boy, we had, uh, uh, a maid named White, you see. And I'm from around Macon, only 30 miles from there. It might be, uh, uh, a cousin of your mama's or something.

DP Could be.

IG But anyway, she was a White before she married my father.

DA Frances White looked after me when I was a little bitty boy

IG Is that so?

DA And I remember going and listening to records at her house

IG Well, I say

DA You know, she'd take me down there and we'd listen to the records and all that. I guess that's how I got interested in music.

DP Well, you're sure interested in music. That's true. You like music.

DA Well, Billie and Dee Dee have been friends of mine for over 10 years now. I used to have a record shop

IG Yes, they was telling me about it.

DA And they used to come in the back and play with Emile Barnes' band, they first came around.

IG Well, the first little band that I first came remember that I started out playing with around here was named "R.D. Jordan.

DA That's R.D. Well, I've heard ya'll talk about it.

IG Well, I started playing up with him. Then, from then on, different bands. I worked with Wally Mercy. In fact, we was on air for years around here. Worked the Southland Club and all these spots around here. We worked all the nightclubs. I worked with Wally Mercy for about, oh, I say, round about almost near 16 years, he and I, you know,

going backwards and forth, like that. Then, I worked with Carl Davies awhile.

DA How do you spell that?

IG Which one? Wally's?

DA Davies.

IG D a v i e s.

DA No, his first name.

IG Carl. C a r l.

DA Oh, Carl.

IG Uh-huh. I worked with Carl Davies awhile. Then, I left them and I went with, uh, uh, what's the boy name, teach school, the one that teaches the high school now. Hal Andrew. I worked with, I played with the Hal Andrew band for awhile.

DA That's funny. I was having a drink, and, uh, at the Country Club,

IG Yes

DA And the bar tender there was saying that, uh

IG Leroy?

DA No, Charlie.

IG Oh!

DA Says he used to play saxophone with you?

IG Charlie Brudin?

DA I guess so.

DP _____ my _____ on the floor

(Much talk by all - couldn't decipher it.)

IG That's Charlie Brudin. Yeah, he played saxophone for us. Charlie Brudin. Girl, I thought someone told me he was

BP I got his picture at home. You remember I show you a picture with R.D., picture made in Florida, and I was working for him at our place at the Macon Nightclub.

IG Yeah, he was working then.

BP And Charlie Brudin, myself and R.D. got those pictures. I showed them to you. I say, well, this one here named Charlie Brudin

IG He's a fine saxophone player

DP We was telling you about him and the other one, he's the undertaker, R.D. Well, that's Charlie. You never met Charlie. You know he wants to sell your shoes coming.

DA Well, we talked about you. He didn't say anything. I guess maybe -- how old is Charlie Brudin?

IG Charlie Brudin should be around my age -- maybe a little bit older than I am.

DA No, well this is younger.

IG Is that so?

DA He may be in his 30's. He said he was in the war and when he came back from the service, he played with you.

IG Charlie, Charlie. Let me see about Charlie.

DA This is a younger fellow.

IG A younger fellow? Well, I don't know.

DA Yeah, well you had so many

IG Yeah, I sure have.

BP Yeah, I was thinking about Charlie Brudin.

IG Charlie Brudin older than I am.

DA Well, this guy was in World War II,

IG Oh yes, uh-huh

DA So you know he'd have to be young.

IG Yeah, that's right.

DA What was the very first jazz band you ever heard?

IG The Pensacola Jazz Band.

DA Who was that?

IG Mack and _____ came here from New Orleans.

DA Thomas Mack?

IG Thomas Mack.

BP Oh, did you know Mack?

DA I don't know Mack, but I've heard plenty about him. Well, Edmond Hall told me about him.

IG And then I worked with him, too.

DA Edmond Hall?

IG No, Thomas Mack. I worked with him awhile.

BP He working at the Western Union office now. The telegraph office. Was a porter there.

DA Oh, yeah? That's funny. I never met him.

BP Know who he look like, Dick? Him and Thomas could pass for brothers.

DA Him and Kid Thomas?

BP No, yeah, Kid Thomas. Could pass for brothers. Mack and Thomas. Same height and everything. Color and everything. Could pass for brothers.

DA Ever been to Morris Park?

