

Table of Contents

Adams, Dolly	3
Albert, Don	6
Alexis, Richard	12
Allen, Red	14
Almerico, Tony	16
Anderson, Andy	27
Bailey, Buster	38
Barbarin, Paul	39
Barnes, "Polo"	43
Barrett, Emma	48
Barth, George	49
Bauduc, Ray	50
Bechet, Sidney	65
Bechet, Leonard	69
Bigard, Barney	70
Bocage, Peter	53
Boswell, Sisters	84
Boswell, Connie	88
Bouchon, Lester	94
Braud, Wellman	96
Brown, Tom	97
Brownlee, Norman	102
Brunies, Abbie	104
Brunies, George	106
Burke, Ray	116
Casimir, John	140
Christian, Emile	142

Christian, Frank	144
Clark, Red	145
Collins, Lee	146
Charles, Hypolite	148
Cordilla, Charles	155
Cottrell, Louis	160
Cuny, Frank	162
Davis, Peter	164
DeKemel, Sam	168
DeDroit, Paul	171
DeDroit, John	176
Dejan, Harold	183
Dodds, “Baby”	215
Desvigne, Sidney	218
Dutrey, Sam	220
Edwards, Eddie	230
Foster, “Chinee”	233
Foster, “Papa”	234
Four New Orleans	
Clarinets	237
Arodin, Sidney	239
Fazola, Irving	241
Hall, Edmond	242
Burke, Ray	243
Frazier, “Cie”	245
French, “Papa”	256

Dolly Adams

Dolly's parents were Louis Douroux and Olivia Manetta Douroux. It was a musical family on both sides. Louis Douroux was a trumpet player. His brother Lawrence played trumpet and piano and brother Irving played trumpet and trombone. Placide recalled that Irving was also an arranger and practiced six hours a day. "He was one of the smoothest trombone players that ever lived. He played on the Steamer Capitol with Fats Pichon's Band."

Olivia played violin, cornet and piano. Dolly's uncle, Manuel Manetta, played and taught just about every instrument known to man.

Dolly's musical education began early under the tutelage of her mother, father and Uncle Manuel. She was playing the piano at age five, but in a few years was also performing capably on guitar, bass and drums. Her first professional jobs were with Uncle Manuel. She remembered going on a job with him and helping him carry his four or five "regular" instruments. At one time, probably with the early Tuxedo Band, a young Louis Armstrong was in the band when Dolly was even younger. Manuel tried to teach Louis how to play two trumpets at once, something that Manuel was a master at. Louis couldn't do it. "My chops are too thick," Louis said.

Dolly married Placide Adams Sr. And soon began raising a musical family. Placide Sr. Was a general contractor, and while Dolly taught the children their musical ABCs, their father instilled in them his mechanical knowledge. Place Jr. said that his father was not a musician, but he did play one blues number on the piano when he thought nobody was around.

Placide Jr. recalled that he would crawl under the house to listen to him.

Dolly taught all seven children something about music. Carl played trombone, but only when a jazz funeral passed the house. Odolie played piano, as did Robert, but neither ever played professional. Calvin played bass, although not professionally either.

Dolly had a great memory. She memorized every note of the seven page score of “Poet and Peasant” and played it at night for the kids before they went to sleep.

“Us kids would be fooling around the piano while my mother was cooking and if we made a mistake, she would take time out to correct us, saying, ‘No, do it like this.’

“Mother was a very talented woman. She could play anything and write anything and was a sight-reader. She never had to look at a piece of music twice. She was also a master seamstress. She made many of our clothes, including our First Communion suits. She wrote her own shows and produced them with members of the family starring. She wrote a show called ‘tumbling tumbleweeds’ and we performed it at All Saints Church in Algiers. She also wrote poetry and song lyrics.

“Mother and her brothers had their own band in the early 1930s which included Baptiste Mosely on drums and Joe Butler or Lewis James on bass. She played at a lot of private parties and was a ‘Silent Movie’ pianist at the old Lyric Theater.”

By the late 1930s, sons Justin and Gerald joined their mother’s band. They played mostly at West Bank clubs, including the Varsity Club, Gay Paree and the Moonlight Inn. Their main competition was Kid Thomas and his band, who were at the Moulin Rouge.

Placide Jr. came into the band around 1941 when he was just thirteen years of age. They later played the “Million Dollar Room” at Sixth and Danneel Streets. When the job was finished at night, Dolly would go home and the three brothers would go to the Dew Drop Inn and jam all night with other musicians.

Placide Jr. recalled the consequences of those all night sessions: “The next night Justin, Gerry and I would be pretty sleepy on the band stand. Mother brought a water pistol and if one of us dozed off, she would squirt us in the eye to wake us up.”

Dolly continued to lead “The Adams Family Band” during the 1940s and 50s., but was also in demand to play engagements with the Bocage brothers, George Lewis and Papa Celestin.

In 1962 they were frequently employed at Preservation and Dixieland Halls. On January 22, 1965, Dolly played a job at Preservation Hall. After a string bass solo on “The Saints,” Papa John Joseph turned to Dolly and said, “That number just about did me in.” With that statement he collapsed and died, falling on Dolly’s foot. Her grand-daughter was in the audience and became hysterical.

“It was a terrible traumatic experience for my mother and she would very seldom play publicly after that. Shortly after that she had the first of a series of strokes and heart attacks which almost totally disabled her.”

Although the family tried to get her interested in music again, she refused to sit at the piano. She spent her last years under the close care of her sons Justin and Calvin.

About a week before she died, she asked Placide Jr. to get their friend Walter Lewis to come over and tune the piano.

She thought she might start playing again. Unfortunately, this was never to be.

**Don Albert and His Ten Pals
by Richard Allen
Fall, 1972**

Texas has produced much jazz, blues, white folk and gospel music. Who can forget musicians like blind Willie Johnson, Teddy Wilson, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Peck Kelly, Hersal Thomas, or Jack Teagarden” Ragtimer Scott Joplin was born in Texarkana. Western swing originated in the Fort Worth-Dallas area. There is a boogie woggie piano style known as “Santa Fe” which centered around Houston, Galveston, Sugarland, and Richman, Texas. We know too little about the early blues and religious music of this state; furthermore, we know almost nothing about the music Scott Joplin heard when he roamed around Texas as a youth. There is even a type of Negro Cajun music, called Zydeco, or sodico, which has moved into Houston. Moreover, cowboy songs are strongly identified with the state.

Why did this flowering take place? Because the oil and natural gas boom which began in 1901 has supported good-time music? Texas had, and still has, big spenders. The high rolling oil men loved to show their generosity in honky tonks, speakeasies and ballrooms. Since 1925 the state has led all others in mineral production. This wealth comes for the most part from oil and gas.

The ethnic groups, including the Negroes, Germans, Anglo-Saxons, Mexicans and Cajuns that settled in Texas were all musical. The mixing of their cultures made for a healthy musical climate.

Doubtless the proximity of New Orleans had its effect. Jelly Roll Morton, Bunk Johnson, Leon Rappolo, Punch Miller and Wingy Manone were a few of many Orleanians who worked in Texas. Another example of New Orleans musicians in that state was *Don Albert and His Ten pals*, A group organized in New Orleans in 1929 but headquartered in Texas for its entire existence.

Mr. Albert was born in the Creole section of New Orleans on 5 August 1908, of a most musical family. His real name is Albert Dominique and Natty Dominique is his uncle. The shorter name seemed more suitable for a band leader. His father was a singer, and numerous cousins and in-laws were and are musicians.

Don began his musical career as a singer, but decided his voice was not good enough. He took up cornet at about the age of nine under Nelson Jean whose playing Don admired. Mr. Jean gave him two lessons consisting entirely of horn cleaning. This seemed pointless, and he asked his cousin Barney Bigard to take him to Luis "Papa" Tio for more study. Next he studied under Milford Piron, brother of the bandleader Armand Piron and a cousin by marriage of Don Albert. Mr. Piron taught him sight-singing for a year and a half without allowing Don to touch his instrument. Don played his first job, a Mardi Gras parade, with Big Foot Bill Phillips. Mr. Piron heard about this and there were no more lessons from him. He felt that his students should learn

the fundamentals before becoming professionals. Don also had a few lessons from the famed Creole cornetist Manuel Perez.

Don played on the lake boat Susquehanna, and while waiting for the return trip to New Orleans from Mandeville heard for the first time Buddy Petit, a cornetist he admired. Other favorites on hot cornet from the twenties were Chris Kelly and Punch Miller. He heard many musicians on advertising wagons and in brass bands. Doubtless several influenced his development, but he is no copyist. He loved Louis Armstrong, whom Don first came across when Armstrong was parading in the Waifs' Home brass band, but says that it is impossible to copy Armstrong.

Also Don Albert played in several brass bands, serving as a substitute with Perez's Imperial

In 1925 at the age of sixteen he left the city of his birth for Dallas, Texas, with his own trio consisting of banjoist Richard McCarthy, alto saxophonist, Lucien Johnson and Don Albert himself. In 1926 he joined Troy Floyd's band in Eastland, Texas as lead trumpet and featured soloist. This group used stock arrangements although there were not many readers then in the local bands and, naturally, they played many head arrangements. The band, made up of Texas men largely, played at the Plaza Hotel and the Shadowland Ballroom in San Antonio, and did some traveling, mainly in Texas. Until the time Albert left, it was like a family with the late Charlie Dixon playing the role of father; after Don's departure there were many changes in personnel.

The band was billed as *Troy Floyd and His Orchestra of Gold* since the musicians had gold instruments. Their theme was "I'm Afraid." Most of the members including Troy Floyd, are

dead, but John Henry Braggs and Scott Bagby live in San Antonio at the time of writing.

Floyd's recordings of "Shadowland Blues" and "Dreamland Blues" (both in two parts) are prized items today. They are not only rare, but have truly made jazz history - being discussed at length in Gunther Schuller's *EARLY JAZZ*. Schuller states that Don Albert was the star musician of the band. The identities of soloists are debatable; according to Don, trombonist Benny Long and trumpeter Willie Long (no relation) took no solos ordinarily; Charlie Dixon is the trombone soloist, but Willie Long solos on "Shadowland Blues" (part two). Both blues are head arrangements.

In September of 1929, the very month which marks the beginning of the depression, Don returned to New Orleans to organize his orchestra, appropriately called *Don Albert and His Ten Pals* (All fourteen of Them) and soon became the top Texas orchestra, succeeding Alphonso Trent and Troy Floyd. About 1932, it adopted the billing of "Don Albert and His Music, America's Greatest Swing Band," being the first to so use the term "swing." This was also the first band to use three bassists.

The band traveled to thirty-eight states, Canada and Mexico playing mostly one-night stands for a small guarantee and a percentage of the admission. Don describes a week's stand as being heaven on earth. There were some long bookings at dance halls, hotels and night clubs including the Shadowland, their headquarters. During this period, battles of music still drew huge crowds, and the Albert band bucked against many groups such as the Casa Loma, then a highly-rated orchestra with complex arrangements. Another aspect of showmanship used was the Happy Pal's comedy routine of ten or fifteen minutes' duration.

Bunk Johnson, with whom Don had jammed about 1926 in a Port Arthur “fast house,” sat in with the band.

In the late 30’s Don cut down on his trumpet work, fronting the band more and handling bookings which were found mostly by word of mouth. Eventually, he found a booker whose business methods broke up the band in 1940 in spite of Albert “Fats” Martin’s unsuccessful attempt to hold the remains together.

The Albert orchestral style is doubtless the result of many influences, but the stamp of Ellington is evident. In fact, the group played many of Duke’s compositions, such as “Rockin’ in Rhythm” and “Mood Indigo.” Robinson played plunger-muted trombone on occasion. Barney Bigard and Louis Cottrell played a straight style as did Arthur Whetsel; and Hiram Harding’s growling would fit right into the Duke’s jungle.

Like Ellington’s sidemen, Don Albert’s were loyal, staying with the band for years and cooperating to produce a unified spirit.

Once again, it is necessary to note that recordings do not give a total picture of any band. The Albert orchestra had a much more varied repertoire, even playing shows which required everything from waltzes and rumbas to accompaniment for Mexican hat dancers. The band also played frequently on radio; they were cut off the air in Pensacola because of their singing on “The Sheik of Araby” - Floridians could not hear of the Sheik’s having no pants on. Naturally, they were required to play the sentimental hits of the day, and Cottrell names “I’m in the Mood For Love,” “Say It Isn’t So” and “How Deep is the Ocean” as typical. It is easy to forget that the thirties produced many hot tunes throughout the entire decade. A 1935 novelty, “The Music

Goes ‘Round and ‘Round” increased the public’s appetite for hot solos. Swing became the thing, and the territory bands played what the jitterbugs wanted, whether it was this novelty or a killer diller. In summary, the Albert outfit could give whatever was needed in a theatre, a hotel or a dance hall.

After disbanding in 1940, Don went into civil service for three years. In 1944, he opened the quite successful keyhole Club in San Antonio. In 1948, he returned once again to New Orleans to invest in the Gypsy Tea Room and prize fights. As these ventures didn’t work out, he went to work for the Post Office in 1949, staying one year. Then he returned to San Antonio, opening the present Keyhole Club which he still owns but leases out. Today he works as an inspector for the U. S. Government.

About 1950 he began to play the trumpet again from time to time. He has recorded twice for Southland in recent years, once as leader and once with Emma Barrett. In spite of his modesty about his voice, he sings “Roses of Picardy” with his own group on the “Echoes of New Orleans” LP (Southland 239) and “Pagan Love Song” with Miss Barrett on Southland 241. In recent years he has received some recognition from jazz critics. The International Association of Jazz Record Collectors reissued his entire Vocalion session in 1967, and it was well received. In the CODA review of the 1969 New Orleans Jazz Festival, Jack Bradley points out his trumpet as being of special merit, John S. Wilson states in his New York Times review of the same event that “Young Sam Alcorn (son of Alvin) and the trumpeters, stood out in this exceptional company, and Mr. Albert added to his laurels by the authority with which he turned a four clarinet treatment of “High Society” into the climax of the evening: the entrance . . of four of New Orleans famous marching band....”

Derrick Stewart-Baxter writes in the May 1969 JAZZ JOURNAL, of the Norsingle sides, “Don Albert’s playing is extremely fine throughout. He shows just what we have missed all these years. A most under-rated musician...”

As a man, Don Albert has special qualities which made him a good band leader. He inspires the confidence of his sidemen, making them turn out a worthwhile performance for “Old Man.” His character is such that his musicians, even though they were his age or older, called him by this nickname. He is a businessman, M.C., showman and booker; also he has been an actor, disc jockey and pioneer in the integration movement, the last in spite of the fact that he could easily have “passed” and worked with better-paying white orchestras. He is proud of his heritage, and has turned down many offers. His appearance is such that he was often mistaken for a white man and was therefore able to get his band jobs in areas in the North and South where Negroes had never played before. After they played, other Negro orchestras were welcome. Don speaks of his men as gentlemen, and without a doubt their character helped break down many barriers.

Further, he is always eager to play. In April 1969 I invited Don to a classical guitar concert at a Tulane Educational Conference in San Antonio’s St. Anthony Hotel. Don arrived with his trumpet, ready to tackle anything! Incidentally, he remarked that he often sat in with Jimmy Joy’s Band in that very hotel.

Finally, I must mention his warm, friendly manner and Creole hospitality. He is at ease in any situation. And nothing is too much for him to do for a pal.

Ricard Alexis

March/April, 1960

If it had to come, “The Call” could not have come to Ricard Alexis at a more glorious time. Never had he played better than within the past year or two. Never had he played more often, nor in better company (musically) than within the last year. Mardi Gras, 1960, had been a triumph as never before! Our reporter informs us that with “Sweet Emma, the Bell Girl,” this band played three different engagements on that one day, March 1st - just 14 days before his sudden passing!

Born October 11, 1896 in New Orleans, his playing days began when he was just a kid. He joined a very fine aggregation called “Bob Lyons’ Dixie Jazz Band” in 1919, and remained with this group until 1925, when the band was disbanded.

It was well known that in 1920, his trumpet style so greatly resembled that of Kid Rena, that they were frequently mistaken for each other. One of his most famous “spots” was the “Elite Nite Club,” next door to the old Lyric Theatre. Here probably one of the greatest triumphs of his life took place; he whipped “Buddy” Petit in a cutting contest and won \$10.

In 1927, he joined Bebe Ridgely’s Tuxedo orchestra aboard the S. S. Pelican. He was then with Celestin’s orchestra until 1928, recording with “Papa’s” band in 1927. After this, he joined Pete Bocage’s “NOLA” Orchestra. In 1931, he returned to Celestin’s outfit, and played a summer-long engagement at the Buena Vista Hotel in Biloxi. From 1932 until 1936, he played at the Lavidia Dance Hall and/or “The Alamo.” He was attacked by some hoodlums after leaving this job one night, and suffered a badly lacerated lip and broken jaw. This was the end of his career as a trumpeter.

Having always played string bass, it was easy for him to switch to an instrument with which he was already familiar. This he did in 1937, and immediately found steady employment with several of the better jazz groups, playing in the French Quarter and numerous spots. He worked with Papa Celestin in the late 1940's, and has been identified more recently with Paul Barbarin's band. He began trying his trumpet again in 1954, and has worked a few marching funeral parades with this instrument.

Of late, he has been riding the crest of popularity which has followed a reorganization of the band by "Sweet Emma, the Bell Girl." Five years ago, he suffered a severe heart attack, but recovered completely. He died March 15, 1960, at 2:30 P.M. after a massive cerebral hemorrhage.

He was a member in good standing of Musicians Local 496, and resided at 1833 Marais Street, in New Orleans.

Red Allen
December, 1968

Born in Algiers, La. just across the river from New Orleans, he was the son of Henry Allen, Sr. and was born January 7, 1908. It was only natural that Henry Jr. Become a musician, for his father headed one of the finest marching bands in Algiers, and even in New Orleans. "Red's" mother wanted him to play a more "refined" type of instrument (the violin) but it wasn't too long before the little boy was practicing on his father's

trumpet. The next step was another “natural.” He began tagging along the parade routes, no matter how long the march. In a year or so, when the march would halt, Henry Sr. Would give his young son his trumpet, and he’d play for the crowd that would gather ‘round. His dad would say “Sonny’s got it! Sonny’s got it!” And his Dad was right! That husky, gangling hulk of a boy was destined to become one of America’s most renowned jazz trumpeters!

Henry Allen, Jr. Climbed the ladder the slow, hard way he played with almost every musician you can mention, and for almost every category of entertainment you can think of. Whitney Balliet, in the New Yorker Magazine, recalled an interview he had with “Red.” “The Chauffeurs’ Club” in St. Louis was so rough, they had to build a fence of chicken coop wire in front of the band to protect the musicians when the fights broke out and the ‘missiles’ began to fly”

To name but a few of the “name” bands and musicians with which “Red” has played with: Fate Marable, aboard the Strckfus Riverboats; George Lewis’ Band; John Handy; Joe “King” Oliver (and it might interest our readers to know that so closely did “Red’s” style coincide with Oliver's, that for years their records together have confounded the “experts” as to who-was-taking-which-solo); Luis Russell’s Band at the Roseland Ballroom; Fletcher Henderson’s marvelous outfit; and the band of Louis Armstrong. The special places that he has played are also interesting: The Greenwich Village cellar nightclub, Café Society Downtown, which was famous for a series of great singers and entertainers such as Pete Johnson, Billie Holiday, Art Tatum, Hazel Scott and Lena Horne. From here he moved over to the Ken Club in Boston, Mass., and then the Down-Beat Room in

Chicago. Later he worked in San Francisco, Salt Lake City, and back to Chicago. In New York, he again appeared at the Onyx, Kelly's Stable, and Jimmy Ryan's. He was also associated with Tony Parenti's fine aggregation. For seven years he was a fixture at the Metropole Café on the Avenue; then, to Eddie Condon's, the Hickory House, the Embers, and made frequent appearances at the Newport Jazz Festival.

In his later years, "Red's" style changed somewhat from the typical Oliver traditional idiom, to a rather "modern" kick. However, on many recent recording sessions, he showed that he had not completely abandoned the "old style" and could revert to type with the least effort. His vocals were lusty, unrestrained, but with a complete knowledge of what he was doing, when he had to "lay it on" and when he had to "take it easy."

Mr. Allen died on Monday, April 17th, at Sydenham Hospital, after a lengthy illness, and was almost 60 years of age. He has resided at 1351 Prospect Avenue, in the Bronx. His widow, Pearlie May Allen, survives him, as does his son, who is on the New York City police force. He has two granddaughters, and his mother, Mrs. Jretta Allen, who still resides in Algiers, La. We ask that they accept our deepest sympathy. (editor, Second Line May/June, 1967)

**Tony Almerico
November, 1953**

"Jazz means many things to many people - jam sessions, Louie's vocals, blues, label collectors, Halfway House, swap

columns, rhythm sections, Eddie Condons, New Orleans, and to a great many people it means Tony Almerico.”

Bandleader, disc jockey, salesman, talent scout, anyway you look at it, Tony is a very busy man. His cream-colored station wagon, a golden trumpet emblazoned on the side flashes through the streets of New Orleans and you know it's Tony chasing jazz again. Let's take a look at Tony: medium height, well-fed, thick, wavy black hair, a sharp dresser, he carries his 48 years as casually as he does his always present cigar. His sincerity is as obvious as his ties. He is usually a cheerful soul and gets along well with his public. Proof of his popularity and ability can be found in the fact that Tony was a board member of Local 174 for at least nine years.

A product of Jesuit High School, a music student of Prof. Leo Broekhoven, Tony Almerico's first job was at the old FERN dance hall in 1924; Von Gammon was leader and today Tony humbly acknowledges his indebtedness to Von. A year and a half later Tony replaced Sharkey at THE RINGSIDE, and this time the bandleader was Freddy Neumann - the pianist at the Sunday afternoon sessions at the Parisian Room for the past several years.

The tempo quickened - Tony landed a job with Slim LaMarre and hit the road. A six month spot at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis produced experience, excitement - and his first recording date, for Victor - but Tony sadly confesses he hasn't a copy of the records. Then came Indianapolis, and finally New York. When the Roseland Ballroom date ended Tony returned to New Orleans - and to his wife and two children. For three years he was sideman in the household at old CLUB FOREST, and this was followed by another tour of one nighters. From 1932 to 1936

Tony was a member of Pinky Vidacovich's Dawnbusters at Station WWL. Because he also played night jobs the pace nearly killed him and he had to give up the crack-of-dawn radio show. For the first time Tony formed his own band and from then on has been his own boss. Club Plantation - SILVER SLIPPER - CHEZ PAREE - COTTON CLUB - ROSE ROOM - SUBURBAN GARDENS - a quick trip up to NICK'S in the Village and home again to the CASINO BALLROOM on Frenchman St. 1940 to 1942 . . the Steamer CAPITOL, 1942-1945 . . the Steamer PRESIDENT . . night after night. A public relations job at GRAFF'S, a men's clothing store. ALMERICCO'S BALL room OPENS IN 1945 - CLOSES 1947. A JOB AT Lenfant's LASTED SIX MONTHS - Tony still chasing jazz.

Then, in 1948, came the New Orleans Jazz Club. Tony didn't realize it at the time but the chase was almost over. Johnny Wiggs, Al Diket and Don Perry among others, felt the time had come for some authentic jazz concerts - sessions - call them what you will - with few exceptions all the local bands were playing pop stuff. The people were forgetting the real music - men like Fazola, Sharkey, Santo Pecora, Lester Bouchon, Monk Hazel, George Lewis, the Loyacano brothers, Johnny Bayersdorffer were around but the jazz wasn't . except when occasionally requested by the tourists - Arrangements were made with Tony Almerico whereby the NOJC sponsored Sunday afternoon sessions at the PARISIAN ROOM, 116 Royal St., a huge dance-hall leased by Tony. He got the bar proceeds and the Club charged \$1 admission. This about paid the for band and tickets. There was nothing left over for advertising. However, the news hit New Orleans like a flash-fire and the stampede was on. Bourbon Street shivered, braced itself, and then surrendered.

Tony Almerico was smart. He saw the possibilities at once and immediately hired Sharkey's band to take over the weekly concerts. Since that time other bands have headlined the show at the PARISIAN ROOM but usually it's Tony's own band you hear there - Bob Doyle on piano, Jack Delaney on Trombone, Johnny Castaing on drums, Frank Frederico on guitar, Joe Loyacano on bass, Tony Costa on clarinet, and Almerico himself on trumpet and vocals! The past few months Lizzie Miles has been featured and usually buglin' Sam DeKemel comes up to torture that bugle and delight the crowd.

But that's not all. Tony has attracted and encouraged many of the younger musicians, some of whom have moved on to bigger game - the Assunto boys, Pete Fountain, George Girard, Connie Jones - these and others first played for the public under Tony's guidance.

The world of radio reached out and tapped Tony in 1949 when WJBW broadcast live sessions from the Parisian Room, and WNOE followed suit in 1950. Then WWL taped 30 minutes of the Sunday concerts for re-broadcast on Sunday nights, immediately preceding the NOJC record show. Recently the same tape has been aired on Saturdays at 6 PM under the title "Streets of New Orleans." It is sponsored by the Marine Corps. On Sept. 1, 1951 Tony became a deejay on station WJMR with his own program of recorded jazz from 2:30 to 4 PM. When the UHF difficulties are cleared up Tony will have an additional half hour show on WJMR-TV. He is very happy about the whole thing, of course, but he worries about his pronunciation. "It's bad enough on radio, but what am I gonna do in front of those cameras and lights?" he moans. We don't think he has anything to worry

about. Jazz has been good to Tony. All he has to do is spin the record and let the music speak for itself.

**Remembering Tony Almerico
by Mona MacMurray
Spring 1987**

Although he lived for little more than a half a century, Tony Almerico's contribution to Dixieland Jazz influenced many lives. He was only 56 years old when he died on December 5, 1961, yet a quarter of a century later his memory lives on among most of today's Dixieland jazz musicians.

Between 1948 and 1958 the Parisian Room at 116 Royal Street, upstairs over Gluck's Restaurant was a haven for musicians - for older musicians who had been idle too long and young musicians eager to get started. Many of the old-timers made comebacks at the Parisian Room and a lot of today's successful musicians got their start there. Tony Almerico was the moving force that made the Parisian Room so important to the revival of Dixieland music in New Orleans.

His own musical career was successful long before he became a part of the Parisian Room. He started to play the trumpet at age 15 and played in the Jesuit High School Band. His first professional job was at the Fern Dance Hall, a dime-a-dance place on Burgundy Street in 1925. From that small beginning he went on to tour with bands in Memphis, Louisville, Indianapolis and New York.

In 1930 he returned to New Orleans and played at local night clubs including Peter Hermann's Plantation Club and the Silver Slipper on Bourbon Street. He left New Orleans again in

1933 and toured with Slim Lamar's band out of New York for three years.

After returning to New Orleans in 1936 he organized his own band, The All Stars, and opened at the Cotton Club on Jefferson Highway. The band was very successful for many years, playing regularly in clubs and for dances in New Orleans. Tony's All Stars played aboard the steamer Capitol from 1940 to 1943 and according to one source was the first white band to play on the boat. They also played on the steamer President until 1945.

In addition to his band activities, Tony featured Dixieland jazz on his radio shows. He had two shows that aired locally, WNOE and WJMR, on the latter he broadcast daily from 10:00 a.m. to noon. He also had a half-hour show on the powerful 50,000 watt clear-channel station WWL every Sunday from 9:00 to 9:30 p.m. that brought in heavy fan mail from all over the country.

The fact that the Parisian Room's Sunday concerts were held in the afternoon (from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.) made them a major tourist attraction not only for jazz fans but for families with children whom they wanted to experience the flavor of New Orleans' music.

Through his tours, radio shows, records and the Parisian Room, Tony Almerico became more than a local celebrity. He was the subject of several national magazine articles, many of them lauding his contribution to the revival of Dixieland music in New Orleans.

During his last illness a special tribute was held at the Municipal Auditorium (the Superdome of its day) and attended by 3500 fans and fellow musicians. Many of the musicians were those whose careers Tony had helped to launch - young men like

Pete Fountain, Warren Luning, Murphy Campo, Pee Wee Spitalara, Paul Ferrara, Connie Jones. Among the old timers who showed up were Harry Shields, Manuel Aznco, Skarkey and His Kings of Dixieland, Armand Hug, Leon Kelner's orchestra, Dr. Edmond Souchon, the Last Straws, Russ Papalia and Leon Prima, Frank Federico, who took over the band after Tony's illness made him unable to play, was there too. This is how Frank tells about it:

"He was sick for a while. The man always had trouble; he had swollen feet, the gout, so they treated the man for the gout. But it wasn't the gout, it was his kidney's all the time. That lady from the Jazz Club, Myra Menville, it was her husband, Dr. Menville, a kidney specialist, he was the one who found out what was wrong with Tony, but by then it was too late.

"I remember the last job Tony played. It was at the Royal Orleans Hotel. He was on those pills. They told him they were vitamin pills but they were pain killers. He'd start off saying, 'Let's play such and such.' Then he'd get up there and start playing something else. He'd start crying saying, 'I know something's wrong, but nobody wants to tell me anything.' That was the end of Tony, the last job he played.

"They had a benefit for him, but it really wasn't a benefit: Tony didn't need money. It was more an appreciation thing. We played a big show. There was a great big picture of Tony with the trumpet. They had tapes of the band and the picture was in front of our band and we pretended to be playing as the tapes were played."

There was some question about just how the Parisian Room came about. I had even heard somewhere that before it became a jazz haven it had been a jitney dance hall. I discovered

it in 1948 and spent just about every Sunday there. During that time, Tony came to my rescue in a way that was typical of him - all help with no strings attached and no paying back. My son, Mike, was born on August 31, 1949. I had been working as a photo-reporter but back then there was no such thing as maternity leave; when I left the job I was permanently replaced by a man, so I had to resort to free lance photography to make a living. I had been doing Tony's photography for almost a year and had a lot of good shots of the band. Tony came up with an idea to help me make money. He had an artist friend make a big display board, and set up the board and a table for me to sell pictures every week to keep me going until I could get back to a full-time job.

In talking to Frank Federico about the Parisian Room, he suggested that I check with Joe Gemelli who was Tony's partner. One night Frank stopped by and we called Joe. The three-way conversation went like this:

MM: You leased the Parisian Room with Tony in 1942, is that correct?

JG: Yes, we were partners with Pat Brennan then.

MM: What about before that?

JG: Tony had it; it wasn't the Parisian Room then. When I came in we redid the place, put the lamps around (the cardboard Quarter type lamps that were an important part of the decor) and made it a French Quarter effect. We started the Dixieland Jamboree, the afternoon jazz concerts and named it the Parisian Room.

MM: Before you got into it, is it true that it was a jitney dance place?

JG: No not that I knew of, never.

FF: Wasn't the Parisian Room a place for tailoring or something like that?

JG: No, how it all happened, Frank, when I came into it I was working for Perez, I wasn't in business for myself then. Perez was out of the formal wear business and since we had that little room on the side for the bandstand, I bought their formal wear business and I called it the Parisian Formal Wear. I had that separately, that's how that got started.

MM: What year was that?

JG: It was after I got out of the service, 46 or 47.

FF: I know that we started the Parisian Room there in 48, that's for sure. That's the year Faz died (Irving Fazola), 1948. In fact we had had only about two or three Sundays at it when Faz keeled over and we got Tony Costa to take his place.

JG: Of course, Pete Fountain was a little boy then, going to school and the Assunto brothers, we had them for the junior band, wasn't that right Mona?

MM: Yes, and Pee Wee and Connie Jones.

JG: No, they came later. The first group of kids we had up there was Pete Fountain, Frank and Freddie Assunto and the group that later became the Dukes of Dixieland. Connie Jones, Murphy Campo and that group came later, they were a little younger. What we tried to do with our first group of kids, Frank, Tony and myself, and all of us, was to encourage the young fellows to play that type of music so it wouldn't die. I have write-ups from "On the Square" and things like that. We were going all the way to keep the music alive, because as Frank Federico can tell you, in those days there wasn't much Dixieland played, right Frank?

FF: That's right. That's when the beboppers started and we had to battle them.

Here the conversation turned to the radio shows Tony did and Frank and Joe reminisced about the Petri wine programs and a trip to Baton Rouge shortly after Irving Fazola's death. It was the first professional job played by the junior band. The money they made was donated to Fazola's widow.

We couldn't remember the exact date of the fire that destroyed Gluck's Restaurant as well as the Parisian Room. Joe Gemelli said that they used to joke with Gluck's owners, Joe Fein and his father.

"We kidded them, saying they burned us out because they thought we were too hot."

I do remember standing across the street crying as the building burned. I had been working in my darkroom three blocks away when I heard the fire engines and came out to see what was happening. Joe said, "It was sad, imagine all those great artists we had up there - at a dollar for three hours."

Here the talk turned to what musicians were playing when the Parisian Room opened.

JG: In the first group Armand Hug was supposed to play the piano but he had some sort of heart condition and we brought Roy Zimmerman in on the piano; Frank, you were there on guitar, Chink Martin was on bass, Monk Hazel was on drums, Digger Laine was on trombone and Sharkey was on trumpet. We had bulgin' Sam Dekemel; he was great. He was the only one in the whole world who could do what he did with a bugle. Remember, I'd put one of those big chef hats on him, Frank, and he used to come out from the back of the room blowing. He

played the Waffle Man Blues on his bugle for the customers of his Davy's waffle wagon."

After this the talk turned to all the regulars who used to fly in for the concerts every Sunday, from places like Memphis, and Missouri and there was a doctor who came down from Baton Rouge every week.

I have a copy of a clipping from Tommy Griffin's Lagniappe column dated December 14, 1961 in which Griffin quoted a letter from Dr. Edmond Souchon. The letter stated that the first actual jazz played at the Parisian Room was a New Orleans Jazz Club jam session featuring Johnny Wiggs on cornet; Boujie Centobie, clarinet; Julian Lane, trombone; Armand Hug, piano; Chink Martin, bass; Freddie King, drums; and Frank Federico, guitar. The latter stated that it was after a second NOJC jam session featuring Sharkey Bonano on trumpet; Irving Fazola on clarinet; Santo Pecora, trombone; Chink Martin, bass; Armand Hug, piano and Monk Hazel, drums, that Tony Almerico and his partners signed Sharkey and his band to an exclusive contract and took over the sessions. In any event, it was the effort put forth by Tony Almerico and Joe Gemelli that made the Parisian Room what it was. At that time Sharkey had not played for many years and the come-back he made at the Parisian Room brought him long-lasting success.

