Born to Be

Alben y Covarrubias

Gil Taylor Gordon: ente y Marcel Draper; sof y Carl Van Vechten
N.Y. Cannic-Freida Ruben, 1929

Draper edited

Born Apr 29, 1893, Wisc

Man drinks 4 cut girls

Man away 2 Harlem

1910 2 St, Paul

Harlem, jaztin stes

Florence McAfee, baby in the Gordon live: "I see people in no hour my go paint the house up."
We find it is a queer, ivid home includin' be in any other and the.

Dad: going back to town torment Taylor; see him o' st, and can he's going 2 start race riot or for march.
Born to Be

5 - his mother & mistress' horse
10 - will die in spring
20 - page for Mrs. Maudie
36 - opium den
47 - "c. truth he never a-lies he told" 191 - "Here I swing..."
54 - "ginge" cal'd cal
55 - Ringling & Crow
67 - St. Paul laid out by cross-eyed Frenchman...
80 - cultured girl
89 - sex on train
104 - Sarasota
109 - Mr. white man
112 - traveling c. eunich
121 - love lessons
133 - "heat in my head"
139 - Krink No More
149 - slowing don records
166 - R. Johnson
169 - "new - Gorr meadow"
1910 to St. Paul
Wen get 2 NY, & how 1st这种?

How bookings handled?

Name Harlem life. What leaders?

Who & memorable NY chorus?

color bar?

Van V: "don found my poor lost sheep"

to born to be - what

how write Born to Be?

how Conviviality illustrated.

"When boys sum home"

crush?

"What master's colored rebels"

Carl Van Vechten

Music at

Maurice Dobaper (Midnight)

FP Adams

Adm Rose Benét

Frank Swinnerton

Heywood Brown & Ruth Hale

Maurine Moore

Alexander Woollcott

Abbe S. Tevelf

playist Sidney Howard, wife Camie

Jimmie Walker

Kermit Finley

Kannos

Dorothy Parker
82 -- Carl Van Vechten, he introduced me to a tremendous lot of people ...

156 -- Carl Van Vechten was a big man. He was a big Dutchman, he had very buck teeth, rabbit teeth like, an' weighed about 200 pounds, let's say, and was six feet tall. But he wasn't what they called a pot-bellied six. He was a prominent man, a very fine dresser. He dressed very immaculate... He liked two colors, two tones. He liked pants one color and his shirt another, tie another... He wore rings, y'know, exotic rings, something that would stand out, or a bracelet, somethin' like that. He was quite a character ... Bein' a millionaire he could do those things.

180 -- I remember one night we went to a party. Carl and I was dressed as in Harlem, dressed in kind of satire ... Some man gave both of us sam hill. He said, "What do you people ... dressed in satire? You got somethin' to offer the world. You don't have to do anything out of the ordinary, just be yourselves." Carl laughed and said, "well, can't we have a little FUN?"

212 -- They'd call me up, 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, and say, "We want to come to Harlem. What are you doing? Are you in bed? Get up, we want to see so and so and so." And I'd get up and take 'em around. ... They always wanted to have at least one colored person with 'em for protection, see, if any argument comes up....

238 -- I wouldn't have written Born to Be if it hadn't been for Carl... When I went to Europe, why, goin' around London I would see all these sights and write back to Carl, and he'd read the letter to the group ... So he wrote me back and he said, "Your letters are such a tremendous success at the parties," he says, "you've gotta write a book when you come back." I said "Carl, I can't write a book, I can't even spell." "Don't worry about the spelling," he says, "you write the book." When I came back they kept after me and so they said, "Get at that book." I'd say,"Well...if you insist." I was singin' concert at the time, and so... it didn't take me more than 5 or 6 months to write it.... I would write it between midnight and six o'clock in the morning, because that's the time Harlem is the quietest and then nobody would bother me. When you write you gotta be holed up someplace. You can't write if anybody's gonna break into your continuity.... I wrote it longhand, see, and when it come to typin' it out, I got Edna (Thomas) -- Edna had a Boston education, she was a very cultured woman... Edna had this ability to type and I didn't. I'd say, "Edna, I want you to type my book for me," So she started typing my book, and Edna'd say, "You can't put that down that way. That's just not so." "You put it down that way anyway," I'd say. "Oh, my God, it'll be threwed in the wastepaper basket."
85 -- When I was railroadin', I could sing, learn how to sing better. I could, uh, get better time off to meet Mr. Johnson. At that time he had a school in Harlem, a colored music school in Harlem and, uh, I could make my arrangements to meet him much easier by railroadin' than could any other job because he had limited time, y'know. 

