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November 1, 1961 Also present: William Russell, Harold Dejan

Interview recorded at 1109 South Galvez Street, New Orleans

Frederick C. "Achie" Minor was born December 8, 1913, on Perdido Street between Roman and Bolivar Streets in New Orleans.

An uncle, Christopher Minor, was and is a drummer; Chris Minor lives on Pauger between Claiborne and Derbigny, about two doors from Claiborne; he is about 61 or 62 years old. WR says Professor [Manuel] Manetta talks of playing with Minor years ago, in the District, and that Manetta is about 72 years old. [Chris Minor played with Joe "King" Oliver in the 1910's, I believe. Cf. Walter C. Allen and Brian Rust, King Joe Oliver and other interviews. RBA]

FM's first instrument was the ukelele; he was 10 or 12 years old then; he next took up banjo, studying for a time with "Son" Thomas, banjo player who worked with Kid Rena. FM and others started a spasm band in school. When FM quit studying with Thomas, he continued with Walter Preston. FM began playing with John Casimir, who was from FM's neighborhood; FM also played with Kid Clayton. During the summer, he and the spasm band went to Biloxi [Mississippi]. Some of the personnel of Casimir's during the time FM played with them: "Wooden Joe" [Nicholas], (trumpet, says HD); [Willie] Cornish, trombone; usually Joe Gabriel, but sometimes Bob Lyons, bass (Clarence Gabriel, no relation to Joe Gabriel, is mentioned; August Lanoix is mentioned as in-law of Clarence Gabriel). The first job FM ever played was for a houseparty on Canal Boulevard; he played banjo; George White, brother of pianist Leon Mumford, played piano. The Casimir band and the Clayton band were playing casual engagements when FM worked with them; the time was around 1929-1930. FM next joined John Handy and the Louisiana Shakers; Handy was still [sic] playing alto saxophone then. Personell of the Handy band: Alexis Ricard [i. e., Ricard Alexis],

Willie Pajaud, [Albert?] Duconge, trumpets; Morris French, trombone; Roy Evans, drums; old man [Henry] Kimball, bass; Handy, alto sax; George Clark, the late Edward Bottley, saxes; FM, banjo. WR mentions Buddy Bottley, balloonist of earlier years; FM says Edward Bottley was no relation. When FM left Handy, he joined Walter Pichon's band, playing for blues singer Mamie Smith on a vaudeville circuit. Personnel of the Pichon band: Theadore Purnell, George Clark, Edward Bottley, saxes; Chester Zardis, bass; "big Foot Bill" [Phillips], drums; Pichon, piano; FM, banjo; "Clifford" Brown, [Hunter?] Gardette, trumpets; Merritt [perhaps], from out of town, trombone. The engagement with Mamie Smith was during the Depression, around 1935-36. HD adds that Walter was living on Claiborne near Columbus at this time. [Cf. city directories. RBA.] WR heard that Mamie Smith later (around 1940) married a rich man and settled down, with him, on New York's Riverside Drive. The tour with Mamie Smith was mostly through the South; the vaudeville circuit they played was not part of the T[heatrical] O[perators] B[ooking] A[gency] circuit; TOBA was an earlier endeavor. WR mentions Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith. MS sang "[Golfin?] Papa." FM agrees with HD that Mamie Smith had a voice something like that of Blanche Thomas. The band with Mamie Smith consisted of about ten pieces including a singer; Sidney Hansel, who now runs a place [?] in Port Sulphur [Louisiana] but originally from New Orleans, was the singer with the band [i. e., as a regular member of the band]. He sang mostly ballads of the time. The band played with Mamie Smith seven or eight months; when it broke up at that time, FM returned to NEw Orleans and joined [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin's band; he remained on the road with Celestin's band about one year. Personnel of Celestin's band then: Bill Matthews, trombone; John Porter, sousaphone; Andy Anderson, [Henri "Kildee"] Holloway,

