

Crescent City Living Legends Collection--New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation archive/WWOZ New Orleans (1973-1990)

Added to the National Registry: 2002

Essay by Bill deTurk (guest post)*



Robert Pete Williams



Queen Ida



James Booker

In 2002, a collection of recordings compiled by the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation and WWOZ 90.7 FM New Orleans were compiled and selected to be added to the National Recording Registry of the Library of Congress.

The following is a listing of the 34 tracks in the Collection. The date of the recording and the length (in minutes and seconds) of each track will be noted first, followed by a brief description. All the interviews in this collection were recorded live from the Music Heritage Stage at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

The stage is now named the Allison Miner Music Heritage after being dedicated to her in 2001. Allison was a major contributor to the New Orleans music scene for 25 years and helped found the Festival in 1970. She helped run Jazz Fest for its first five years and, after some time away from the city, returned to take over the Music Heritage Stage in 1988. Allison coordinated hundreds of fascinating interviews there until her death in 1995 at the age of only 46.

1 – April 29, 1990 (27:46) **Danny Barker** interviewed by Jerry Brock.

Daniel Moses Barker was born in New Orleans on January 13, 1909 and died on March 13, 1994. He was a composer, musician and legendary raconteur. He performed with scores of well-known artists over the years, but, perhaps, his greatest legacy is his work with the Fairview Baptist Church Band in New Orleans which was pivotal in producing generations of new jazz talent. Wynton and Branford Marsalis, Dr. Michael White, Leroy Jones and many other youths played with this group.

2 – February 2, 1983 (58:22) **James Booker** performs solo piano and sings at Tipitina's.

James Carroll Booker III was born in New Orleans on December 17, 1939 and died November 8, 1983. He was only 43. His unique musical genius and flamboyant style earned him nicknames such as the “Black Liberace” and the “Bayou Maharajah.”

New Orleans native and American music legend Allen Toussaint says this about Booker in a 2013 “Offbeat” magazine article written by David Kunian:

There are some instances in his playing that are very unusual and highly complex, but the groove is never sacrificed. Within all the romping and stomping in his music, there were complexities in it that, if one tried to emulate it, what you heard and what excited you on the surface was supported by some extreme technical acrobatics finger-wise that made his music extraordinary as far as I'm concerned. And most of all, it always felt wonderful.... He was an extraordinary musician, both soul wise and groove wise.... He was just an amazing musician.

3 – May 6, 1990 (45:21) **William Thomas “Champion Jack” Dupree** is interviewed by Allen Toussaint.

Champion Jack was probably born on July 4, 1910 in New Orleans and died January 21, 1992. As a youth, he taught himself how to play the piano. He earned his nickname from the 107 bouts he fought as a boxer.

4 – April 29, 1990 (57:05) **Reverend Leon Pinson** and **Elder Roma Wilson** are interviewed by Worth Long.

Both Reverend Leon (1919-1998) and Elder Roma (1910- 2018) were born in rural Mississippi and were known for performing down-home gospel.

5 – April 28, 1990 (30:05) **Wilson Anthony “Boozoo” Chavis** is interviewed by Allison Miner. A highlight from the interview is Boozoo talking about his most famous song, “Paper in My Shoe.” He recorded it when he was only 25 in 1955 and shares how it is about being poor, “I used to go to school with no socks, put a paper in my shoe to keep my feet warm.”

6 – May 4, 1990 (36:35) **D. L. Menard** with **Eddie LeJuene** and **Kim Smith** are interviewed by Allison Miner.

Doris Leon Menard was born in Erath, LA, on April 14, 1932 and died on July 27, 2017. Known as the “Cajun Hank Williams.” According to noted Cajun folklorist Barry Jean Ancelet, his song “La Porte En Arrière (The Back Door)” is the most played and recorded Cajun song ever.

7 – April 28, 1990 (51:13) **Thomas Edison “Brownie” Ford** is interviewed by Allison Miner.

Brownie was born in Gum Springs, OK, in 1904, and died in 1996. Many of his cowboy ballads and stories were inspired by his experiences as a ranch hand and rodeo rider.

8 – May 6, 1989 (45:12) **Bo Dollis** – Big Chief of the Wild Magnolias – with **Thomas Landry**, **Johnny Stephens** and **Lawrence Harrison** are interviewed by Allison Miner.

A highlight from this interview happens during Allison’s introduction where she talks about how the first New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival (held in Congo Square--now Armstrong Park--at the back of the French Quarter in 1970) had such a poor turnout that they sent the participating Mardi Gras Indians to Jackson Square (a primary tourist attraction about six blocks away on the other side of the French Quarter) to start a parade with the hope that people would follow them back to the Fest. It did not happen, but Allison notes it “was wonderful nevertheless, because it was the first time the Indians agreed to come out and be commercially involved in the music business.”