138 -- I used to do my calisthenics at midnight, running out of the Jersey Central station to the yard, about half a mile, so I could keep my western breath up.

191 -- They couldn't understand my dialect. They didn't know where I was from. They didn't know whether I was a foreigner or not, see, because I didn't speak with any accent.

196 -- They used to call me "Ringling" all the time. And so, if anything happened wrong, anybody wanted to do something to me, they'd say watch out for him, that's oh, don't do it, watch out for him, that's Ringling's boy.

236 -- They have a word back East. They'd say, "It isn't expedient that we do it now," see. And if they wanted to do somethin' for the colored people or even the poor whites in the Ozark Mountains or down in Kentucky, place like that, they'd say "It isn't expedient now."

404 -- A woman was tellin' me one time, she says, "Taylor, I would marry you, you're a lovely man, but you're such -- colored people are such lousy providers." I said, "What do you mean?" "Well, if they marry a beautiful woman, they can't take care of them. They won't, positively won't take care of them." I says, "They WON'T take care of them. They couldn't take care of 'em if they wanted to." I says, "Where do they get the money from? They're always squeezed out of it any place they're any money, you know what I mean? The only colored people made any money was a prizefighter, or a political man, or some burglar."

616 -- Vaudeville was the apprentice for American art.

817 -- Alabama visitor who got in fight in Harlem night club got knocked up, locked up, and finally doctored up.
The South has a funny code down there. Even when they raise all this sam hill about what goes on in public, in the streets and busses and things like that, in their homes sometimes they're a different sort of a people. They may be very generous with you, unless they got some politician comes in there who wants to show off. They they'd be very...ah...prejudiced...and wink at you at the same time. If they know you well.

I've seen several of the riots that they think about now, you know. The first one they had in New York City was, if I remember, was about 1925. And that wasn't too bad...I saw two-three riots there...

What we called the segregated line was 125th street. Then it got down to 116th street. (139th st called "scrivers' row," colored doctors and lawyers could live there)

They (today's performers) didn't have to work on the stage where they guys up in the balcony could throw shoes at you and pennies and cans at you if you weren't good.

Most of the guns, killing, in Harlem was love affairs or racketeer gambling affairs...In fact, Harlem wasn't a gun place. Let me tell you somethin'. Negro people only in the last 20 years have become gun people. Most Negro people -- we used to have clans, they have clans in the South -- were cutters...Used to have a sayin', back in the '14s and '15s, y'know, they could tell what section of the country the fella come from by the brand that was on him, y' see. If he was cut here, he was from Geechyland, if he was cut this way he was from Selma, Alabama...They could tell where he'd been in a fight. Reason why those marks came from those places was, the games that they played and how they were cheatin'. If you were shootin' craps, you more or less would be bendin' down when you got cut and that way you'd get it here. Whereas if you were playin' poker, you were more apt to be settin' up, then you'd be apt to get this one here (across the cheek). Then if you were playin' what they called 'skin', why you'd apt to get this other. So they could tell what area he came -- we used to laugh about that. So-and-so, instead of call him by his name, they'd call him "Alabama," "Geechy" or somethin' like that....
353 -- (Muriel Draper) She was exotic. A little eccentric in her dress at times, see. ... She had long hair. Her hair went clear down to her waist, and she's always do it up tight, like you'd think she's **always** wearin' a wig. One night we's at a party and some woman insinuated, thought that she **must** had on a wig. So Muriel didn't say a thing, just took all the pins out of her hair and let it all clear down there... She was an English-type woman, sharp features... She's a very fine elocutionist, you know, and she always talked with her lips kinda out, like so and so and so, every word had to be cut out just like that.

397 -- I never went anyplace that anybody didn't want me. I's just as proud as they was... Far as I was concerned, I d hobnobbed from the gutter to the kings, so I wasn't looking for any trouble from some night club drunk.