Celestin, trumpets (HD says the band being discussed was later than the one in which Guy Kelly played: FM agrees); FM, banjo [& guitar?] (he replaced Narvin Kimball, the postman, who joined the P. W. A. [i. e., W. P. A.] Band; WR says Kimball played bass [at Preservation Hall] the other night); "Little" Cato, piano (He is now in California); either [Gaudet?] or Lawrence [Trotter?], drums. [Cf. Lawrence Trotter, reel ?] FM had switched to guitar by that time. WR says [Abbey] "Chinee" [Foster, drums] had already left the Celestin band. The band traveled through Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Arkansas and Texas. FM doesn't recall that Celestin had two bands, one on tour and one playing in New Orleans, s WR heard. HD says perhaps the separation between Celestin's Tuxedo Band and [William "Bébé"] Ridgley's Tuxedo Band had been overlooked, causing some to think Celestin had two bands. [Celestin had two bands when he was in the Paddock. This was before WR moved to New Orleans. Cf. interviews with Paul Barnes; Adolphe Alexander, Jr.; Ricard Alexis, Octave Crosby. RBA.] HD traveled with Ridgley's Tuxedo in the [19]20's; some of the personnel: HD [clarinet ? and alto sax]; Emma Barrett [, piano]; Gilbert Young, Leo Dejan (HD's brother) [, trumpets]; a trombone player who wore his tuxedo all the time and managed to look neater than the rest of the band, who changed clothes when traveling. [Cf. HD, reel ?]

FM played banjo and guitar with Celestin's band; when he returned to New Orleans, he joined [A. J.] Piron's band, playing guitar only; the band played on the boat, taking it to St. Louis and playing one season [during the warmer months]. When FM left Piron, he joined Joe Robichaux's band, a sixteen-piece group. FM didn't record with that band, as he joined Walter Pichon's six-piece band shortly before the Robichaux outfit went to New York to record.

WR says he was [at his home] in [Canton,] Missouri during 1936-37, and that he recalls seeing a boat which advertised Piron's band; the boat stopped at Quincy, Illinois, a nearby town, but WR didn't go to hear the band. FM says they played three of the boats: the Capital, the J. S., and the President. Personnel of the Piron band then: Leo Dejan, Joe Phillips [, trumpets]; Eddie Pierson, trombone; Louis Cottrell [, Jr.], Oscar Rouzan, Elliott Taylor, saxes; Sidney Montague, drums; Booker Washington, bass; Louis Given, piano; FM, guitar.

FM likes guitar and banjo; at HD's suggestion he prefers the one with which he can make the most money; the current favorite is the banjo. He can also play trumpet, but considers himself quite limited. His sons have and play various instruments, including drums and piano.

The trips FM made with Piron on the boats were before the [World] War [II]. FM joined Sidney Desvigne's band when the War began; he remained with Desvigne until after the War. Then he joined Paul Barbarin. HD says Desvigne had a big band.

FM played one season [i. e., the winter months?] in New Orleans and one season [i. e., the summer months?] in St. Louis with Piron on the boats; the boats made no long trips after that. FM played with Piron for about two years in all. WR and HD talk of the older Piron band, which comprised, in part: Louis Cottrell, Sr., drums; Peter Bocage [, trumpet]; Charlie Bocage [, banjo]; Lorenzo Tio [, Jr., clarinet and tenor sax]; Louis Warnick, alto sax; Steve Lewis, piano (who was very popular according to HD.)

The Desvigne band played only in New Orleans; they played at the San Jacinto Club and at the Gypsy Tea Room, among other places. HD says the Desvigne band played at the Gypsy Tea Room when he himself had the alternating band there; there were two bands on Sunday; HD had a "mixed" band; he explains that he means he had some civilians and some service personnel; he himself was in the Navy at the time. Personnel of the Desvigne band then: Joe Phillips, Alvin Alcorn, Sidney Desvigne, trumpets; Eddie Pierson, trombone; another trombonist, from across the river, "a brownskin boy [who] collect[s] insurance," a man now in his thirties who doesn't

play anymore; Louis Cottrell, Jr., Oscar Rouzan, Sam Lee, saxes; William Houston [, piano]; Louis Barbarin [, drums]; Narvin Kimball, bass. FM was with that band three or four years.