Pete Fountain is, of course, the most famous of the Parisian Room alumni, but there are many others still playing. One of my favorites is trumpet man Murphy Campo. He remembers Tony with great respect and admiration. He said:

"I guess you can go through the whole library of New Orleans musicians and you'll find that I'd say 90% of us started up at Almerico's Parisian Room. The Dukes of Dixieland, Pete

Fountain, Pee Wee Spitalara, George Girard, most of us got our start up at the Parisian Room.

“Too bad there’s not a place like that today, where young musicians coming up can be exposed to the kind of jazz that we play. There’s no place for them right now.”

Asked how he met Tony, he said:

“Well Tony used to run the talent shows in different movie theaters here in New Orleans and we always had a little Dixieland band with Pee Wee, Bob Farrar, myself, Ronnie Dupont and several other young guys coming up and we used to go play all those different talent shows; and we’d win most of the time. Tony invited us to come up to his Parisian Room in the afternoon on Sunday. They started to play at 3:00 o’clock and we’d come up at two to attract some people. That was about 1953. Before that, like I say, Pete Fountain, the Assunto brothers, Betty Owen, Connie Jones, Al Hirt, Lou Sino, they all started up at the Parisian Room.

“One time Tony had a contest up there; that’s how we got to go on the Ted Mack Amateur Hours. We won the contest at the Parisian Room and Tony got all excited and was worried about how we could manage to go to the Amateur Hour show, So, we hustled and raised money around the city playing at fights and different little places and raised enough money for the trip. Then Tony got us up to Ted Mack’s Amateur Hour and we came in second.

“He did a lot to help young musicians. I enjoyed going up there on Sundays; it was a place for me to go, a chance for me to learn and to play with better musicians. Tony really helped me and almost every other musician in town. He did a lot for all of us.”

Murphy Campo plays regularly around town, and often at the French Market. He's a fine trumpet player and a very nice guy. He was about 13 or 14 when he started at the Parisian Room.

Frank Federico and Tony Costa are the only members of the Tony Almerico band still living. Tony plays only now and then but Frank is still very active and you can hear him often at the French Market. In addition to playing with his own band, he's called on frequently by other leaders as a side man.

Some of the young musicians who were helped by Tony are no longer living. Both of the Assunto brothers died very young. Pee Wee Spitalara who played for a long time with Al Hirt, died about a year ago and the latest to leave us, also at a young age, was Lou Sino. All of them had become well-know during their short lives.

There are, of course others, like Pete Fountain, Connie Jones, and Murphy Campo who are doing well and still remember Tony Almerico with great affection.

Andy Anderson

by Mona MacMurray & Sue Hall

Summer, 1983

Andy Anderson learned to play the trumpet by taking a mail order course and went on to play with most of the greatest of

New Orleans Jazzmen between the 20's and the early 70's. He could hold G's above high C's with the greatest of ease for a chorus or more, according to a news story printed in the local paper on the opening of the New Orleans Jazz Museum in 1961.

A strange mishap brought his career to an halt in the early 70's. "I had to retire from the Olympia Band. I wouldn't have retired., but let me tell you what happened to make me retire. I cam home one morning and for some reason these four teeth in the front fell out and I knew that I wouldn't be able to play the trumpet that night so I called Harold (Dejan) and told him that my teeth fell out.

"I tell you what I think might have been the cause of my teeth falling out. I was going to the grocery store; I was living on Jena Street then, uptown, and there was a market there had a fella sold meat that was nice and tender all the time. I had an umbrella in my hand and a dog ran out at me. I struck at the dog with the umbrella and it opened up and I fell. I think that's what jarred my teeth loose.

"The dentist gave me a plate there, but my trouble was I stopped playing for too long. One thing about your embouchure, your lip, you have to continue playing. It takes you 8 or 10 years; I had a wonderful embouchure, I could make high notes, higher than anyone in the city. I got proof there in a magazine story."

Andy tried several times to come back but never really made it. At the time of our interview, June 11, 1982 - about six months before he died - he was till trying to get his lip back. We met with him in the Delta Towers, a low-rent housing for senior citizens (and shortly after the interview, he along with all the other old folks, had to move because the building was sold and the new owners converted in into a hotel). His quarters consisted

of a clean, bright, airy room, a ‘fold-away’ kitchen and a bath. His horn rested in an open case next to his bed so, “I can pick it up and blow whenever I feel like.”

Andrew Anderson (“but everybody calls me Andy”) was born on August 10, 1905 in Mandeville, Louisiana. The jazz Family Album listed his birthday correctly but gives the year as 1910, which Andy says is not correct.

He came to New Orleans when he was 16 years old. His father, George Anderson, was a bass player who played with Bunk Johnson between about 1915 and 1918. He also played with a spasm band and in a theater in Mandeville with a four-piece band consisting of guitar, drums, violin and bass. He made his living cutting timber and doing carpentry during the day, and played music at night. Andy had three brothers and three sisters. None of the other children were interested in music.

Asked how he got started on the trumpet, he gives a different story from the one in the Preservation Hall Portraits book, which says that one of his brothers bought him his first horn from an old trumpet player who wrote out the scales for Andy. In the interview he said, “I told my daddy that I was going to buy me a trumpet and I went to Werleins and bought one. Then I started taking a course from the American School of Music in Chicago. It was a correspondence course. After taking about half of the course I went to Pinchback Touro who was the head of the welfare band (WPA Band) and also was teaching music. I went to him to learn. After I learned a few things from the Chicago school, they gave me a few things to play, and I played them for him and he said, “How long have you been playing? And I told him I’ve been taking a course from Chicago, the American School of Music and he said, “I’ll tell you one thing,

you're further advanced than any man I've been teaching and they've been taking lessons from me for a couple of years."

Pinchback told Andy that he not only didn't need lessons, but that he was good enough to give lessons and asked him to play in the WPA band. He refused the offer for two reasons. First, he was getting a lot of work around town, and second because he wanted nothing to do with anything that was connected with welfare. He and his wife took two children in and "the welfare paid us to raise them, but the money they gave you, you couldn't buy anything with it except what they told you to, so I took the book and everything back there and told them I didn't want any welfare money. Twenty years later I met a woman on Canal Street and she said, "Mr. Anderson, do you remember me. I'm the woman you turned the welfare book back to."

When he first came to New Orleans, Andy worked in Rudolph's Saw Mill on Carrollton Avenue while taking the correspondence course music lessons. He said that his first professional job was with the Pelican Silvertones. It was a ten-piece band and he played first trumpet. "We played at the Pelican, a big building there (Pelican Stadium). They tore it down for some reason; there's a hotel sitting there now. That was my first job and I worked with the band for 8 or 10 years. We played weekends and holidays.

According to the Preservation Hall Portraits Book, Andy's first job was with Willie Foster's band at Buck Humphrey's place on the levee, but on tape he said that his first job was with the Pelican Silvertones. He was, however, vague on several points. Also changed order of things at times. Asked about his first job (non-musical) he said it was at the saw mill on Carrollton Avenue. Asked earlier if he had worked in Mandeville,

he said no, but later said that he had worked for Hendricks Dairy in Mandeville before coming to New Orleans.

Andy worked for about 15 years at world-famed International Trade Organization, International House, on Camp and Gravier Streets. That was where I met him. I was working there as a photo-reporter. He had answered an ad in the paper and was hired first as a handy man. Later he was offered the job as night elevator operator and still later when the job of guard came open, he was offered it and took it. Andy often told a story about his early days at International House. At times I had to climb up a ladder to take pictures and Andy got the job of holding the ladder steady. He'd tell it like this, "Mr. Matrana (the building manager) said that the first man he caught looking up that woman's dress when she's on the ladder loses his job, and well, after I lost that job . . ." During the time he worked at International House he was also playing music.

It was difficult for Andy to keep events in order in his mind and we had to back-track often. At one point we started from the beginning to try to get things straight and ran into some conflicting time areas.

He went into the Army Air Force in 1942, was stationed in Florida and was discharged in 1945. While he was in the army he was relief bugler, "I'd relieve the fella who played the bugle to wake the fellas up in the morning. Then at night the lieutenant and them would call me in the office saying, "Bring your trumpet, I want you to play something for my wife, and I'd play for his wife over the phone. I'd play, This Love of Mine and South Sea Island Magic over the phone. They were calling long distance."

Sometimes before he went into the army Andy played with Papa Celestin's band. Actually, he filled in for Papa Celestin, more about that later. While playing with Celestin's band Louis Armstrong's trombone player. Papoose the Indian heard him and recommended him to Armstrong, but he had already been drafted and had to tell him that "Uncle Sam beat you to me."

While Andy was in camp in Florida, Armstrong was playing at a place near the camp and Andy went to hear him. When he walked in the door, Papoose the Indian said, "Look, here comes Andy!:" and Louis stopped the band and said to Andy, "Come on up here, Man, I sure hate to see you in that monkey suit." "He called my uniform a monkey suit," mused Andy, adding, "I never did get the chance to play with Louis Armstrong, that's the break I had."

Andy played in several taxi dance places before the war. The first was the LaVida on Canal and Burgundy. After that closed he moved to the Alamo at 113 Burgundy and the Budweiser - actually the name of the place was the Fern Café No. 2, but musicians referred to it as the Budweiser because of the large beer sign hanging over the door. "There was one on Rampart Street, in the middle of the block where I worked for a long time, too, but I can't remember the name. They didn't have regular bands, the musicians just hired up. During that time we had Willie, a guitar player, and James Davis, he played piano and his brother was playing saxophone, his name was Rubin and he was in the army with me. Another brother, Robert played the drums. I played some jobs with One-Eyed Babe Phillips, a bass player, Jim Robinson was playing trombone. Joe Rena played drums, he's Kid Rena's brother. Walter Decou played piano.

He's the one who got into it with Rapp (Probably Guye Rapp) the guitar player and he stabbed Rapp, killed him right on the job. Walter stabbed him. I had told Walter to stop playing and take off because we were fixing to knock off and I figured they were fussing all the time. I told Rapp to go too, that the rest of the band could finish the job. Rapp walked out to the dressing room in the back and walked through the aisle and then he came in front of the bandstand and Walter met him there and stabbed him. He killed him right in front of the bandstand. This was at the LaVida. By the time I got back out of the army, Walter was out of jail."

Andy also mentioned working at the Entertainer's Club. He said it was around Basin Street on the other side of Krauss Co. Other sources give its location as Franklin Street. "It was part of the District, but the District wasn't open then. I played with Willie O'Conner, Sam Lee was playing sax, banjo and guitar. A fella named Roy was playing drums. I played there two or three years after I left the jitney dance halls. I played along North Rampart St. in a lot of different places, too. They had a lot of clubs on Rampart."

Asked about the pay, he said, "That was the worst part of it. When I first started playing we had a union but it didn't count for much. A fella was un-union could work right beside you. I remember during the depression we worked from 8 o'clock until 4 in the morning for \$2.00 a night, and sometimes you worked longer. In other words if the crowd was there you stayed, and we didn't get overtime."

In answer to a question about non-music jobs other than International House, he said, "I was the kind of person who

didn't work other jobs after I started playing music. I went right from one job to another in music until I went in the army.

“In the army I remember we organized a band and all the boys from the north, there were no southern boys, they were all from New York and California and other big cities, and they looked at me because after I finished helping the supply man, I'd go in and play music that night, and they'd say, “Andy, where are you from?” and when I'd say, New Orleans, they'd say, ‘Ain't no one from New Orleans can read music’ and I'd tell them that I was from New Orleans and could read. I learned to read from the course I took from Chicago. I found out about the American School of Music from an ad in the Louisiana Weekly.”

Asked about the musicians he played with in the 20's and 30's and part of the 40's, he said, “I played with John Casimir and the Tuxedo Band and also with A. J. Piron on the steamer Capitol. I wrote a song, the Chant of the Tuxedos when I was with John. In that band we had Jim Robinson on trombone, Andrew Morgan on tenor sax, Wilbert Tillman on bass, Herman Sherman on saxophone, John Casimir on clarinet and Peter Bocage. With A. J. Piron's band, Eddie Pierson was playing trombone but I forget who else there was. It was during the summer months, we used to leave around spring time. I played several jobs with Sidney Desvigne, too, but not regular though, not that much, but as a pick up. I had my own little band, too. Andy's Hot Five. Let me try to think now, there was Brady, the drummer, Israel Gorman - he was supposed to make up a band so we could play for the churches, but he drowned during Hurricane Betsy, in the high water. We were getting a band together when he got drowned. In the band, too there was Sidney Pfleuger, the regular guitar player, but John L. another guitar

player would play when Pfleuger couldn't play, and Walter Decou and Rappolo, the same ones from the stabbing.”

Andy said that they played spot jobs over the lake, picnics and things around Mandeville on week ends. “There was a lot of things happening on weekends all the time.”

On another attempt at back tracking, Andy mentioned working in Mandeville during his early career. “When I first came to New Orleans, I didn't stay all the time, I went back and forth to Mandeville. My cousin Paul body, he was one of the old timers, her used to play in Mandeville all the time and Buddy Petit played with him. Buddy inspired me to play the trumpet. He was the one who told Paul when they were eating dinner one night, and Buddy had his trumpet and the music and I picked up the trumpet and got the music, and started playing and Buddy asked Paul who was playing and Paul told him I was his cousin and Buddy said, ‘Damn, he can read music good. He needs to be in New Orleans where he can work himself up.’ and so I got inspiration through Buddy saying that.

“In Mandeville my cousin would get jobs for the band and I picked up the drums and would play with the advertising band when the regular band drummer didn't show up. My cousin played bass with the band before Chester Zardis joined Buddy. Buddy was drinking a lot then but that was the early 20's and it didn't interfere with his playing.

Andy was married four times. His first marriage was to Daisy Britt and a son, Andrew, Jr. was born. He is now in his 50's and works as a bondsman. Andy had a daughter whose mother was a ‘side woman’ named Frances whom he lived with after his first wife died. The daughter, Arlene was a murder victim in Los

Angeles when she was 30 years old. His second wife was named Beatrice, the third was Nancy and the fourth was Anne.

On discharge from the army he formed a six-piece band, called simply, Andy Anderson's Band and worked the whole vicinity over the lake and at Grand Isle for four or five years. "A man named Tony Marullo hired us. I had a fella named Charley playing drums, he lived on Howard Street, can't remember his last name. Tuts Washington was on piano, Leonard Mitchell played guitar and Henry Russ was on bass, with Albert Delong on saxophone. During the summer we played out there five nights a week, Wednesday through Sunday nights.

"In the 1950's I played at the Paddock in Papa Celestin's place, when he got sick. I'd relieve him all the time when he was off. I didn't play regular, just when they needed a trumpet player." Asked how he got along with Mrs. Valenti, he said, "Fine, just fine. The boys used to tell me about the way she used to mock me, the way I played, 'Oh he's so sophisticated, he stands up and holds his trumpet so erect,' and she'd mock the way I did. When I played there the police ladies, what do you call them, that are over the girls, lady police (he meant matrons), they'd be standing next to the bandstand when I played songs and I'd be phrasing my horn and they'd ride with it and Mrs. Valenti would say, 'Look at him, ain't he the fancy one!'

"I got fired from the Alamo. I'll tell you how it happened. It was a time musicians were getting more money and asking for more, and Mrs. Valenti's husband was the boss and he figured that I was trying to get the boys to demand more and he told Octave Crosby, the piano player, 'You better get rid of that trumpet player, he's trying to poison everyone's mind' and that was one time I was glad I didn't have to depend on that job. You

see, I was asking different things and he didn't like that, said I was a bad egg. I told Octave, who was a good friend, not to worry about me. That night I was leaving the Alamo and a man came up and asked me if I wanted to take a job two or three nights a week on the excursion boat that went over the lake, so I left there that night and went to work for Mr. Jahneke. I worked on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights and in the day on Sunday. Andy also worked later on the steamers, S.S. "J.S." and President.

In the 1950's Andy performed on two 'Wide, Wide World telecasts with Paul Barbarin. He recorded with George Lewis for Verve records during a west coast trip in 1959, the same year he recorded with the Young Tuxedo on the Atlantic record, "Jazz Begins" he also recorded once with a band in England during a tour with the Olympia Band. The song he wrote, "The Chant of the Tuxedos" was used on that record. "I have the copyright on that song, but I guess its about run out by now," he said.

He made only one trip overseas, with the Olympia Band. He was scheduled to make the second trip, but had lost his teeth in the meantime and couldn't play. He did do quite a bit of traveling with George Lewis. He said he wasn't a regular member of George's band. "The band I recorded with in Hollywood had George, and Alton Purnell, Jim Robinson, Lawrence Marrero, Slow Drag and Joe Watkins. I did "Chant of the Tuxedo" with that band, too.

Andy's education started in Mandeville; he went only as far as the 6th grade there. After he came to New Orleans he finished the 8th grade. That was all the formal schooling he had but he studied a lot. He bought a set of ten different high school

study books on English, history and other high school subject and studied by himself.

His grandfather, Billy Smith was from Virginia but moved to Mandeville and delivered mail in the country there. His mother, Selina Smith was born there. Billy Smith bought property which is still owned by Andy's youngest sister, Ruth. His sister Irma lives uptown and a third sister, Selina is no longer living.

Andy played at Preservation Hall during the 60's with John Casimir, along with Bill Matthews, Alfred Williams, Wilbert Tillman and Charley Hamilton. When Casimir died, Willert Tillman became leader and Andrew Morgan replaced Casimir. The band broke up after Wilbert Tillman suffered a stroke.

After he lost his teeth, Andy tried several times to make a come back, but his health was not too good, the result of long years of heavy drinking - a practice that earned him the nickname "Jug" or "Jug Head." He tells this story, "I made trips with George Lewis, the first one was to Chicago, we played at the Fireman's Hall, I stopped playing with George because I wasn't feeling too well. I wasn't sick, but just didn't feel good. Later, both me and Kid Howard were sick at the same time. I was going to the hospital and he was, too and the doctor warned us both, 'Let me tell you, he said, Christmas is coming up, don't go drinking the liquor. When you come back I want you to be looking fine. When I came back to the doctor I was doing fine but he said, 'Your boy, he went down.' Howard had died. He started drinking right at Christmas.

"I had some kind of complications from drinking. I didn't quit drinking. There were four of us, I remember Clyde

Kerr was one, we used to drink every morning uptown. We'd stop after a job and drink until about 8 or 10 in the morning at the Derby on Louisiana Avenue and Freret. You stop in there and you'd fine us buying liquor all morning."

About a month after the interview, Andy called to give me the news that he had found a place to live, just a few doors from his sister's house. I saw him a few times downtown. He was always very neatly dressed and we'd talk a bit and then go our separate ways. I hadn't seen him for about six weeks and was at Preservation hall when I heard the news of his death. I couldn't go to the funeral. I had worked with him for about 15 years so he was more than a musician friend. He used to let my son, Mike, make the rounds with him when I had to work late at night in the darkroom and couldn't get a baby sitter. He'd raid the refrigerator in the kitchen and we'd have late night feasts, while the prints were washing and drying in the darkroom. So, I want to remember him as a friend a warm, living friend.

Buster Bailey

William C. ("Buster") Bailey, celebrated virtuoso of the clarinet and recent alumnus of Louis Armstrong's "All-Star," died of a heart attack, at his home in Brooklyn, Mass.

His career dates back to 1918, when - at age 15, he started under the wing of William C. Handy, Father of the Blues, in Memphis, Tenn. He migrated to Chicago, and from 1919 to 1922 his style took shape while playing in the big band of Erskine Tate. He also took lessons from the same man who taught Benny Goodman "classic style" clarinet, Professor Franz Schoepp. Bailey had hoped for a career in classical music, but the opportunities for a Negro at that time were few and far between in the classical (especially symphonic) field, while the openings for good jazz Negro clarinetists were abundant. To the very end, although playing with many celebrated jazz bands and leadsmen, Bailey's style retained the formal, disciplined quality he had learned from Prof. Schoepp of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as a young, young boy.

Fletcher Henderson's great band afforded haven for Buster Bailey for 10 long and happy years. He also toured Europe with Noble Sissle and for a while with Carroll Dickerson and King Oliver. Other "name bands" with which he played were Lucky Millinder, John Kirby, Charlie Shavers, Russ Procope, Billy Kyle and Spencer O'Neil. For a while Buster Bailey was married to Maxine Sullivan (now Mrs. Cliff Jackson), and with her as singer, Buster Bailey's outfit was able to crash the "race barrier" at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City, and also affording a long radio program contract.

In the mid 1950's, Bailey limited his engagements to smaller traditional Dixieland groups. He was also in the celebrated "Pit-Band" for the 1953-1954 revival of "Porgy and Bess." For a while after these engagements, he realized his life's ambition by playing in the symphony orchestras of Leon Barzin and Dimitri Mitropoulos. He also made frequent appearances at

the Metropole in New York, for off and on engagements in their various jazz groups. Buster had just returned from Las Vegas one week prior to his demise, where he had been playing with Louis Armstrong and His All-Stars.

He is survived by his widow, the former Mary Nelson, two daughters, a son, a sister and eight grandchildren. He was buried in Brooklyn, from St Matthew's and Luke's Church.

Paul Barbarin
Jan./Feb., 1969

When the Board of directors and Committees selected Paul Barbarin to round out their program for "International Week," it was quite a "natural." This man epitomizes a fast disappearing type of musician: that of the old school of primitive New Orleans jazz. Month after month, this magazine is forced to carry obituary columns announcing one (or more) deaths among the real pioneers of jazz.

Paul is only 58 years old, but he has played with many of the very earliest and greatest of archaic jazzmen. He went to Chicago with King Oliver in 1918, again in 1925 - and remained with "King" Oliver for 3 years. (At this time Luis Russell took over the band).

Louis Armstrong superseded Russell, but Paul remained with this outfit until 1939, after which time he returned to his native city, to join "Red" Allen. In 1943, he played with Sidney Bechet's band, meanwhile drumming for many of the great marching bands of New Orleans. He has played at Jazz, Ltd. With Art Hodes outfit, and fronted his own fine band at Childs,

in New York City. In New Orleans, he has always assembled a wonderful band for any dance, concert or festival that wanted him, and did many spot jobs around the city. Recently, he was featured artist in Canada, where he played with some of the greatest bands in the dominion. Frequently he fronts his own outfit in the “Quarter” in New Orleans, and visitors always go away feeling that after hearing his music they have at long last, “drunk from the fount.”

His recordings number in the hundreds, and are mostly classified in the “Collector’s Item” category, even to his most recent releases. Mr. Barbarin is noted for his unfailing support of the N. O. Jazz Club, and is always among the first to offer his services gratis for any worthy Charity or Fund Drive.

Paul’s contribution to jazz is not limited to his ability as a drummer. He is also a composer of note. If our readers will peruse the old Oliver and Armstrong records of yesteryear, they will be amazed to find Paul’s name as composer of numerous tunes. Probably the most remembered is “Come Back Sweet Papa.” More recently he has penned such hits as “Bourbon Street Parade,” and one (which he dedicated to the New Orleans Jazz Club) call “The Second Line.” Four other new compositions were added to his long list, when his own band recorded for “Good Time Jazz” a year or two ago.

Paul does real well as a vocalist, too. Don’t be surprised if he gives out during the 11th Annual concert of the New Orleans Jazz Club, October 26th. Here’s the complete lineup of Barbarin’s band: Lester Santiago, piano; Manuel Sayles, guitar and banjo; Jack Willis, trumpet; Waldron Joseph, trombone; Louis Cottrell, clarinet; Gerald Adams, string bass. Paul has also added what he

calls “A crowd charmer” in the person of a vocalist, Blanche Thomas.

We expect Barbarin’s best effort at the concert on this particular night, as there will be special musical challenges from the other two superb groups on the same program.

Paul Barbarin (early 2nd line)

Paul Barbarin, New Orleans drummer who played with King Oliver, first started his musical career in 1916, at the age of 14, by playing a clarinet. He played a few jobs on this reed instrument and then, because he met and liked Happy Bolton a drummer then playing with King Oliver, Paul switched to drums.

His first job as a drummer was with Johnny Prodenca’s “Silver Leaf Orchestra” in 1917. He played with this band for several months and then changed over to Buddy Petit who was the manager of a new band just starting out as the Young Olympian Band.

After about 6 months with Petit, Barbarin headed up the line for Chicago but not to play music. He took a job in the Stock Yards of Armour & Co. But the music inside Barbarin would not let him be content in such a job and he soon quit and joined a 3 piece combo led by Joe Wolfscale.

Eddie Vincent (trombone) who was in Chicago with the Original Creole Band, had an idea of gathering up some of the New Orleans musicians who were playing odd jobs around the “Windy City” and so, Bill Johnson (bass) (also of the same band) angled for a job at the Royal Gardens Café and brought back the news to the boys that if they could get up a band they were hired.

The boys lined up Bill Johnson, Lottie Taylor (piano), Jimmy Noone (clarinet), Paul Barbarin (drums), and then sent a message to Buddy Petit down in New Orleans. Pete refused to come and so, they wired King Joe Oliver, who accepted the offer. It was at this café that the “Royal Garden Blues” was created. The band immediately clicked and its fame spread. Soon all of the South Side began to crowd in the doors.

Over at the Dreamland Café (the competition of the Royal Garden) they were trying to woo Oliver away and make him a permanent factor in their band. After a year at the Royal Gardens a switch was made by Oliver. He left this band for the Dreamland and Freddie Keppard took his place. However, after a short while at Dreamland, Oliver came back to the Royal Gardens. With two new member: Sidney Bechet (clarinet) and Freddie Keppard (trumpet) Oliver used the same men he first started out with at the Royal.

After the Royal Gardens closed at night, Paul Barbarin took an “after hours” job with Jimmy Noone, playing at “The Fume.” Down the street also working on a second job was King Oliver at the Pekin Café with Lil Hardin, Baby Dodds, Johnny Dodds, Bill Johnson and Honore Dutrey.

The Royal Gardens orchestra broke up and Oliver organized his own band (about 1919) using the same line-up he had at the Pekin. Barbarin did not go with him but joined Art Simms Band.

Barbarin left Simms to tour the Orpheon circuit with a “Plantation Show.” They were billed as the “Tennessee Ten.” In South Norwalk, Conn. Paul quit the stage to become a leader of a 3 piece combo at a night club called “Patterson’s.” Six months later he joined Jimmy Noone in Chicago at the Paradise Gardens.

Eight months later he was homesick and Paul left Chicago for New Orleans where he joined Luis Russell at Tom Anderson's in Storyville. The personnel of this band was: Luis Russell (piano), Willie Santiago (guitar), Arnold Montoyer (cornet), Albert Nicholas (clarinet & alto sax), Barney Bigard (tenor sax) and Paul (drums).

About 1922 King Oliver - still going strong in Chicago - sent for Luis, Barney, Albert and Paul. The band was supposed to open at the Lincoln Gardens on Christmas Eve, but ill luck tagged them as the place burned down before the night was over. Somehow a Christmas tree caught on fire and in no time the whole club was in flames.

A year or so passed - then the King organized a band with Luis Coss (bass), Bud Scott (banjo), Paul, Barney, Albert (clarinet & alto sax), Darnell Howard (alto sax & clarinet), Kid Ory (trombone), Bob Schaffner 1st cornet) and himself (2nd cornet). After 1926 Faggen, an Eastern booking agent, who had previously wanted Oliver's Band to come to New York City, finally succeeded in hiring him to play at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem. There were a few changes in the band and the set-up was: Russell (piano), Junie Coss (banjo) not the same Coss previously mentioned), Omar Simeon (alto sax & clarinet), Paul Barnes (alto), King Oliver (2nd cornet), Red Allen (1st cornet), Tic Grey (cornet), Kid Ory (trombone) and Paul Barbarin (drums).

After 2 weeks playing this engagement Joe (with the band) was offered a job at the Cotton Club. He didn't take it because the pay wasn't good enough. Duke Ellington accepted the offer which turned out to be a lucky one as from then on Ellington rose to fame.

Paul D. “Polo” Barnes
by Mona MacMurray
Summer, 1981

When Paul D. “Polo” Barnes died on April 13, 1981, after a long illness, he was given a send off rarely matched, even for a jazz great. Musicians always turn out to play for a departed brother, but at Polo’s funeral even musicians who couldn’t play for one reason or another came out in such numbers that there were as many musicians among the mourners as there were in the two large bands that provided the music - this was pointed out by a young lady reporter for a local newspaper. The Young Tuxedo Brass Band and Dejan’s Olympia Band, along with members of the Dirty Dozen marching Club did the honors.

Letters, cards and cables of condolence are still arriving at the North Roman Street home of his widow, Alma Barnes.

Polo was born almost 80 year ago, on November 22nd, 1901, one of five children, three boys and two girls. His older brother, Emile was one of the pioneer jazz clarinetists and a superb musician. Polo idolized his brother and always tried to “be just like ‘Meelie.’ “musically they were alike but they were worlds apart in temperament. Emile was rather morose, quick tempered and not too patient, whereas Polo was always cheerful, kind and loving.

He loved his mother dearly and although he was considered the smartest kid in the class at Lutheran College, he left school in the sixth grade to help support the family after his father left them. He did, however, continue to study on his own and became a self-educated man.

He was the only musician to have kept complete journals during his travels. He lived during an important period in the development of jazz and his journals are now an invaluable contribution to jazz history. He used plain school composition books, one for each year, and between the early 1930's and the 1960's there is a complete record of each day's activities - time of arrival at a job, pay, expenses involved, where, what and when he ate, the hotel he stayed at, and any other information he considered important, along with comments. Most of these journals are intact but unfortunately those covering his years with Jelly Roll Morton are missing.

His marriage to Alma Corning on July 28, 1946 was a very happy one. Alma says it was a wonderful marriage and she wouldn't hesitate to do it all over again. They met when Alma was rooming with Polo's sister, Alice. One day she was helping Alice clean up, wearing an old house dress, and Polo came to the house. "He was wearing a white Panama hat and a nice suit and he looked gorgeous. I said to myself, "Whee, what I'd give to have a husband like that!" and ran upstairs to change clothes and get presentable. We had vegetables growing in the garden and he asked me to go out there with him to pick some corn. Then we cooked and ate it and he asked if could take me out sometime."

"The next time I saw him, it had rained hard and there was a big puddle in front of the house, so I lifted my dress to wade through it, and didn't know he was watching me until he said I had nice legs! Well, we got married a year later, he was in the navy then, and we really did live happily ever after."

My earliest impression of Polo was one of respect for his quiet dignity, and his obvious devotion to his wife and delight at his surprising wit. One time at Preservation Hall I asked him how

he managed to think of all those lovely lacy things he did during his clarinet solos. “Do you plan them in advance, or dream them up during moments of fancy?” I asked. He smiled and answered softly, “Honey, when I stand up to play, I never really know what the hell I’m going to do.”

Long before I met Alma Barnes, I knew so much about her and all of Polo’s wonderful descriptions of her were true. They were made for each other and as a couple they were made for the world. Their home was always open to everyone. There was almost a constant stream of house guests - musicians, photographers, writers from overseas, friend and fans from other cities in the United States and, to so many friends here in New Orleans, a quick visit to “Daddy Paul and Alma” always gave the spirit a lift.

Polo played his first job in September 1919. Like his brother, Emile, he chose the clarinet and just “learned to play it, I didn’t take lessons, the music just came to me as a gift.” He also played alto and soprano sax. Early in his career he formed his own group, the Original Diamond Jazz Band, later called the Young Tuxedo Orchestra. Members of this band included his first cousin Josiah “Cie” Frazier on drums, George Washington, trombone, Eddie Marrero, bass, Lawrence Marrero, banjo and Bush Hall, trumpet. The only member still living is Cie Frazier who plays regularly at Preservation hall.

Polo played with Kid Rena’s band and in 1923 he joined the Maple Leaf Orchestra and the Original Tuxedo Orchestra at Tranchina’s.

When the Original Tuxedo Orchestra split up, Polo stayed on with Papa Celestin until 1927, then joined King Oliver’s band and toured the country on and off until 1935 when

during the last tour, band members were paid only \$1.00 a night and had to pay all their own expenses, including hotel rooms.

In 1928, between tours with Oliver, he joined Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers and in 1929 made a recording for RCA Victor. His soprano sax solo on "Deep Creek Blues" on that record is considered a jazz classic.

Also between tours with King Oliver, in 1932 he formed a band in Lake Charles which included Nellie Lutcher on piano, DeDe Pierce on trumpet and Chester Zardis on bass. In 1935 he returned to New Orleans and worked with Willie Pajeaud at the Budweiser Dance Hall. He joined the Kid Howard band in 1936 and played with them at the LaVida Taxi Dance hall until late 1939.

During World War II he served in the Navy and was a member of the Algiers Naval Station Band. Other notables in that band included Henry Russ, Vernon Gilbert, Gilbert Young, Adolph Alexander, Jr. Harold Dejan, Frank Fields, William Casimir, William Spencer, Booker T. Washington, R. Anthony, Herbert Risch and Leon Harris. During his hitch in the Navy he attended the Naval Music School in Washington D.C. and earned the rank of Musician First Class.

After the war he rejoined Papa Celestin's Tuxedo Orchestra and played with him regularly for a couple of years. In the early 1950's he and Alma moved to Los Angeles where they lived for about seven years. Polo worked days as a school custodian and played music jobs at night. They returned to New Orleans in the late 1950's but Polo went back to California in 1960 to play at Disneyland with Johnny St. Cyr and Kid Ory.

He returned to New Orleans permanently in the early 1960's and joined Paul Barbarin's Band. Later he became a

member of Kid Thomas' band and played regularly with him at Preservation Hall until illness forced him to retire in 1976. While a member of the Kid Thomas band he toured Europe, Japan and South America.

A particularly important highlight in Polo's career was a brief but solemn ceremony held on the campus of Tulane University here in New Orleans a few years ago, during which an honorary doctorate was conferred upon him by the Boswell International Institute, proclaiming him a Doctor of Jazzology. Louis Nelson, Milford Dulliole, Charlie Hamilton and Emanuel Sayles played during the ceremony. When the news got out, his friends and fans were quick to address him as "Doctor Paul Barnes," a practice which delighted him.

