

**BATON ROUGE FOLKLIFE SURVEY
AUDIO RECORDING LOG**

Audio Log #	DMM-BRFS-23A	Photo Log #	DMM-BRFS-23P	I.D. Form #	DMM-BRFS-23
Interviewer(s)	Douglas Manger		Date & Time 1st Interview	02/03/15	09:00 a.m.
Recording Title (informants or event)			5454 Government Street Baton Rouge, LA 70806		
Location of Interview			Brown and Brown Custom Clothiers		
Recording Equipment		Olympus Digital Recorder (Linear PCM Recorder), LS-11			
Format	Waveform Audio	Length of Interview	(1) 05:47 (02/03/15)	(4) 09:22 (02/05/15)	
			(2) 23:27 (02/03/15)	(5) 07:15 (02/10/15)	
			(3) 12:29 (02/05/15)	---	

Time	LS110357	Interviewee
00:00	Introduction	Eugene Brown, Sr.
00:38	Brown grew up in Savannah, Georgia. Graduated from high school, then attended Georgia Southern University. Taught school for a year and a half in Savannah. Worked part-time on the side in a clothing store.	
01:42	Liked the clothing business. Took full time employment with a company that had clothing stores in "Historically Black College and University" (HBCU) communities. Company transferred him to Baton Rouge to open up a new branch store. Baton Rouge is home to Southern University. After four years, Brown bought them out.	

02:51	New store, Fashions Limited, located downtown Baton Rouge. Later changed the name of his business to Brown and Brown Custom Clothiers moving from ready made clothing to custom tailored clothing.	
03:21	"I've always had a passion for clothing, even in my younger years." During his youth, Brown would use his earnings from summer jobs to buy tailor made clothing for back to school wear. "It was the way we pretty much did things. It was not elite, but certainly everyone didn't do it...there was nothing special about me...I had a number of friends, I mean, that's what we did." Although everyday school clothes, it was more the fact of getting something made.	
05:47	End of first segment.	
	LS110358	
00:00	"You were able to go and pick out exactly what you liked and get it made the way you wanted to get it made. Like I said, that's what we did. It was kind of the folkway of where we grew up within our culture."	
00:48	Tailored school clothing tradition among Brown's school friends. Reaction of classmates: "To some degree envied, for sure, but not ridiculed." Brown's mother early on would take him to the better stores downtown to buy his suits for church. Kept two suits for church. Early exposure to fine clothing helped foster Brown's interest. "It was a special time. I was very fortunate in my upbringing."	
02:56	Always used the same tailor. Jewish gentleman by the name of Paderewski.	
03:10	Brown bought jeans and kakis to wear with custom-made (school) shirts. Also kept two pair of tailor-made pants for special occasions.	

05:12	<p>“When they talk about a community raising a child, that was especially true back then.” At school Brown was pushed by his teachers who wouldn’t take “no” for answer. In the days of segregation, State of Georgia would send aspiring Black teachers to top tier colleges and universities out of state for training. Many of Brown’s teachers in school were educated in this manner. “My teachers were the best of the best because of where they got their degrees from.” Brown’s brother has been president of several universities.</p>	
10:07	<p>Father died early on. Brown raised by mother and her brothers and sisters. Brown named after his uncle who was a businessman.</p>	
11:08	<p>Several of Brown’s friends worked for the prior mentioned men’s clothing chain store with locations in HBCU areas. That prompted Brown’s interest in applying there. “The grace of God first. OK. Grace and favor.” Secondly, “in my family you were just taught to think outside the box.”</p>	
12:53	<p>At the age of 23, Brown sent from Savannah to Baton Rouge to open men’s clothing store at the corner of Florida Avenue and Riverside Mall. “Everything was different 40 years ago. Today (Brown given store manager position at such a young age) that would not have happened.”</p>	
14:29	<p>Somewhat informal training, but “I got an education in the clothing business that I could not have gotten at any formal institution in the United States.” Learning took place through experience, trial and error, some teaching.</p>	
15:48	<p>Building a customer base in Baton Rouge as a Black man from elsewhere working for a Jewish-owned business. Brown was goal oriented. Taught from childhood about the benefits of hard work and dedication. “Everyday, thank God, I’m here putting the key in the door. Never do I get up and say, ‘My goodness, I got to go into work today.’”</p>	
17:23	<p>Background as an athlete enables Brown to process fear properly and not let it overwhelm him.</p>	