IG Beg your pardon?

DA Have you ever been to Morris Park?

IG Morris Park?

DA Run by Dr. Brunswick and Aaron Long.

IG Oh, that's, uh, you mean, out here to Dr. Cobb, isn't it?

DA I guess it is.

IG Yes, I've been out there.

DA Where Thomas Knight played?

IG Yes, uh-huh. That's Dr. Cobb that run that place out there. Was one. I don't know who run it now, me. Been years ago.

DA I believe Edmond Hall or Manual Sayles told me about that. Did you remember Edmond Hall? Tall, lanky fellow, played clarinet. And he was down there first with Buddy Petit. You remember Buddy?

IG Yeah I know Buddy Petit and all of them.

DA And he was here first with Buddy

IG Is that so?

DA And then he came back, uh, with, uh, with Thomas Mack, I believe, or Lee Collins, I can't remember.

IG Lee Collins?

DA Do you remember Lee?

IG I knew, I remember Lee Collins.

DA He passed, you know.

IG Did he?

BP It hadn't been that long.

IG and _____ he passed too, he came down with Mack too.

DA Who's that?

IG Oscar Berger. He was the banjo -- I mean bass fellow.

DA Who else was in Mack's band?

IG Oh, he had two boys. One named Leech. The Leech brothers.

BP He was from the State of Illinois.

IG They were from Illinois and one played sax

BP And one plays trumpet.

IG Sammie, don't get on the wire.

DA One plays sax?

IG One plays trumpet and one plays sax.

DA So he had two trumpets, uh?

IG Oh, Mack had more than two trumpets. Once upon a time, he had four trumpets. He had a big band. A large band. He had around, about three or four trumpets, his sax, three or four sax, alto, oh, he had a large band then.

BP _____ trombone out of Mobile named George Morris.

IG Yeah, George Morris died, too.

DA And who else was in the band?

IG Vernon, he played banjo.

DA Vernon?

IG Uh-huh. A fellow named Vernon.

DA Where was he from?

BP Mobile.

IG Yeah, uh-huh. I didn't know where Vernon was
(Much talk - couldn't decipher)

BP All those boys from Mobile come over and play with the Pensacola Band all the time.

IG Well, what happened. They'd come over here and get stuck, get some of this sand in their shoe and they couldn't go back. So they'd used to get a job and get to working around here, you see? Usually that's the way it happened if people were strangers to Pensacola.

DA They just love it so much they just can't leave.

BP But I'm going to watch you though

DA You're not going to let me stay Billie?

BP No, (much laughter)

DP He's got to go back with us hadn't he Billie?

BP Yeah, he gotta go back home, back with me. I'm gonna keep my eyes on you.

DA Did you ever know a fellow named Edmond Washington?

IG Edmond Washington?

DA Edmond Washington and he played saxophone. He's a big fat fellow now. You know him don't you?

IG I wonder is he the one who came here from, did he come from New Orleans over here to play?

DA Uh-huh.

IG Yes, I remember him, but I tell you what, my other sister played with them. That's him, you know, this guy went and -- they called him "Pop"

BP Kid Ernie

IG Well, he come here with Kid Ernie sometime. But not Kid Ernie's. It was one of those big thin mens who came in with him. Edna and them did. They went out to Shorty's. They played dance out at Shorty's. It's been a long time ago. A great big fellow, brown skin fellow, got a bid stomach sticking out right there.

DA Well, that's him.

IG That's him. I know who you're talking about. My sister played with them awhile. I went and worked one time in her place because she got a booze in and couldn't go, so I went and worked one time, but I never did play too much with that bunch.

DA She got a what?

BP You know Edna, Dick.

DA But what's a booze in though?

IG Yeah. Too much of that booze in

BP _____ booze in party

IG Yeah and she wasn't able to make the job and I played in her place. that time.

DA Who is Helen Jackson?

IG Helen Jackson is a piano player. She lives over on East Street. My father was supposed to marry her mother, but he didn't. He married this other lady, so --. She was a wonderful piano player, but she don't play any more now. She's in bad health.

DA Oh yeah. Well, that's too bad.

IG It certainly is.

DA Did she play by ear or read or both?

IG She read both of them. She read and plays too, I'm telling you.