Polo's illness lasted five long years and although his friends and fans were prepared for the end, it was no less sorrowful when it came, but we take comfort in the thought that his painful journey is over now.

Emile Barnes
March/April, 1970

Emile Barnes (78) died March 1, 1970 in Charity Hospital where he had been a patient for 2 weeks. He was accorded a funeral with music by the Eureka Brass Band (under direction of Percy Humphrey). He was a brother of Paul "Polo" Barnes, another celebrated clarinetist from New Orleans. Emile had not played professionally for the past few years, however, he did enjoy jazz sessions with friends at his home on occasions.

Emile began his musical career on a tin fife and at the suggestion of Bunk Johnson, he bought his first clarinet from a

pawn shop (as the story goes) with a pocketful of winnings from a poker game.

Emile played with Wooden Joe's Camellia Band, Kid Rena, Kid Thomas, Kid Howard, Chris Kelly and Buddy Petit.

"Sweet" Emma Barrett

by Patrick McCauley

March/April, 1962

When Sweet Emma rang the people came. From uptown, downtown, back o' town and out-o'-town they converged on the Grand Salon of the Royal Orleans Hotel, where Emma and her perennial sidekicks offered up a program as typical of jazz's heyday as an old Brown Derby.

The occasion was a benefit concert Jan. 31, for Sweet Emma Barrett, the ageless jazz pianist of the shapely calf, spider fingers, and tinkling garters. The goal was to compensate in some small measure for the theft of Emma's life-savings, which she habitually toted around in a shopping bag that was snatched from her one day of late.

The momentary result was not commensurate with the size and enthusiasm of the crowd. It was only fairly good (Sic; Sweet Emma requested that the exact figure of her benefit not be given, for fear she'd be pick-pocketed again!). Artistically, the evening could hardly have been improved.....

And her friends are legion. Emma after all has been a fixture in New Orleans jazz sometime around World War I. Legend has it that she got her first audience exposure playing with some of the fellows in her present combo, at the boys home down the river. Unless memory falters, she first played for pay at

the Roof Garden of the old Pythian Temple in the early 1920s and worked her way through a procession of renowned local band including the Tuxedo Band and Papa Celestin's Original Tuxedo Band....

**George Barth
March/April, 1970**

George Barth (80) died January 14, 1970 in Beaumont, California. On February 1st, he would have celebrated his 81st birthday. George had been associated with clarinetist Johnny Fischer over the years. He played cornet in Fischer's Ragtime Band in New Orleans. He was buried in Beaumont, January 16, with Masonic Rites. Not too much information is available on Mr. Barth, however, there is a photograph of Fischer's band in which George is a member. He is survived by his widow, 2 sons and a daughter who reside in California.

**Ray Bauduc
Michael Killalea
Summer 1984**

Many Houston restaurants boast exquisite menus and entice passerby with seductive aromas which seep under their doors. Add a dash of two-beat, New Orleans Jazz and the combination is irresistible. I first met New Orleans own Ray Bauduc, now seventy-seven, in such a setting, drumming with abandon in a local Dixieland band, wearing a smile as large and as radiant as any sunrise in Dixie. Ray who settled in Houston for

family reasons, is in some respects like a fish out of water in Texas. He speaks disparagingly of “cowboy bands,” many of whom have unsuccessfully offered Ray work since he took up residence here in 1967. A New Orleanian by birth, it is the Dixieland music that Ray grew up with that forever binds him to his native city.

Ray’s father was a mechanical draftsman in New Orleans for whom music was a sideline, though he kept enough instruments about the house to arm a small orchestra. Ray’s brother Jules became proficient with each instrument but finally settled into professional drumming. When Jules had a show to do, Ray would help him set up and then tear down his drums with great gusto, being helpful and maybe sometimes a little in Jules way, probably earning an occasional good-natured ribbing from his older brother as is the lot of young siblings.

Jules was the earliest arbiter of Ray’s musical tastes. As Ray put it, Jules showed him “how to play the right things on the drums.” Jules got a job drumming for Howard Voorhies’ band (c. 1920), which was playing at the newly opened Elk’s Roof Garden, working from about 9:00 until midnight. Ray spent those evenings listening to the music around town and would typically head home with Jules after his show. One night when they reached the corner of Rampart and Canal, Jules said: “You see that club over on the left hand side of North Rampart St. - well, the band playing there is the corniest band in the world. I don’t want to catch you on the sidewalk over there,” Jules admonished sternly. “If you’ve got to go this way on North Rampart, you go on the other side of the street, and when you pass in front of Tom Anderson’s Café, I want you to stop, take off your hat and make a bow, because that’s where the greatest of the greats is playing.

That's where Louis Armstrong is playing, and Zutty (Singleton) is playing drums for him late at night." Young Ray, barely a teenager then, was appropriately awed, so Jules continued magnanimously, "When we go over there, I'm going in for a beer, and I'll have Zutty open the back window so you can get a load of what' right - the right kind of music." Too young to loiter in bars, Ray went eagerly around back and, as he put it, "listened to that music, and that was the greatest."

Ray saw more of Zutty Singleton in the weeks and months that followed. Howard Voorhies ran the musical instrument department of Werlein's Music Store on Canal St., which was a focal point for many of the local musicians. Ray often helped Howard out there on weekends and after school. Zutty stopped by frequently, and he and Ray would talk about drums and drumming. One day Ray found a Zildjian brand cymbal (more on them later) that he really liked, and he stashed it away in a bottom drawer until he could afford to buy it. Unfortunately, he mentioned his lay-away treasure to Zutty, who, quickly making his own plans for the Zildjian, promptly bought it. Ray now chuckles, "I was broken-hearted after he got it." Ray does not regard Zutty as hard-hearted or uncharitable, though> "He (Zutty) got a job playing at the Lyric Theater, and I used to go borrow that cymbal from him after he got through . . . to go play a job the next night. And I'd bring it to him so he could use it. I love . . . the way it sounded. It was a good old Zildjian cymbal."

While Ray's early New Orleans years shaped his musical tastes in general, they also provided the inspiration for the tunes he was to write and co-write in subsequent years. In his early teens, Ray took his drumsticks with him wherever he went,

always trying to learn the names of the bands hired to play at the weekend picnics given by the small social clubs of the era.

One Sunday two social clubs were simultaneously having a picnic in Milneburg, so Ray rode the train out to the then resort to see bands like the Kid Rena Jazz Band, Papa Celestin and His Original Tuxedo Jazz Band, Sharkey's Rhythm Kings, and "Pantsy" Laine and His Wampus Cats. The bands always played out on the porches, each playing for half an hour or so, then the next band picked it up playing the same tune, keeping the music going. This inevitably developed into a "bucking" or "cutting" contest as the bands strove to outdo one another.

The train Ray rode was the only public transportation at Milneburg at that time (c. 1920), and ran from Elysian Fields Ave. at Dauphine St. or Burgundy St. It was called Smoky Mary. Ray always rode in Mary's last car, out on the observation deck.

As Smoky Mary pulled away from the station, Ray would pick up the tempo of the wheels with his sticks. This tempo varied as Smoky Mary sped up or slowed down, so Ray was free to play as he wanted, four beats to two beats, syncopation, waltz, boogie woogie, shuffle, and so on, working out many of the rhythms he would use years later as part of his unique style.

Much later, in 1939, when Ray was with the Bob Crosby Band, he, Matty Matlock, and Bob Haggart came up with an upbeat tune, which reminded Ray of the sound of a train. After humming the tune to Matlock and Haggart and working out the arrangements with them Ray named it after his old New Orleans friend and mechanical mentor, Smoky Mary.

As Ray grew a little older, he started playing more regularly. He was a founder of the Six NOLA Jazzers, which, after some settling and rearrangement later on, became the

Dixieland Roamers. This group was the first to broadcast live Dixieland in New Orleans around 1923, and with great success, to judge from the grateful letters that poured in requesting encore performances. The band was: Ed Cathy, vocals; Pinky Gerbecht, trumpet; Ellis Stratakos, trombone; Eddie Powers, c-melody saxophone; Frank Mutz, piano; and Ray Bauduc, drums.

After the Roamers broke up, Ray worked at the Old Absinthe House in New Orleans, until Johnny Bayersdorffer asked Ray to join his band (1923), the Roamers having previously disbanded. Bayersdorffer planned to book his five-man jazz band into one-nighters on both sides of the Mississippi and up and down Bayou-la-Fourche. The personnel were Johnny Bayersdorffer on trumpet, Charlie Hartman on trombone, Jack Weber on clarinet, Johnny Miller on piano, and Ray Bauduc on drums. The number of instrument on tour was limited to five because only five musicians, Ray with his snare, sticks, and cymbal, and each of the others except Miller carrying his instrument, would fit into Bayersdorffer's shiny, 1921 Ford.

Once returning to New Orleans on a hot afternoon, the musicians spotted a country store and decided to stop for a beer. As they drove closer, they heard some music, or, as Ray put it, "some instruments blowing and it sounded more like someone practicing." Sitting there listening to the discordant noise sparked an idea. They left the car, each horn player bringing along his mouthpiece, while Ray jammed his drumsticks into his back pants pocket, concealing them under his jacket.

They infiltrated the bar at intervals, each entering alone and ordering his beer as though a stranger to the other incognito musicians. The New Orleanians had stumbled onto a rehearsal of a small town band, which had to stop playing even before

reaching the first chorus in order to perform instrument repairs instead. The New Orleans players craftily moved in on their respective bandsmen, taking casually with the local players and admiring their instruments, no doubt with their tongues tucked securely in their cheeks.

The instruments required a variety of minor repairs. Bayersdorffer wiped off the trumpet valves, spit on them, and added a little oil, so that they moved as freely as a fish through water. Charlie Hartman had to use kerosene to wipe axle grease from the trombone slide, while Jack Weber jury-rigged broken clarinet key springs with rubber bands. The piano pedal and keys needed work, which Johnny Miller ably provided. As for Ray, he fixed and remounted the bass drum foot pedal when he was satisfied with its play.

The repairs accomplished, Bayersdorffer pointed furtively as Ray with two fingers up, and Ray responded with two beats of his stick on the bass drum, and the five were off and playing “Panama,” which they also called “Two Licks.” Each of the musicians took a few choruses, as wide-eyed spectators crammed into the store. The band went into their ride-out chorus, finished the tune, and quickly put down their borrowed instruments. By the time the audience could recover their composure, the musicians had run from the store like demons, jumped into the Ford, and were headed for New Orleans, leaving the townspeople particularly the local musicians, scratching their heads and wondering how so much good music could have come from their dilapidated instruments.

Ray continued collaborating with Bayersdorffer at Spanish Fort. The band expanded to include Dan Tanguelle, alto sax; Eagle Weserfield, tenor sax; Steve Layocano banjo and

violin. Chink Martin joined on bass, to be replaced later by Lefty Irman. With this band Ray performed in Chicago and Indianapolis before returning to Spanish Fort. Bayersdorffer's band lost Jack Weber and gained Bill Creger on clarinet. Lester Bouchon on tenor saxophone, and Joe Wolfe on piano. Ray also began what was to be a long-standing association with banjoist Nappy Lamare. This second band played in Spanish Fort and toured in California, where many members became homesick and returned to New Orleans. Bayersdorffer and Bauduc went to Indianapolis, performing there at Day's Casino before heading home themselves.

In 1926, Bayersdorffer's band merged with Billy Lustig. Calling themselves Billy Lustig's Scranton Sirens, they traveled to Chicago and later broke up there. Subsequently, Billy Lustig got in touch with Tommy Dorsey, and along with Jimmy Dorsey and pianist Chummy MacGregor, put a band together. Ray reports that there was the usual arguing between Jimmy and Tommy: one day Jimmy took Ray aside and confided of his weariness of bickering with Tommy. He asked if Ray would like to go to New York with him, Chummy MacGregor, and Joe Venuti, the premier jazz violinist. Ray accepted gladly, and he added to me, "I had just put the short pants down and the long pants on when I joined this band."

Ray began working with Venuti and Jimmy Dorsey in New York, though only temporarily, as it turned out. Other band members were Frankie Signorelli on piano, late of the Memphis Five (Chummy MacGregor had had to leave New York due to illness in his family); Chi-Chi Carmen, string bass; Eddie Lang, guitar and banjo; and Red Nichols, trumpet.

Shortly thereafter, Jimmy Dorsey got a job doubling in vaudeville with Fred Rich's band. Coincidentally, Rich argued with and fired his drummer. At Dorsey's suggestion, Rich hired Ray to fill the vacant spot.

Rich arranged for a European tour, but when the band was all set to leave for England, they learned that, for some obscure reason, American musicians were not allowed to visit Great Britain at that time. The only way to circumvent this peculiar rule was for the musicians to change the occupation listed on their passports from "musician" to the more generic, "performing artist." This meant that each band member had to develop an entertaining avocation. Some knew acrobatics, others sang or danced. Probably many of them had feelings similar to Ray's: "I didn't know what I could do besides (play drums) . . . Right now I still don't know what I could do besides. Take the sticks away from me and I'm lost." Fortunately, Ray rose to the occasion, recalling from his early New Orleans days some slow, shuffling dance steps. He put them together into a routine done to the "St. Louis Blues" and called it the Dixieland shuffle.

The band duly toured Europe and did a fine job playing what Ray calls "funny hat music"; but ironically when Ray did his act, he was the sensation of the show. He now says, "In England they don't know me as a drummer, they just know me as a dancer. I got a big kick out of it."

If you ask Ray Bauduc which, of all the bands he has worked with, was his favorite, he sits back smiling and tells you about the Bob Crosby Band; how it originally started in Ben Pollack's band, which boasted Jack Teagarden, Benny Goodman, Jimmy McParland, and Matty Matlock, along with Bauduc. Ray had just left Reddie Rich at the time he joined Ben Pollack (c.

1929). Ray says of the musicians in Pollack's band, "They all loved the type of music they were playing."

The band acquired a vocalist named Doris Robbins, but according to Ray, "She decided to fall in love with Benny, and he decided to fall in love with her, and they got married." "Unfortunately for the band, Doris was more interested in her own singing career than in the New Orleans sound, and, wielding her influence as Pollack's wife, she tried to shift the band's style of music towards the big band mainstream, which Ray calls "Hotel style music."

The musicians themselves had other ideas and wanted to keep the style of New Orleans music alive in the band, so the nucleus of what was to be the Bob Crosby Band left Pollack and returned to New York City. They spent some time rehearsing with Glenn Miller, but Miller wanted to take over the band and replace their Dixieland sound with his own arrangements. Jack Teagarden was slated to lead the band, but he remembered that he was under contract to Paul Whiteman and was regretfully consigned to performing the saccharine, symphonic arrangements of Whiteman instead of the hard-hitting New Orleans jazz he might otherwise have led.

The musicians got together and put Bob Crosby, Bing's younger brother, in front of the band. Crosby, who had been singing with the Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey Band on Glen Island Casino, came into the band with the understanding that he was going to front the band and not interfere with their style. Ray says, "We told him (Crosby), 'Listen, don't worry about a thing. You just learn how to read that script and be a good emcee.' We said 'Give off two beats and we'll take over from then on.' We had a bunch of guys that played the kind of music we loved. We

had Bob Haggart (on bass) and Matty Matlock to make a lot of arrangements. The band itself was real happy at the time. That's the band I loved all the way through, because everybody was happy. It was just one big family band."

This big, happy family band had a number of now classic hits, of which "South Rampart Street Parade" was one of the most popular. The story of this tune stretches back to Ray's childhood days in New Orleans. About a week before carnival time, Ray's uncle would take him to see the parade put on. Ray recollects, by the Bulls, a black social club. There was a marching jazz band, preceded by strutting dancers in swallow-tailed coats. Each carried a "bouquet" of cauliflower, and from the center of each cauliflower protruded a large ten-cent cigar. Leading the whole parade was a ferocious bull with a huge brass ring through its nose. A rope passed through the ring and ran from one side of the street to the other, stretched tight and secured by a man at either end. As the parade marched along Esplanade and Claiborne Aves., the two men tethering the bull didn't watch the band, the dancers, or anything else in the parade; not even the bull Ray recalls. "They were strutting with delight and everything, but they were watching the guy at the other end of the rope, because if that guy let go, all hell would've broken out, and that was it - the Rampart St. Parade." Ray decided then and there that one day he would write a tune to represent the music and the spirit of the event," . . . and (which would) make people happy."

The tune itself was written in 1937 when Ray was with the Crosby Band at the New Yorker Hotel in New York City. Ray told Bob Haggart about the parade and that he had an idea, one he had been carrying in his head ever since, for a New Orleans

jazz march. During one of their subsequent intermissions, Ray began humming the tune he had in mind, keeping time by beating on his leg. Haggart searched desperately for something to write on, but could find only a tablecloth. He drew the five ledger lines on it and cribbled down the music notes as Ray continued to hum and play. After finishing their set later that night, Ray and Haggart took the tablecloth to their hotel and finished writing the tune, also working out the arrangement. Ray named it "Bulls on Parade,""(The next day Ray and Bob had the tablecloth cleaned and returned to the hotel.)

At the band's next recording session, they made a twelve inch record of "Bulls on Parade," and were playing it to get a balance for the band when Jack Kapp, the head of Decca Recording Co., dropped by. He loved the tune, but not its name, fearing that the listeners wouldn't understand it. "Man, they'll think you talking about some cops down in New Orleans." So Kapp suggested renaming it "South Rampart Street Parade," and Ray and the others agreed. The tune was such a success that Decca asked the band to make a ten inch record for the jukeboxes. The Bob Cat chorus was sacrificed for this short version.

This wasn't the only occasion on which Jack Kapp saw fit to rename a Bauduc composition for policy reasons. In 1938 Ray and the rest of the Bob Cats, the Crosby Band's eight piece Dixieland combo, recorded a tune they had performed dozens of times before and were listening to the playback when Kapp walked in, again bubbling with enthusiasm. As Ray recalls, Kapps said, "I was trying to think of the tune's name as I came down the hall, and now I've got it - "Maryland, My Maryland."

It sounds great, but we can't use it, because it would be sacrilegious to jazz that tune."

The band mutinied at this, informing Kapp that all the jazz bands in New Orleans had been using that tune for years. Finally Kapp was more or less convinced, but still hesitated to give his full approval. The Bob Cats suggested a compromise approach - they would use the chords and structure of "Maryland, My Maryland," but simply compose their own melody, a remedy which Kapp eagerly agreed to.

So the Bob Cats made a second test platter with their own melody, and this was unreservedly approved by Jack Kapp. The Bob Cats, however, asked for one small proviso - since Jack Kapp had renamed their "Bulls on Parade" to "South Rampart Street Parade," the band wanted to name this tune themselves. This is how the piece became "The March of the Bob Cats." Hearing this title, Kapp smiled and said "That's great: 'The March of the Bob Cats,' written by the Bob Cats."

In 1937, while playing with the Crosby Band in New York, Ray was co-writing some articles for Downbeat magazine about Dixieland drumming and had been engendering quite a bit of enthusiasm from both Dixieland drummers and from fans about the music and about Ray's Ludwig drums (more on them later), his unusual set up and his cymbals, mostly made by Avedis Zildjian cymbal Co. Ray had another cymbal of Chinese manufacture that he called his Chinese Crash cymbal, and he got an especially large number of queries about it. At that time, though, China was at war with Japan and, needing brass for ammunition, stopped manufacturing the Crash cymbals.

Concurrently, Ray had an idea for a medium tempo tune and worked out the arrangements with Deane Kincaide and Bob

Haggart. Ray was stuck for a name, even after the Bob Cats had rehearsed the piece. In honor of his extinct, highly-prized cymbal, Ray called it “The Big Crash from China.”

Later Ray talked with Avedis Zildjian, who then designed the Zildjian Swish cymbal to replace the Chinese Crash cymbal. Ray, unsatisfied with anything imperfect, wanted more of a sizzling sound from the instrument than it provided, so he adapted it by weighting it with rivets. After experimenting with about twenty-five different rivets, he decided to use wide head, light-weight aluminum airplane rivets in the Swish cymbal. This is what he uses today.

Ray’s collaboration with Avedis Zildjian wasn’t his only contribution to the improvement of the tools of his craft - he also got together with the owners of the Ludwig Col, Bill Ludwig, Jr., and his father, and redesigned the placement of the smaller drums in a set so that they attached to the rim of the bass drum and could slide along it, as the drummer desired. Subsequently, a drummer was able to arrange his drums around him as he chose. This, of course, is the basis for most drum sets in use today.

Ray’s biggest hit, co-written by Haggart, was a highly innovative duet between Ray’s drums and Haggart’s bass. The most unique aspect of the tune stems from a technique Ray had developed years before with Nappy Lamare, another Crosby member, when the two were playing with Johnny Bayersdorffer in New Orleans. Nappy would finger a chord of melody with his left hand while Ray played his sticks on Nappy’s banjo strings. Ray had told Haggart about this many times, and, when Haggart seemed to be in a bit of a slump while playing a tune, Ray would reach over and slap the bass strings with one of his sticks, telling Bob “Wake up - let’s go, man, let’s make it walk,”

Creativity occurs under the right coincidence of mood, technique, and opportunity, like an inert, primitive soup of organic molecules amalgamated and catalyzed into life by a flash of lightning. Ray and Haggart's duet flashed to life on a Sunday afternoon in mid-October, 1939, at the Blackhawk Restaurant in Chicago. The place was jammed with exuberant high-schoolers. The Crosby Band did its usual dance numbers and its regular floor show, bringing out a dance team and a few other acts. The band then brought a small piano onto the dance floor, along with the Bob Cat drums, Haggart came down with his bass, Nappy Lamare with his guitar, along with the rest of the Bob Cats and their instruments, while the audience crowded around, sitting jammed near the piano and drums. (One of Ray's favorite memorabilia from this period is a cartoon depicting him at his drums, playing like a fiend and resembling one in the caricature, surrounded by fans seated on the floor.)

The Bob Cats played eight or ten tunes that afternoon, finishing up with the "Big Crash." The audience went wild at the tune, and wanted to hear more music so badly that when the bus boys took the piano off the floor, the kids grabbed the drum set, preventing its removal. Haggart and Bauduc began their performance. Haggart taking four bars, Ray taking four bars, then the two of them playing eight or sixteen bars together.

That Sunday afternoon was a cold dry day in Chicago. In those days drum heads were made of calf's skin and were very humidity-sensitive becoming soft and soggy in damp weather, but tightening up on drier days. On this particular day Bauduc had noticed a similarity in sound between the G string of Haggart's bass and his own floor tom-tom, which was stretched pretty tight, thanks to the opportune weather.

...with one stick and tapping on the bass's G string with the other. He looked at Haggart, cueing the bassist with the near telepathy that occurs between people who have a razor-sharp awareness of one another's moods and techniques. Haggart took the microphone and began whistling through his teeth, in the style he had admired ever since seeing the "Whistling Waiter" at the Hotel President in New York, who would whistle and spin his tray, strutting through the hotel's restaurant as though it were his own private dining room. Inspirations can spring from courses as diverse and as wonderful as the music itself. Haggart, whistling the theme he and Ray had fooled around with backstage, started playing arpeggios up and down the G minor scale, Ray playing along on his Greek cymbals, woodblock, cowbell, cymbals, small tom-toms, even the rims of his drums, finally returning to his "G-tightened" floor tom-tom. Ray then turned both sticks loose on the bass G string, as Haggart fingered along it, whistling madly as they went out.

The tune was such a success that Bauduc and Haggart recorded it the following week, naming it "The Big Noise from Winnetka" and dedicating it to the high schoolers from Winnetka, Illinois, who comprised the largest portion of the audience, and who were in such a strong collective mood for New Orleans style music that they had held Ray's drums hostage, assuring the opportunity for the composition of "Big Noise" on that Sunday afternoon in Chicago.

The Bob Crosby Band was essentially ended by World War II, Ray and several other key members were drafted. Rays served in the Army Artillery Band until 1944. Upon discharge, he and Gil Rodin, former saxophonist with Crosby, began their own big band, but Ray was more comfortable behind a drum set with

his sticks than in front of a band with a baton, and he continued to play in subsequent years, working with each of the Dorsey Brothers (in separate bands, of course: at this date (1946-1950), Jimmy and Tommy had yet to be reunited).

The battling Dorseys were briefly reunited in 1947 while making the movie *The Fabulous Dorseys*, in which Ray appeared. When I asked him if he had starred in the film, Ray quickly emphasized: “I wasn’t one of the stars. I was one of the musicians that played in the jam session when we went in to see Art Tatum at the piano. “Ray says he actually did little in the picture” . . . because Jimmy and Tommy (Dorsey) did too much fighting. That’s the way the picture ran.”

The jam was of the tune “Sixteen Bars Blues,” with Tatum on piano, Ziggy Elman on trumpet, Tommy Dorsey on trombone, Jimmy Dorsey on clarinet, Charlie Barnett on tenor sax, and Ray on drums. Also, two musicians named Sandy and “the angel” were on bass and guitar, respectively. Of them, Ray says, “I can’t remember their full names, but they played wonderful - great guys.”

Besides the jam itself, there was a scene of the musicians taking a break in a smoke-filled bar. The director, in true Hollywood fashion, encouraged them to “smoke it up, drink it up, make like you’re having a ball.” Charlie Barnett and Ziggy Elman, sitting at a table with Ray, took the director at his word and decided to do exactly that. Instead of refilling their glasses with Coca-Cola, they had two quarts of brandy under the table. Later, when it was time to film close-ups of each musicians playing his solo, they shot Tatum, the Dorseys, Ray, and the rest, but when they got to Ziggy Elman, as Ray put it, “By that time he wasn’t able to stand up! So they just parked him in the corner of

the room and laid him against the wall. That's the only way he could stand up."

In 1952 Ray renewed his long-standing association with Jack Teagarden, touring with the great trombonist until 1955 and recording several tunes with Jack, among them Jelly Roll Morton's "King Porter Stomp," Bix Beiderbecke's "Davenport Blues," and "Misery and the Blues," in which Jack sings in his deep-throated, melancholy style.

Ray got together with fellow New Orleanian and ex-Bob Cat Nappy Lamare and formed a New Orleans style band in 1955 which toured the U. S. and was particularly successful on the West Coast.

In honor Dr. Edmond Souchon of New Orleans, Ray appeared on Ralph Edward's television show, *This is Your Life*, along with several other musicians. Ray provided me with a still photo of them playing on he show. The personnel were Dr. Edmond Souchon, guitar, Merle Koch, piano; Ray Leatherwood, bass; Eddie Condon, banjo; Muggsy Spanier, cornet; Matty Matlock, clarinet; Bob Havens, trombone; and, of course, Ray Bauduc, drums. Incidentally, Eddie Condon became a little over-exuberant at this reunion and got plastered. This is why he sits sideways with his banjo still.

Ray still plays drums with his deft, imaginative New Orleans two-beat style. He says, "Music is like a religion: I play the music I enjoy, and I want others to enjoy what I play. If I didn't play the music that's right for me, the New Orleans sounds, I wouldn't enjoy it, and then no one else could enjoy it either."

Sidney Bechet Dies in Paris

May/June, 1959

After several months of intense agony, death came quietly to New Orleans' famed soprano saxophone virtuoso on Thursday, May 14th, 1959. Sidney Bechet died on what is reputed to be his 62nd birthday, after lapsing into a semi-coma which mercifully began about two weeks ago. During the last few days he had to be sustained by means of intravenous feedings, and was heavily under narcotics. He had known that the end was in view since last fall, when a diagnosis of cancer of the throat and chest was made following his last concert in Paris.

Bechet claimed 1897 as the year of his birth, but looked many years older. His hair has been snow white for many years, and his physiognomy was deeply grooved with wrinkles. Although his eyes twinkled merrily and attested to his alertness and humor, they bore the telltale 'arcus senilis' of a much older man. His appearance was that of a well preserved man well past 70.

Born in New Orleans, Sidney Bechet's musical career encompassed all but the first 6 years of his life. At the age of eight, he was sufficiently advanced on the clarinet to sit in with Freddie Keppard's band.

Your writer had the extreme good fortune to have heard Bechet many times while he was playing with King Oliver. If our memory serves us right, Sidney was strictly a clarinetist during this 1916 epoch. We do not recall ever seeing or hearing him use the soprano sax until many, many years later. His facility and good taste on the wood wind was top-hole even "way back then." However, it was the unorthodox saxophone which brought him

fame, money, glory and adulation that one and only one New Orleans musician nearly approached: Louis Armstrong.

When “Satchmo” (who was playing in Switzerland at the time of Bechet’s death) was notified, he was reputedly to have observed: “One of the saints has now gone marching in. Let’s don’t cry too much for that good old cat, ‘cause he’s up there with ‘em. I can see him now - he’s marching right in.” Armstrong could not resist paying tribute to Bechet’s beautiful tone, and opted that Sidney possessed it from the day he started playing: “It was golden, daddy, just plain gold. Just a jug full of golden honey.”

Beginning in 1919 when he joined Cook’s “Southern Syncopaters,” Bechet began a series of European trips and was immediately recognized as a genius on the soprano sax. So, impressed was symphony conductor Ernest Ansermet when he first heard Bechet, that he braved the opinions of all other “long hairs” by the astute prediction, “This may well be the music of the future.” That was exactly 40 years ago!

Sidney Bechet has played in London, Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Moscow and St. Petersburg - to mention but a few of the European cities he has completely captured. He has played with Oliver, Benny Peyton, Marion Cook, Clarence Williams, Tony Jackson, Freddie Keppard, Noble Sissle, Bunk Johnson, Armstrong, Duke Ellington, “The Black Review” (an all Negro musical that toured Europe), Eddie Condon, and also fronted numerous bands of his own. He has appeared at many Town Hall Concerts in New York City and led a trio at “Nick’s” in the Village. He frequently played Chicago with all star bands.

During the meager jazz years when swing was king, Bechet suffered - as great as he was. Disgusted, his funds very

low, he opened a tailor shop in New York City in 1938. Fortunately, this did not last too long for Noble Sissle again induced Sidney to join his group to play throughout the U.S.A. and on European tour.

Paris has always been Bechet's favorite, and Bechet was certainly Paris' most idolized jazz figure. He moved there permanently in the late 1940's, where his popularity transcended his jazz fame, and he challenged Maurice Chevalier as an entertainer and personality. His first marriage was to Marie Louise Crawford and his second in 1951 when he married German born Elizabeth Ziegler.

This wedding marked what was probably Paris' most pyrotechnical acknowledgement of their affection for this New Orleans artist. The wedding party rode up in horse drawn carriages, preceded by a jazz group and 11 mounted horsemen. When the ceremony was over, some 50 doves were released, and 10 jazz bands joined the marriage procession which extended for two miles along Juan-les-Pins. Some 300 bottles of champagne, 100 bottles of aperitif and 50 gallons of cocktails were consumed. Paris even named a street for the aging newlywed!

In 1953 Bechet turned to serious composition, and composed the music for a ballet which was called, "La Nuit Est Unne Sorciere." The work puzzled the music critics, and their reviews show confusion as to just what was the significance of Bechet's work. During the same program, Bechet saved the day for his younger idolaters by picking up his sax and playing Muskrat Ramble, St. Louis Blues and a few other jazz standards. Last summer he worked at the summer resort of 'Juan les Pins' on the Riviera. His earnings since moving to Paris are estimated to have placed Sidney in the millionaire class.

The liner notes of Good Time Jazz (Sidney Bechet, King of the Soprano sax - L.12013) written by our good friend Ernest Bornemann of London are probably the most astute analysis of Bechet's playing we have ever read. He says, "Bechet's mind was the richest of any improvising musician... he could take any theme from the blues to a modern Gerlman Schlager and make superb music out of it - music that kept the spirit of the theme and yet reflected the ideas of a most powerfully original individual in every line of variation. I admired most his apparent ease of playing, his ability to 'sing' on his instrument with the effortlessness of a child humming to himself. Yet, his music was not smooth...EACH NOTE HAD A MEANING. It was the music of a man who had led a rich life and was able to convey its meaning in music. He is completely relaxed; and completely in control of his instrument . . he gives you the impression of a man who can do anything in his chosen idiom. I think one must pay homage to his exceptional sense of timing. The way he places accents, quite unpredictable and yet, with unfailing sense of drama, in purely personal. No one else . . not even his pupils ;. . . Try to predict where his 'cut-offs' will come, and he will fool you every time. He is a master of surprise . . . While younger men play the sterile music of emotional impotence, Sidney at his age sings of love and sorrow and joy and the good things of life with the warmth and conviction to whom the world is undiminished in promise and fulfillment."

**Dr. Leonard V. Bechet
Jan. 1953**

Dr. Bechet was born in New Orleans, on April 25, 1877, and passed away suddenly at his home September 17th, 1952. He was buried on September 20th, in the city of New Orleans, with the rites of the Roman Catholic Church, which means a quiet ceremony, undisturbed by marching bands to end from the cemetery. Our emotions bring to mind the memory of the number of funerals which in Leonard played, and we wondered if he too would have liked the New Orleans style burial!

Leonard's early associations were with all the greatest of the great "giants of jazz" in the Crescent City. Although a trombonist whose magnitude was of the first water, he was far overshadowed by his illustrious brother Sidney, the great clarinetist and soprano sax virtuoso. But his ability was way above the average commercial trombonists of today.

Dr. Bechet was a graduate of Straight University in the city of New Orleans, and took his dental training under Dr. Wood, Dean of Dentistry at Tulane and later Loyola Dental School. Leonard has been a dentist for over 40 years. His greatest claim to fame in the dental world was the fact that it was through his efforts Bunk Johnson was able to play again. After losing all his teeth, upper and lower, Dr. Bechet fashioned plates which were the envy of every trumpeter whose career was being jeopardized by "bad teeth." That "Bunk blew Again" is a crowning achievement in the life of Dr. Bechet - and it might be said that much of the present day "revival" which took place as a result of the formation of Bunk's band (with George Lewis, Big Jim Robinson, Slow Drag et also), could not have taken place had not Bechet's ability made it possible for "Bunk to blow again."

In 1919 Dr. Bechet married Odette Marcelin, and their 33 years of married life has been an example which many musicians could copy.

