

Deatrick Holley "Goldie" from Memphis

Now here comes Goldilocks with Old Big Shoulders. Bad Boy you know you did good! Got the pretty baby. Made your mamma proud!

Yeah baby! It's Goldie! How you doing baby? Boo ya ya! All right now! Wear them jeans girl.

That's a bad dude, I thought that that one boy had two a them pretty women. All right, Dad! Laissez les bons temps rouler!

This here is the French Quarters. We outlaws down here, son and I'm undefeated. Back up boys, y'all get your cameras ready, looks like it's fixed be a shooting. Stand back, we about to slap some leather. One. Two. Three. BAM! Another one bites the dust! This here is Goldie the Bourbon Street Cowboy, fastest gun in the French Quarters. That's how old boy here makes a living, putting 'em on boot hill. Won't you all do the sweet thing and bless the box for me? Thank you, Dad. You all are so lovely. I hope that you and these fine young ladies have a wonderful evening.



What the tourists want is to be validated, to know that they're having a good time and that their presence is appreciated. This here is Goldie baby! Twenty-four karats! I come to life and give 'em a real show. I dance, I sing, I strut and sway with an animal grace. Let 'em know this is the Big Boy's Playground, and ain't nobody ringing the bell, cause we're at recess forever.

I came down to New Orleans in '96. I'd been working at Amtrak in Memphis, and they said they had a promotion for me down here. I come into town all suited and booted, and then when I show up at the station, they say that they had to give the job to some other guy. OK, that left me high and dry in New Orleans, highly pissed off. I'm walking around here and I'm down to seventeen hundred dollars. Oh Lord, what to do? I looked at these boys with the silver standing on the crates, and I said I can do that, but I'm gonna be totally different. I'm gonna be gold.

I called up a laboratory in Hollywood and told 'em I needed makeup that I could wear without turning into a greasy gobbly mess. I can't tell you the secret formula, because I don't want these other boys out here to catch on, but this here is twenty-four karat. Solid gold baby! My makeup is meticulous. My mustache stays looking like

Sidewalk Saints

Clark Gable, and that's what you want. You want that accentuated look. I'm gorgeous! Not a one can come and be as handsome in their presentation — tall, gold and brutally handsome.

I started out on Decatur Street. That's where you got Granny and Grandpa, Auntie and Uncle, all the kids and everything. Yeah, they tip, but they want a hundred photos for a single dollar. That's too slow for me. That's what I now call the Disney Channel. So I got up in my saddle and went out to ride that horse called Bourbon Street. I still ride him better than anybody down there. I'm the King of Bourbon Street.

I got fans that come back year after year. The sweeties they understand that's how I make my living, so the ones that come back annually usually tip me a hundred dollars. That's cool. I got others who don't work for Microsoft or something, they pay me twenties, tens. I love 'em. One particular judge over in Baton Rouge keeps a big picture of him and Goldie right there in his office. That's a big compliment. It is. I'm thrilled internally by it.

A couple years ago, they actually tried to stop street performers in the Quarter. There was this one particular councilwoman, I can say her name, because she's already mad at me: Jackie Clarkson. But I ain't mad at her. I have no axe to grind. Now Miss Clarkson's background is in real estate, and she had aspirations of turning the French Quarter in condominiums and getting rid of all the street entertainment. They had a sixteen-man task force. They came out here and arrested me in the middle of my show, took me to jail and charged me with obstructing a public passage. They figured if they knocked off Goldie, all the other entertainers would get the message. It really hurt me that she would do that, but when I got to court and I stood before the judge, he looked at me and said, "I know you. You're Goldie. You do a mighty fine show."

I said, "Thank you your honor."

Then he said, "As a matter of fact my wife and I, we took a picture with you."

"You did your honor?"

"We sure did."

"Did you tip me?"

The judge started laughing. "Yes, I did Goldie, five dollars."

"Boo ya ya!"

The whole court started cracking up. The judge ordered me

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released immediately, then he told the prosecutor not to fill up his court with this frivolity. Since then, I haven't had any problems with the city. As a matter of fact, after Katrina, Ray Nagin showed up at the town meeting in Memphis and said, "Goldie come home. We need you." Mayor Nagin told me, "Goldie, my door is always open to you." I'll always respect him for that. Since Katrina, I think the city is starting to realize that the street performers are one of the main reasons that tourists come to New Orleans. It's unique. This is the only city in America where something like this is possible. A character like Goldie, put him in Boston, they'd be calling the SWAT team on him.

Tonight, I'll probably work two or three hours. That's the nice thing about working for the I Say So Corporation. Whatever I say so, that's what I do. The crowd can tell if you really got the juice flowing, so if Goldie's not ready, I don't try to bring him out. There's no faking out here. If it don't come from the star that's in you, then it ain't gonna shine. It's gotta be twenty-four karats.

For the first couple years, I just went at it full throttle all day long, but as the years have gone by it's starting to tax me so much physically. With my diabetes, there are some boundaries that I have to respect. Some nights I have to stay home and just be Deatrick Holley

Sidewalk Saints

— tall, *dark* and brutally handsome.

Alright handsome! You did good, got the pretty baby! Made your mamma proud!

You see that? They smile, walk away, grab each other's hand and share a special moment. When they go back to working in the office or driving the forklift in the warehouse, they're gonna remember that moment, and pretty soon they'll be coming back to the French Quarters. I'm telling you, Goldie's a part of what's gonna bring New Orleans back.

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