

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Oscar Davis

COLLECTION: 4700.0755

IDENTIFICATION: Baton Rouge Blues Musician

INTERVIEWER: Jo Jackson

SERIES: Baton Rouge Blues

INTERVIEW DATE: March 4, 1997

FOCUS DATES: 1960 -1997

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1095

Family background; recalls music being played in his home as a child; brother [John Davis] teaches him how to play harmonica; begins playing drums in 1970; decides to concentrate on harmonica; discusses musical influences; Davis plays with wide variety of local blues musicians; discusses Raful Neal's influence on his music; discusses Tabby Thomas' influence on his career and music; Davis does not think Tabby Thomas treats musicians fairly; discusses CD recorded in Baton Rouge; reflects on pleasure derived from entertaining people; differences between playing for a black audience and a white audience; lists his favorite Baton Rouge blues musicians; memories of Silas Hogan, "Whispering" Smith, Bo Melvin, and Clarence Edwards; Davis' mother died when he was five years old; lives with grandmother; stopped attending school at an early age; begins working to help support family; marries wife, Barbara, at the age of twenty-one; Barbara dies of heart failure in 1992; remarries twice; discusses current wife Rena; discusses impacts of playing music on social life; dislikes prevalent drug and alcohol abuse among many blues musicians; refrains from drug and alcohol use while playing; recalls tour in Colorado with Larry Garner; reveals method used to get a very distinctive sound on the harmonica; discusses guitar players in his band, Alfred Jackson and Wil Jackson; problems with other guitar players in the past; problems financing CD; lack of profits from CD sales; recognizes Troy Turner and Chris Thomas as possible future blues stars in Baton Rouge; discusses difference in styles of black and white musicians; joins first band at the age of seventeen; discusses Ronnie Houston's drumming style; Tabby Thomas gives Davis the nickname of "Oscar Harpo."

TAPES: 1 (T1095)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 1 minute

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 46 pages

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL: Index (2 pgs), Proper name list

RESTRICTIONS: None