How deeply inbred this music can get, is evidenced by the fact that although Dr. Bechet treasured his sheepskin which permitted him to practice dentistry, he never did give up blowing that slip-horn! How long ago was the last parade Leonard played in? Why Mardi Gras, 1952, of course!

For a few intimate details of his personal characteristics, we refer you to "The Second Line" of Nov/Dec, page 23. Our regrets are that there are no waxed evidences of his prowess on the trombone, that he might place alongside his sheepskin for Dentistry - but one thing is certain, those who met and knew Leonard Bechet can remember a character that will remain indelible - in their hearts! Taps for a fine gentleman!

**Barney Bigard
Fall, 1972
by Floyd Levin**

The return of Barney Bigard to the city of his birth was one of the most memorable events of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. In honor of the occasion, the famous New Orleans clarinetist whose years with such greats as Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong are jazz history received the keys to the City at the Jung Hotel concert. This interview was taped at the Jazz Museum where Barney and Dottie Bigard, the Floyd Levins and Mrs. Nyra Menville gathered together for a happy and nostalgic reunion (GWK)

Levin: You were closely identified with Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong, two diverse groups as one could imagine. You play a classic New Orleans style of clarinet. It also fits well in a sophisticated big band setting. How do you account for the fact that you could move from the small New Orleans bands to a big sophisticated band like Duke Ellington's?

Barney: You see, Ellington is a very smart arranger. If you play for Ellington he will listen to your style of playing. If he is going to write a tune for you, it will fit you like a glove where you won't have to struggle around. The same for Johnny Hodges and others in his band. It was Ellington's genius that made me feel comfortable and fit right in the slot.

Levin: There must have been a tremendous difference a few years later when you joined Louis Armstrong.

Barney: Yes, that's what I like about it. It was a beautiful contrast coming from a big band to Louis's band where you had all the freedom in the world. In Ellington's band you had to fit in a slot and that was it. But with Louis you could play all night long and you had more freedom with your instrument. You also learned more. I loved the freedom of the Dixieland format.

Levin: When you say that you had all the freedom with Louis, how is that possible when you were locked with a tight repertoire?

Barney: I'm saying that when it came my time to play a solo, I could play anything I wanted. It is true playing the same tunes night after night would make you tired of it. Like opening every performance with "Indiana." It's funny, Louis knew so many tunes but he always stayed in the same groove by opening every show with "Indiana."

Levin: Wouldn't Louis play any different tunes if you asked him?

Barney: Oh, yes, he would finally give in if we talked to him. But at all concerts he would open up with "Indiana." He would never play request at a concert. At a dance of informal session, he would play request, but he would never change his program at a concert.

Levin: Most of us knew Louis, but there must have been a side of Louis that you knew that we didn't know.

Barney: Louis was a great individual. Anyone who came up to him and asked for money, he would give it to them. That's the way he was, he didn't care about money. He could get all of the money he wanted from Joe Glaser, his agent. I've seen lots of people trying to take him as a sucker. He knew what they thought, but he would give it to them anyway. While he was in Europe, he would give money to a lot of musicians there. There was a trombonist in France who wanted to go home so bad that Louis gave him the money for the fare. We were playing in Nice on the Riviera and we all thought this guy had gone back to United States. We found that he was still in France playing with Rex Stewart and he had spent all the money that Louis had given him. Louis was not at all resentful that he had been taken. He knew what was going on all the time, but he would never turn any of these follows down.

Levin: There was another side of Louis, wasn't there?"

Barney: Louis could get angry if he thought somebody was trying to take advantage of him. Don't think that big people could take advantage of him. I wouldn't want to see anybody make him mad because he could tell you off, believe me.

Levin: When you were making all the one-nighters would Louis set the format?

Barney: He always set the time for playing and he wouldn't listen to anyone. A couple of times he would play overtime and Joe Glaser had to talk to him. That was once in a theater and once in Las Vegas. But after that, no problems. We used to play dances where the operator would want us to play 20 minutes and then stop so that he could sell drinks. Louis would play an hour and twenty-five minutes and would have the time all messed up. sometimes it would be as long as an hour and forty-five minutes. When he had his horn on the stand he was a dedicated man. There will never be another man like Louis.

Levin: What do you think of the Louis Armstrong statue?

Barney: It's a shame that there is no statue of Louis Armstrong in New Orleans. There's a man who has toured the world and he put the City of New Orleans on the map. He is the greatest jazz trumpet player to come out of New Orleans. But the people here are still fooling around and I don't know why. That statue should have been built a long time ago before he died.

Levin: The whole idea started three years ago in 1969 at the New Orleans Jazz Festival. There are people all over the world who have contributed to the statue.

Barney: That's true. People have contributed money all over the world for Louis. I know there are people here in New Orleans who could afford to build a statue for this great man. The only thing I can say is that the people of New Orleans don't realize how great Louis Armstrong was in the eyes of the world. They don't realize what he has done to this county and to the city. Maybe some of the people here though he was an Uncle Tom. But

that is not true. They may have thought he acted like one but he never was insulted.

Levin: What do you think would be necessary to motivate the people in New Orleans to get this statue erected.

Barney: They should see the big men in the corporations who can write it off in income tax deductions. They should be shown what a great man Louis Armstrong is to the City of New Orleans.

Levin: Is there anything else you would like to say?

Barney: I would like to ask the people to get together and get this Louis Armstrong Fund growing. We could all get together. There are really no problems.

Levin: You were very young when you left New Orleans. What exactly happened when you left New Orleans?

Barney: I was 19 years old when I left in the mid 1920's. The status of music here was fantastic at that time. There were Chris Kelly and Buddy Petit and Manuel Perez. These men had bands that were very active in New Orleans at that time.

Levin: Where would a man like Buddy Petit play?

Barney: Buddy would play anywhere. He was jobbing all the time. Buddy was a real funny man and he was a classic. He used to take a deposit on a job and never show up. He would do that just to get the deposit, then send some other band there. People would get very angry at him, but he had a way of talking himself out of it and they would hire and rehire him time after time. It was fantastic. I saw a guy have a razor around his throat and was ready to cut him and he talked himself out of it. He stuttered. He was a fantastic player. He couldn't play as hot as Louis, but he could make as many changes.

Levin: Did you play with Buddy Petit?

Barney: Yes, I played with him towards the end of my time in New Orleans. I played with him once at the Fair Grounds. He had four or five bands booked under his name. After the job that night at the Fair Grounds, a cop came up and asked for Buddy Petit. Then he went up to Buddy and asked him if he was really the man he was looking for. Remember, that Buddy stuttered and he said, “I-I-I-I am Buddy Petit.” Then the cop asked him, “What have you to show that you are Buddy Petit?” Then Buddy pulled out a lot of contracts and cards to identify himself. Then the cop said, “Then, you are just the man I want to see. Come with me.” And the cop took Buddy off to jail and booked him for breach of contracts. We were without a trumpet player all that night.

Levin: Did you know Louis or Kid Ory?

Barney: No, Louis and Kid Ory left New Orleans before I started to play. They were all gone. Even my favorite player Jimmy Noone had gone to Chicago, but I did meet Johnny Dodds here in New Orleans. He used to work for my uncle, Emile Bigard, who was a violin player. They used to use fiddle players a lot in those days. Armond Piron was a great violin player as you know. He played a society job at Tranchina’s Restaurant at Spanish Fort. Lorenzo Tio was also here, as well as George Baquet and another unsung hero named Charlie McGurdy. There were a lot of good clarinet players around town at that time.

Levin: Did Tio ever leave New Orleans?

Barney: Yes, he went with Piron on a trip, but he came back. I think he had a stroke - then he went to New York and stayed there for a while. The funny part about it, he and Sidney Bechet opened up a gin mill in New York. They took the place

and cleaned it up and they had four or five gallons of gin. The day of the opening, both of them were sitting there drunk and drank up all the gin. That was after he had the stroke, too.

Levin: Did Darnell Howard study under Lorenzo Tio in New Orleans?

Barney: No, Howard did not study under Tio. Omer Simeon studied with Tio in New Orleans first. That was before he went to Chicago.

Levin: What was your first instrument?

Barney: My first instrument was the clarinet and I was terrible at first. They used to call me the snake charmer and that was the truth because I was very bad. So then I played the soprano in place of the clarinet. When I went to Chicago and joined King Oliver's band, he had two good clarinetists in Albert Nicholas and Darnell Howard. I wouldn't even pick up the clarinet at that time. I had an offer to go to China, but I wouldn't take it, so Nick and Darnell took the job. That left Oliver without a clarinet, so he came up to me and asked me, "Didn't you play a clarinet?" I told him I had a little, but wasn't any good. Oliver asked if he bought one for me would I try it. I said, "OK, what could I lose?" I started wood-shedding on the clarinet and I began to like it more and more. Then I gave up the saxophone and wanted to play exclusively on the clarinet.

Levin: Did you play around New Orleans for some time before you went to Chicago?

Barney: I went to Chicago on my 19th birthday. I was playing around New Orleans when I was 15 and 16 years old. "Bug Eye" Louis Nelson, God bless his soul, used to get gigs at Lake Pontchartrain. When he couldn't make the job, he would come to my house and ask my folks to let me fill in for him. Once

I went out there and who was I to meet but Zutty Singleton and Sidney Desvigne and a lot of other stars. And Zutty said, “Look who that character sent out to play with me!” I didn’t care and I just went ahead and played. And that’s how I got experience.

Levin: All jazz musicians develop a style of their own and you have a very distinctive way of playing. Who would you say influenced you the most?

Barney: I learned quite a bit from Jimmy Noone in Chicago. While I was in New Orleans, I would just play and see what I could steal from others. As far as I can say Jimmy Noone was my big influence as well as Sidney Bechet. I heard Sidney Bechet’s records while I was in New Orleans and I used to copy him note for note.

Levin: Would you say that you came from a musical family?

Barney: I had an uncle, Emile Bigard, and I have a brother, Alex Bigard, who plays drums. He was a very active drummer when I grew up in New Orleans. He was older and I never did play with him. I am very particular about my drummer. A lot of them play rush time and they will hurt you. For instance, if you are playing a solo, you can’t think if you have to worry about the drummer. That bugs me more than anything else.

Levin: Of all the drummers you have worked with, which one would you consider the epitome of jazz drummers?

Barney: Big Sid Catlett was the one I loved. He was fantastic. When he backed you up, all of his ideas made it possible for you to hear the melody. A lot of these guys are flashy and loud and the crowd likes that kind of noise. But they don’t have what

you call feel for the music. When a drummer is playing with a band, he should not run all over the drums.

Levin: Who besides Sid Catlett was in that category of a good drummer?

Barney: Cozy Cole knew his drums very well. There's a fellow on the West Coast named Doc Cenardo, who lays down a very good solid beat for you. He doesn't like to take solos. The fellow with the World's Greatest Jazz Band, Cliff Leeman, is a very good drummer. There are a lot of very good drummers in the studios, like the drummer in the Johnny Carson show.

Levin: Tell us about the tour you have just completed last fall, Barney.

Barney: I enjoyed every bit of the tour. I wanted to see some of my friends and it gave me the opportunity to do it. This was a tour with Wild Bill Davison, Art Hodes and Eddie Condon. We played the colleges where there never has been any jazz before. We made a big hit. And the beauty of the whole thing was that we played for both young and old audiences. People were turning out and were happy to hear jazz music. They need people like you, Floyd, to arouse interest in the young people. We had people dancing in the wings of the theaters where we played. The kids have been hearing so much of hard rock that the amplified instruments have made them 80% deaf.

Levin: How would you say you feel when Barney Bigard comes back to New Orleans?

Barney: Well, it's the wonderful food and returning back to the place you launched your career. I was really proud to get back to see New Orleans once again. It is great to see all the people come from all the different states for the New Orleans Jazz and heritage Festival. It is a wonderful feeling to be here.

Barney Bigard
Barney's Creole Clarinet 1906-1980
by Floyd Levin
Fall, 1980

Isn't it strange that among the thousands of talented jazz artists who have passed this way during the last half-century, only a handful can justify the classification of greatness? This is probably because jazz, as a viable form of art, is still too young to have firmly established a criterion by which we are able to properly assess its many contributors. We are still witnessing the maturation of those primal seeds of inspiration that began to sprout around the turn of the century. Eventually, there will emerge from its history, a true pantheon of our music properly enshrining those responsible for its development.

By what group of standards can we actually judge the relative creativity of jazzdom's great and near-great? A careful analysis of the contributions of the Armstrong's, the Ellington's, and the Morton's - those who certainly can be considered representative of jazz's loftiest achievements, discloses the factors necessary for qualification as a super-star of jazz: *individuality*, coupled with *sincere feeling*, *technical facility*, and *impeccable taste*.

Assuming the acceptability of the above hypothesis, we can now most confidently nominate Albert Leon "Barney" Bigard to a permanent chair in the proposed pantheon of jazz. Until his death on June 27, 1980, Barney was considered the foremost living exponent of the New Orleans style clarinet. When we listen to those delicately woven Bigard passages, they at first

appear to be softly stated tremolos and sweeping flourishes; but do not be misled, they are shouting the clarion message of pure New Orleans jazz! Listen once again to the undulating chromatic runs that flow smoothly as he subtly reshapes a familiar tune into a triumphant Bigard specialty. I cannot count the many times I have heard his apocalyptic “Rose Room.” Each performance clearly revealed the depth of feeling that could emerge from his Albert system horn. Can any melody ever surpass the emotional purity of “Mood Indigo,” the dreamy Bigard tone poem from 1930? Even the title is perfect!

Jazz history was made during those creative years when Barney Bigard’s clarinet added a piquant New Orleans flavor to the urban sounds of the Duke Ellington orchestra. Between 1928 and 1942, the Duke astutely blended the richness of Barney’s style with the eloquence of Johnny Hodges, Cootie Williams, Rex Stewart, Ben Webster, Harry Carney, Joe Nanton, and Lawrence Brown. This amalgamation of talent merged to form what should be considered the greatest jazz orchestra of all time.

Amid Ellington’s elaborate arrangements, frequent interludes were reserved for Barney’s flowing improvisations which always seemed to amplify the Ellington textures quite perfectly. Hearing the soaring lyricism of his many warm and melodic passages, we are able to conjure images of his musical background - the strong influence of his fine teacher, Lorenzo Tio, Jr. (who also instructed such Crescent City notables as Johnny Dodds, Jimmy Noone, Omer Simeon, and Albert Nicholas); memories of his playing in arcane New Orleans bands led by Armand Piron, and Buddy Petit; and those steamy summer nights in Chicago’s plantation Club seated alongside Darnell Howard and Albert Nicholas in the Joe Oliver reed

section back in 1925. Barney Bigard's contributions to the Ellington book were monumental. In addition to "Mood Indigo," he was responsible for such tunes as "Rockin' In rhythm," "Saturday Night Function," "Clarinet Lament," "Clouds In My Heart" and "Sophisticated Lady," to name just a few.

Barney left the Ellington band when travel conditions became increasingly deplorable during World War II. His departure left a void that was never completely filled despite a succession of great reedmen who occupied that exalted chair over the years.

During the mid-40's, Bigard appeared with Freddy Slack and Kid Ory, and also participated in several recording dates and studio jobs in the Los Angeles area. (Late television viewers can still see Barney with Louis Armstrong, Zutty Singleton, Red Callender, Bud Scott, Kid Ory, and Billie Holiday in "New Orleans," a flawed film that attempted to capture the romantic flavor of New Orleans from a Hollywood viewpoint).

It is not generally known that Barney was responsible for Kid Ory's emergence from a long retirement. At Bigard's instigation, Ory came forward to claim royalties due from the publication of his classic, "Muskrat Ramble." Ory joined Barney's small combo and began to receive attention from collectors and fans who remembered his work with Armstrong, Oliver, and Morton several years earlier. Ory eventually formed his Creole Jazz Band, which became the leading contributor to the surging jazz revival that is still gaining momentum. Bigard's participation in this segment of jazz history is probably being revealed now for the first time.

When the Louis Armstrong All Stars were assembled for a date at Billy Berg's Vine Street Bistro, Barney was selected to

handle the clarinet chores in a great band that included Jack Teagarden, Earl Hines, Sid Catlett, Arvell Shaw and Vilma Middleton. Though hastily put together, the All Stars were immediately successful and Satchmo brought the sounds of traditional jazz to every corner of the world with this illustrious group.

After 13 years with the great Armstrong, Barney Bigard entered a period of semi-retirement in Los Angeles. He enjoyed the relaxed style of living after those many years of arduous travel; but he was always ready to pack his Selmer horn whenever called upon for a jazz festival or concert tour. He frequently surfaced for festivals in nice, New York, New Orleans, and Honolulu. His most active role in recent years was the starring spot in the annual “A Night in New Orleans,” the international touring event that brought the sounds of the Bigard horn to fans in the U.S., Canada, Alaska, and Europe.

The triumphant career of Barney Bigard, which began modestly in a little house on Villere Street in New Orleans, and eventually blossomed into worldwide prominence, has come to the final bar. He will be missed.

Peter Bocage
Piron's Trumpeter Goes to His Reward
Feb., 1968

“Pete” Bocage, one of the true gentlemen of jazz, is no longer with us. He died suddenly and unexpectedly at his home, 1006 Valette Street, Algiers, La., on Sunday, December 3rd, 1967. He was buried from the Rhodes Funeral Home in Gretna, on Thursday, December 7th, in St. Bartholomew Cemetery. He reached his 80th birthday, August 4th just past.

It shook this old-timer to dig up the well worn photo of “Piron’s Society Orchestra,” dated 1920, and realize that he had known every one of the men in the band on pretty intimate terms. Then came the realization that Pete Bocage had been the last surviving member of this famous band! (Sic: members of this band is as follows) . . . Armand J. Piron, violin and Leaderman; Steve Lewis, piano; Bob Ysaguirre (also known as “Sequire”), tuba; Charley Bocage (Pete’s brother), banjo; Louie Warnick, sax & clarinet; Lorenzo Tio, Jr., clarinet & sax; John Lindsey, trombone; Louis “Daddy” Cottrell, drums; and Peter Bocage, trumpet!

Long before the United States had entered World War I, the young gentry of New Orleans was swinging its heels to the rhythms of a band that will go down in history as having been one of the greatest ever to come out of New Orleans. Yet, they left a heritage of only nine horrible acoustical recordings, none of which even came close to catching the spark that characterized the A. J. Piron ensembles.

Contemporaries of the Piron Orchestra forces their age bracket into the span between 55 on up into the 70s, which also means that these ranks are thinning. Before long, those who could testify of Piron’s greatness will be long gone. In all probability, that memory will go by the wayside. There are no records that prove Piron’s greatness.

We are indeed fortunate that Peter Bocage lived long enough and was remembered well enough for him to have been recorded with several of the more recent “Preservation Hall” bands. Although this writer is *Muy sympatico* for the old-timers who play there, and is pleased of their “exposure” in their last remaining days, we cannot say that all the records they have made turned out pleasing to these trained European ears. But - old as he was, Pete Bocage’s horn comes shining through, clear, clean and mellow!

Pete was never one for pyrotechnical displays (as are so many trumpeters who believe that virtuosity means blowing the roof off the house and everything in triple-tongue). He kept a straight melodic line, always showing the way, clearly and distinctly, and not obtrusively. He never got in the way of any soloist, but delighted the soloist by backing him up with carefully muted harmony, softly, and in the background.

Just as he played, Pete spoke . . . softly, gently, and correctly. With just a slight tinge of Creole to his English pronunciation, he was able to speak French quite fluently. His whole family spoke it. They could also actually talk the difficult and disappearing language which originated in New Orleans, which was a combination of French, English, African, Latin, and what have you. It was difficult to master, and more difficult to understand. We never heard him raise his voice in anger. If ever a musician let his instrument speak for him, Pete was that guy!

Mr. Bocage started on violin, and played the same type fiddle as the man he called “Maestro” - Piron himself. Pete switched to valve trombone, then to slide, and finally on trumpet. He was also quite at home on the piano and marimba. His greatest forte however, was that of arranger. He frequently

assisted Piron in writing out many of his most successful arrangements. He was also a composer of note, having shared the honors with Piron on 3 of his most famous tunes: **New Orleans Wiggle; Mama's Gone, Goodby" and Bouncin' Around."**

When Piron's band broke up, Pete Bocage and his brother Charlie, formed the "Creole Serenades," who had quite a successful run in the Patio Royal (now Brennan's Restaurant), and also aboard the Streckfus Steamer President. He has played first trumpet in the Excelsior and Tuxedo Brass Bands, and second trumpet (to Percy Humphrey's lead) in the famous Eureka Brass Band.

He had retired from an active career with the Standard Life Insurance Company, and was an Honorary Member of Local 496 of the American Federation of Musicians. At the time of his death, he was one of the oldest performing musicians at Preservation Hall.

Boswell Sister

(In Harmony with)

by David McCain

Spring, 1977

How did a 23-year old become interested in the Boswell Sisters, a 1930's vocal trio who broke up 18 years before he was born? Well, one day while thumbing through one book of Richard Lamparski's multi-volume *Whatever Became of . . . ?* a series dealing with the whereabouts of yesterday's celebrities, I came across a feature on the Andrews Sisters and read this phrase: "Although they (Andrews sisters) never matched their idols, the Boswells, for perfect harmony and rhythm . . ." Having

always been a fan of harmony singing, be it church hymns or barbershop quartet, I did a double take when I saw the words “perfect harmony.” So these Boswell Sisters were idolized by THE most famous harmony team of the century? Why had I never heard of them? Who were the Boswell Sisters, and what were their roles in the history of music? I immediately made up my mind, right then and there, to find some recordings and judge this “perfect Harmony” for myself. Perfect is a pretty strong word.

Finding records was easier said than done. After searching for many months, I finally found an album, under the Biograph label, which had their hits of 1932-34. Their names were Martha, Connee, and Vet, and the liner notes said they grew up in New Orleans. I put the record on and listened carefully. Before the two sides were done, I had become a Boswell fan for life. I was knocked out by the pep, time-rightness, power, versatility, and jazz instinct of the girls’ voices. They used their voices just like musical instruments and blended in with the band so well that at times you had trouble separating the two! Tempo change was a Boswell specialty - they could start a song off slow and moody, and end up swinging it to death. Their sound was new and different to me. I had never heard anything like it before. I can imagine the impact their sound had on first-time listeners in the 1930s, during their heyday.

Since they were such definite originals, I HAD to research them biographically and find out what their musical training was, and what made them tick. But if records were hard to find, news copy was even harder. I managed to find tiny bits and pieces but not the in-depth stuff I wanted. After more and still more research, I came to the conclusion that, strange as it

may seem, the Boswell Sisters had been overlooked by music and jazz historians! After hearing them perform it seemed impossible. But it was, nevertheless, true.

Try looking in music history books that deal with jazz and swing. If you're lucky you may run across one sentence that mentions their name. Michael Brooks suggested, in his liner notes on the Biograph album, that maybe they were overlooked because they were white, but you can't think of jazz in just one color. On one hand you have Louis Armstrong and Bessie Smith, both black jazz immortals, and on the other hand you have Bix Beiderbecke and Mildred Bailey, who were white and certainly earned their fame in jazz too. There's no denying the black roots of jazz, but what I'm saying is that for jazz talent, or for any talent for that matter, there should be no distinction between black and white.

So using that theory, I don't know what happened in the case of the Boswells.

They were too talented to pass up! Well, I wasn't going to pass them up, and here are some of the things I learned. The girls sang, I could immediately tell, with a decided black influence. This was because they were taught singing from the black servants employed at their home in New Orleans. Martha was the eldest and played the piano, she later backed her sisters on many of their records. Connee started out on the cello at a very early age and also played the saxophone. Vet played the violin and banjo. Their parents were both musical and 3937 Camp Street became known throughout the neighborhood for its jazz sessions. (The house is still there).

The girls became the child prodigies of the New Orleans Philharmonic, and their father wanted them to play only the

classics. But whenever he was away they cut loose into the jazz numbers of the day and sang in harmony. Emmett Hardy, the legendary cornetist from Gretna, (La.), heard them and urged them to leave New Orleans and strike out on their own. They did, and the rest is history. Making New York City their home base in 1931, the Boswell Sisters became known from coast to coast via the radio, and became the first singing sweethearts of America. “The Boswell Sound” and “Boswell Rhythm” became new terms in the music industry. You could almost forget there was such a thing as the Depression after you heard them sing “We’ve Got to Put That Sun Back In the Sky.” Hollywood beckoned, and the girls appeared in three motion pictures, their first being “The Big Broadcast” (1932) in which they sang “Crazy People.” They went on two European tours, in 1933 and 1935, and toured the United States with Paul Whiteman’s band. In 1936, at the peak of their fame, Martha and Vet retired in favor of marriage, leaving Connee to climb on to still greater fame as a single. Of the trio, Vet is the only survivor. Martha died July 2, 1958, and Connee passed away October 11, 1976.

After much more research and perseverance, I made two important contacts. Through an ad in a magazine I came in contact with Dennis Yancey, a jazz pianist at Harrah’s in Lake Tahoe, Ca., who was also a Boswell enthusiast. We shared information that we had, and it was through him that I was able to find more Boswell records. My second contact was made while home in New Orleans last November. I got in touch with Myra Menville of the New Orleans Jazz Museum, and found in her a shared interest in New Orleans own Boswell Sisters. Between us, we are hopeful that we will be able to find out more on the

Boswells. After all the researching I have done, there are still a lot of pieces missing to the puzzle.

I have started a scrapbook on the Boswells, but it is only half full at the moment. I want to try and make as comprehensive a display of their career as possible, for it seems no one else has tried to delve into the Boswell history. When I feel I have completed my research (I am determined) I will donate the scrapbook to the Jazz Museum. For jazz buffs who hear the Boswells for the first time in 2076, and want to know more about them, then the New Orleans Jazz Museum could supply the answers. The Boswell Sound is never stale, it sounds as fresh and bubbly in 1977 as it did in 1932.

Of course, this article means nothing at all unless you've heard the Boswells sing. All I can say is - find some records and judge them for yourself. For a first-time Boswell session, I recommend the Biograph album, "The Boswell Sisters, 1932-34." This album is still in print, and if your record dealer doesn't have it, it can be ordered. For those of you who do remember hearing the Boswell Sisters, this album would be a great recapturing of memories.

If I had to describe the Boswell Sisters in one word, which is very difficult, I would have to say "original." They were a one-of-a-kind group and no other has even come close to imitating them. The Boswell Sisters' contribution to jazz, and popular music in general was great. Their vocal style is still being copied. They were among the first groups to deviate from the standard, straight way of singing, thus opening the way for more creativity in the music business. Martha, Connee and Vet Boswell, I salute you. Yes, you had it all right. Perfect harmony. And so much more!

Connee Boswell
(December 3, 1907 - October 11, 1976)
John Lucas
Winter, 1977

New Orleans has lost its other great lady of music. First to go was Mahalia. And now Connee, preceded by Martha but survived by Vet. To me CB stood for courage and Beauty. She took jazz a long way - from Emmett Hardy to Ella Fitzgerald. In doing so she transcended handicaps with the deceptive ease of an Art Tatum or a Django Reinhardt. Or in the Crescent City itself, a Wingy Manone. Love saw her through. Plus art. Like her sisters, she was not only a splendid singer but also a complete musician. Recognition came early and late. In a letter not long ago she wrote: "It gives me a warm feeling to know that our sincere and from the heart musical efforts, knitted so many years ago, are now, in 1974, receiving so many beautiful compliments. It really pleases Vet and me to know that all our hard work was not in vain. Although we enjoyed every minute of it, it was HARD WORK because we FOUR spent many, many hours together morning, noon and night figuring out special intros, interludes, etc., etc., etc. Four???? Yes . .we four. Martha, Vet, Connie (as it was spelled in those days) and Ole Man Eighty-Eight!" That same Christmas she sent a card thanking me for a book of my poems: "Harry {Leedy} and I are enjoying it so much. We love the one about CB. Thanks a HEAP." Let me reproduce my lines.

CONNIE BOSWELL - Beauty here is in the ear of the hearer whose eye will corroborate and heart confirm, an instant

response to gifts so generous, so genuine they defy him to decide where the artist stops and person starts.

Last year's Christmas card reported the loss of her beloved husband: "This is not the Time to send sad news - but - I though you should know. "I hate to think of Connee confronting life alone, then death, undergoing cancer surgery last February to no avail. But of course she was not alone - Vet Boswell and Ben Leedy saw to that. And afterward they sent a card containing a poem Connee had composed four days before she died at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. For she was a woman of many talents - painter and poet as well as vocalist. She shall have the last word, her final quatrain:

"And when I'm gone, Remember me when the sun shone brightly and now, Amen."

Connee Boswell
 ("Of Things Past")
 Myra Menville
 Winter, 1977

All the newspaper accounts of Connee Boswell's death on October 11, 1976, from stomach cancer, in New York's Mount Sinai Hospital, listed a few of her more popular recordings (75 million copies were sold). They said she was 68 years old, that she had appeared in movies, on the stage, and in Broadway shows, and that she won an Oscar in 1937 for singing "Whispers in the Dark" in the movie, Artists and Models, with Jack Benny. The articles mentioned her marriage, about 1935, to her manager, Harry Leedy who died January 1, 1975. Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., and Harry Bellafonte were quoted as saying she was

“the most widely imitated singer of all time.” Bing Crosby told the reporters: “She was a great artist and she had a marvelous feel for popular American music. She was a woman of great courage and a marvelous person and she will be greatly missed.”

Everyone knows that Miss Boswell, partially paralyzed from polio at the age of 3 (or 4 or 5, depending upon which newspaper you read), performed from a wheelchair but few people remember that she was one of the original founders of the March of Dimes, that after 1960 her public appearances were limited to hospitals and benefits for the handicapped, or that twice she was elected “America’s No. 1 Female Vocalist” in national radio polls.

The liner notes on *Connee Boswell and The Original Memphis Five in Hi-Fi* (RCA Victor LPM-1426) tells us: “Bessie Smith and Caruso were my favorites. Caruso probably influenced me more than anyone else. Of course, I don’t sound like him, but I used to just sit and listen (to his records) and be amazed by his breathing. Then I’d try to do what he was doing. I’d take a long breath, and hit a lot of notes.” Caruso inspired the Boswell Sisters to swing the classics. “When we did ”Martha” - the aria ‘M’appari’ from Flotow’s opera - it went right back to those old records we played as kids in New Orleans.

Kids in New Orleans. Who? Where/ I wanted to talk to somebody who had known Connee before she became a singing sensation. Unfortunately, Bill Coker and Irwin Poche’ are dead. They had recognized the talent and appreciated the difference between the Boswell Sound and that of ordinary singing groups. The two men did everything they could to help the careers of Martha, Connee, and Vet Boswell.

Bassist Sherwood Mangiapane remembers playing in “little musical acts” (free) for the entertainment of “some military base across the river” (probably the U. S. Naval Station, 8th District), and that “the Boswell girls were always there, singing up a storm.”

I turned to George Blanchin. At one time he was the Southern distributor rep for Columbia Records. George reminded me about the NOJC jazz session-meeting in the old Roosevelt Hotel (now the Fairmount), around 1959 or 1960. Connee Boswell was a surprise guest of the Club. She was tired and did not sing, but she sat near the bandstand and signed autographs while she answered questions and talked about the contributions to jazz that an organization like ours can make. She was “thrilled” to learn about the Jazz Club’s goals. How could I have forgotten that visit?

Then George told me to phone Mercedes Taney, a childhood friend of the Boswell girls. Mercedes and Walter Taney work the door at all NOJC concerts; they handle the sales and collection of tickets and nobody had better try to sneak past them or their helpers. Walter is the Manager-Director (or agent’s representative, if you will) for most of the entertainment and sports events in New Orleans. “I had an old Model-T Ford,” Walter said, “and I would pick up the Boswell girls and take them wherever they had a job - movie houses, clubs, churches, fairs, the Young men’s Gymnastic Club (now the New Orleans Athletic Club) where the girls sang on Family Nights. Gar Moore gave the girls their first opportunity to go pro by getting them a spot at the Orpheum Theatre. He was the PR man there. They were bright, cheerful, and talented singers - and very generous. They worked hard on their arrangements. I didn’t know them

when they were children. Talk to my wife. She grew up with them.”

Mercedes Taney: “The Boswells lived at 3937 Camp Street. Mr. And Mrs. Boswell were circus people, from Florida. I don’t remember which part of Florida or which circus. . .there were so many circuses in those days . . . It may have been Sarasota. Later on they were in vaudeville, so they were away a lot; that’s why Connee’s Aunt Mattie was there. She ran the house. I believe she was Mrs. Boswell’s sister but I’m not positive about that. Later on, when the sisters went on the road, Aunt Mattie went with ‘em. Connee needed help in dressing, you see, so aunt Mattie looked after things and she was a chaperone, too. When the trio broke up she lived with Martha.

“I remember there was one brother and somehow I believe there was another boy in the family. It was so long ago. You know, I’m not convinced Connee was born in New Orleans. Of course, she could have been born here but when the parents came to New Orleans, some of the children came with them, perhaps all of them. I do remember that Martha was the cutup of the trio. She married a man named Jules Picard and they had one son; later she married George Lloyd who had a large mink farm. She died in 1958, the same year that Vet’s husband, John Paul Jones, died.

“The Boswell home was always full of music - young musicians, always rehearsing! Singing and dancing - and eating. There would be Pinky Vidacovich, Monk Hazel, Emmett Hardy, Leon and Louis Prima, Leon Rappolo. Connee would fill in often because she could play the cello, piano, saxophone, and trombone. She’d play ragtime, and she’d sing a lot of gospel songs . . Connee would invite I don’t know how many black gospel singers to her

home, and she'd sing along with 'em. She really loved gospel singing.

“I remember we had a club; Just the girls. You know how teenager always have to have a club! It was called the KKK Club, and that stood for Krazy Kat's Kittens. Heavens, that was at least 42 years ago.”

Another neighborhood friend, Mrs. George Murphy, recalls that Connee Boswell constantly sang the song “Why Was I Born?” “She sang it all the time and in such a sad way . . .” said Mrs. Murphy. Well, it's a sad song. Mrs. Murphy and Mercedes Taney commented on the warmth, hospitality, and informality of the Boswell home, and on the stream of boys and girls who flocked there to dance and sing and to eat of Aunt Mattie's good cooking. “It was all so spontaneous, so cheerful,” they both said. And Mercedes remembers that “Connee did walk, with help, to her wheelchair.”

