



James Willis Touchet

James Willis Touchet was born in Vermillion Parish near Forked Island, Louisiana, on February 14, 1926, to a mother who loved music and who played the accordion. In the late 1930s the Touchet family would sit on the porch and play music together which is where Willis learned to play the fiddle.

In the 1940s neighbors and folks around Vermillion Parish enjoyed the Cajun music played by the Touchet Brothers. Willis played the fiddle, Archonge "T-Coon" played the steel guitar and Iday played the guitar. When brother Elier joined the band the four Touchet Brothers began playing at night clubs such as "The Brown Derby" in Berwick, Louisiana, "Cut Grass Inn" in Morgan City, Louisiana and "Claude's Tavern" in Greenwood. They were very much in demand for the *bals de maison*. Their sister, Eva, later joined the band to play guitar and bass guitar. The band would also become a regular at "Smiley's Club" in Erath, Louisiana, and would remain playing there for many years. The Touchet Brothers were also invited to play at the Liberty Theater in Eunice, Louisiana, the Crawfish Festival in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana and many other clubs, events and private parties.

Willis began writing traditional Cajun music at a young age. Some of his most popular songs has been re-recorded by well-known modern day musicians."The Old Fashion Two-step," which became his most popular song, has been recorded by artists, Wayne Toups, Kevin Naquin, Balfa Toujours and "The Red Stick Ramblers" along with many others; "It's Lonesome in Prison" was recorded by the band, Courtboullion, (Wayne Toups, Steve Riley, and Wilson Savoy), and "The Life I Thought I Wanted" was recorded by Steve Riley. Willis was well known for sticking to his roots and writing traditional Cajun music.

In 2002 Willis received “The Pioneer Award” from the Cajun French Music Association. Over the years, Willis and the Touchet Brothers played with many Well-known local Cajun musicians such as “Big John” Suire, D.L. Menard, Lionel Leleux, Butch Porrier, Gerald Bourque and Butch “T-Butch” Menard.

Along with Willis's passion for Cajun music was the love he had for his family and Christian faith. Willis was an inspiration to all of his family and friends and was a great role model of how to love and forgive.