18:31	As manager Brown did all the buying for the new store at the market in New York City. Tells story of attempt “to wow them” at his new location. Miscalculated by buying double breasted suits ahead of the fashion curve in Baton Rouge. Men’s clothing styles in that era, prior to the advent of mass marketing on TV, started on both coasts then progressed inland. Miscalculation almost put him out of business. Taught Brown a lesson. Back then necessary to give styles some time before bringing them to Baton Rouge. Today with mass media must be on top of styles.	
21:10	Brown talked about generational connection with his customers. Now serving second and third generations. “We develop a relationship.”	
22:07	In the earlier years Brown’s customers had not been exposed to custom tailored clothing. Buying off the rack was the norm.	
23:06	In Brown’s early days at his store downtown customer tastes for color were very pronounced. “If you wanted a lime green suit, we had one.”	
23:27	End of second segment.	
	LS110359	
00:00	Review of Brown’s history as discussed thus far.	
00:54	Business decision to buy the store outright when parent company in Brown’s view, although closely knit together and somewhat of a family, “no longer wanted to compensate me and to make available the opportunity for me to be compensated as I should be.”	
02:10	Brown opens Fashions Limited. Kept the same product lines with some variance. No longer regional. With new business Baton Rouge specific. Focus on local clientele in Baton Rouge.	

04:00	Folklife of dress in Baton Rouge. "Definitely helped shape it," states Brown. Particularly with a one-store location, "people really believe in you rather than what you're selling so you have to make sure that what you do is on point and they can trust you...I have your best interest at heart. I'm not just trying to make a sale." Seek to help the customer create the aura or appearance he is trying to create. Brown related, you have to know, as well, something about people and where they are in life and what they are doing, because their clothing has to fit that.	
07:00	How to put customers at ease when they might have to step out of their mold. "We try to reference someone they can identify with that's in the mainstream to see that this is acceptable and this is where they should be." Otherwise, the customer might not completely buy into it.	
08:42	Was or is there a Baton Rouge look? No, it was more about trying to fall within the framework that was going on nationally. Given exposure in movies and on TV, "we had to be within that framework of what they were seeing without being too fashion forward."	
10:00	When Brown first started in Baton Rouge seven or eight men's clothing stores were in operation. Fashions Limited four years running before closing. Then Brown opens Brown and Brown Master Clothiers going after the custom tailored clothing market. Decision influenced by plethora of chain stores in the area that began selling both men's and women's clothing.	
11:45	Transition into custom tailored clothing represented niche market relatively unexploited. Brown's perspective was to offer custom tailored clothing at an affordable price because the norm was (is) high end, high priced. (Note: Whistling tea kettle audible in the background starting at 11:14.)	
12:29	End of third segment.	
	LS110360	

00:00	Parents did not have things laid out with a silver spoon. Brown had to learn how to take advantage of opportunities. "Blessed in that there have been opportunities and I had the insight and understanding as to how to seize them." Many business decisions have turned out well. Speaks to notion of calculated risk. Importance of thinking outside the box. Don't necessarily have to do things as others have. Need to be creative in your thinking. "We have been blessed to be able to do that, and I'm just thankful for it."	
02:55	Had a customer base already. Matter of educating them as to what exactly Brown and Brown was doing. "I would like to think they all during their formative years, they knew someone who bought custom clothing." Custom clothing out of reach because of price. "We felt like we could make it affordable, and that's what we did."	
05:01	Brown and Brown still maintained some off the rack suitings for those customers who preferred that option over a custom made suit.	
06:02	If the customer opts for a custom made suit over a ready made suit, in Brown's opinion they will never go back to an off the rack suit because of the comfort and being able to get exactly what they want.	
07:22	Brown commented about all the variables that go into the ritual of fitting a customer for a custom-made suit. "It would be hard to miss us with a color or style of fabric because the size of our offering of fabrics, I must say myself, is somewhat amazing."	
09:22	End of fourth segment.	
	LS110361	
00:00	Interviewer breaks interviewees comments down into a matrix. The expressive occupational culture; the folklife of a clothier.	

02:07	<p>As a business entity, Brown commented on wanting to be “an integral part of a community and an integral part of a family’s life.” Has now had the opportunity to cloth fathers, sons, and now grandsons spanning three generations. In doing so the business touches many facets of family and community life extending out to rituals which include marriages, anniversaries, and funerals. When someone is nattily attired, Brown’s hope is that people will say, “I bet that came from Brown and Brown.” Whenever a garment goes out the door, “you always want to put your best foot forward.” Important that Brown and Brown continue to have a recognizable place in the community.</p>	
05:09	<p>Brown talked about the importance of having his son in the business. Brown would have been a plumber like his father had his father lived longer. “It’s something for me to be able to pass on something to my son or to have something that is really larger than the both of us in that we are building something that will hopefully continue on and we’ll be able to pass on for generations. It was both important and special to me to have him (Eugene, Jr.) be a part of this.”</p>	
06:47	<p>Appreciation expressed by the interviewer for the time taken. Brown responded: “...hopefully we’ve been able to shed light and participate in your work and endeavor in a positive manner, and we just thank you for the opportunity.”</p>	
07:15	<p>End of interview.</p>	