In 1934 Mercedes married Walter Taney. Their wedding trip took them to Houston, and then, on an impulse, to Galveston, Texas. The Boswell Sisters were singing in a nightclub there, and, with Aunt Mattie and manager Harry Leedy, they were staying at the same hotel selected by the Taney's.

“Our rooms were very high up - on the 18th or 19th floor, I believe, and there was a terrible hurricane approaching. The girls' manager, who married Connee the following year, well, he brought all of them up to our rooms in case the water flooded the lower floors. Some of the band members were there, too and as things got more and more serious and really scary, we sang and danced and I remember Connee singing “River Stay Way From My Door.”

The rest is history. Hard work, travel, fame, success, money. When the trio broke up Connee continued to break ground and set an example for future singers. People still speak of the Boswell Sound. As long as there are recordings that sound will live.

**Lester Bouchon
May/June, 1962**

The heavy hand of death claimed one of New Orleans' finest jazzmen. Although only fifty-eight years of age, Lester can be included in the category of "second generation" of musicians stemming from the Crescent City. He died at his home, 201 South Gayoso, after a very brief illness. His musical career began when he was a young kid hardly in his teens.

At the time of his death he was owner and operator of a cocktail lounge at 4905 Canal Street. Known as one of the city's best dressed and immaculately groomed citizens, he was soft spoken and reserved. His reputation was that of a respected and highly regarded business man, while in the world of jazz Lester will never be forgotten by his confreres. No one was easier to record with - no matter how trying and lengthy the session stretched out. Cooperative to the neth degree, we have never heard him complain, even though a "master" had to be repeated six or eight times due to somebody else's mistakes. Nor was he ever known to express himself unfavorably with regard to another of his fellow musicians.

Mr. Bouchon was basically and soundly trained as a musician, but preferred the freedom that goes with true jazz. He scorned the printed page and was expert on several instruments.

Primarily classified as a tenor sax man, it is our opinion that his ability as a real New Orleans clarinetist has often been overlooked. Moreover, his handling of the difficult bass sax ranked him in the category of Adrian Rollini and Joe Rushton.

Some of his happiest early days in New Orleans were spent in the line up of the famous New Orleans Owls, but there was hardly a good band operating in the city that did not include Lester's name. Bouchon soon sought his fortunes in and around Chicago, and played with numerous "name bands" during the period where jazz went underground. During this epoch, he was a stalwart and solid foundation for every reed section he played with. His value was doubled by his knowledge of the written score, but he was also invaluable as a "take off" man when hot choruses were necessary.

In all probability Lester Bouchon's happiest days were spent with Sharkey Bonanao's finest organization. This lasted for over six years, and a busier bunch of musicians has never existed in the city. "Home Plate" was The Famous Door, where they played six nights a week. During this long uninterrupted reign, the band would take advantage of band-breaks to double at the Roosevelt's plush Blue Room. Appearing as a "specialty number," no matter what show was booked, the band played the "early 7:30 show" before they went to the "Door." When their "break" came at the Bourbon Street establishment, the band hopped into taxis and sped down to the Blue Room to again be the mainstay of the 11:30 "late show." Then, back to The Famous Door. Three times a week, the band arose early in the morning to journey down to the docks, where they played for the pleasure of passengers boarding the Lykes Steamship luxury cruisers. This stint lasted for two hours. Frequently this was followed by

television appearances or recording sessions that lasted several hours. It is quite safe to say that no band in our city enjoyed such popularity nor was there ever a harder working bunch. And Bouchon's horns were forever in good taste in ensemble playing and in his solos. . . . Besides Sharkey's famous band, Lester also played with the band of the late Tony Almerico.

Wellman Braud
March/April, 1967

Lacking a few months of completing his 75th year, Wellman Braud passed away in Los Angeles on October 27th. He was born in St. James, La. January 25th, 1891.

His career touched almost every musician of prominence connected with what we like to refer to as "first generation of jazzmen." His start paralleled the pattern so common to innumerable New Orleanians. At age 12 his parents started him on *Solfegio* and violin. The first attention that he drew was playing bass in a string trio at Tom Anderson's, at Iberville and Basin Street. Innumerable spot jobs followed, with musicians such as Joe Oliver, Kid Ory, young Louis Armstrong. With the closing of the Storyville "district" he migrated to Chicago, and joined the band that included Sugar Johnny Smith, Lawrence Duhe, and later the Charles Elgar Orchestra. A bit later, he was bassist for the Wilbur Sweatman Orchestra, and began doubling on tuba and string bass.

James P. Johnson, celebrated Harlem stride pianist, selected Mr. Braud to accompany a wonderful band that traveled with an all-Negro show called "Plantation Days." Following this, he toured the continent for almost three years, and joined one of

Duke Ellington's first bands from 1926 until 1935. For the next two years, Wellman took over the direction of the "Spirits of Rhythm," and then had his own trio in a Sheep's Bay restaurant from 1937 until 1941.

One can readily see the ability in Mr. Braud's make up by the length of his successive engagements. With the money he had saved he went into business in Harlem, running a pool-hall, playing occasional gigs and sometimes making records. Kid Ory invited Braud to tour Europe with him in the fall of 1956, and after returning home, Mr. Braud "retired" for a short while, living in Brooklyn, until the very green grass of California beckoned to him.

His many "semi-retired years" in Los Angeles were punctuated with occasional gigs, attendance at various jazz club functions, and once-in-a-while recording sessions. The story of his life can be followed much better through a musical vein by re-examination of his discography, for it reveals his adherence to the strict traditional New Orleans type music, and the high level of musicianship with which he was associated. Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Baby Dodds, Peewee Russell, are but milestones that brilliantly mark the years since his start in 1903. In our opinion the greatest record to show Braud's magnificent chording, his tasteful and solid rhythmic beat, and his all-too-seldom bowing of the bull-fiddle can be heard on Atlantic's "Bechet-Spanier Four."

Tom Brown

by Betty Holder & Edmond Souchon

Feb. 1951

Tom Brown was born in New Orleans. He is shy. Ask him how old he is and he just chuckles, “Who wants to know?” He speaks with a low voice, but he blows a mean trom, and he is famous.

He was the first white man to take the South’s hot and happy music to Chicago and really show that town what it was all about. He was the pioneer: he paved the way for the other musicians who followed, bringing their style of jazz to Chicago.

Although Tom is shy, ask him who was the first man to play jazz and you will find out –forcibly and with explosive vehemence – that it was NOT Jelly Roll Morton, who went into the back of a saloon on Iberville and Basin Sts. In 1904. You will leave that. Tom not only played jazz before any other man, but that he also called the music JAZZ long before anyone else thought of it.

Naturally, drastic statements like Tom’s are the kind which bring forth statements and counterstatements. The old vicious circle, which came first, the hen or the egg, crops out anew in another form: was Tom’s band the first to play two-beat in Chicago or were the colored bands in the Windy City prior to 1915 the rightful claimants? Tom’s own band, ”Brown’s Original Dixieland Jazz Band” were the first white men to interpret the music, and Tom will draw a fine line of distinction between white and colored music. The fact that the two are not played the same way, and that the only two-beat music is existence at the time was ragtime, bears serious consideration before contradiction or argumentation.

When Tom Brown’s band from Dixieland invaded Chicago, a minor skirmish between union and non-union musicians arose. “Jazz,” says Tom, “was a vulgar word. It wasn’t

even applied to music when we hit Lamb's Café in Chicago." In derision and spite, word of mouth propaganda which was intended to hurt the popularity of Tom's band, was started as a whispering campaign by the opposition: "Don't go to Lamb's Café," they would say, "the musicians there play only that jazz music." Curiosity naturally attracted many customers. The "forbidden fruit" suggestion brought many others. They stayed because they like it!

On May 15, 1915, Tom's band opened in Chicago. For the next eight years success upon success followed.

They toured the East. Such spots as the North Star Inn, the Century Theatre in New York, vaudeville, theatres, and prize-fights, plus the Great Lakes Naval Station followed one upon the other. Tom recalls how Al Capone once carried his trombone case when the band played at Chicago Heights.

Tom's musical career dates back to the age of nine. (His present age is a secret, he says!) At that age, he played the violin, and formed his own band. Later, he switched to trombone, on the occasion when his own trombonist could not fill an engagement. Besides this, Tom is an accomplished string bass man.

In 1914, Tom married the former Agnes Coyne. He attended the Live Oak School and has followed the career as radio electrician where he has been successful, and not dependent upon jazz.

Brown has a collection of records numbering over 4000. He is a composer in his own right, having any number of authentic jazz tunes to his credit. He claims authorship of the famous "Tiger Rag" which, when he first composed and played it, was called No. 2.

(Editor's note: Nick LaRocca has a notarized original manuscript of the same tune with his name affixed as the composer, while Jelly Roll Morton, in his famous Library of Congress albums published by CIRCLE and Rudi Blesh, actually plays the tune in his various stages; also "his own formative stage." This fact is also published in the book, "Mr. Jelly Roll," by Alan Lomax. Jack "Papa" Laine gives credit to Alcide 'Yellow' Nunez, Achile Bacquet, and Dave Perkins).

These statements are NOT given for argumentative purpose, for we are not expressing our opinion in the matter. We simply wish the members to know that we are aware of both sides.

No copyright was taken out by Tom on "Tiger Rag," or on his own "Moaning Blues," which has been taken up by others musicians and is now played under the name "Livery Stable Blues."

Tom has recorded for Okeh, Columbia, Pathe and other companies.

His original jazz band was composed of: Raymond Lopez on cornet; Arnold Loyacano at piano; Billy Lambert on drums, and Gus Mueller on clarinet. This group auditioned for Edison, even before records were made. Brown's style of music was so new then, however, that Edison passed up his opportunity to record this band. He regretted this later on, and asked them to reconsider, but other engagements prevented them from doing so.

Tom Brown joined the New Orleans Jazz Club in 1949. He was presented with a trophy in recognition for his pioneering efforts in behalf of jazz, and for his being the first to introduce jazz to Chicago.

He is presently playing with Johnny Wiggs' band, and has recorded for Commodore and Milt Bagler. His records should be on the market in the very near future. At least we hope so.

Dame Fortune, who had deemed fit to brush Tom by in earlier days despite his sincere and authentic efforts, has smiled in his direction at last. Tom welcomes the chance to stop TELLING about greatness in words, and his music will at long last be able to speak for itself and for him.

Tom Brown
(Jazz Pioneer, Passes Away)
April, 1958

One of New Orleans' most famous musical sons passed away at Charity Hospital, in New Orleans at 5 A.M., Tuesday, March 25th, 1958. He was 68 years old. Broncho-pneumonia was given as the final cause of death. His illness was of a very short duration, and the end entirely unexpected.

Tom is credited with taking the first Dixieland band out of New Orleans, to spread "our" music to the Windy City of Chicago. The year was way back in 1915. The place where this particularly indigenous N.O. sound strutted before the amazed ears of the Yankees was Lamb's Café. The group which came to be known as "Tom Brown's Band from Dixieland" consisted of Ray Lopez on cornet, Gussie Mueller on clarinet, Tom Brown on trombone, Bill Lambert on drums, and Arnold Layocano on piano (and string bass). Larry Shields did a short stint with this group, but was "loaned" to another New Orleans group (who

later became the ODJB) - and Gussie Mueller replaced him permanently.

Mr. Brown played with many bands and groups, and was well known to vaudeville, when he headed the group which called themselves "The Five Rubes." The various Yerkes bands (including the Yerkes Marimba Orchestra (known as the 'scourge of the collectors'), the Kentucky Surrender Orchestra, Johnny Bayersdorffer's Orchestra, Norman Brownlee's Orchestra, and many others. In more recent years, Mr. Brown had been with Johnny Wiggs and Sherwood Mangiapane. Probably his longest "one spot stand" was at the St. Charles Hotel, when Wiggs' group played for many weeks in their cocktail-dance lounge.

Mr. Brown was owner and operator of his own radio and music repair shop, in the uptown section of Magazine Street, near his own home (on Eighth Street). Tom's musical career began at the age of 8 or 9, when he headed his own 'kids' band. Tom's instrument at that time was the violin. However, the failure of the trombonist who was hired made Tom switch over to trombone. It's been his favorite instrument ever since. Tom Brown was also a very smooth string bassman, and he and his big bull fiddle. Tom's tailgate style is probably the most authentic there will ever be, and commercialism failed to dent his armor plate. Tom would rather play "honest Dixie" than eat! And he never changed until his death.

Some of Tom's finest work can be heard on "Waffleman's Call" and "I wonder Where My Easy Rider's Riding Tonight" (with Johnny Bayersdorffer). Another record which is still used as a criterion to measure jazz trombonists is "Peculiar" and "Dirty Rag." Companies for which Tom registered were: Victor, Decca, Columbia, Tempo (of America),

Commodore, and several others. “Jazzology Records,” owned and operated by George Buck, Jr., purchased one of Tom’s greatest tapes and intends to release it sometime this summer, under the name of Tom Brown’s Band from Dixieland. Joe Mares, bossman of Southland, did what was to be Tom’s swan song, less than 2 weeks ago. The session was held (we are told) in tom’s honor - and will also hear the same title.

Norman Brownlee
May/June, 1967

Brownlee’s Orchestra was recorded only one - two sides for Okeh (January 23rd, 1925), and the record gives a magnificent example of true, early New Orleans Dixieland. It is invariably included in all anthologies, along with Johnny Bayerdorffer, Johnny DeDroit, the Halfway House, the ODJB and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. Here is a list of personnel: Norman Brownlee, Leaderman and Piano; Sharkey Bonano, cornet; Harry Shields, clarinet; Hal Jordy, alto sax; Behrman French, banjo; Alonzo Crumby, drums. The tunes are *Peculiar* and *Dirty Rag*, both by New Orleans composers.

We are also indebted to Mr. Brownlee for several important and rare photographs, two of which are most important in reconstructing in a visual chronological order the photographic history of New Orleans music. Two pictures, taken consecutively and on the same day (back in 1923), showing two “cheesecake” poses for advertising purposes, contain the following musicians; “Alonzo Crumbie, drums; George Barth, trombone and string bass; William Braun, mellophone; Bill Eastwood, banjo; Norman Brownlee, Leader and piano; and the

legendary Emmett Hardy on cornet. These two photographs are the only ones of this famous trumpeter. It is regretful, however, that a recording was not made of the group, including Hardy, for we are forced to accept word-of-mouth legend of Hardy's magnificent style, tone and inventiveness with no actual proof. This photograph also reveals the versatility of all the men in the band that was not brought to light before. George Barth, besides playing trombone and string bass, also was a sax man; Alonzo Crombie, besides being a top-flight drummer, could double on trombone; Billy Braun was a fine pianist, and played mellophone; Billy Eastwood was equally at home on banjo, guitar and saxophone; while Brownlee himself included baritone sax to his accomplishments.

Back in 1961, Norman Brownlee visited New Orleans and evaluated the worthiness and dependency of the N. O. Jazz Museum. Soon afterwards (while he was still in perfect health), he donated his bass fiddle. This is, we believe, sufficient evidence that the Museum was a safe haven and repository for his beloved instrument, which was so very close to the scenes of his earliest and most productive period in jazz.

For the past thirty five years, Mr. Brownlee has resided in Pensacola, Florida. For sixteen of these years he has been superintendent of the Bayview Memorial Park, Incorporated ("Pensacola's Perfect Burial Estates"), in the Musicians Union, American Federation of Musicians, Local 283, he served as Secretary for many, many years.

Along the Gulf Coast, there was an organization of musicians - most of them from Pensacola, but many of them from the surrounding areas, who gathered under Brownlee's wing about every four to six weeks. This was an organization for the

edification and enjoyment of the musicians themselves, and a few of their intimate friends who were dyed-in-the-woods jazz aficionados. Sometimes the number went up to as high as twenty or more, and the jamming went on far into the night. They had themselves a ball, and as Brownlee himself put it, “they stuck pretty close to the real thing, and this was an outlet for musicians who were starved for real Dixieland music.”

His widow, Mrs. Norman E. Brownlee survives him, in Pensacola. He also leaves three sons; Norman E. Brownlee Jr., of Fort Worth, Texas; R. J. Brownlee, of Philadelphia, Pa.; and H. F. Brownlee, of New Orleans, La. He was buried in his own Bayview Memorial Park, the place that he loved so well and of which he took such meticulous care.

Abbie Brunies

March/April, 1955

At the age of 41, a good friend and a great drummer suddenly passed away. Stemming directly from the great line of musical Brunies' (of “Halfway House” fame - and almost any other of the contemporary great bands of that day), his spectacular demise on the bandstand at “Child’s Restaurant” in New York City was the exact antithesis of what Abbie would have liked.

Although all drummers are supposed to be exhibitionists, Abbie Brunies was the rare exception. Plying his trade with a steadiness and reliance, satisfied to keep the band cohesively solid, he was never given to loud clanging of cymbals or ‘drum solos,’ so sought after by innumerable other percussionists. Abbie’s idea was a solid beat - never lagging, and

with just enough “push” to drive his front line to a rousing finish. If we had to sum up in two words our reaction to his playing, we would use the words “Good Taste!” And we believe that most other musicians would concur heartily. He was not a show-off.

When the NOJC was organized in 1948, two concerts were given, one immediately following upon the heels of the other. The drummer selected for the first bash was “Monk” Hazel. The second, in spite of his youth, was none other than Abbie. He never stopped playing jazz - until the final curtain was rung down upon him.

It was a Saturday night in New York City, at Child’s. The place was packed. “Sharkey and His Kings of Dixieland” were just beginning their second of a 4-week engagement. I believe that one “set” had already been played, and the band was just getting on the stand for the second. One of the sidemen, turned to Sharkey and said, “look at Abbie!” Almost at the same instant, as though by cue, Abbie went down. Of course, attempt was made to revive him immediately, but it was all over, just that quick!

The old adage “*The show must go on*” was never more exemplified than at this very moment. In all probability, not a half dozen patrons had seen him fall. And more and more were at the entrance clamoring to get in. Abbie was carefully and affectionately covered with a sheet (or tablecloth), and the coroner notified immediately. (By law, a sudden death victim must not be moved until examined by a medico connected with the Coroner’s office. So Abbie remained as he had fallen -). It is needless to inject remarks about the feeling in the rest of the band - for there was nothing to do but “carry on.”

Back home in New Orleans, the sad figure of a Chicago girl - who had become a bride, a mother and a widow within the space of one year - was notified of her husband's demise. The little newborn daughter of two weeks was never seen by the Daddy who had waited so long to have her! The nearest he came to seeing her, was a snapshot, mailed to Abbie with a St. Valentines card by his wife, which arrived a day or so before he passed on!

**George Brunies
by George W. Kay
Winter, 1975**

**“I have seen the bright lights burning
Up and Down old Broadway
Seen them in gay Havana
Birmingham, Alabama, and say
They just can't compare with
My home town - Orleans!**

These words from the famous blues classic “Tin Roof Blues” describes the life of the great jazz trombonist, George Brunies, from the carefree days of his youth to the day he returned to his final resting place in his beloved home town - New Orleans. Brunies, who started out in the Irish Channel section of the city, died on Tuesday, November 19th in Chicago. He was 72. He gained worldwide fame for his unique Dixieland style known as “tailgate” trombone.

A few months before his death, Brunies visited New Orleans to see members of his family and friends for the last time.

As if by premonition that his days were numbered, he asked his longtime friend, Joe Mares, Jr. to arrange for a group of musician friends to play the blues at his graveside.

On a clear, bright Saturday afternoon of November 23rd George Brunies was laid to rest in his family tomb at Lafayette Cemetery No. 1 in the Garden District. Joe Mares honored his request for music at the graveside ceremony. He rounded up an all-star group composed of Plato Smith and Clive Wilson, trumpets; George Finola, cornet; Raymond Burke, clarinet; Nick Gagliardi, trombone; Al Loubre, banjo and Brunies' nephew Ernest Brunies on snare drum. The number they played was "Tin Roof Blues" composed jointly by George himself, Joe Mares' brother Paul and Leon Rappolo. Brunies favorite blues was played in beautiful taste and feeling in keeping with the occasion. George Brunies would have approved wholeheartedly. He got his wish to be buried to the music that sustained him through life.

George Clarence Brunies was born in New Orleans on February 6, 1902. He came from a talented musical family. The five Brunies boys all played brass: Albert and Richard favored trumpet, Merritt, the trumpet and valve trombone, and Henry and George, the trombone. George had learned to play alto horn and banjo before he switched permanently to slide trombone. He and his brother Abbie - they were both kids in knee pants at the time - landed their first professional job in a marching band for a Mardi Gras parade. It has been said that Abbie, who is the surviving member of the famed Brunies brothers, still has the faded picture of that first job which he would keep constantly by him on his music stand. George showed such rapid progress in mastering the slide trombone that it was not long before he was ready to play regularly in professional bands. When he reached

this stage, his brother took him to meet the Grand Old Man of Dixieland - “Papa” Jack Laine. Laine’s Reliance Brass Band was in great demand for dances, concerts, parades and parties. Laine also booked other bands for social functions in the New Orleans area. One of the bands “Papa” handled was his son Alfred’s group “The Wampus Cats,” a bunch of promising youngsters who welcomed George warmly as a member in good standing.

Soon George was faking and developing his style and techniques with his fellow “Wampus Cats” until he was ready for bigger and better things. Abbie was leading his band at the Halfway House and intermittently at spot jobs at Brunings and other restaurants in Buck Town. Young George often filled in temporarily with Abbie’s groups for some of these engagements. It was at this time that George met the great clarinetist Leon Rappolo who had already made a name for himself in local jazz circles. George sat in several time with Rap at a dive called the Lucky Bucket Club.

In 1920, New Orleans drummer Ragbaby Stevens sent a wire to the Brunies boys to join his five-piece Dixieland crew in Chicago. They weren’t quite ready to leave New Orleans, but cornetist Paul Mares decided to accept the offer. When Paul got to Chicago, he persuaded George to make the trip north to join him and Ragbaby Stevens to go with Elmer Schoebel’s band at Blatz’s Palm Garden. Other members of the band were Jack Pettis on C melody sax, Johnny Provizano on clarinet and Frank Snyder on drums. It was while working with Schoebel that George met a young Chicago cornetist who became a lifelong friend - Francis “Muggsy” Spanier.

Schoebel and his band then moved into Lincoln Gardens which was one of the gayest and most popular dance halls in

Chicago. After playing to capacity crowds, the band decided to take a job on the Streckfus steamboat “JS” working the Mississippi between St. Paul and St. Louis. When the “JS” docked at Davenport, Iowa, George met Bix Beiderbecke and renewed his acquaintance with his hometown cronie, Leon Rappolo, who was playing one of the local clubs with Carlisle Evans’ Original Jazz Band. Other members of the Evans band were Emmett Hardy, the legendary New Orleans cornetist, and banjoist, Lew Black. Schoebel’s band was losing clarinetist Provizano, so they persuaded Rappolo to join them in Chicago at Friars Inn at the conclusion of their riverboat engagement in the summer of 1921. The band consisted of Schoebel, Mares, Rappolo, Brunies, Snyder, banjoist Lew Black and Steve Brown from New Orleans, the first white man to use the pizzicato style of playing string bass. Mike Fritzel, owner of the Friars Inn, named the band “The Friars Society Orchestra,” probably to entice the carriage trade. Somehow, band leader and booking agent, Husk O’Hare, talked himself into handling the band’s business transactions. One of his “deals” was signing the band to record for Gennett Records in Richmond, Indiana in 1922. Although O’Hare had little, if anything, to do with the transaction, he was able to have his name included on the Gennett label to read, “The Friars society Orchestra, under the direction of Husk O’Hare.”

George Brunies recalled the early days of the Friars Society Orchestra in an interview with Gilbert Erskine. “Friar’s Inn was a dive,” Brunies said. “and it seemed that every gangster in Chicago turned up during our stay there. It was always crowded. We played sometimes until 4 or 5 in the morning.”

“Rap was right for the band. We took his “Rusty Nail Blues” and worked it into “Tin Roof Blues.” He was a great guy,

but he couldn't discipline himself. He finally became so dissipated that he lost his mind. I don't remember Bix from those days, but a lot of Austin High fellows came around."

Brunies continued, "Husk O'Hare arranged to have us make the Gennett records. Mares ran into Jelly Roll Morton, and we worked out his "Mr. Jelly Lord" and "Milneburg Joys" which we recorded with him. We thought it best to say he was a Cuban, so that's what we did."

"During the first session, I blew right into the recording horn, and the needle jumped all over the place, so they turned me around and made me play facing the wall."

In March 1922, the band changed its name from The Friars Society Orchestra to the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. Pianist and arranger Schoebel left to accept an offer at the Midway Gardens and his place was taken by Mel Stitzel, Ben Pollack replaced Frank Snyder on drums and the NORK became a five-piece Dixieland group with Mares, Roppolo and Brunies comprising the front line. The band recorded eight Dixieland standards for Gennett including the immortal and timeless Brunies' classic "Tin Roof Blues." Later, Paul Mares recruited Chink Martin to replace Steve Brown on bass.

How good were the New Orleans Rhythm Kings? The late Chicago clarinetist Volly DeFaut had this to say: "I never played in a band or heard a band that had the rhythm that band had. I can't describe it, but at least one or two times a night they would do things to me that I've never experienced since. You know, they had Ben Pollack on drums, he was tops. Steve Brown would do things on bass, he picked a bass like no one today. He made the Whiteman Band and he didn't read. George Brunies had talent and Leon Rappolo was great. He didn't have the

technique of today, but for tone and feeling, no one could touch him. Nothing like it today.

In 1924, George Brunies left the New Orleans Rhythm Kings to lead his own group at Chicago's Valentine Inn. This venture was short-lived and within a few months he joined Ted Lewis' band. When Lewis hit New York in the summer of 1924, Brunies found Bix and the Wolverines playing at the Cinderella Ballroom. The Wolverines had a recording date for Gennett and Bix asked George to sit in on trombone. Al Gande, the Wolverine's regular man, couldn't measure up to the lusty, forceful Brunies as the recordings of that session will show. Brunies made "Lazy Daddy" and "Sensation" with the Wolverines and even played kazoo on "Lazy Daddy."

Although Ted Lewis was an incredibly poor clarinetist and most of his music was commercial, in the extreme, he had an affinity for good jazz musicians. And it must be admitted that his early bands had an unusual, "brassy" sound of an augmented Dixieland unit. Numerous outstanding Brunies' solos can be heard on Ted Lewis' jazz oriented recordings. Some of the Lewis scores called for a high degree of musicianship involving modulations, bridges, tricky changes, etc. It was a tribute to the non-reading Brunies, whose phenomenal ear made it possible for him to execute the most complicated arrangements once they had been "explained" to him. The year 1928 brought a musical lift to Brunies, for it was that year that his close friend, Muggsy Spanier, joined the band in San Francisco. The Ted Lewis Columbia recordings showcasing George and Muggsy ("Leisada Blues", "Farewell blues," "Wabash Blues, " "Lonesome Road," "Yellow Dog Blues," "Egyptianella," among others) contain some moments of superb jazz.

George's twelve long years with Ted Lewis ended in 1934 with a landmark set of recording dates for Decca under the banner of a Wingy Manone-led "New Orleans Rhythm Kings." Although these sides lacked Wingy's usual drive and spark of his Bluebird sessions of that time, they are important in bringing Dixieland style up to the 30's. Clarinetist Sidney Arodin, who never got much exposure on records, joined his fellow Orleanians, Manone and Brunies, in some rousing Dixieland numbers. The triumvirate shine on "Tin Roof Blues," "Sensation" and "Panama."

In 1935, Muggsy, Brunies, Eddie Miller on clarinet, Terry Shand on piano and Gene Krupa on drums, made four more sides for Decca, again under the name of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. Red McKenzie sang some of his best vocals on a set of tunes that were not in the Dixieland mold: "Dust Off That Old Piano," "Since We Fell Out of Love," "Baby Brown," and "No Lovers Allowed." This set is made to order for Spanier and Brunies and they stand out as soloists and in the ensembles. Muggsy displays some of his best open horn work in these sessions. Eddie Miller's fluent clarinet on "Dust Off" and Brunies' swinging trombone on "Baby Brown" are memorable. For some reason these recordings have been overlooked by most collectors.

The next three years (1935-1938) found Brunies playing in the various bands at Nick's Greenwich Village. The personnel was constantly changing in the bands at Nick's and it wasn't unusual for a complete changeover of men, including the leader, to occur in a single evening. Brunies was at his happiest and most raucous during his days at Nick's. The star studded roster included Bud Freeman, Eddie Condon, Pee Wee Russell, Bobby

Hackett, Joe Sullivan, Sidney Bechet, Sharkey, Wingy and many, many more.

Early in 1938, Milt Gabler had the wisdom to pick Brunies for his inaugural Commodore recording session, thus marking the beginning of a long and productive series of top notch recordings by Brunies under the Commodore label.

It was at this time that George met the numerologist Gerun Moore who persuaded him to change his name to George Brunis. The ‘e’ in George came back now and then, but “Brunis” remained for the rest of his life. But to his family and hometowners in New Orleans, he was always George Brunies.

In late 1938, Muggsy Spanier, who was convalescing in Chicago after a long illness at Touro Infirmary in New Orleans, dreamed up the idea of forming a little band to play real hard hitting jazz - blues, stomps, ragtime and popular standards - that would win the jazz following and pay off in good money. He scouted around for the best talent he could find and he came up with a star studded crew that included Brunies, of course, and Rod Cless on Clarinet. The group, named Muggsy Spanier’s Ragtime Band, was booked by Ernest Byfield of the Hotel Sherman in Chicago into the hotel’s Panther Room. From April until September 1939, the Ragtimers played a record-breaking five and one-half months at the Sherman. Critics, the press and the general public flocked to the Panther Room to listen and rave over this great little band. Fortunately, the Ragtimers recorded 16 sides for Bluebird which are hailed by jazz fans and collectors all over the world. Brunies is at his best on “Dipper Mouth,” “At the Jazz Band Ball” and “Livery Stable Blues.” His trombone and hilarious vocal on “Sister Kate” have never been surpassed.

Critics, jazz lovers and record collectors will argue loud and long over their choices of the best of George Brunies on record. Certainly the staccato, gutty phrases, the brilliance of sustained notes and swooping glissandos of the Brunies' trombone come through magnificently on the Commodore records of the early 1940s. Milt Gabler hired Wild Bill Davison and Muggsy Spanier for a number of sides that capture George playing the best trombone of his long and varied career. Some notable examples of Brunies' hard hitting horn are "That's a Plenty," "Clarinet Marmalade" and "Panama." His lazy, melodic, hot style bursts through on "Tin Roof Blues," "Pretty Doll" and "Dancing Fool." His delightful trombone and vocal on "Ugly Child," which was a direct steal from Clarence Williams' "Pretty Doll," become a Brunies' "Blue Plate Special."

In the mid to late 1940's Brunies itinerated between New York and Chicago to fill innumerable gigs in jazz spots. He was a regular fixture at Nick's, The Hickory House and Jimmy Ryan's in Manhattan. Later he appeared with Art Hodes in Chicago at the Blue Note, Brass Rail, the Bee Hive, among others. During the post World War II years, Brunies appeared on several live concerts on Rudi Blesh's "This is Jazz" radio show in early 1947. Some of Brunies' best performances are included in the recordings of the live broadcasts on Circle Records which are now the property of George H. Buck, owner of the GHB-Jazzology labels. During the early 50's Brunies played a long stint of over 10 years in residence at the Club 1111 on Chicago's Bryn Mawr Ave.

Brunies spent most of his later years appearing for concerts in New York, Manassas, Detroit, Memphis, St. Louis

and Chicago. He recorded for several jazz labels including Southland, Fat Cat Jazz, Jazzology and GHB records.

Most writers and critics have labeled George Brunies as the best white “tailgate” trombonist of Dixieland Jazz. Alan Webber, a jazz authority and trombonist now living in Washington, D. C., has always expressed great admiration for George Brunies and his traditional New Orleans trombone style.

“I first heard Brunies in the flesh on the Saturday night of Labor Day weekend, 1942 at Nick’s, a year after I first discovered him on record,” he said. “Mother and Dad and I emerged from the Sheridan Square subway station and started up 7th Ave. A hundred feet or so from the open entrance I could hear the band, Brunies blasting out those rising glisses on the third strain of “Blowin’ the Blues.” That did it. I ran all the rest of the way, and at 17 I could muster a fair bit of speed.

“Since then I’ve heard Brunies play the same tunes much the same way, listened to his ancient vaudeville gags and watched him roll his belly . . . and never ever failed to love every minute of it, yea though I had heard and seen it all a hundred times before. No sound I’ve ever heard in jazz gives me the thrill that Brunies’ trombone did all those years ago . . . and, so long as my records and hearing hold out, always will.”

After many years away from his hometown of New Orleans, George Brunies was invited by Joe Mares, Jr., to play at the New Orleans Jazz Club concert on November 13, 1971 at the Royal Sonesta Hotel. The concert was so successful that he was brought back to New Orleans in August 1972 for two more Jazz Club concerts. At the final concert, Brunies received the Key to the City from the Mayor. It was after this concert that he asked Joe Mares to have a New Orleans jazz band play at his funeral.

An unduring tribute to George Brunies and his great music is expressed by Joe Mares, Jr., his long time friend from Brunies' early youth in New Orleans.

“His career had taken him to wherever jazz was, and was played. He had no feeling that he was helping officiate in a truly American art form. There was no thought of jazz as a cult.

“I lost not only a person whose music I loved and admired, but I lost a dear good friend. To the older generation of collectors and fans, his name and records aren't going to be forgotten.”

Raymond Burke

The Rabais of Raymond Burke

by Al Rose

Sept/Oct, 1958

If, unfortunately, you happen not to live in New Orleans, it's just possible that you've never heard of Raymond Burke. His records, on a small handful of labels, are only reasonably distributed. Reviewers single out his clarinet contribution to each recorded side for special, enthusiastic praise. But among New Orleans Jazz fans and musicians, Raymond occupies a unique position. Although other clarinet players listen to him in unreserved admiration, none attempt to copy or imitate him. Musically, he exerts no influence whatever on anyone's style. When knowledgeable people speak of other Crescent City clarinetists, they might say something like “Harry Shields (or George Lewis or Lester Bouchon or Pete Fountain) is the greatest

clarinet player in New Orleans - not counting Raymond, of course.”