DA And she plays jazz and
(Lots of talk, indecipherable)

BP I tell you another jazz piano player they had around here that was related to me. What her name? Nellie Reese?

IG Yeah.

BP Nellie Reese.

IG She's dead though.

BP Yeah, she was a good piano player though. Nellie Reese.

DA I never heard of her.

BP No, I know you didn't cause she's dead now.
(Indecipherable)

BP All her sisters were all school teachers.

DA What did R.D. play, now?

IG Drums. He played drums.

DA Who was in that first band he played with?

IG I was. Let's see, it was R.D., myself, and uh, who was the other boys -- Charlie Brudin and, I don't know, I can't remember everybody, but I do remember it was Charlie Brudin and R.D. They started out.

DA How many people in the band?

IG Oh, it was round about six or seven.

BP And Alphonse played trumpet with you

IG Well, he came in, true enough, but what I meant, he's just telling when they started off.

BP Oh, starting off - yeah.

DA Who is Alphonse?

IG Alphonse Gamble -- he's a trumpet player. He worked with all of us, too.

DA Alphonse Gambler?

IG Gamble. Uh-huh. G a m b l e. He was a fine trumpet player, but he doesn't play anymore. He had all his teeth pulled, so he don't play anymore.

BP That was Dee Dee's buddy.

IG He works at the post office, he's something at the post office now.

DA Well, tell me, when you were starting out.

IG Uh-huh

DA The bands down here, did they play like Buddy Petit and, on that order, or would they play strictly in reading or what?

IG Well, the boys actually would be playing just ear music, but they know how to read, some of them. They were just young starting out, you see. We'd go out and get gigs. We'd make good gigs money. So, sometimes, you know, some could read, but mostly we would be playing by anything we hear, we could go and play if they had a good ear on them, you see.

DA Did they play like New Orleans music or

IG No, unh-unh, no, we didn't have that dixie swing back in New Orleans the way we play our music.

DA Well, what was the difference?

IG Oh, it was quite different between the New Orleans music and our music.

DA Well, I've always been curious to know what the difference was.

IG Well, it's a lot of different. Right today, it's a lot of different in orchestration from New Orleans over here.

DA Who carried the melody down here?

IG Who carried the melody?

DA Yeah.

IG Well, we has, just like a, uh, trumpet, and let me see now. Wait now. The piano, trumpet, bass and the, and the, piano, bass, and the drummer, I'm trying to say, and they had one of them, what you call them horns,

BP Sax?

(Tape dragging - hard to tell who was talking)

IG No, no. Bass horns. Bass horns. That was four instruments for the bass and then the reed section was the, two sax, we had an alto and that other, what Wally Mercer blow,

BP He play soprano, no, he play tenor

IG Tenor, I'm trying to say, we had first and second, alto and tenor, and then trumpet, and then we had a girl to sing with. We had a nice combination alright.

DP Sure did.

DA And it was different from New Orleans. Who would carry the melody the most of the time though when the whole band was playing?

BP Well, everybody mostly. I tell you the whole band was playing. Whoever take the solo, you see, we would back them up. The whole background. Just like Dee Dee gonna take a solo, you know a trumpet solo, then the other party took the other solo, back him up and things like that. The piano player was just like I take a solo, why then the saxophone would just back me up.

(Tape dragging)

DA Billie

BP Yeah baby.

DA I want you to explain the difference between New Orleans music and Pensacola music, as soon as I can get a new reel on here.

(Side 2 - starts out with music - don't know who)

DA I want to move this bird cage, alright?

IG Yeah.

DA Let's put this over here and then if ya'll want to sing or anything we can put the microphone right up here. Right up here. If I ever can untangle the cord. Here, I got it now. I got it now. We got it baby, don't worry about nothing.

BP Don't worry about the mule going _____, I'm right here to hold the line.

DA You're right here to hold the line, uh? O.K., what you want to do Billie?

BP (Indecipherable)

DA I know what I'd like to hear.

BP What?

DA We were talking about it in the car. I don't know if you know the words. "Lordy, Miss Claudie."

BP No, I don't know that words.

DA Can you play it?

BP Unh-unh. Never could.

DA Well, what about "When I Lost My Baby, I Almost Lost My Mind?"