9 – April 30, 1989 (59:19) **James “Son Ford” Thomas** with **Walter Liniger** interviewed by Allison Miner.

Son Ford was born near Eden, MS, in 1926. He is a widely celebrated figure in the evolution of Delta blues. He also sculpted hundreds of unfired clay pieces throughout his life.

10 – April 28, 1990 (68:49) **Al Broussard** interviewed by Alison Miner.

This interview is highlighted by the 84-year-old’s story about his recent trip to play for the Queen of England and features several boogie-woogie piano demonstrations.

11 – 1973 (24:08) **Jewell “Babe” Stovall** and **Brother Percy Randolph** perform gospel-influenced Delta blues at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

Babe was born in Tylertown, MS, on October 14, 1907. In 1964, he relocated to New Orleans and performed regularly. He often mentored young white musicians in county blues and guitar techniques. He died on September 21, 1974.

12 – 1973 (12:10) The **Olympia Brass Band** performs at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

The first incarnation of this band was active from the late 19th century to around World War I, one of its most famous members was cornet player Freddie Keppard. In 1958, saxophonist Harold Dejean started a new group and revived this historic name.

Coincidentally, 1973 is the same year that the Olympia had a memorable role in Roger Moore’s first James Bond film, “Live and Let Die.” Early in the film, they lead a funeral second line

through the French Quarter for a victim assassinated during the parade. Trumpeter Alvin Alcorn played the part of the killer.

13 – April 15, 1973 (24:18) The **Kid Thomas Jazz Band** performs at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

“Kid” Thomas Valentine was born in Reserve, LA, in 1897; he died in 1987. He came to New Orleans as a youth, gained a reputation as a hot trumpet man, and lead a popular dance band for decades. From the 1960s through the 1980s, his band performed regularly at the legendary Preservation Hall.

14 – 1973 (23:15) This is another recording from the Jazz Fest’s **Jewell “Babe” Stovall** and **Brother Percy Randolph** recording from this year (see track 11). Babe plays guitar and Brother Percy is on washboard.

15 – April 29, 1989 (60:57) **Inez Catalon, Lula Landry** and **Marce LaCouture** are interviewed by Nick Spitzer.

One of the interesting points from this segment is that it highlights the rarely represented role of women in Cajun music.

16 – May 4, 1990 (31:30) **Charles Brown** is interviewed by Allen Toussaint.

Tony Russell “Charles” Brown was born in Texas City, TX, on September 13, 1922 and died January 21, 1999. His piano style and smooth vocal first made him popular in the late 1940s. His biggest hits were “Driftin’ Blues” and “Merry Christmas Baby.” Allen Toussaint conducting the interview also allows for some technical music discussion.

17 – February 2, 1983 (21:19) This is another recording from **James Booker**’s performance at Tipitina’s (see track 2).

18 – 1973 (23:54) **Robert Pete Williams** performs solo--on guitar, kazoo, and vocals--at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. He was a blues musician born in Zachary, LA, on March 14, 1914; he died on December 31,1980. Many of his songs were about the 12 years he spent in prison.

19 – April 14, 1973 (24:09) This is another **Robert Pete Williams** New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival performance.

20 – April 13, 1973 (5:37) The **Como Fife and Drum Corps** perform at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. This aggregation offers a historic and rural interpretation to what people often think of as strict military bands from centuries ago.

21 – April 14, 1973 (24:17) Another performance of the **Como Fife and Drum Corps** from the following day (see track 20).

22 – April 15, 1973 (12:11) The **Olympia Brass Band** perform on the first part of this track and **Doug Kershaw** performs on the second part at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

We already explored the Olympia on track 12. Douglas James Kershaw was born on January 24, 1936 in Tiel Ridge, Louisiana. He learned to play fiddle by the time he was eight and eventually mastered 28 instruments. His biggest hit, “Louisiana Man,” sold millions of copies and has been covered by over 800 artists! Perhaps more fascinating, it was broadcast back to Earth from the crew of the Apollo XII Moon mission in November of 1969.

23 – April 14, 1973 (12:17) This is another split performance from the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival with the **Olympia Brass Band** for the first four minutes or so, followed by an unidentified gospel group.

24 – April 14, 1973 (12:13) The first half of this track is a performance at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival by the **Onward Brass Band** and the second half features **Clifton Chenier**.