One summer night, I was talking with the late George Girard during an intermission in front of The Famous Door. “Al,” he said, “I’m going to be needing a clarinet player. Got any ideas?”

“How about Raymond?” I suggested.

“Man, that would be plain heaven!” George laughed, “But, if I had him I’d still need a clarinet player!”

This is not double talk. In the shorthand of New Orleans Jazz, this is what George was saying:

You know and I know, there’s nobody like Raymond Burke. It would be stimulating and exciting to have him blowing alongside me every night. But you know Raymond! He just doesn’t play a clarinet part! The tourist expects to hear the really conventional harmony, and Raymond just won’t stick to it. He’s got all that ingenious counterpoint on his mind - and you know, if it’s on his mind, he blows it!”

It’s true. There’s really no steady band job for Raymond Burke. Once, someone who didn’t know Raymond suggested in open discussion that he organize a band of his own. Everybody laughed. But if you want to know what’s funny about that idea, you just have to know Raymond, himself.

Raymond Burke is 53 years old, a native of New Orleans. He has passed all of these years within the city limits, except for a handful of dates into which he was coerced by fellow musicians. His total time out of town hasn’t added up to ten full weeks.

He has the wavy hair and pencil mustache you’d associate with a riverboat gambler, dresses in tastefully selected, but rigidly conservative clothes. His trousers are creased to a

dangerous edge, his shirts stiffly starched, his shoes blindingly polished. He might pass for a floorwalker at Maison Blanche.

But when he speaks, all traces of sophistication vanish. His accent is pure French Market New Orleans, his usage, the colorful, but never obscene, vernacular of the New Orleans streets.

In his world are no sidewalks, but “banquettes,” no porches, but “galleries.” Any hour after 12 Noon is “evening.” Raymond does not, never did, smoke, drink, gamble or “run-around” as the saying goes. Neither does he disapprove of those who do. He is without either formal or musical education, cannot make out the first note of written music. He speaks little and rarely. Responds quickly to humor and slowly to wit.

That, superficially, is Raymond Burke - but there's more!

Have you ever known an eminent figure in the arts and wondered whether the term “genius” could properly be applied to him? If you have, then he wasn't a genius. Raymond Burke is an active demonstration of the fact that genius is obvious and you don't need to bother to wonder whether he is or isn't. I can't tell you what genius actually is, but via Raymond, I can tell you how it reacts, what it does - and perhaps, why.

Daily, about one o'clock in the “evening,” Raymond Burke opens the paddock on his little Rabais shop door on Bourbon Street in the heart of the Vieux Carre. Now a Rabais shop is not as high flown as an antique store nor as disreputable as a junk shop. It only occurs in New Orleans, a storehouse of absorbing trivia, reflecting directly the interests and tastes of its proprietor. Raymond's is heaped with records. (In Raymond's world, there are two kind of records. Jazz records and opera

records. All records which are not Jazz are opera). He also has rare photographs of New Orleans dating back to the beginnings of Photography. There are musical instruments and parts of musical instruments. There are venerable sound production systems, including an Edison cylinder player and a Victor talking machine complete with morning glory horn. There are Tulane yearbooks of the twenties and bundles of pre-Civil War banknotes. There are piles of old sheet music and several racks of reasonably current paper back novels and magazines.

This Rabais shop of Raymond's is in the residential part of Bourbon Street, where there is almost no foot traffic. Its floor plan runs well into eighty square feet and is innocent of electric lights, fixtures or furniture, with the exception of a single cane-bottom chair. It's not a shop for browsing, since Raymond has made no provisions for display or store traffic. One may only examine the merchandise on the fringes of the pile, or whatever is otherwise within reach. Raymond knows what's in there, but not necessarily where things are. This establishment does a gross business of about \$2 per day. Fortunately for his peace of mind, Raymond knows nothing about accounting. More valuable items in the shop are not for sale, although Raymond doesn't know that. One finds out by trying to buy something at any price. Raymond will probably decide not to sell it.

The true function of Raymond's Rabais shop becomes apparent within minutes after opening. A middle-aged man carrying a survivor of a banjo case approaches - or the grocery boy from around the corner carrying a trumpet in a paper sack. Raymond will get out his clarinet, extract a spaghetti of rubber bands from his pocket and make the repair ritual, and shortly the business of music is in progress. By closing time (That's when the

sun goes down - no lights, remember) perhaps a dozen musicians will have stopped to pass the time of day and run through a chorus or two. Among them will have been great names in Jazz and enthusiastic unknowns. Raymond like to play with all of them. This action requires no full instrumentation. Maybe just a ukulele and reed duet. Raymond's magic transforms it all to great Jazz.

For these goings-on the banquette, there is no audience, no curious neighbors, no informed tourists. From time to time a customer will stop to select a pocket edition or magazine, put his nickel on the rack and go about his business. He pays no attention to the music and is not aware that he's been tapping his hand on his thigh in time with the beat.

At night, if he's accepted a "music job," as he calls a paid Jazz date, he kisses his wife, Catherine, good-bye, (She's a wonderful, generous understanding wife, by the way) and turns up at the location with meticulous punctuality. While nothing would delight him more than to play seven nights a week, professionally, on an "odd - job" basis, he steers clear of steady band work. He also hates to be interviewed.

"Raymond, when did you start to play Jazz?"

He's been asked before. Never has really understood the question. Doesn't now.

"I dunno. I just been playin' it."

Well, then, when did you buy your first clarinet.

"Made it myself. Piece of fishin' pole and a mouthpiece. Before that I played harmonica, tin flute, anything."

What bands have you played with?

This is an uncomfortable kind of a query for him. It just shows you don't understand what he's up to and that it's not in any way relevant to what's on his mind.

"I never played steady with what you'd call a band. A bunch of us used to play together around Milneburg in the twenties. Like Pansy Laine's 'Wampus Cats'."

Actually Raymond started to play for money about 1913. At the age of about eight, he and the late Leo Adde, later to be celebrated as the pulse of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, entertained on kazoo and cigar box in front of the bordellos of Storyville. Leo passed the hat. Over the years, he's continued to play with erratic regularity with the full roster of Crescent City luminaries, from Emmett Hardy through great names like Wingy Mannon, Ray Bauduc, Eddie Miller, Johnnie Wiggs, Tom Brown, Santo Pecora, Sharkey. He's recorded with George Girard, Wooden Joe Nicholas, Edmond Souchon, Johnny St. Cry, Monk Hazel, Danny Barker - just everybody who's made a reputation in New Orleans Jazz. His clarinet is to be heard on paramount, Tempo, Southland, good Time Jazz, Creole, S-D, Golden Crest and Delmar, to name a few. He was a reluctant star performer at the National Jazz Jubilee at Los Angeles shrine Auditorium in 1955.

Last year, a record review referred to him as "The greatest Jazzman playing in New Orleans today." This kind of comment is painful to Raymond.

"People shouldn't print things like that. Everybody'll expect me to blow my brains out every time I go on the stand."

He doesn't respond to the audience that shouts, "Go! Go! Go!" In spite of his exceptional execution, he won't play in tempos that are too fast. "Them things are just for showin' off

fingerin'. They ain't music." He refuses to dramatize blues by playing slower than good taste indicates. "A blues ain't funeral music."

When Raymond plays the blues they're sympathetic but not tragic. His stomps are joyous rather than gleeful. His style is exciting but not tense. He does nothing whatever for effect. No growling, no flutter-tonguing, no skyscraping, no sacrifice of tonality for flashy runs. The runs come in when they have meaning. He will not play with musicians who pander to patronizing audiences that demand something other than music with their Jazz. He will not wear comic costumes or "funny" hats. He will not execute dance steps or participate in gag routines. He has been known, when musicians have been sacrificing the dignity of the art, to take his horn apart on the bandstand, pack it in its case and go home. The semantics of words like "integrity," "discrimination," "consistency" and "honor" may be entirely lost on him but he has plenty of each.

This New Orleans music he speaks of - what is it to him? How does it make his music different from other people's music?

Raymond Burke's brain is the Rabais shop of New Orleans memories. When he blows, he blows the bricks in the buildings, the cobbles in the alleys, the iron lace of the galleries. Out of his horn tumble recollections of a Pontchartrain studded with rickety resort piers when Jazz bands still made the waters know Saturday had come. Interpreted by ingenious devices of his own, he abstracts the sounds of Bucktown, the rice and sugar smell from the callalady's pushcart in Burgundy Street. Flavors of remoulade and file and chicory coffee, he distills into rich, strangely unmistakable tonal brew. He is sensitive to every uniquely New Orleans phenomenon, today's or yesterday's.

Triumphantly, because he lives his life in the present, all of this is accomplished without a trace of nostalgia or sentimentality. His horn doesn't weep for the "good old days," but glories in the wonderful place New Orleans is, was, and will be. If there's a cloud with a silver lining, he plays the lining rather than the cloud. There is no good or evil in his rabais, just "pretty things." Raymond's horn explains all simple truths in the universal tongue of true art, in clear sound any auditor who applies himself responds to naturally. He is neither consciously dedicated nor neurotically driven. He is serene and contented and requires less recognition than any artist I've known. An article like this, widely circulated, could disturb his life, by bringing to his horn too many people who wouldn't be really listening. It would never occur to him to change his way of living or playing just to make money or to achieve what the world accepts as success. In his own unselfconscious words,

"You know, people got to do all kind of funny things for a livin' if they don't play."

A tribute to Raymond Burke

by Jake Trussell

Sept/Oct, 1958

In the summer of 1949 my wife and I spent six days and nights in New Orleans, I have never forgotten him since.

Not having heard Lester Bouchon in person, I only knew from his records that he was a fine musician. But to me personally, I will always remember Raymond Burke as an integral part of the 1949 Sharkey Bonano band. From that sultry musical week on, I have always considered Mr. Burke to be the worlds most under-rated clarinet player.

On those magical nights at The Famous Door, Raymond Burke played inspired jazz clarinet. He was certainly one of the purely “hottest” clarinetists I have ever heard. He had a style all his own. At times screaming, wailing, reminders of Pee Wee Russell - but without the grotesque threatening - to - goof - the - next - note- but - never - doing - it quality of Pee Wee. No matter what Burke tried, he left the impression that he was master of the instrument, which he was.

This 1949 Sharkey band had Sharkey on trumpet, Burke on clarinet, Santo Pecora on trombone, Monk Hazel on drums and mellophone, Jeff Riddick at the piano, and Chink Martin on bass. What a band!

I knew of Monk Hazel through a mutual friendship with Judy Downs Lownes, of Hazen, Arkansas, a jazz fan who had helped me edit a jazz magazine some years earlier. Through this contact I met Monk at an intermission, and he in turn introduced me to Raymond Burke.

It was a pleasure to discover that Mr. Burke was as self effacing off stand as he was vibrant musically on stand. Quiet and unpretentious, he impressed my wife and I as being one of the nicest people personally that we had met anywhere.

While in New Orleans on this trip I purchased a couple of 78 rpm records on the Creole label, featuring Raymond Burke and his trio and another group. Today they are some of my most treasured items, both musically and as mementos of a wonderful six nights on Bourbon Street.

Recently Raymond was heard with Johnny Wiggs band on Good Time jazz’ “recorded in New Orleans,” and has made appearances on other New Orleans sessions that have reached

availability on Southland, Paramount, S.D. Golden Crest and several others.

Still Raymond Burke is comparatively lost in the rankings of the great jazz clarinetists. And its a “rank” injustice. When you mention a list like Ed Hall, Omer Sineon, George Lewis, Pee Wee Russell, Matty Matlock, Pete Fountain, Leon Rappolo, Irving Fazola, etc., the name of Raymond Burke should always be included. Right at the top of the list, too, with the very best of them.

The Emergence of Raymond Burke or The Clarinet is a Fine Instrument With Which to Hoe a Long Row

By John Steiner

Sept/Oct, 1958

In 1939 when small portable disc recorders became generally available, at lest a dozen hot collectors began systematically exchanging acetate copies of rare items and, more importantly, began the location recording of local musicians and exchanging copies of such cuttings. In an acetate-for-acetate deal with Orin Blackstone of N. O., George Hoefer and I simultaneously discovered (for ourselves) the sensitive, sensuous, sentimental clarinet of Raymond Burke. Probably George wrote about our thrill in one of his early columns. At any rate both of us scribbled immediately to Orin an excited thanks and the request for more Burke. In usual human vanity we prefer now to think that our enthusiasm may have sparked Oriin and Ray into their pressing of one of these early cuttings.

Yet even in 1944 when Orin’s Index to Jazz was published, neither the under-the-table pressing nor any other

recorded Burke was available to allow Ray's inclusion in the Index's alphabetical listing. Today it seems as startling an omission as Orleans. Needless to say, we slept the six days and stayed up until dawn all of the six nights!

This was during the now historic "revival" of New Orleans style jazz in New Orleans, and I don't think it is incorrect to say that Sharkey Bonano's Kings of Dixieland were leading the revival. Ensnared at The Famous Door, Sharkey's band during that 1949 summer was playing some of the greatest jazz ever heard on Bourbon Street. We consider ourselves especially lucky, for we understand that this group never plays together any more.

It was our good fortune to catch Sharkey's band those six nights with a "substitute" filling the clarinet chair. Lester Bouchon was ill in the hospital and a small, impassive visaged man by the name of Raymond Burke was playing clarinet. I had never heard of Raymond Burke before that week in New Orleans. Much more important Pee Wee or Barney or Dodds had been overlooked.

Everyone knows that an art devotee cannot tolerate lights under bushels. He's driven with a zeal, the devotee, to uncover each ray. As a case in point, when years later I met and visited with Edmond Souchon, we soon found that of all our broad spectrum of mutual interests, the one subject upon which we most admired and respected each other was our fondness for Ray's playing. And our one problem in life was to spread this word. We repeatedly asked each other: What if Ray's artistry were never openly recorded? What a poorer World if the jazz parade would pass Ray without his genius being widely recognized! Was Ray to be another Buddy Bolden or Emmett

Hardy? Obviously we were wacky on the subject. And - fanatics that we were, we set about rectifying the situation. We listened to some band records where Raymond's overly modest sound was lost in the scuffle. We listened to some private tapes of Ray with a trio. Then we decided that we should produce a modern LP of Ray under those vividly revealing conditions (earlier discovered almost accidentally by Bill Russell in his recording of the Lewis trio) of a simple rhythm supplied by bass and guitar. We commissioned Bill Russell to arrange and supervise the date during one of his regular forays into New Orleans. With Doc Souchon's empathetic collaboration, the trio became Ray, Doc, and Sherwood Mangiapane (pronounced Mangy-g).

Johnny Wiggs Hyman, a neighbor of Doc's, dropped by on rehearsal day to well-wish and kabitz through the proceedings. Things happen a little fast right here in our story. Bill Russell is serendipitous. Wiggs just happened to have his horn. Ray can't help inviting every horn in the room to join the proceedings. On hearing the four in rehearsal Bill recognized a dozen new values over what was attained with the trio as planned. Bill is also extra-perceptory. He knew that I would concur so he signed up the four. Their invention and talent and charm is crystallized on Burke's New Orleans LP. Realization on this record allowed us to produce the Big 4 date with the same group.

One discrepancy in the New Orleans should be explained. In spite of my pleasure in hearing the quartet, I had fixed in mind that also Ray was to appear in solo position with string background. With the infinitely patient assistance of Ewing Nunn, we strung together several solo sections which had actually been quartet items in their original recording. The instantaneous

way in which Ray seems to change key, tempo, and position relative to the mike as he changes tunes in the medley called Memories, etc. is startling and unbelievable. I have many letters about this.

The records continue to sell well despite the demise of the 10" LP generally. This, I venture, is the first mark of a classic in jazz. And to our delight Raymond's star has begun its ascent. He may now be heard on about a dozen Lp's.

A new LP I am told has recently been recorded with the "Big 4" augmented with Knocky Parker, Paul Crawford and Paul Barbarin. Yet another date had Hodes and Freddie Moore accompanying. Because a string bass exactly fitting the group like Sherwood Mangiapane was not available, the "Big 4" has become the nucleus for a very special, sensitive New Orleans sound. I know that Johnny and Doc, and Mangy will join me in saying that the most special part about this sound is Raymond. Then there is also Russell's serendipity to thank.

Raymond Burke
 (New Orleans Living Legend)
 Winter, 1982

The New Orleans city directory has him listed as Raymond Barrios. But his legions of devout fans in this country and abroad know him as Raymond Burke, leading exponent of the classic New Orleans "white" clarinet style. Burke, who celebrated his 77th birthday on June 6th, has graying hair, a neat pencil mustache and brown eyes that peer inquiringly from his cheerful face. His warm and infectious laugh has a musical quality that is completely disarming. He is shy, sensitive and goes

out of his way to avoid offending anyone. Indeed, he is a man who has no enemies.

Burke's clarinet artistry doesn't fit into an easily defined category. A jazz musician's style embraces many different things. It is never temporary or faddish or a passing fancy. In short, a jazzman's style is an individual or "personal" touch. Raymond Burke belongs among a very select group of jazzmen who are richly endowed with that rare attribute known as "personal" style.

Burke's playing is completely original and recognizable from the very first note that flows from his ancient Albert clarinet. The Albert is almost a museum piece today and only a few early New Orleans veterans and revivalists still play it. By the mid-twenties the Boehm clarinet replaced the Albert in popularity because musicians found the Boehm easier to master. It is also easier to execute fast chord changes. Controversy has raged among reedmen over the relative merits of the two instruments. Duke Ellington hired Barney Bigard from New Orleans because he wanted that rich, full "woody" tone of Bigard's Albert clarinet. (Duke was also a confirmed disciple of the great New Orleans reedman Sidney Bechet who played both the Albert clarinet and soprano saxophone). But it is argued that Pete Fountain, Kenny Davern and Bob Wilbur - all Boehm clarinetists - produce warm, flowing sounds that equal the Albert players. So this issue remains unsettled.

Raymond Burke has always commanded the highest respect of his fellow hometown musicians. The late cornetist, Johnny Wiggs, a frank, outspoken elder statesman who never broke his arm throwing bouquets around willy-nilly, had this to say about his favorite clarinetist: "Raymond Burke is the sweetest

guy I ever knew and his music reflects his personality. People try to compare him with Pee Wee Russell, Johnny Dodds, Jimmie Noone, Larry Shields and everyone else. But Raymond plays *Raymond Burke*. He doesn't copy anyone. He plays his own style and he is completely self taught. There isn't another clarinetist in jazz who plays the things Raymond does."

Jazz authority John Steiner described Burke's style another way. "Definitely more Negroid in style than any other white clarinetist since Leon Rappolo. Burke's roundness of tone and plaintive glissandos amaze and confuse those who listen to him for the first time. To understand just what he is doing fully, it is necessary to listen to him over and over again. Then his impact will strike you with its full force."

Gilbert Erskine gives a searching analysis of Raymond Burke - the man and his music - in his perceptive summary: "Raymond is exactly like Pee Wee Russell. He is extremely ill at ease talking formally with a group, but very cordial in one-on-one conversations. All his expressiveness comes through his horn. Johnny Wiggs was aggressive and pedantic in his ideas, where Raymond, if he had any feelings, would prefer to be noncommittal."

"It usually is hard to get any good musician to talk articulately about his music, and especially Raymond. He would vaguely say his goal was "to find the pretty notes." I don't know anyone better than Raymond who can sense unmistakably what is needed at any time in ensemble playing. Listen to his shadings, choices in upper and lower register, and his famous "explosions," igniting the ensembles. All the really good New Orleans clarinetists are quite distinctive from one another. Raymond fits this mold - he is very original."

Exposure to the “video” Burke as well as the “audio” Burke is really essential to fully appreciate the “complete” Raymond Burke. When he starts cooking on all burners his entire anatomy comes into play. Perhaps his expressive rhythmic movements are the inherited gifts of the lucky few. He scowls, winces and sways his entire body when he squeezes out a long, soaring blue note. Sometimes he points his clarinet to the floor like a snake charmer hypnotizing a cobra at a circus. And you can be damned sure Raymond will make that phantom viper rise up and do a belly dance to his torrid rendition of “I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate!”

In his younger days, Raymond was known in the music trade as a roamer. He often stalked back and forth on the band stand like a caged lion and he had a tendency to wander “off mike.” He immersed himself so deeply in his music that he simply forgot the outside world. His “fade-aways” caused problems at recording sessions in the old monaural days when studios used only one microphone. Joe Mares licked this dilemma for his Southland sessions by placing an extra mike in front of Raymond and his clarinet. “Doc” Edmond Souchon was so impressed with the results that he called Mares and asked him for his secret. “How do you keep Raymond from fading away? He won’t stand still when I record him with my little band. He wanders over to first base, then steals second and finally winds up in the outfield. I can’t nail him down in one spot.”

Mares responded with a twinkle in his eyes, “Well, I’ll tell ya’, Doc, it’s like this. I placed a separate mike in front of Raymond, then I tackled him around his knees so he couldn’t move and I held him tight for the entire session. That way he came out loud and clear.” Thanks to Joe Mares and dear old

Southland Records, some of the very best of Raymond Burke has been preserved on wax for posterity. (In 1968, Mares sold Southland to George Buck who has issued the entire series on jazzology/GHB labels.)

Raymond Burke (Barrios) was born June 6, 1904 in a frame house at Clio and Constance Streets near the Irish Channel. When he was two years old, his family moved to Marengo and Magazine Streets. His mother married William Burke who was not a musician. He is the nephew of early jazzmen, Jules and Leo Cassard and drummer Harold Peterson. His uncle, Walter “Brother” Burke, was a good drummer who played with pianist Lennie Bayersdorffer (uncle of cornetist Johnny Bayersdorffer) and clarinetist Scag Scaglione at Pete Herman’s Club Orchard at Conti and Burgundy Streets. “I started playing so early that I’m like Johnny St. Cyr who never knew when he started,” Raymond recalled. “I must have been six years old when I took up the harmonica and kazoo. My mother played piano and soon I found a clarinet and chorded behind her. In those days I listened to the Original Dixieland Jazz Band records and particularly to Larry Shields. Then there was Yellow Nunez on the Louisiana Five records but I never heard those bands in New Orleans. I don’t know how you can pin down my style because I listened to records by Johnny Dodds, Goodman, Shields, Nunez, Rappolo, Noone and many others. I remember trying to copy the solos of shields on “St. Louis Blues” and Dodds on “Canal Street Blues.”

“The first band I ever heard was Fischer’s band which played more in the ragtime style, what we called “ratty” music. Most of those early bands played in parks such as Clay and Annunciation Square and over on the Irish Channel. Everybody

had a different style. Some people tell me I played in a higher register in those days. Maybe that was because we played outdoors for picnics and parades and I had to blow harder. I stayed with the clarinet for twenty-five years before I took up the saxophone.”

Many aspiring neophytes gathered for jam sessions at Loyacano’s Market on Orange and Camp Streets in Coliseum Square. Among the beginners were Burke, Armand Hug, Leon Roppolo, Bill Cregar, Al Hessemer and others who lived in the neighborhood. “There was an old saying in those days - if a fellow had a bad corny tone he was playing a “Willie” sound,” Raymond said. “As far as I known, everyone had his own style and we learned from each other.”

Burke’s first professional job was with Tom Early’s Harmony Band around 1922. Charlie Cordilla was leaving the band to join Abbie Brunies’ Halfway House Orchestra. He told Early there was a kid living near him who could blow a pretty good clarinet. Early went over to the Burke’s house and found a young Raymond sitting on the door step noodling on his clarinet. He liked what he heard and talked Raymond into joining the Harmony Band. Other members included Early, leader, string bass and alto horn, the Rosenmeyer brothers (Herbie on trumpet, Eddie on trombone and Clifford on drums) and Chink Martin occasionally on tuba. The Harmony Band was kept busy filling spot jobs for picnics and outdoor events at Milneburg, Morgan City and Gretna.

Burke recalls the legendary cornetist Emmet Hardy who has been eulogized as the second Bix Beiderbecke. “Emmet often played second cornet to Herbie Rosenmeyer in the Harmony Band when Early added extra men for bigger jobs. He played a

very nice horn but I was too young to remember his exact style. I do recall, though, the sessions at Paul Mares' house when Paul and Emmet worked up duets like the King Oliver-Louis Armstrong choruses on the Creole Band records. Paul returned to New Orleans from Chicago in 1924. He listened to King Oliver's band a lot of times when the New Orleans Rhythm Kings were working at Friars Inn."

"I would go to Emmet's house on State Street and sit in with Paul and Emmet on cornets, Joe Mexic on trombone, Harold Marento on piano and Pasqual Gregan on drums. Paul and Emmet played "High Society" just like the Oliver-Armstrong duets on the Gennett record by King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. They often called Leon Rappolo at his home so he could hear them over the phone. He was very sick at that time and he wouldn't leave his house."

In 1923 Burke left the Harmony Band to join Alfred "Pantsy" Laine and his Wampus Cats. The band included Laine, leader and trumpet, Joe Loyacano on trombone, Willie Abraham (Chink Martin's brother) on banjo, Sanford Mello on drums and Burke on clarinet. Oh, yes! let's not forget the member of the band who made Ripley's "Believe It or Not." He was Willie Guitar who played string bass and lived on Music Street. Pantsy (Woe to anyone who *dared* drop the "T" from his sobriquet!) was the son of legendary "Papa Jack" Laine, affectionately known as "The Father of White Jazz." The Wampus Cats were in great demand at such places as Kelly's and Powers' Gardens, Tonti and Young's Halls in the city. Across the river in Gretna were Lee's Hall and the Davey Crockett.

Around 1924 Raymond went with Richie "Iron Lip" Brunies' Bayview Jazzers to Mobile, Alabama. Richie was the

oldest member of the famous Brunies brothers - Henry, Merritt, Abbie and George. The band included Brunies on trumpet, Big Boy Lay on trombone, Eddie Mitchell on piano, Blaise Finkley on drums and Burke on clarinet. The Bayview Jazzers were managed by Captain Oswald who had a chain of locations throughout the area. The Bayview Pavilion was one of Oswald's choice ballrooms where he booked name bands for long engagements.

Oswald also handled the famous Original Crescent City Jazzers with Wingy Manone and Sterling Bose on cornets, Avery Loposer on trombone, Cliff Holamnd on reeds, Johnny Riddick on piano and Leo Adde on drums. In late 1924, a nucleus of the band joined the Arcadian Serenaders in St. Louis and recorded for Okeh, previously, in March 1924, the Crescent City Jazzers, with Bose on cornet, recorded "Sensation Rag" and "Christine" for Okey in New Orleans.

Raymond returned to New Orleans in 1925 and free-lanced with a number of bands. He made his first record that year with Blind Gilbert on trumpet, Chick Johnson on tenor sax, Hal Maranto on piano, Henry Waelde on guitar, Bill Wailde on bass and Al Droia on drums. The band, using the knocked-out name "Goofus Tin Roofers," recorded two original tunes by Blind Gilbert (legal name, Gilbert Meistier) titled "Cornet Omelet" and "Dump Cart Blues" for Columbia in the Godschuax Building on Canal Street. Abbie Brunies got the date but the record was never released.

I think there must have been too much foolishness on those records," Raymond explained. "Kazoos and other noisemakers were added to the regular instruments. Gilbert never got a good tone but he had wonderful execution and he

could play anything. He was a spasm streetman and passed for white. He and Teddy Miller used to play on street corners for coins. He could play trumpet, piano, guitar . . . in fact, any instrument and he could also sing and write music. He claimed to be the composer of “Angry” which was copyrighted by Merritt and Abbie Brunies and pianist Dudley Mecum who wrote the words. The tune was published in Chicago.”

“I remember the time I sat in with Gilbert’s band at the Las Marinas Club on Decatur Street. Some ASCAP song writers dropped in to catch the band for tunes they might publish. Gilbert played “Cornet Omelet” and “Dump Cart Blues” and other things he had written. The music was so complicated the ASCAP people got disgusted and left.

During the speakeasy days of prohibition Raymond took spot jobs all over town with pickup groups. Some of the more notorious gin mills were the Shamrock on Bienville, the College Inn on Rampart, the White Star, Brown Derby and Radio Café on Decatur. “The police often raided those joints and closed them down. They broke all the bottles and tore up the places but they wouldn’t put us in jail. The average pay was two dollars a night plus the split-up kitty.”

In 1929 Raymond joined Henry Waelde’s Melon Pickers at Pete Herman’s Club Plantation. By this time he added c-melody, alto and tenor saxes to his instrument kit. “I played for six years with the Melon Pickers,” he recalled. “The original band included Wailde, the leader on guitar, Bill Naquin on trumpet, Julius Chevez on piano, John Ball on string bass. Al Doria on drums and myself on reeds. We didn’t have a trombonist so we welcomed guys who wanted to fill that chair. Other regular sit-ins were Otto ‘Coco’ Himel, the great guitarist

with Gene Austin's Candy and Coco, and Wingy Manone when he didn't have a gig."

Musicians with the out-of-town road bands came to the Plantation for after hours sessions. When Guy Lombardo played for several weeks at Club Forest in 1934, members of the Royal Canadians loved to jam with the Melon Pickers. Then there were the sidemen with the touring bands at the Roosevelt Hotel and the Saenger and St. Charles theaters. The Plantation became the home-away-from-home for the traveling musicians.

It was due largely to the Melon Pickers that the Plantation established the reputation during the depression years as the brightest spot on the New Orleans jazz map. A remote radio wire drew enough people to keep the Plantation operating from 1929 to 1934."

In 1935, the Melon Pickers replaced the Creole Serenaders at the Absinthe House. The Creole Serenaders, many of them former members of Armand J. Piron's orchestra, had an array of superb musicians. The personnel at various times included the three talented Bocages (Peter on trumpet, violin, trombone, banjo and vocals, Henry on trumpet, tuba and string bass, and Charles on banjo, guitar and vocals), Lorenzo Tio, Jr. on clarinet, Louis Warnick on clarinet and saxophone, Steve Lewis or Dwight Newman on piano, Paul Barbarin, Cie Frazier or Henry Martin on drums. The Creole Serenaders was one of the popular bands in the city and broadcast regularly over station WWL. Peter Bocage collaborated with Piron on several compositions including "Mama's Gone Goodbye."

When the Absinthe House job folded, Burke worked with the Dandy Inn Five from 1939 to 1941 at the Dandy Inn, a twenty-five cent taxi dance hall located near Washington Avenue

and the Basin Canal. “I made my first commercial record in 1939 with the Dandy Inn Five, called “Mardi Gras Blues,” Raymond Said. “Bill Gallity, Jr. was on trumpet, Roy Armand on piano, Little Chink Martin (Martin Abraham, Jr. - on bass and Charlie Stowe on drums. It was cut on a seven inch 78 r.p.m. disc at Holmes Department store. The other side features Vic Coleman’s Chicagoans playing “slow blues” which was recorded in 1943 when I was with the group in Kansas City.”

In 1942 Burke was drafted in the army and served basic training at Camp Polk, La. He was discharged within six months as overage and returned to New Orleans. “As soon as I cleared my union card I went with Vic Coleman’s cocktail unit at La Louisiane Restaurant on Iberville Street. The group included Coleman on accordion, Bob Thompson on guitar, Jack Sheen on bass and myself on clarinet. Coleman asked me if I would like to go with the group on a short tour and I agreed. We played two months at the Continental Hotel in Kansas City where we made the record and two weeks in Wichita, Kansas. Then we broke up and I came back to New Orleans.” Raymond made another tour with Leon Prima’s band to St. Louis, Nashville and Memphis. He spent the remainder of the World War I years playing spot jobs in New Orleans and the vicinity.

Jazz in New Orleans hit an all-time low during the late 1940s. There was little work for jazz musicians in the clubs that flourished during the turbulent war years. Mardi Gras 1948 marked the founding of the New Orleans Jazz Club as a leading catalyst in sparking the jazz revival movement in the Crescent City. The story, although threadbare from repeated telling, takes a fresh approach in Myra Menville’s account in the Second Line:

“On Mardi Gras, 1948, Johnny Wiggs, Gilbert Erskine, Don Perry, and Al Diket, intoxicated by the jazz they heard at the Zulu parade, apparently were simultaneously inspired. There were no witnesses but legend has it, Johnny Wiggs stretched out his arms and said: “Let there be a jazz club” . . . If lightning didn’t crackle, it certainly should have. A meeting was called for February 21, 1948 (now the NOJC’s official birthday) in Oren Blackstone’s record shop on Baronne Street, across from the old DeSoto Hotel. The city’s jazz devotees joined ranks. Monthly jazz session meetings, in various hotels, brought so many audience-hungry musicians their union sent a worried officer around to inspect the membership cards. Eventually the union stopped squinting, convinced by the number of jobs sparked by this revival of jazz in New Orleans.”

The year 1949 signaled beginning of better things to come for Raymond Burke. In May he made his first records that reached an audience beyond the confines of the Crescent City. Historian Richard B. Allen described the circumstances as follows:

“On May 11 and 12, 1949, when these recordings were made, Raymond Burke was virtually unknown outside of New Orleans. Paradox’s issuing of two 78 r.p.m. records from this session was the turning point in Burke’s career. I remember one day in the early fifties when a Boston collector came to the Jazz Record Center on Bourbon Street hunting for these 78’s. I’ll never forget the look on his face as he recognized our hero and shouted, “Raymond Burke in person!” I knew then that the purists had a new legend. Burke’s reputation has continued to grow in the United States and abroad.”

“This session was aptly a cooperative affair. Much credit should go to Bob Matthews who organized it. Herbert A. Otto, now universally recognized in the field of human potential, recorded this pickup band in the back room of Orin and Harvey Blackstone’s New Orleans Record Shop. Guitarist and banjoist Danny Barker came with good advice.”

“New Orleans jazz grew from many musical traditions and has continued to absorb many influences throughout its brief history. It was never pure. Raymond Burke is a good listener and has consequently incorporated many ideas from many schools in his style.”