BP Yeah.

DA You can play that?

BP Yeah.

DA Alright. Why don't you just play it and not sing it, if you don't remember the words.

BP I can, no, I can play it, but I ain't gonna sing it.

DA Don't sing it, just play it. Alright, fine.

[Horn playing in background, possibly Dee Dee, then piano begins accompanied by horn -- possibly Dee Dee and Billie - "When I Lost My Baby, I Almost Lost My Mind"]

DA What you want to play now? It's up to you.

BP I play anything, anything you want me to play. Just like we're playing for something. You know.

DA This isn't supposed to be anything special, you know.

BP No, this ain't nothing special.

DA It's not like a regular recording or fun.

BP Oh, we'll just play anything, just for fun.

[Playing --Billie Pierce, accompanied by possibly Dee Dee on horn - "The Boogie"]

DA You don't have a name for it, uh? Just the Riff.

DP Florida Riff, anything. Just put Florida Riff on it.

BP Put Florida Riff, Florida Riff (laughter).

[Playing "How Long, How Long Blues" - believe Billie singing, accompanied by Dee Dee on horn]

BP I love Leroy Clark

DA I love all Leroy Clark numbers. Great numbers that he sang.

DP Uh-uh. He be good with music.

DA Alright, well, let's move the microphone so that (indecipherable) You want to run back and see how your voice came out, Billie?

BP Yeah. Yeah, roll back the tape.

DA Say something for me Sammie.

ST Hi.

DA Say it again.

ST Hi.

DA O.K., sing loud, just for a second.

ST [Sings "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"]

DA So, Sammie Lee, whenever you're ready, ya'll can stomp off.

IG Say, my name is Sammie Lee Thomas. I can sing

ST My name is Sammie Lee Thomas. I can sing "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot."

[Sammie Lee Thomas sings "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" accompanied by Ida Goodson.]

DA That's Swing Low Sweet Freight Train.

IG Oh, the freight train.

DA We got the freight train over here. Well, you want to sing one now and maybe we'll have you sing it again when the freight train is gone. (Laughter) Look, we can talk a little while the freight train's here. Alright, now tell me about some of those New Orleans bands you heard here, Ida.

IG Well, that's right. I heard Celestin. And I heard Louis Armstrong.

DA Who is Louis Armstrong?

IG You know who Louis Armstrong is. Don't you know Papa? Well, he's one of those great trumpet players.

DA I've heard of him somewhere.

IG And then, uh, we had a band from New Orleans came here by the name of, uh, (mumbling), Papa Celestin, oh, I don't know, I can't remember the other names, it's been so long.

DA Do you remember Danny Barker?

IG Oh, yes, I do remember Danny Barker.

DA I write to him.

IG You do write to him?

DA Yeah. He's in New York now doing well.

IG Is he?

DA He's playing banjo in a play.

IG Is that so?

DA Yeah. It's all about Germany. Can you believe it or not? And he plays in the pit. It's all about when they closed down the district in Germany.

IG I bet it was something, too. (Lots of laughter)

DA Well, I can't tell you any more in front of the children. (Lots of laughter). But old Danny, he wrote me all about it.

IG Is that so?

DA But he's doing well.

IG Is that so?

DA And he's writing a play himself.

IG You say.

DA It oughta be good. He's a good writer.

IG Glad to hear that.

DA I think we have time for you to sing _____
[Ida plays and sings "A Good Man/Woman Is Hard To Find"]

IG Indecipherable.

DA Really? We have to take your advice, huh?

IG That's right. (Lots of talk in the background)

DA Billie?

BP Yeah, baby.

DA You gonna play something now with Dee Dee?

- DP Yeah, yeah, I'll play something.
- DA She wants to take a little break. Well, I tell you what, we'll run this reel off unless you've got something special to sing because we're about to run out of tape. Let's run it off.
- BP Just run it off and get through with it.
- DA Let's get a new tape on here. I want you to give these girls some advice before we turn the tape off here. Billie is good at this now. What advice you got to give them Billie?
- BP Good advice to give em?
- DA Uh-huh.
- BP Ya'll just watch Billie. I'll tell you what to do. (Laughter) Watch me. I'll tell ya'll exactly what to do!