When he left Desvigne, FM organized the Four Tones: Kimball, Louis Barbarin, Alvin Alcorn, FM; they sang and played for engagements around town; they sometimes played on programs before or after visiting bands, such as Louis Armstrong or [Nat] "King" Cole, performed.

The music FM heard earliest was by bands playing on trucks; he heard Guy Kelly, Kid Rena, Punch [Miller], Georgie Boyd (a clarinetist who lived three or four doors from FM). HD recalls that GB could make his clarinet talk and that when he worked at the Willow Inn with Boyd, Boyd would sometimes send John Casimir to take his place.

When FM first began playing, banjo players such as Walter Preston, Kid [i. e., Son?] Thomas and Charlie Bocage were not playing the style of banjo played by later players; the later players, such as Narvin Kimball, [Emmanuel] Sayles (with whom FM studied), Rene Hall, Ferdinand Dejan, Walter Williams, [as HD suggests both] Danny "Son Do" Barker, and Harry Fairconnetue (from the Mississippi Gulf Coast) were playing solos on the banjo. Banjo was in style when FM was growing up; he remembers having a recording by Louis Armstrong's Hot Five with Johnny St. Cyr playing guitar. HD says John Marrero was one of the best banjo players; WR says George Guesnon [another banjo player] admired Marrero. FM also studied with Percy Severe, who came from Mississippi, perhaps from Jackson. [When I last heard of him, he was in Natchez^Z. RBA.] FM knew of Severe when Severe played with Sidney Desvigne's band. HD says Lucien Johnson brought a banjo player to New Orleans; the banjo player was Harry [Featherford's? or Pettiford's?] brother; he was very good.

FM studied with Narvin Kimball, Emmanuel Sayles, and Percy Severe.

FM saw a lot of parades although he could not follow them; he lived around the corner from the Dewey's Club and from the Tulane Club; the former was on Roman between Perdido and Gravier. Dewey's Club house is now a large [private] house [i.

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e., a residence?]; the club was a social and pleasure club; Louis Armstrong played funerals from that club. FM first saw Alvin Alcorn playing with a band there.

End of Reel I

November 1, 1961 Also present: William Russell, Harold Dejan, Mrs. Raymond Brown

The Deweys Club was in Existence when Louis Armstrong, "Black Benny" [Williams], and others were playing parades; although the club is no longer active, some of the ex-members are still living in the area, hanging out at Jim's Place, which is a barroom on Perdido between Roman and Bolivar.

HD says FM's father-in-law, Raymond Brown [now dead?], was a wonderful trombonist; "he was on the road with us when I was with [Clarence] Desdune." FM never played with Brown.

Some of the musicians playing before FM could go into places to hear them are still playing today; two of them are [Willie] Pajaud and Alfred Williams.

Some good banjo players of the time when FM was "coming up" were Rene Hall (now living in California), [Emmanuel] Sayles, and Percy [Severe].

FM's first banjo was a cheap instrument colored red, white and blue; he got it because it was pretty; WR says George Guesnon decorates his banjo. FM now has a Vega, which he bought from Eddie Dawson. FM says [Narvin] Kimball has two expensive banjos; WR says Lawrence Marrero had an expensive banjo. HD says Harry Fairconnetue still has the same good banjo; Fairconnetue played with HD and Raymond Brown [in Clarence Desdune's band]. HD says Fairconnetue lives in Bay St. Louis [Mississippi]; a fine clarinetist named Warren Bennett lives there; there is also an old clarinetist, [Sumner] Labat, living there at one time; FM says [John] Handy lived there, too. [See JH interviews.] HD says Fairconnetue traveled with Clarence Desdune's band, in which HD played after he left Ridgley's Tuxedo Band; "and also Warren Bennett, and just stayed around here a long time." HD played with the Bay St. Louis bands on the coast sometimes.