440 -- Most all of them English people had a funny thing about comin' to a party. There would be 40-50 people in a room, and if the party was supposed to be at 11 o'clock, they'd come in about 12, 12:30, and Muriel Draper'd be sittin' in this big chair. She had a great big queen chair, she'd be sitting back, and she could observe everybody that hit the door, see. But when they'd hit the door, more or less, they'd come in all in Paris gowns and dresses... until Muriel spied them. Muriel says, "Oooh, so and so and so and so." Then they'd say, "Aaah." Then the grand entry... Whoever the celebity was, they always got the grand slam... I remember one time when Rebecca West came in, and I saw Rebecca standin' there. "What's she waitin' for, what's she waitin' for?" Finally Muriel said, "Obhh, Rebecca!" And then, "Oooh, Muriel." Everybody: "Who was that?" "That's Rebecca West."

533 -- Heywood Brounx was a big fellow, weighed about two hundred and ten or twenty pounds, you know, about six feet two, and very fine sense of humor. He used to come ane lecture to people in Harlem, at the YMCA quite frequently, too. I met him downtown at lots of these parties, and he introduced me to more foreign people. He'd get people from South Africa and from England and Australia and Japan and all over, all sorts of people in his home, you know... Heywood was quite a friendly fellow. I always figured he's afraid he'd break the chair down, that's why he laid on the floor. Lay on the floor and get his glass and talk there... If I wasn't talkin' about some trip or somethin' to the West, I kept my mouth shut... Those people had college educations and experience of the world. Best way to be was just listen and drink.

558 -- We'd get down in Greenwich Village and Sinclair Lewis, in his apartment... Say, that Sinclair Lewis, he was somebody. You know, he could sing more spirituals than I could. Oh, he used to get down there three-four clock in the mornin' in his apartment... and we'd end up
singin' songs, after talkin' all about Marx and all about the politics of the world... Boy, he could really sing songs. He knew more songs. I knew about 200; I think he knew more than I did.... He knew more secular spirituals -- I mean, Christian songs -- than I did; like Methodist and Presbyterian songs. He knew 'em all. My mother -- I thought my mother knew a lot of 'em, but he...

585 -- I didn't start to sing until I thought I could make some money with it.

595 -- Ringling gave me a good help. Ringling wanted to pay for my tuition in school, singing, but in those days they's so prejudiced they wouldn't take me. They'd send me up to Carnegie Hall and they wouldn't take me as a student. But they did use to give me student tickets to the Metropolitan Opera House and I'd sit there and hear Caruso, see, and listen. I stole a lot... I'd take his records and turn 'em way down low and steal from that. So I learned how to sing that way, stead of paying $20. If you take a soprano or a tenor and turn 'em slow so they sound like a baritone, or a soprano sound like an alto, you can learn all their technique of what they're doin', see. But singin' fast, you'd never get it, see. Turn it slow and then you learn a tremendous lot about singin'.

620 -- They wanted to try your air, see if you get buck ague and run off. You ever been before a big audience? No? Well, I tell you, you gotta know what you're doin' and you gotta whip them, too, you know. When you come out, the first thing they challenge you right away, mentally, say, "Well: what can you do?" And if you don't dominate 'em, they'll sure dominate you.

635 -- Franklin P. Adams and Heywood Broun, I remember, would always get in some discussion about the -- either political or economic or the condition of New York City, see. And it was all over my head, I just listened, see.... But they would always get in some long diatribe, roundabout what was the ills of the city, and they's always had 'em, and how to cure 'em, and what could be done....

688 -- Of all those parties I went to, there never was a fight; never saw a fight in one of 'em.

&35 -- (Father Divine) He came up there durin' the Depression, when everybody was broke, and a lot of people would go to Father Divine and get the best meal in the world for 35 cents, see. And you'd be surprised, white, black, blue, green, and the other, they'd eat in Father Divine's, because when you couldn't eat downtown you could go to Father Divine's and get a whole half a chicken. You could get a meal you couldn't pay $2 for downtown for 35 cents, including ice cream dessert.... And he had 'em lined up, you'd thought a baseball game was goin' on.
Father Divine must have been about five feet five or six, couldn't have been much more, and he must have weighed about 180 pounds, and he always kept his head shaved, like Jack Johnson the prize fighter. And he was kind of a copper brown... oak brown. And he had very good features. And he didn't seem to age. I seen him over 20 years... and he always seemed to look about the same... A very elegant dresser.

That's the consolation of never hoardin' any money.