Although the employment picture for jazz musicians brightened considerably during the 1950’s, the number of full time jobs weren’t too plentiful. Raymond Burke, like many others, turned to second-income sources. Raymond had always been a musician-collector in the truest sense. In the early 1950s he opened a one-room shop in the residential section of bourbon Street. Edmond Souchon recalled Raymond’s business venture in this capsule version of his story appearing in the Second Line:

“A recent occurrence at 906 Bourbon Street seems to us the most apropos coda to the article written by Al Rose in the September-October 1958 issue of the Second Line. It was titled “The Rabais of Raymond Burke.” We believe a quoted definition from Mr. Rose’s article is necessary. The word “rabais” is indigenous to New Orleans as “quarti” and “jazz.” A Rabais shop is not as high flown as an antique shop nor as disreputable as a junk shop . . . it is a storehouse of absorbing trivia, reflecting directly the interests and tastes of the proprietor.” “Raymond’s place is a one-room affair. Its front door gives directly entrance on bourbon Street, almost at sidewalk level. Possibly there might

be a back exit giving into God knows whoever, but no one has ever penetrated that far back to find out!

Over the years, Raymond has accumulated the most heterogeneous collection imaginable. There are many rare old faded photographs of New Orleans. Post cards and maps and calendars dated back 50 to 75 years. Innumerable old “78” records piled one upon the other in a “Leaning Tower of Pisa.” Edison talking machines, complete with glory horns, and cylinders for playing. Add to these the ever mounting mound of beat-up musical instruments - some playable, but most unplayable. Some are being made into lampbases. Piles of old sheet music and Tulane University year books grow higher and higher. Paperback novels and magazines have reached Gargantuan proportions. These have gradually obscured the “treasure” behind.

“Mr. Burke, the proprietor, soon found himself in a precarious position: he couldn’t enter the shop himself without completely taking down the first two stacks of magazines. Even then, he was forced to climb over several others. His solution; he unlocked the door, reached for a chair he had placed on top a stack of magazines, placed the chair on the sidewalk to the right of the doorway, and took his position on the sidewalk, outside his own shop!”

“A few days ago, Raymond received notice from the fire department that his “Rabais Shop” was a fire hazard. He was indignant! Suspicious that his landlord had reported him were soon despoiled. Some “traitor” who didn’t like jazz had turned him in. Nevertheless he had to act. With bleeding heart he sorted out enormous stacks of what he regarded as less valuable magazines and paperbacks. Reluctantly he piled them high on the

sidewalk in neat rows, awaiting the Garbage Truck to pick them up. He hung around, just to see that it was properly done. He glanced inside his shop. It just didn't look like his old place. He had too much room - he could actually navigate inside! But at least it met the requirements of the law."

"Then, an amazing Guardian Angel smiled down on Raymond! Tourists, visitors and 'localities' began pouring along Bourbon Street. Before the setting sun had a chance to darken the unlighted interior of Raymond's shop, and before Raymond realized he was working long overtime, he had set an all-time record for sales. The stacks of periodicals he had labeled for "disposal" on the sidewalk had gone like hotcakes. Raymond's sales for the day had topped \$151."

It was a sad day on Bourbon Street when Raymond decided to close his "Rabais" Shop and cart his "collectables" to his house on North Rampart Street. The city planners made a big mistake when they demolished the building to clear the area for the Louis Armstrong Park. Burke's "Rabais" Cultural Center certainly would have qualified as a landmark for historic preservation.

The Guardian angel smiled down again on Raymond before the Armstrong Park wrecking crews reached his block. It wasn't an overnight condo blitz, so he had plenty of time for house hunting. He found his ideal dream house, a charming old New Orleans "camelback" located near the City Park area. Although the building needed minor repairs and renovating, the basic cypress wood structure had granite rock stability.

The restoration of the lovely home was strictly a family affair. The Burke family, Raymond and Catherine and Mister Seymour the Cat, are living the legend of the beautiful song he

wrote. They are living the legend of “The City of a Million Dreams.”

John Casimir, Clarinet
(Clarinetist Casimir Passes on)
 by Cary James Tate
 March/April, 1963

January 3, 1963, added another name to the long list of jazz greats who have recently succumbed. Tall, muscular 64 year old clarinetist John Casimir died at his home, 2604 Philip Street, leaving a mellow but scanty legacy of recorded music. As bandleaders of the Young Tuxedo Brass Band, his name became as familiar to New Orleanians and jazz addicts as the French Quarter, a pot of Creole gumbo, or the annual Mardi Gras celebration.

John Casimir belonged in the fabled Jazz Age with such noted Louisiana clarinetists as Sidney Bechet, “Big Eye” Louis Nelson, Larry Shields, Alcide “Yellow” Nunez, Johnny Noone, Irving Fazola, George Lewis, Tony Parenti, Steve Angram, Leon Rappolo, and Alphonse Picou. Not too long ago, John mused: “I started to appreciate music when I was a boy. I used to second-line for Johnny Dodds. He was a clarinet player and I carried his instrument. I guess that’s how I wanted to learn how to play the clarinet.”

Shortly after World War I, Casimir stepped into a tailgate band called “The Young Eagles,” with bass genius Pops Foster, trumpeter Lee Collins, trombonist Earl Humphrey, and banjoist “Son” Thomas. Later during the hectic twenties when many Orleanians blindly condoned gambling, prostitution, and

bootleg liquor, the clarinetist joined trumpeter Kid Milton's Band, a dynamic unit that included trombonist "Big Ike" Robinson, bassist Willie Newton, and drummer Joe Casimir.

Then, in the thirties John Casimir stepped out on his own - and stepped high ever since - as leader of the Young Tuxedo Brass Band. Through the years his group played in colorful parades and pompous funerals; the members usually being Vernon Gilbert, John "Pickey" Brunious, Andy Anderson, Joe Avery, Albert Jackson, Dede Pierce, Albert "Frenandez" Walters, John Handy, Walter Knox, Wilbert Tillman, Clement Tervalon, Henry "Booker T" Glass, "Kid Shots" Madison, Eddie Pierson, Kid Howard, Jim Robinson, Loochie Jackson, Harold de Jan, Eddie Jackson, Sonny Henry, Tata Alexander, Herman Sherman, Ernest Rogers, Andrew Morgan, Alvin Alcorn, Alfred Williams, Emile Knox, Albert Walters, Bill Matthews nothing but the finest of Dixieland jazzmen.

Often while marching through New Orleans streets his band has requests from second-liners for such rollicking numbers as "It Feels So Good," "Bourbon Street Parade," "Casimir's Whoopin' Blues," "Lord, Lord, Lord," "Just a Little While to Stay Here," "Joe Avery's Piece," "When the Saints Go Marching In," "The Shiek of Araby," "Every Man a King," and "Down in Honky Tonk Town." A few years ago leading New York artist Morton Roberts saw the Casimir unit parading and did a \$30,000 oil painting of the tailgate scene which was later reproduced in LIFE magazine, and also used as the cover of Atlantic Records album, "Jazz Begins" By the Young Tuxedo Brass Band. About 1956 the wailing blues tone of the Casimir clarinet caused television director Frederic Ramsey, Jr., to include him in a brass band funeral sequence for CBS-TV Odyssey.

One critic described his style as “an incomparable attack on punchiness that influenced jazz so strongly in its earliest phases.

In the eyes of the musical world the late John Casimir is looked upon as a great clarinetist, a master showman, a giant of New Orleans jazz. To the musical world I can only add - and with much pride - John was my friend.

**Emile Joseph Christian
by Joe Mares, Jr.
Winter, 1974**

A glowing spirit of Dixieland music was extinguished with the death of the New Orleans trombonist, Emile Joseph Christian on December 3, 1973 at one o'clock in the morning. He was 78. Born in New Orleans in 1895, Emile and his two brothers, Frank and Charlie, who also were great jazz men, came up from the late Jack “Papa” Laine School. Emile also played with the late Alfred Laine, Papa Laine’s son.

To jazz lovers the world over, Emile Christian needs no introduction. From the beginnings of jazz to the present activities in the Crescent City, Emile has been renowned both here and abroad. He recorded with many groups throughout the years but August 1959 was the first time this pioneer fronted his own band for a recording (Southland LP 223 - Emile Christian and His New Orleans Jazz Band).

Emile, when a young man, would frequent such historic jazz sites as Milneburg, Gretna, Sportsman’s Park and Bucktown, playing most of the time with the Alfred Laine’s Bands. Following his stay at Peggy Armstead’s in Storyville,

Emile left for Chicago in 1917 to spread the gospel of jazz. While playing in four-piece combos around Chicago, Emile received a telegram to come to Reisenweber's to take over Eddie Edwards's place in the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, when Edwards was drafted into the war service.

After about a year in New York, the band made its historic journey to England in 1919 as the first jazz band to spread Jazz. The band played all the theatres and clubs, including the Hippodrome Theatre, the Palladium, the 400 Club on Bond St. and Rector's Club. In May 1920 when the band returned to New York, Emile left and went to work with Phil Napoleon and his Memphis Five at the Kelly Club, at Coney Island. After three weeks with Napoleon he went back to Europe to join the Broadway Sextet. He played Paris, Holland, Finland, Norway, Germany and all the way to Bombay, India.

Emile returned to New York in 1939 and played there until 1941 when he was called home due to his mother's illness. He then played with Leon Prima at Vas Vegas, returning home to play with Prima at the 500 Club on Bourbon St. Then he joined George Girard at the Famous Door. In 1949, Emile was playing at the El Morrocco Club on Bourbon Street with Phil Zito's band, which included the young, talented Girard and Pete Fountain. During this time he learned to play string bass and developed into a great performer on this instrument. He made the switch to string bass since Bob Havnes was the regular trombonist in the band. His last 10 years as a professional musician were spent with local musicians such as Pete Fountain, Johnny Wiggs, Sharkey Bonano and other great musicians in New Orleans jazz.

Emile Christian's importance in jazz history is firmly established as one of the truly great pioneers of New Orleans jazz.

He greatly influenced younger trombonists who came along in later years. Good-bye, Emile, New Orleans will miss you.

**Frank J. Christian
Winter, 1974**

Frank J. Christian, older brother of the famous Emile Christian, died November 27 in New Orleans. He was 86. Christian, who played trumpet, led the New Orleans Jazz Band in Chicago and New York with Jimmy Durante on piano, Chris Lhotak on trombone, Achille Baquet on clarinet and John Stein on drums.

Prior to that time, he was a ragtime band leader in New Orleans from 1910 to 1918. His career started around 1908 with Jack Laine's Reliance Band.

A native New Orleanian, he also worked with Fischer's Brass Band and in groups featuring his brothers, Emile and Charles. In the early 1920's he appeared in vaudeville with Gilda Gray.

Beside the trumpet, Christian also played the clarinet, violin and tuba.

**Joseph "Red" Clark Jr.
March/April, 1961**

The great tuba man of the Eureka Brass Band has crossed the River Jordan. "Red" Clark, manager and top "big brass," went to meet his Maker on November 30th. He was buried in New Orleans, with fitting ceremonies - His passing was definitely over shadowed by that of Alphonse Picou. But he will

be a hard man to replace as a marching tuba brass band's man. Also as Manager. His enthusiasm for the band is exemplified by a quotation from Sam Chartres book ("Jazz: New Orleans 1885=1957): "Members of the Eureka say that "Red" will walk all the way out to protection levee to get a funeral march."

in 1947. He has been a fixture with them ever since.

He was quite serious about the band, and did all within his power to collect and preserve as much of the music of the earlier brass bands as he could. Such serious enthusiasm could not go long unrewarded, and soon "Red" became Manager for the Eureka, a position which he held until his death.

His first recording with the Eureka Brass Band was in 1951, and he has been on every other recording date since that time. His work is especially notable on the "Folkways" album which Sam Chartres was instrumental in releasing a year or two ago.

It will be mighty hard to adjust to the fact that when the Eureka Brass Band is heard coming along from the distance, and the band swings around a corner into view, that the man at the head of the Eureka line, way over on the left hand side - with that great big silver horn wrapped all around his neck - will be someone else than "Big Red." We have no doubt that the 'Eureka' will find a man who is equally adept as Mr. Clark to take his place. But we will be startled each time we see them march, that we don't see a happy, light-cheeked face sticking out from inside all those silver coils! We - and all New Orleans will miss "Red" Clark. We hope that this short piece imparts to his family the sincerity of our condolence.

Lee Collins

Nov/Dec, 1960

Don't look now, because if you do you'll get more heart pangs. They've cut down another of those magnificent oaks that marks the avenue of jazz stalwarts stemming from New Orleans. What was once a dense forest now resembles cut-over timberland!

Lee Collins passed away on July 3rd, 1960. He died at his home 1424 East Marquette Street. Forbidden to blow his trumpet for the past six years, he still continued with hope in his heart that someday he'd be able to play again. Alongside his bed was his trumpet - brightly polished, and waiting for him with open case. It remains where he left it - untouched and silent.

Unquestionably, he belongs in the upper echelon of fine trumpeters of the old school. His name is a MUST when you trace the lineage of early New Orleans trumpet "Kings." He belongs right alongside Buddy Bolden, Joe "King" Oliver, Tommy Ladiier, Louis Armstrong, Buddy Petit, Manuel Perez, Bunk Johnson and Freddie Keppard, to name but a few.

The sound of his horn will be perpetuated by some of the finest discs which date from the earliest days of recorded jazz. His family can point with pride to sessions he has made with Chippie Hill, Baby Dodds, Louie Austin, "Jones and Collins Astoria Eight," George Lewis, Mozz Mezzrow, Jimmy Archey, Freddie Moore, Jelly Roll Morton, Barney Bigard, Darnell Howard, Johnny St. Cyr, Roy Palmer, and others too numerous to be included.

He was one of the legendary New Orleans musicians who marched in funeral processions and parade bands. He also did his

stint in “Storyville,” just as many other New Orleans famous musicians did at one time or another.

Collins migrated to Chicago in 1924, and about this time replaced Armstrong in King Oliver’s famous band. He took part in the Windy City _____” with Jelly Roll Morton and the Red Hot Peppers; likewise, he was part of the famous “Jones/Collins Astoria Eight when these celebrated recordings were made.

Later on, he played in the old honky-tonk section of Chicago, at the Victoria Club on North Clark Street. For a while he was a fixture at the famous, plush blue Note, in Chicago’s famous Loop.

While on a foreign tour, he ‘fell out’ during a performance in Paris. He was told by physicians that he had a collapsed lung and should never blow again. This was way back in 1954 - and although desperately ill during most of these six last years, he never despaired of someday taking up his trumpet. In and out of the Cook county Hospital many times for treatment of his ataractic lung, on Sunday, July 3rd he suffered a stroke. This took him away.

To demonstrate in what affection he was held by his fellow musicians, a mammoth benefit performance was given for him in 1957 and almost every jazz musician in Chicago took part and contributed to the fund - musically and financially.

Lee Collins was s devoutly religious man. His bible was continuously at his side - right next to the open case holding his trumpet. Although playing in the bordellos of Storyville and the rougher sections of Chicago many times, he was unaffected by their sin. A sincere believer, he preached the gospel when he was not asking part in jam session!

Hypolite Charles
by Austin Sonnier, Jr.
Spring, 1983

Cornet player Hypolite Charles was born in Parks, Louisiana on April 18, 1891. The son of a school teacher, he was encouraged in his interest in music by his father, Auguste, and upon organizing his own band prior to going to New Orleans, his father joined him as a member. The other musicians in the band were: Theophile Thibodaux on trumpet, Hypolite Potier, cornet; Simon Thibodaux, trombone, and Gabriel Ledet on bass.

He also played with the Vitale Band in Loreauville, Louisiana with Jules Day on trumpet. Tom Vitale, second trumpet; Louis Vitale on trombone; and Pierre Vitale on bass. Auguste Charles often joined them on baritone horn. In 1908 Hypolite moved to New Orleans to study music with Eugene Moret, the brother of George Moret, leader of the Excelsior Brass Band. Within a year he was working with Manuel Perez at a dance hall on Dauphine and Elyian Fields. In 1911 he joined the Silver Leaf Orchestra which was led by violinist Albert Batiste. Sam Dutrey played clarinet; his brother, Honore, was on trombone; Phillip Nickerson played guitar; Jimmy Johnson, who had been with Buddy Bolden, played bass; Willie Carter was on drums. The band played mostly for debutante balls and private parties along St. Charles Avenue. He also began playing parades with the Excelsior Brass Band. While playing for funerals and parades the band would march all over town on streets that were rocky and full of potholes. Once, in the French Quarter, he stumbled over a large rock and cut his lip badly. After that he would not play in the streets with bands that read music. He

subsequently joined Sonny Celestin's Tuxedo Brass Band and remained there for a number of years.

He joined the Maple Leaf Orchestra in 1919 and opened with them at the Washington Youree Hotel in Shreveport, Louisiana in July of that year. They came back to New Orleans in the fall, and a few months later Charles organized his own orchestra and started working at the Moulin Rouge. His group composed of Sonny Henry, trombone; Joe Welch, drums; Sam Dutrey, clarinet; Emile Bigard, violin; and Camille Todd, piano. He had studied with Camille Todd in 1909.

When Armand J. Piron went on his second trip to New York, Charles' orchestra replaced him at Tranchina's with only one change in personnel; Robert Hall replaced Dutrey on clarinet.

Charles retired from playing music in 1925, when after performing for a Sunday afternoon tea dance, he suffered a ruptured spleen. He was confined to his bed for a year. After getting well he started selling life insurance in New Orleans, and continued to do so until 1940, when he turned his accounts over to Peter Bocage and returned to Parks to take over his father's grocery store.

The following interview took place during the summer of 1975 at Mr. Charles' homes in Parks, Louisiana

Sonnier: When did you play your first funeral job?

Charles: I started playing for funerals when I began playing with Sonny Celestin's Tuxedo Band. Oscar Celestin. We used to call him "The Dog" because of the way he looked in the face. Kind of like a bulldog - real mean looking but one of the finest persons I know. It was a pleasure working with him. He was a real gentleman and he didn't go for all that foolishness like

a lot of the other musicians did. Music was his business and he took pride in doing it that way. He was responsible - know what I mean?

There was a lot of musicians - good ones too - that lived that bad life. All they did was stand on the streets and drink and had a lot to do with these women that would hang out around the nightclubs. They had a lot of fun. They had a lot of fun but they didn't live long. All that foolishness is not healthy for you. Well Mr. Celestin didn't go for all that. He was a respectable person.

Now we played quite a few parades for different lodges and social clubs but the funeral processions were really something. That was an all-day affair sometimes. First the band had to meet where the body - at the dead person's house where all the family and friends would be. Then, when the time came, they would take the body out of the house and we would all march to the church. No music, just the procession. Well, at the church is where it would all start. Sometimes there would be five or six preachers and they all had to say something about the dead person. Man, that would take forever. While all of this was going on we would sit outside the church and wait. Some of the fellows who liked to take a little drink would walk over to a barroom and buy beer or something and wait there.

Now after all the ceremonies were over - that would sometimes take more than two hours - they would take the body out of the church and we would all get together to start the march to the cemetery. Then the work began. You had to walk down these streets that had big holes and rocks all over the place. They didn't have no pavements like today, mister. And it was really hard to read from the little hymn book and watch where you

were walking. I got hurt that way one time - fell down and hurt myself real bad.

And those graveyards - some of them was a disgrace. Old broken down tombs . . . trash. In fact, there was one that I remember was so bad the city or somebody went in there and cleaned everything out. Tore all the old tombs down and got rid of all the junk. They Build a shopping center on that spot.

Sonnier: Do you remember the name of that cemetery?

Charles: No. I can't recall the name right now. But it was bad in those days. People just didn't have the money. I always had a job besides playing music. You had to do that to make ends meet. I worked for the largest band in New Orleans and I also sold insurance. I gave Peter Bocage my job when I quit the insurance business to return to Parks.

Well, on the way to the graveyard we would always play slow pieces . . . hymns, to keep the funeral procession moving at a slow pace. People would hear the music and would come on the outside and stand on the street and watch. Some of them would join in the walk to the graveyard. They didn't have to know who was dead - that's the way it was back then.

Once in the graveyard, we would stand back and wait again. There was a bit more to be said over the body then it would be pushed into the tomb. When it was all over - ashes to ashes, dust to dust - we would assemble again and the person who hired us would give the word for us to lead them out of the graveyard. The drummer would play a roll and the lead trumpet player would start of with DIDN'T HE RAMBLE. Then we would move out at a fast pace. Once we got out of the graveyard the hearse would go it's way and the family would go their way or sometimes they would follow us for a few blocks.

We only played for a few blocks outside of the graveyard because things usually got real bad with all the people by then. It was a disgrace the way some of them acted. The police would always have to be there to try and keep trouble down.

One thing you should know . . . the Tuxedo Brass Band was the first one to play **WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN** at a funeral. All the bands would play **DIDN'T HE RAMBLE** and one day Oscar Celestin said that he wanted to play something different. The two of us looked through the music book and decided to try **WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN**. It really went over big. Most of the other bands started playing it after that.

Sonnier: Did the band members go to the family's house after the funeral?

Charles: Oh, yes. Sometimes . . . If the person who died was a good friend or one of the fellows in the band family. They would invite you to go over and eat and drink something. That was done in respect to the dead. (A tradition of African origin that embraces rejoicing at death.) That was like a big party but with no music.

At the wake before the funeral everybody would pay their last respects by staying with the body all day and all night . . . praying a lot. It would be a sad time. The, after the funeral service and the burial was over everybody would meet at the house. All the neighbors and family would cook and bring a pot of something to the house. There would be any kind of food you could name and all the beer and whiskey you could drink. Just the family and close friends would be there. The musicians always tried to go because it meant a free meal.

Sonnier: Lets go back to Parks for a while. Did you ever play for parades or funerals there?

Charles: No. We never had music like that at funerals in Parks . . . not even in New Iberia. As far as I know, that was something that went on only in New Orleans. I don't know how it started but I do know that they were doing it when I first went there in 1908.

We played for church fairs and outings in Parks. There were some real good musicians there too . . .the Thibodaux brothers, Hypolite Potier, Beauregard Adam from Cade used to play around here a lot, my father, Auguste Charles . . . all good musicians. Peter Carey used to come all the way from Lafayette to give some lessons and play.

There was a man in Parks called Lemon Ledet who used to give a parade and outing once a year on Lomon Ledet Day. I don't remember exactly what day it was. All the local musicians would get together and form a big marching band. We would parade all over town before going to the picnic ground . . . on both sides of the bayou. We would play just marches. At the outing we would take turns playing music for people to dance to all day long.

Sonnier: The story is that you became so good at playing the cornet you took over as leader of your own band at a very early age. Was it hard for you to deal with the older and more experienced musicians?

Charles: No problem at all. Most of us were related one way or the other. It was like on big family. In fact, they were all for me going to New Orleans and getting in the big-time business there. I was special to them and they were all my teachers and wished me well.

Sonnier: Did you ever meet or hear Buddy Bolden?

Charles: Oh, yes. We never did meet but Bolden was very popular in New Orleans. He played a lot of blues and ragtime pieces. I played mostly in orchestras that played classical and dance music. Of course, we did play blues and ragtime pieces too. My wife, Rose, had an uncle by the name of Fritz who played guitar in Buddy Bolden's Band. She can remember when they would practice at his house but she was just a little girl and didn't know any of the fellows.

Sonnier: What about Bunk Johnson, did you know him in New Orleans?

Charles: Bunk was all over the place. Real popular. He was a little skinny fellow . . . just like a bird. His cornet style was different from the rest of us because he would play short phrases and his notes were all short. Staccato. He wouldn't hold them for their full value. His style was all his own.

When I went to New Orleans in 1908 I started taking music lessons with Eugene Moret who was the brother of George Moret. George was one of the best cornet players in New Orleans. He was also the leader of his own band - the Excelsior. He was a trained musician. Could read anything you put in front of him . . .and could play that jazz too.

Well, that was a good start for me. From my association with the Morets I soon got to know all of the best musicians in the city. Fellows that didn't go for too much foolishness. Know what I mean? . . . Oke and Vic Gaspard, Armand Piron, Camilla Todd, Alphonse Picou, Arnold Metoyer, Sam Dutrey . . all great musicians. I was lucky to even be able to keep up with them. That was fast company.

Camella Todd was a concert pianist and a music teacher. She also played with the Maple Leaf Orchestra for a while. She was known and respected throughout the city. I also studied with her and we became very good friends.

After a while I started playing here and there with different people and in 1911 I was offered a job playing with the Silver Leaf Orchestra. That was my first big job. I was twenty years old and learned a lot from those older fellows. Albert Baptiste was the leader.

From there, I would say in 1919, I went with the Maple Leaf Orchestra. That was another one of the city's great bands.

Sonnier: It seems that most of your time as a musician was spent playing in reading bands. Did you get a chance to improvise much?

Charles: Yes, We improvised, but not too much. Sometimes we would play a blues number or a dance piece that had sections to solo . . .Hot numbers. In the Tuxedo Band though, most of the tunes were played by ear and you could solo as much as you liked. That was the kind of band those “hot” players liked to be in.

I played with the Excelsior and the Tuxedo. By doing that I got a taste of both styles.

Charlie Cordilla

Sometimes the sun shines too brightly for the moon. That's what happened to Charlie Cordilla. It's high time someone let the mellowness of that reed flow into our hearts through our eyes - and through our loudspeaker.

Charlie had the fortune of playing with Leon Rappolo when “Rap” was at his height. It was good to play alongside the “greatest of the great,” but nothing but an eclipse could result. And it did. Peoples mostly remember Rappolo.

Charlie is not bitter about it. In fact, I doubt seriously if he ever considers this a fact. But there must have been a time - somewhere along the line of Charlie’s musical life where true, deserved recognition would have been appreciated. Maybe Charlie got it from the men he played with - and that might have been sufficient to last him these many years. Maybe he just don’t read what the “experts” write about jazz, or that he just can’t be bothered with what they say. Perhaps he knows that usually these ‘writers’ or ‘experts’ can be catalogued as frustrated musicians themselves - with a little knowledge and an axe to grind! Anyway, I am yet to hear one word of recrimination or regret or covetousness against his musical neighbor, Leon Rappolo.

Charlie plays a little still. But he is strictly a ‘family an’ He hates the late hours, the smoke filled cabarets (rhythms with “cigarettes” the way he pronounces it), that long trek home in the wee hours, and the constant feeling of having to be at his hottest best every minute up there on the stand! Yes, Charlie may play a little for kicks, or possibly a spot-job if he needs a little extra money for Christmas, or in order to help someone near him who is ill. But not for keeps! No sir! He’d rather drive a truck. And that’s just what he does.

We had the pleasure of putting a mike in front of Charlie and letting him talk - quietly - at the office one Saturday “after hours,” and leisurely carry on a conversation - as tho’ tape and time were of no consideration. Wish you could have that tape. Charlie’s voice would get you immediately. You’d realize what an

easy going, swell person he is. Nothing hurries or worries him. I've never heard him blow his top. Maybe he does this in the sanctity of his home. But I know his wife too and she's never reported even a mild explosion!

Charlie was born May 25th, 1899. His Dad was called Anthony Cordilla - and the home was Baton Rouge, La. He was christened Charles Joseph Cordilla, and is the youngest of 10 kids (5 brothers and 4 sisters - all living but one!) They moved to New Orleans when Charlie was 6 years old. Charles is married 27 years and the most disappointing thing to him and his wife is that they had no children. They both love 'em!

His music began at the age of 15, when he took up trumpet. This lasted about 2 or 3 years - when he switched to clarinet (old Albert system, which he still loves the best). This was followed by the commercial tenor sax (Buscher) which was coming into style. His professional career began when Charlie was quite young - much against his family's wishes. But which teen-ager of those lush days could resist the thrill of the "speakeasy" the excitement of the music, and the adulation which was showered upon the musicians by the hosts of distaff admirers, who by the way, were much the same as these who swooned to Sinatra or scream to Johnny Ray in our very modern today!

His first job was at "Pop Toro's" cabaret - just after Storyville closed. In the band were Georgie Brunies on trombone; Eddie Shield (ODJB Larry's brother) on piano; "Stale Bread" Emile Lacombe on banjo, and Charlie on clarinet and sax. This job was followed by one at Bucktown (with the cabarets up on stilts!), with one exit only - and where the patrons were disappointed if the dance did not include a good old fashioned

embroglio. But it was tough - with only one avenue of escape, one person wide, and upstairs! And the band at “Bucktown” included piano, drums, clarinet and drums! This job lasted about 4 or 5 months.

Evidently the stint at Bucktown was a trying one, for Charlie remembers “laying off music” for a good little while. The he joined Sharkey Bonano who had a fine group playing at the old “Tonti.” In 1920 Charlie found himself at the famed “Halfway House” (so named because it was halfway between New Orleans proper and old “West End.”) This job lasted almost 5 years, and it is interesting to note that Charlie proceeded Leon Rappolo with this outfit by almost a year.

If you will examine the “discographies” for the personnels of the early recording bands, you will be amazed at the interchange of names among the various bands. It almost leads one to believe that the record companies were playing favorites, or that there were very few first class jazzmen at the time. But that is not the case, no more than it is today. Some musicians were smart enough to stand where lightning (musical) could strike them. Others were retiring and did not force themselves. That’s Charlie!

In those early days, recording was a new game. Not too much money was in it at that time. Nobody thought it would last, certainly they did not dream it would assume the proportion it has or there would have been a mad scramble! And not one of them was aware that they were writing history with a steel needle in soft wax!

If a musician didn’t like the way the guy next to him kept time, or didn’t approve of the way he combed his hair - or if the chap smiled too much at your best gal - you simply gave

notice and moved over to another outfit. There were many of them, and they were glad to have you! These are some of the reasons they swapped around bands so much and refused to stay put. That went for the other guys. But look for Charlie Cordilla's name. You'll find it with two bands: the Halfway House Orchestra ("under the direction of Abbie Brunies"), and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. Charlie moved over with the great Paul Mares just before the Halfway House folded up. And he recalls that the first company they recorded for was Okeh, and the tunes recorded were "Pussy Cat Rag" and "Barataria" - and Rap was with them.

Two of Charlie's favorite stories beat repeating, because they are concerned with the great Leon Rappolo, and have to do with the earliest days of jazz. Take for instance the one about how Charlie got Angie Gemelli's "Conn" clarinet in place of his brand new "Penzil-Muller," It was in the days when the Halfway House Band consisted of Abbie Brunies on cornet, "Stale Bread" Emile Lacombe on banjo, Mickey Marcour on piano, Emmett Rodgers on drums, and Charlie on clarinet. This was the original group, and Rappolo used to pass by and "sit in" occasionally. And he fell in love with Charlie's new "Penzil-Muller!" One night he talked Charlie into lending it to him for a job out at Bucktown, and Charlie consented, providing Angie Gemelli's new "Conn" was left as security!

"Rap" and his group went out to West End, and after playing for a while, "Rap" became disgusted with Cordilla's clarinet (it was not working for him as well as at the Halfway House!) - so he proceeded to break it up and throw it overboard into Lake Pontchartrain!

Charlie remembers the first recordings he made with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. They were recorded at some music house on Canal Street (Werleins? Grunwalds?). There was no studio - the first “mikes” were simply set up in a closed room, and the session started. In the band was “Rap” on clarinet and Santo Pecora (Pecoraro) on trombone. Charlie was booked to play sax. Some sort of argument arose between “Rap” and “Santo” - and “Rap” walked out! Paul Mares rescheduled the “session” for the following morning, with Charlie Cordilla taking “Raps” place on clarinet.

When the starting time arrived, “Rap” was still not among those present, but to protest his rights came Nick Rappolo - his brother - with a “441” on his hip, with a warning to Charlie that he was NOT to play the same notes that he “Rap” used in this tune! Charlie says he didn’t, and if you’ll listen to the records they made (“She’s Crying for Me Blues,” etc.) you’ll agree that he did not need to play “Raps” part!

Then came “The Silver Slipper” night club (with Irving Fazzola, Monk Hazel, Red Long, Abbie Brunies, and several others); the Bienville Hotel Roof Orchestra under Sharkey Bonano; spot jobs for 10 years; the shipyards for the World War II epoch - where the situation was helped a little by the formation of a company band for the launching of ships. In retrospect, Charlie has played at Milneburg with Alfred Laine, with “Papa” Jack Laine at the “Open Air Theatre” in Alexandria, aboard the “Str. Greater New Orleans” in the riverboat days; a long job with Leon Prima and Sharkeys Band; in the Catskill Mountains at a swanky summer resort in 1930 (with Sid Arodin, Freddie Newman, Leo Adde and Chink Martin, Bill Gillen, Red Jessup and Joe Capraro - all great names in the early days of jazz!)

Who was the greatest clarinetist of all time in his opinion? None other than Irving Fazzola, thinks Charlie. The greatest trumpet? Who but Louie Armstrong! But closely followed by Sharkey - and the almost mythological Emmet Hardy (who Charlie says inspired “Bix” and from who “Bix” got many of his ideas.)

Charlie’s favorite record of all those he made? With much humility - but no hesitation, “Maple Leaf Rag,” “Let Me Call You Sweetheart” on the old Columbia label.

If you are lucky enough to possess these two in good enough condition to hear the music properly, you can bring back some of the most driving, beautiful solos on clarinet you have ever heard! And there are several others made by the Halfway House Orchestra (the first recording job done on Charlie) - wherein you may hear him at his smoothest most melodic best! But the first two mentioned are his favorites.

Won’t you open up that window and let some of that liquid moonglow in? The, go turn the pages of your “Hot Discography,” and you will see the name of one of the finest and most neglected really GREAT men of early jazz. His name is Charles Joseph Cordilla.

**Louis Cottrell With Feeling
by William Russell
Spring, 1976**

Louis Cottrell was an apostle of beauty. His warm emotional tone and clarinet style was of course only an expression of his own beautiful and gentle nature. Unfortunately, I heard him rarely the last year of his life. His participation in the movie

Pretty Baby offered one such memorable occasion. Only Louis' clarinet was shown on the screen but his performance of Jelly Roll's lovely "Big Lip Blues" aptly demonstrated one of the cardinal principles of New Orleans music. The tone and phrasing must always be beautiful to please and charm the listener.

I am reminded of a remark once made by Barney Bigard, both a fellow student and a mentor of Cottrell. Barney was contrasting the New Orleans clarinet tone with the rough, loud, and harsh noise some younger clarinetists think is necessary to play "hot," when he said: "After all, people have to listen to our music.