Not unlike the Olympia which we have already discussed, the Onward Brass Band had an original incarnation from about 1886 to 1930 and was revived decades later. One of the more famous members of the original band was Joseph Nathan “King” Oliver. In 1960, Paul Barbarin and Louis Cottrell, Jr. put the new ensemble together.

Clifton Chenier was born in Opelousas, LA, on June 25, 1925. He was one of the founders of zydeco music, a Grammy Award winner, an inductee to the Blues Hall of Fame, and a 2014 recipient of the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award. He died on December 12, 1987.

25 – 1973 (9:28) **Professor Longhair** – Henry Roeland Byrd – performs at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival.

Fess was born in Bogalusa, LA, on December 19, 1918. He recorded the first version of his signature song, “Mardi Gras in New Orleans,” in 1949 and he’s considered a major influence on such world famous New Orleans artists as Fats Domino, Allen Toussaint, and Dr. John.

The venue mentioned on earlier tracks (2 and 17), where James Booker performed--Tipitina’s, was named after one of Fess’s most popular songs, “Tipitina.” It was founded, in no small part, as place for him to perform in his later years. He died on January 30, 1980.

26 – April 14, 1973 (11:35) **Kid Thomas** performs at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival the day before the recording of his band appears on track 13.

27 – April 28, 1990 (35:38) **Samuel Bercet** is interviewed by Allison Miner.

At the time of the interview, he was leader of the group Dimensions of Faith and known for making peaceful gospel music for over 21 years.

28 – April 28, 1990 (30:16) **Ruth Brown** is interviewed by Allison Miner.

Ruth was born in Portsmouth, VA, on January 12, 1928 and died November 17, 2006. She was the first female artist signed to Atlantic Records as well as being a Tony and Grammy winner.

29 – April 27, 1990 (26:47) **Milford Doliolo** is interviewed by Allison Miner.

He was drummer born 1903 in New Orleans. One highlight from the interview is when he demonstrates drum rhythms commonly played in New Orleans; one, a dirge for a jazz funeral and the other, a second-line beat.

30 – April 25, 1992 (38:38) **Lynn August** – Joseph Leonard August, Jr. – is interviewed by Allison Miner.

He is a blind zydeco musician born in Lafayette, LA, on August 7, 1948.

31 – April 25, 1992 (43:54) **Huey Lewis** – Hugh Anthony Cregg III – is interviewed by Allison Miner during first ever Jazz Fest appearance.

32 – May 5, 1991 (46:16) **Oliver Morgan** is interviewed by Rick Coleman.

Oliver was born in New Orleans on May 6, 1933. In 1964, he recorded his only national hit, “Who Shot the La La,” about the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of Lawrence “Prince La La” Nelson at the age of 27 in 1963. Oliver Morgan died on July 31, 2007.

33 – April 4, 1991 (28:57) **Johnny Adams** – “The Tan Canary” – is interviewed by Allison Miner.

Laten John Adams, Jr. was born, the oldest of 10 children, in New Orleans on January 5, 1932. He died on September 14, 1998.

34 – April 28, 1991 (29:25) **Queen Ida** – Ida Lee Lewis Guillory – is interviewed by Allison Miner.

Queen Ida was born just outside of Lake Charles, LA, on January 15, 1929. She was, likely, the first female accordion player to lead a zydeco band. She played the instrument at a time when girls did not do such a thing. One highlight from the interview is when she recalls when she worked as a school bus driver and would practice the accordion in secret while waiting to transport the kids.

- The order of the tracks correspond to the audio file at the Archive, not necessarily to the listing on the website.

The complete listing of this collection can be found online by visiting <https://www.jazzandheritage.org/archive>, clicking “Search the Collection” and entering “Crescent City Living Legends.”

On the next page, click “sound recording” in the left-hand box for the list of the 34 tracks. A greater synopsis of most of the interviews are detailed here. The actual audio is not available online but can be listened to, in person, at the Foundation’s archive at 901 Toulouse Street in New Orleans.

The Jazz & Heritage Foundation Archive is open to the public by appointment only. For more information, contact the Archive at 504-558-6138 or archive@JazzAndHeritage.org.

Note: I would like to thank Rachel and Dolores at the Archive without whom this annotation would not have been possible.

Bill deTurk is a columnist for “Louisiana Kitchen & Culture” magazine where his illuminating and entertaining columns “Bill on Booze” and “Bill on Tunes” have been featured in every issue since the publication’s premiere in 2012. On the airwaves for over 22 years, he has hosted “The Louisiana Music Party” on award-winning New Orleans WWOZ 90.7 FM and wwoz.org streaming around the world.

*The views expressed in this essay are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Library of Congress.