The old brass bands FM remembers were the Tuxedo Band and the Imperial; the latter was led by [cornetist] Manuel Perez. FM and HD agree that some of the men who played in those bands are still around; among them are [Jim] "Jim Crow" [Robinson, trombone] and [Adolph] "Tats" [Alexander, Jr.], the latter a member of the Imperial Brass Band and also the Imperial Serenaders. HD thinks [Eddie] Cherrie is still alive; he knows that Cherrie's son is still alive.

Raymond Brown's widow is asked about Brown's associates, including [Nolan]

"Shine" [Williams] and George McCullum. Mrs. B. says her husband died about 25 years ago. He played in some of the [gambling?] clubs on Jefferson Highway; he played in Texas with the band of his tenor sax playing brother, Bat Brown. "Clifford" Brown [son of Raymond, and actually Raymond, Jr.] began playing trumpet when he was about 16 years old; Mrs. B. recalls that the last band Clifford played with was that of [Walter] Pichon, on the steamer Capital^o; Clifford played his way to New York [not on the Capital^o--PRC], where he decided to stay. FM, Mrs. B. and HD mention names of musicians [who played with Raymond and/or Clifford Brown?]: "Gopher" a piano player; "Walter that died" (says FM); "Shine;" George McCullum; George Cobette; Alvin Alcorn (related to Mc Cullum, says Wr. [Cf. Alcorn interview.] HD says Alcorn replaced McCullum in the [Desdune] band when Mc Cullum returned to New Orleans to attend the birth of his child); Benny, a pianist now dead--not Benny Turner, also a pianist, who still lives in Algiers. Raymond Brown was 39 years old when he died. He learned trombone by himself, playing in Mardi Gras parades and other parades; he later got a teacher. [He clowned with his trombone on Mardi Gras at first?] Brown, who married at 16, was about 18 when he took up trombone. A photograph of Brown is produced and scrutinized.

HD mentions a band [i. e., Bat Brown's?] which played in Texas; he can't recall the name of the band, but two members were "Fats" [Albert Martin?], drums, and Davy Jones, tenor saxophone; Jones at one time worked at the Tic Toc [in New Orleans?]

WR mentions that FM had said he worked with [John] Casimir. WR mentions Chris Kelly. FM worked across the street, at the Astoria with [John] Handy's band, from the Pelican, where Kid Rena was working; others in Rena's band [Rena played trumpet]: Davy Jones; Edgar Saucier, Joe René[sic], drums; Son Thomas [banjo]. The band which followed [Handy's band into the Astoria?] was the Jones-Collins Hot Six, with Davy Jones, [Theodore] Purnell, Lee Collins et al. FM says, "Oh, Rena could play; he was a solid trumpet player... He was still pretty good during the time he was sick (when WR heard him)." HD says Rena was called "Little Turk."

HD identifies Clifford Brown in a photograph. FM identifies "Doodle," a tenor

saxophone player now living in California. HD identifies one photograph as having been taken at the Apollo Theater, in New York City; HD used to see "Pigmeat" Markham there every week; when HD was in New York then, Danny Barker was playing with Lucky Millinder.

Mrs. B. mentions the Texas band with whom her husband played; Benny [piano player mentioned earlier?] was in the band; Bat Brown, Raymond Brown's brother, was in the band [and leader?].

FM's uncle, Chris [Minor] is mentioned; he is still working; he is in the low sixties in age. He worked at Tom Anderson's, with [Manuel] Manetta, says WR, playing music, many years ago; he quit playing before FM started playing.

End of Reel II