A Tribute To Louis Cottrell by George R. Davenport

Those of us who were fortunate enough to know him knew that Louis Cottrell was not only a great musician, but that he also possessed those rare charismatic qualities of being a gentle soul, a gentle man, and a gentleman.

Louis's place in the archives and annuals of jazz history is certainly forever inscribed among the giants of New Orleans jazz clarinet players. Particularly, his soulful lower register tonal quality and his ensemble work place him high in the class among the all time greats. However, beyond this great talent which he possessed, Louis was a beautiful person. His attitudes, philosophy, and life style culminated at a plateau which we all envy but seldom achieve; this being the fruition of vocation and avocation coming together for a way of life.

I knew Louis for several years, and enjoyed his music immensely. Our relationship was highlighted by his visit with the

band to our home in Jacksonville, Florida last summer when I held a surprise birthday party for my wife and father simultaneously. Both friends and strangers here in Jacksonville are still talking about this rare and moving experience.

Yes, Louis had that ability to move people. Whether moving them with the soulful playing of his clarinet, or in conversation, you quickly recognized that here was a man of great depth of character. This was certainly borne out in his quiet inner rage and battle with death by cancer. As his good friend and mine, Placide Adams, told me, "Louis did not want people to know because he did not want their pity. He wanted to die in the street, and he literally did, playing his music at Tradition Hall two nights before his death."

This is surely indicative of the heart of a lion that was within the soul of this gentle man.

He leaves a very large pair of shoes to fill, in both his place on the bandstand or a "walk through the streets of the city." We'll miss you, Prez!

Frank Cuny
(Answers the Call)
Sept/Oct. 1966

One of the gentlemen of jazz is no longer with us. We refer to him in this manner because he was one of the most soft-spoken, self-effacing, well behaved musician to have graced the jazz scene in New Orleans. His roots were deeply imbedded in the soil of Algiers and of New Orleans - which means in early New Orleans jazz.

Born “across the river” December 14th, 1890, his musical education began as soon as he was able to reach up to a piano keyboard. Besides learning to read he also became one of the first improvising jazzmen in the business. This made him in demand in two categories.

About the time that Paul and Johnny DeDroit were the hottest thing in New Orleans, Frank was rubbing shoulders with them, in the pit of the Orpheum Theatre. A very rapid reader, he was a good team-mate to Paul DeDroit, who was known throughout the circuit as the fastest cue-drummer in the business.

When the DeDroit band was going great guns at Kolb’s Restaurant (upstairs), in 1919 Mr. Cuny replaced Tom Zimmerman as pianist. He remained with Johnny for many years, and recorded with them for Okeh. The tunes were: Panama; Nobody Know Blues; New Orleans Blues; The Swing (Washington and Lee Swing); Brown Eyes; Number Two Blues (otherwise known as “Tiger Rag”). The DeDroit band only cut three more numbers - Eccentric, Lucky Kentucky, and When My Sugar Walks Down the Street, but Cuny was replaced by Frank Froeba on these. We do not believe that Frank appears on any other sides.

Besides playing at the Orpheum, Frank Cuny later traveled to New York City with the DeDroit group, and became quite popular at a night spot called “El Balconado.”

Returning to New Orleans, he became a member of the excellent pit band at the Palace Theatre, and played innumerable spot dance jobs. It is our impression that he continued to be one of Johnny DeDroit’s most dependable sidemen, and stayed with him until Mr. DeDroit retired from active playing. At one time

Mr. Cuny was one of the busiest in the field, playing at many carnival balls and formal “society” parties.

Mr. Cuny resided in the “French Quarter,” at 720 Frenchmen Street, and was one of the most solid supporters of the Musicians Union. His quiet and gentlemanly manner endeared him to all his associates, and it is no secret that his memory was perpetuated when Local 174 sent a commemorative contribution to the Heart Fund.

Peter Davis

by George Kay

October, 1950

“Mr. Davis gave me a cornet and taught me how to play . . . Then I was in seventh heaven. Unless I was dreaming, my ambition had been realized.”

(Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans., by Louis Armstrong)

When Louis Armstrong was placed in the Colored Waif’s Home for Boys, in New Orleans, at the tender age of 11, he chose music for vocational training. His teacher was a man named Peter Davis. It was undoubtedly Peter Davis who was responsible for giving his young pupil the most important and valuable musical experience of his entire life.

A tough but affectionate disciplinarian, Professor Davis took a liking to young Louis Armstrong and taught him the elements of good music and helped him play the cornet correctly at the very beginning. Such important fundamentals as breath control, good embouchure, pitch and tone were the most

important infancies upon the man who was to become the greatest jazz man that the world has ever known.

Armstrong has always expressed a debt of gratitude to his first teacher, Professor Davis and to the late Joseph Jones, founder and superintendent of the old Waif's Home. In his autobiography, "Satchmo, My Life in New Orleans," Louis expressed pride for the days he spent there. Whenever he was in New Orleans, Louis would take time to visit the Home to give a gift for the boys and to see his old friends, Mr. And Mrs. Jones and Peter Davis. In 1923 the Milne Boys Home was built, and Jones, Davis, and the staff from the Old Waif's Home went to the new school. Mr. David Dahlgren has been superintendent of the school for the past 20 years.

When Peter Davis retired from the staff at the Milne Boys Home he continued to keep an active interest in the music instruction at the school. When the boys band was dropped from the music curriculum, professor Davis was very unhappy. He would drop by the school and talk to Superintendent Dahlgren about starting up another boys band. As time went one he was seen less often but he would phone Mr. Dahlgren and Mrs. Jones just to keep contacts alive. The last time was seen in public was in 1965 when Louis Armstrong appeared in New Orleans for a concert sponsored by the New Orleans Jazz Club. The occasion marked the presentation by Mrs. Jones of Armstrong's very first horn to the Jazz Museum. Peter Davis, then in his late 80's attended the ceremony. A year later he appeared on a nationally televised show with Louis and Steve Allen. Then he dropped out of sight and no one heard from him.

The recent ceremony in February at the Milne Boys Home honoring Louis Armstrong and his donation for the

purchase of a grand piano aroused my interest in the whereabouts of Peter Davis. No one knew whether he was still living and notices had been placed in the paper to try to locate him. It was then that I decided to conduct my own search for Peter Davis.

One evening I drove to the Milne Boys Home on Franklin Avenue just at dinner time. I questioned several of the staff in the mess hall for anyone remembering Davis from the old days of the Waif's Home. One member, Mr. Burke, told me that he thought Dave Oxley, a drummer at Preservation Hall, would remember and might be able to give me a lead. I called Dave from the mess hall but he could not help me. He suggested I call Danny Barker but Danny had no information. I went to see Mrs. Dahlgren who was very cooperative but she could give no real help. Mr. Dahlgren was out of town but would be back the next morning, and she suggested I phone him. In the meantime she offered to call Mrs. Jones who was the last one to hear from Peter Davis. Mrs. Dahlgren asked me to call her the next morning, after she had talked to Mrs. Jones.

The next morning I called Mrs. Dahlgren and she told me Mrs. Jones had no information to give about Peter Davis. As a last resort I called Mr. Dahlgren at his office. He was most cooperative and generous in giving all the information he knew about the circumstances leading to the disappearance of Mr. Davis and the lack of clues as to whatever happened to him. Just as we were closing our conversation he happened to say something significant: "There is only one thing that I recall that might have some bearing on this matter," he said. "Some time ago I remember that a worker from the State Welfare Department called me and asked me if I knew of any close

relatives of a man by the name of Peter Davis, formerly of the Waif's Home. That is the last time I ever heard from anyone who expressed an interest in Peter Davis and that was over three years ago."

Mr. Dahlgren chance remark rekindled a spark of hope with this tread of a clue. Was it possible that Peter Davis, an elderly recluse with no close family was placed in a nursing home? With nothing but a name and approximate date of birth to offer for identification, I went to the local office of the State Welfare Department, holding out little hope that I would be able to find anything of value. A polite young lady welcomed me and I told her my problem. She said, "Let me have the name and I will try to run down the name on our list. It might take a long time to find the person you're looking for." I assured her that I would wait for the information. In about thirty minutes she returned with a slip of paper and said, "I think I have your man. We have a Peter Davis, born in 1880. He is a patient at the Prayer Tower Rest Home in New Orleans."

The next morning was a beautiful, sunshiny Good Friday. About mid-day I drove to the Home and inquired if Peter Davis lived there. I was told that he was there, that he was too feeble to see me that day, that I could return later in the week and it was suggested that I call before I came. The excitement of finding Peter Davis was an indescribable thrill.

Before making a return trip I called Myra Menville who has been so close to Louis throughout his present illness. I knew that she would be the one to give me the right approach on handling the situation. Myra was so thrilled to get the news that she offered to go with me and suggested that I take along a tape recorder and a camera to get a picture of Mr. Davis and a

message from him to Louis. I then arranged a date for our visit to the home.

On Saturday following Easter, I picked up Myra and we drove directly to the nursing home. We were taken to Mr. Davis' room, and seeing the old, famous teacher of the great Louis Armstrong brought tears to our eyes. Peter Davis at 91 could no longer comprehend or speak. As he sat in his wheel chair we took pictures and talked to the superintendent, Mrs. Yvonne Tate. She told us that Peter Davis was admitted to the nursing home in 1968, and that he was a warm and kindly old man who was loved by everyone. Surprisingly, no one knew that he was the great teacher of Louis Armstrong and when we mentioned that we planned to send Louis a photograph of Peter Davis, everyone was delighted to assist in any way possible.

As we were leaving, one of the nurses aides came up and asked me about the old man and I told her the story of his life at the Waif's Home. She looked surprised and said "You know, I didn't dream that he was a music teacher at the Boys Home. He used to look up at me and say "The boys, the boys, hear the boys?" I would answer "Peter, I don't hear any boys." He would look at me again and say "The boys, the boys, don't you hear the boys? Hear them play their music? Hear them sing? They are my boys..."

I looked at her and said "You know, Peter Davis was really hearing the boys. The music he was hearing was definitely for real and it was just possible that he was hearing Little Louis Armstrong." Her words heightened our own emotions and I knew that the music that Peter Davis had given to Louis would never die. Louie has passed it on to the whole world. (Sic: Mr. Davis died on April 29. 1971)

Sam DeKemel

(Passes Away - Add a bugle to the Seraphic Choir)

March/April, 1967

Things must be hummin' "way up yonder" for "Buglin Sam" DeKemel is circulating among all the jazz greats since early January! It is our loss, but certainly their gain, for Sam was one of the most colorful figure to ever grace the N. O. jazz horizon. If things were getting slow up there, some changes certainly have been made since Sam's arrival! Never a dull moment, when "Buglin'" is around.

Born in New Orleans January 16th, 1903, he lacked 10 days of making his 64th birthday, for he passed away on January 6th of this year at the Ochsner Foundation Hospital after a 6-hour illness. His father, Matthew Antoine DeKemel, Sr., was born in France, while his mother (Marie Alost) was born in Belgium. There was one other child, Maurice Joseph DeKemel, Sam's younger brother.

It was Buglin's Sam's grandfather who brought the custom of playing a bugle on a cake-wagon to America from his beloved Alsace-Lorraine. He also brought the know-how of extra special fine pastry that made his waffles different from any others, and the best in the city of New Orleans.

Maurice J. DeKemel recalls when he started accompanying his father and "Sam" aboard the one-horse powered waffle-wagon. He was around 12 years old, and was still in short pants and stockings. "Sam" was rounding 15 at that time. Both the boys began learning to blow tunes on the bugle from their father, as a gimmick to attract customers. Matthew Sr. And

Maurice besides blowing “G.I.” regular bugle calls, could also blow certain “popular” tunes of the day (some of which were waltzes), but “Sam” was the only one who really absorbed New Orleans jazz like a sponge absorbs water! He just loved that kind of music, and did his best to imitate the roughest and most barrel-house cornetists of the day. We have always been of the opinion that Wingy Manone must have exerted a strong influence on Sam’s way of blowing. Much of his repertoire was gained by listening to the bands playing in the camps out at Milneburg. What he did with a plain, ordinary “G.I.” issue of a bugle was unbelievable!

Most bulges are pitched in the key of “G” major, and are limited to a certain number of notes and “chords.” By having an iron lip and a pair of leather lungs, Sam learned to flatten certain notes and sharpen others, so that he could actually blow the complete scale without any valves to assist. This was done simply by varying the pressure of his lips against the mouthpiece and by blowing hard enough to “distort” a note into a sharp or a flat. He began to be noticed all over town, everywhere his father drove the celebrated waffle-wagon. People began to ask for him instead of his father, and bought their delightfully light and tasty “grid-iron” shaped cakes only as a secondary treat to hearing “Sam’s” music. They sold for 4 for a nickel!

With the advent of doughnut shops and the sale of “coffee-cakes” and “sweet rolls” by the bag, the popularity of the Waffle-wagon began to wane. Sam tried to continue for another five years, but gave it up and joined his brother in a sandwich shop venture on Perdido Street which lasted from 1933 to 1943. Then it folded.

Just about this time, the National Jazz Foundation, under the enthusiastic guidance of “Scoop” Kennedy, began spearheading a great recrudescence of jazz in New Orleans. Before “Scoop” left for Europe to take charge of the overseas entertainment of the troops, many old jazzmen were pulled out of hibernation, where they had fled during the big band epoch. “Buglin;” Same DeKemel was among these. As the great Sharkey Bonano’s star began its glorious ascent, he brought along Bulgin’ Sam, right back into the limelight. Round faced, boisterous, happy-go-lucky Sam became a fixture at Tony Almerico’s “Parisian Room,” and was a featured artist Sunday after Sunday. Many times he hit national radio hook-ups and became known from coast to coast. Roger Wolfe also featured Sam on his national “Treasury Department” hook-up, which featured New Orleans bands.

There were no “powdered waffles” to accompany his re-debut, and these were not needed. There were many people in the audience who were Sam’s contemporaries and had never forgotten him. The younger generation acted as though they were the ones who had “discovered” Sam. Everybody was tickled to have him back. With the advent of the microphone, Sam was able to give out with his inimitable leather-lunged, double-meaning vocals. He also proved to be a scat-singer without a peer. And that included the great Satchmo. And for the first time, buglin’ Sam DeKemel was committed to wax. His unusual style and ability were preserved for posterity.

For the last five years, Sam played very little. He worried abnormally about himself and his physical condition. At the Fair-Grounds Race Track, Sam had a cinch of a job. He was the bugler who blew “Post-Time” for all the races, and it paid

very well considering the little work it entailed. But even this simple duty seemed too much for him to carry on. Just as his popularity flashed across the jazz scene in New Orleans, his absence begot forgetfulness. Ever we, who admired and enjoyed Sam's music so, were shocked when we read his name in the obituary column. We had not thought about him for so long.

His was an unusual art. Besides the extraordinary ability of being able to play a tune on a valveless instrument, he was a real authentic jazzman. He had a terrific throb and natural beat. We doubt if another similar artist will cross the jazz horizon in our lifetime...perhaps never again.

Paul DeDroit Dies in Hollywood March/April, 1963

To the generation of Orleanians springing up since 1929, their only interest might have been that Paul DeDroit was the brother of Johnny DeDroit, famous trumpeter and leader, so well known to everyone that ever hired a band, or danced to a band, or attended any Carnival Ball in New Orleans. To those whose roots go farther back, it meant a great deal more.

Oldsters (such as Ye Olde Editor), have never stopped remembering Paul DeDroit, even though he migrated to California some 35 years ago. Ask any of our contemporaries their opinion of Paul, and the answer will have a surprising unanimity: "He was without doubt, THE GREATEST!" With memories dating back to the times when great hands and great musicians were a 'dime a dozen' in and around the Crescent City, this was quite a compliment. That his memory should have lived

so freshly in spite of the handful of jazz records on which he is represented, is nothing short of amazing.

Paul grew up in a musical household. His father, a successful business man, was also one of the leading “classic” trumpeters of his time in New Orleans. Johnny, his older brother began taking trumpet lessons at about age 10 from the celebrated Professor Fabian. Paul, about 2 years younger, began the same as many other celebrated drummers, beating on everything around the house that would resound, with a pair of home-made drumsticks. His father, realizing that the boy possessed an exceptional talent, placed him under the tutelage of the dean of all New Orleans percussion teachers, Professor George Peterson. He made rapid strides, and even as a youngster in short pants, began playing with bands, composed of men much older and experienced than he. Starting in his own Laurel School Band, it was not long before he began playing for dances, picnics, and parties all over town. And even in his father’s marching Brass band!

At the tender age of 16, Paul was invited to join the famous Orpheum Circuit Pit Band, under the direction of violinist Emile Tosso. He held this chair for over 15 years, only relinquishing it when vaudeville began fading away, and Professor Tosso tossed in the sponge. Acts from all over the country loved to play New Orleans, for the word had gone around, “There’s a kid in that orchestra that makes everybody’s act look good. He’s the greatest on following cues, and can play every kind of act from elephants to opera.” Paul was a great reader, but smashed an established belief of the time. (And so did Big Brother Johnny) No lesser an authority than Papa Jack Laine unhesitatingly made the statement that Paul and Johnny DeDroit

were the first (and only) two “legits” who could really play-it-hot and “fake,” the same as any real jazzman. During his stay at the Orpheum Paul also did work for the Vincent Lopez enterprises. Older brother Johnny was quite a business man and entrepreneur. Something was always cooking on his front burner. Organizing a fine 5 piece group (in which Paul was included), they played for dancing in the very famous “Cave” of the Grunwald Hotel. They were fixtures there for about 5 years. From here, the group moved over to the Forrest Grille, still in the Grunwald, a more accessible and less expensive place for the younger generation to meet. This was also a very successful stay, and for many years.

There was an interim, when Paul enlisted in the navy in World War I. While in the service, he took up trombone, and was soon playing with an outfit called “The Jazzin Jackers.” He attained quite a proficiency on this wind instrument, but his really great love was for the percussion instruments. Paul was replaced in Johnny’s band by a drummer named Johnny Frisco, but immediately took possession of his chair as soon as he returned from the war.

When the job at the Grunwald petered out, Johnny DeDroit was not long in selling Mr. Conrad Kolb (famous restaurant in New Orleans). It was the first time Mr. Kolb had ever tried a dance band, and he was leery. The impact the DeDroit group had on the N. O. public is well known to every dancing couple of the mid-twenties. The Okeh Record Company recorded internationally sought after. They were the first to “swing” the “Washington & Lee Swing” for Tulane Swing, back in 1924. Kolb’s was jammed packed every night and for “tea-dances” in the afternoon.

Soon, the lean years for real jazzmen began to make inroads. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, Paul DeDroit packed bag and baggage, and headed for California. He was fortunate to be steered by Ray Lopez (trumpeter for Tom Brown's Band from Dixieland, and for many other "big bands"). Lopez made arrangements for Paul to get an audition at Grauman's Chinese Theatre. Paul got the job, and stayed in the pit orchestra for more than six months. From here, he joined the orchestra of the Warner Bros.-Metropolitan Theatre in Los Angeles, and later played with the Paramount Theatre Orchestra.

Came the "lean years" for the real jazzmen. While other jazz musicians were almost starving, Paul was still in constant demand. One interesting spot that he worked was on Lucky Luciano's old gambling ship. "Mon Falcon," anchored offshore at Long Beach, Calif. He was happy then, for in the band were Ray Lopez and Gussie Mueller (also of Tom Brown's Band from Dixieland, the Palmer House, The Stables, Paul Whiteman's first orchestra, and many other celebrated groups).

After this, he went to work for Leon Leonardi, on radio station KFWB (La.). About this time, Alfred Newman was searching for "the best damn drummer in town." He needed an especially fancy drummer, for his orchestra was accompanying Bob Hope, Joan Bennett, Bing Crosby, Cary Grant, Olivia Dehaviland, and a host of other "stars." They were booked for a Victory Caravan Bond Tour, with a schedule that included many large cities, especially New York, Chicago, Washington D. C. and Boston. Jimmy Heaton told Newman about Paul and he was auditioned. "Where in the hell has this guy been?" asked Newman. "He's the greatest I've ever heard." He was hired on the spot.

In 1942, when Paul returned to the west coast, Newman suggested that he try out for the Twentieth Century-Fox Studios. They grabbed him and immediately placed him under contract. There was nothing that Paul couldn't cut to perfection, and was soon top man in the percussion section.

As the productions became more and more elaborate and the music more and more complex, the orchestras naturally grew in size. Many "youngsters" joined the organization. Most of these were petrified by the size of the band, the flashing red lights of the recording studios, the technicians bouncing in and out, and the men in the booths watching them like evil judges, waiting for one false move or percussion blunder. The man with the earphones, waving a baton, frightened the youngsters half out of their wits. Paul was a pillar of strength and encouragement to these novices, and frequently stepped in to play their part at the precise moment, thereby saving their job for them. Paul was respected as a musician and beloved as an individual. He was what the musicians called "a good guy."

Paul DeDroit was frequently called to do the most complicated percussion parts for the symphony orchestra, playing several times in the Hollywood Bowl. When something especially tricky was on the score, it was Paul they singled out. He was frequently a member of the Glendale Symphony Orchestra, playing - not only drums, but also the most tasteful vibraharp imaginable. After a visit to the west coast, trumpeter "Wingy" Manone told his New York confreres: "The best damn Dixieland drummer in the world is playing long hair music with the symphony on the West Coast!" He was disgusted.

After 20 years with 20th Century Fox Studios, Paul retired. He kept his hand in by playing occasional spot jobs, and

once in a while a symphony. He only lived six months to enjoy his retirement. Contracting the flu, he was moved to the hospital, heart complications set in, and he was gone in a few days.

Although Paul's life can be classified as highly successful from both an artistic and monetary angle, he was another example of changing times and tastes. He became "just another memory" by his New Orleans friends, and joined the multitude of great musicians that fickle Lady Fame passed by. To those of us who knew and loved him, and the numbers are legion in the Crescent City, there is no need for him to leave a large heritage of jazz recordings. His personality and his musicianship impressed themselves in our hearts, so very deeply. Not only do we remember, but we shall never forget.

**An Impression of Johnny DeDroit`
by Myra Menville
Fall, 1976**

Johnny DeDroit was born on December 4, 1892 in New Orleans. The end is a long way off because, at 83, the man is vitally alive, in good health, bursting with energy, memories, and plans. The middle part of his story, if chronologically ill-defined, is clearly important to any record of the New Orleans bands that played in the 1920s, '30s, '40s and '50s. that is quite a span of time to recall - for anyone - and to expect a popular, successful bandleader to remember every occasion, every sideman, every date, all the addresses, time schedules, and details is as absurd as it is to expect him to reveal all the joicy stories and back-stage gossip he does remember.

Someone unfamiliar with his background would guess Johnny to be a retired business man in his very early 70s who wears good clothes casually and enjoys the niceties which make life pleasant and uncomplicated. His hobbies, now discarded, fit this picture: golf, fishing, boating. Papa Jack Laine, jazz pioneer, often said that Johnny and his brother Paul were the first “reading” musicians who could play hot jazz and “fake” with the best non-readers.

Johnny DeDroit enjoys reminiscing, and speech is propelled by bursts of an energy as yet federally unharnessed; his words are often smothered by laughter. Between his slight deafness and his genuine desire to answer the question, the time lag sometimes confuses the issue. Several things become clear quite soon: He does not want his comments to hurt anybody or to be misinterpreted. He knows an extraordinary number of people from all strata of society and wants to keep their friendship. He is proud of his music career and the reputation and recognition it brought him. He is a disciplinarian, an intelligent and civilized man who is quick to praise and who would have been successful in any livelihood he chose. He has a sense of humor.

Here are some of Johnny DeDroit’s words, spoken and selected at random:

“Where did I play? You name it . . . nightclubs, Carnival balls, theatres, private parties, conventions, hotels, Tulane and L.S.U. fraternity parties, political meetings, club Forest, suburban Gardens, The Orpheum and The Saenger, the old Liberty Theatre, vaudeville, country clubs, the New Orleans symphony just to prove I could, Kolb’s Restaurant for four years, the Cave and the Forest Grill rooms in the old Grunewald Hotel which is now the Fairmont . . . in Chicago at the Green Mill, at

the Balconades in New York, the old Tulane Theatre, at the white House and the Buena Vista which were resort hotels on the Gulf Coast, the Little Club, the Oriental Club, the Dauphine Theatre, Spanish Fort . . . I was always working, always busy . . . out of town spot jobs but in New Orleans I held good, steady jobs: three years one place, six years another . . . I made good money.”

“In 1924 my band was playing at the Balconades Ballroom in new York, down near Columbus Circle. We were an instant success. I was booked there through Vincent Lopez’s office. We had some good men - Frankie Froeba on piano and Ellis Stratakos on trombone; Henry William on clarinet, George Barber on banjo and vocals and so on. My agent was Myra Fuller, Earl Fuller’s wife. He was a great bandleader. Anyhow, she was my agent for six months and the only one I ever had. While I was in New York I dropped by the Arcadia Ballroom where Fletcher Henderson was playing and I asked Louie Armstrong, if he was happy with the job. He said, “no, Johnny, I’m not. These fellows are colored but they’re trying to play white,” and I sand, ‘Louie, you should have your own band.’ He said, ‘I have to wait til the band plays it don’t Mean A Thing If It Ain’t Got That Swing to show I can do something!’ he really wasn’t happy so I urged him to go get himself a band and be his own leader, which he did a few months later . . . It was my pleasure to play Armstrong’s arrangements. Often, on jobs, it was my music for the first chorus and then I’d put in a Dixieland chorus with Armstrong arrangements and finish with a big band arrangement. Always pleased the crowd. I had all of Louie’s records but - my little grand-daughter accidentally knocked all of them off a table . . . “ He shakes his head slowly.

“I played in the pit orchestra at the Orpheum Theatre and one day while a newsreel was flashing on the screen my brother Paul who was the drummer there turned to me and said ‘Swing it!’ The number we were playing was ‘chinma, We Owe A Lot To You’ and I took off and we swung and the house came down. We were hooked. We had to swing one tune every week to satisfy the people. Well, Rene Solomon heard about us. He taught music at here and he had the contract for all the music at the Grunewald Hotel and he came to me and said he liked the band and wanted me to audition for Mr. Grunewald.

I had good men like Tony Parenti who was only 16 at the time and Tom Zimmerman . . we played two numbers and Mr. Grunewald said ‘You’re hired. Go over to terry & Juden’s store and get measured for your uniforms - they were costumes, really. Wooden shoes, woolen stockings, short trousers, vests . We were supposed to be DWARFS! This was in 1918 and I was the oldest man in the band. That job made me. We were put in a room called The Cave - upstairs - a beautiful room. When the season ended we were engaged for the next, but this time we went into the Forest Grill, downstairs, much bigger; it was decorated with fake trees, very elaborate. There were entertainers, acts . . . I had to get rid of Tom Zimmerman who couldn’t read a note and replace him with Frank Cuny who was excellent, excellent. We wore silk pongee shirts and \$6 knitted ties. I always believed in a good appearance. Nice clothes.”

Looking back, I’d say that Cave job was the best. The band I liked best to listen to was Abbie Brunies’ Halfway House Band. I liked to listen to Sharkey, too. And Johnny Bayersdorffer was great. What a trumpet player! Joe Mares and I are good friends, always will be, but the only thing we disagree about is he

thinks his brother Paul was the best - and believe me, he was good, and had a lot of success - but Bayersdorffer . . . always under-rated.

“Remember Irving Fazola? He played tenor sax and clarinet and he had the most beautiful tone. He played spots with Leslie George and with me. We both wanted him in our bands and when I landed the Jung Hotel job he came over to my band. He could play Spanish music like nothing you ever heard! He was not - well - not prepossessing in appearance. One job, we wore white linen suits. We had two - one on and one at the cleaners. Only cost 25 cents a suit in those days and I insisted my men look well at all times . . . neat . . . they had to be punctual and sober and neat, always. Well, you know how Faz was . . . he’d go out after the job was over had ne’d . you know . . drink and show up on the job next night wearing the same, crumpled suit and I’d go get his other one and pay for it myself. I claim I was the one who got him in the big time: Johnny Hamp was playing in the Blue Room and he was looking for a good clarinet player. I told him I’d get him one and invited him to hear Faz who played ‘Stardust’ and he could play it like nobody’s business. It sounded like all the sweet mockingbirds in the air all over the world. Hamp said ‘if he plays like that when he’s “sick” what is he when he’s sober! Want him now.’ So Faz went to California with Hamp and then joined the Bobcats. That man was such an eater. In a restaurant Faz would look at the menu and say: ‘Give me two of everything but the soup.’ Some people don’t know just what an intelligent man Faz really was. They just know about his playing . . .”

“Mine was the first orchestra in New Orleans to have a PA system. And the first band to wear tuxedos in a nightclub job .

. around 1918 or 1919. My band was the first of any musical consequence to broadcast in New Orleans . . . I forget the call letters . . . but it was downtown. I had a Madame Crippon, an operatic soprano, and she sang the Marseillaise; we played only two concerts - two nights only, and we got telegrams telling us people could hear us all the way up to Napoleon Avenue~ (About five miles uptown).”

“Santo Pecora was a handsome fellow; he dressed well and could play a million dollars worth of music but couldn’t read a note. He was a lady’s man, an excellent trombone player, had lots of jobs. A composer, too. Tony Parenti was a great clarinet man. People said he played too many notes and I said the other guys couldn’t MAKE the notes! Tony had talent. Loved to gamble. He’d go out at each intermission and place a \$2 bet across the board and he’s lose some days more than he was making. I tried and tried but couldn’t make him stop gambling . . . “

“Yeah, I knew a lot of fine musicians . . . Professor George Blanchin was a very fine violin player and leader. I played at the Palace Theatre under him . . . a brilliant fellow. I always tried to get the best men for my bands - sometimes I had to settle for less but not for long. Besides Faz and Parenti and Santo, I had Armand Hug, Tony Almerico, Red Bolman, Meyer Weinberg, Joe and Freddy Loyocano, Wyatt Sharp . . . Mel Berry. You know, Eddie Edward) of ODJB) couldn’t read music but he taught Berry how to play good Dixieland jazz. There was no music for the numbers like Dixieland One Step and Livery Stable Blues. I learned how to play ‘em by listening to Robichaux and others. I had a lot of friends among the black musicians. Some of the boys in my band knew more Dixieland than I did, so

I went down to Tom Anderson's saloon and I listened and I sat in and I learned. Santo? He must be about 75. He had no education but he certainly was an asset to my band."

Johnny's father was George DeDroit, a successful business man who was also band master of the 1st Texas Regiment and an outstanding trumpeter of classic band music. He was an organizer and the first president of the musician's union in New Orleans, later serving as its secretary. He recognized the musical inclinations of both his sons, Johnny and Paul was 22 months younger. Johnny, a student at Laurel School, began taking lessons when he was ten years old, from a Professor Fabian and in later years he returned to his teacher off and on for further instruction. Johnny graduated from Boys' High School in 1910; joined the union when he was 12, played small jobs as he found them, and at 16 he was "ready for anything".

His first professional job was at Lou Rose's Winter Garden on Baronne St. He had the job for a year. It was the beginning of a life that would bring him into contact with many of the top names in the entertainment field of his era - Sophie Tucker, Henry Busse, George Raft, Vincent Lopez et al. A life that has had its rewards: Johnny was an agent and some nights he worked three or four bands; there were the three boats, the golf cups, the invitations . . ."I'm the only musician member of the Rotary Club" . . . the years, 1947-1951 when he was president of the musician's union. Dave Winstein who has been the president of the AFM local 174-496 for many years says of DeDroit: "He was a very capable musician, a leader who was protective of his men. He was an efficient, aggressive, good business man. A complete asset to the music industry down here. He never holds a grudge." Winstein according to Johnny was

such a fine clarinet player - “some people forget how good he really was” - that he replaced Faz in Johnny’s band. There were all the years DeDroit played in the Jerusalem Temple Shrine Band. He now serves as Director emeritus.

And he does not forget the debt he owes to two newspaper reporters who wrote glowingly of his every job, Ken Knobloch and especially, Mel Washburn. “Their write-ups really helped me, “ he says, “they liked by band, my music, and they liked me personally. I’m grateful to them.” There was his marriage in 1913 to Eleanora Burlage, who died in 1969 after a long, long illness. Their daughter Eleanor, now Mrs. David Eskenasy, gave Johnny two grandchildren. He had retired from the band business in 1959 and after his wife’s death he turned more and more to books. His reading brought him to the public library and there he met Mrs. Frances Baas, “a Newcomb graduate - and so smart! She’s younger, about 14 years younger, and how she pampers me. We have a lot in common. We’re very happy.” They were married in 1971 and they live in a large, old home in uptown New Orleans.

“Jazz has been my life. It brought me before the public. I loved to improvise. I loved playing it and now I love listening to it . . . I didn’t make a lot of records. Let me tell you about that; I signed with Okeh. Records too hurriedly, without investigating them - a five year contract. I had never recorded before and had nobody to tell me what to do. Two weeks later Victor came, begging me to sign but it was too late. I’ll never forget recording in a cold empty building on Carondelet Street, waiting for the heat to come on . . . when it finally did we had to put the clarinet on the steam radiator to keep it from getting out of tune! Undoubtedly my best seller was The Swing - Tulane University’s

popular alma mater song they swiped from the Washington and Lee song until they got their own. People loved to sing it and dance to it.”

At age 83 a man has a right to call it as he saw it, as he remembers it. Johnny DeDroit regrets the fire that destroyed all his scrapbooks and mementoes but he doesn't dwell on them, or need them to recall all those happy years. When he left my home the only thing on his mind was his and Frances' trip to Miami, his anticipation of “those wonderful meals at Wolfie's Restaurant”. He walked briskly to the automobile, smiling and still talking as he slid in the seat next to his wife. As they drove off I couldn't help shaking my head in wonderment and exhaustion. There was no way I could report half of what he had said. And he had said only half of what he could have. Johnny DeDroit - you're one more!

**The Life & Times of Harold “Duke” Dejan
Marcel Joly
Fall, 1983**

When Harold Dejan was touring in Europe with his Olympia Brass Band in 1979, he played one concert in Belgium. When I met him there I gave him a color print of a slide I had taken in New Orleans the year before. On the photo Harold was wearing a beautiful brown leather cap. He looked at the photo and said: “Do you like this cap?” I said I did. “OK” Harold said, “I still need it now because of the cold weather here, but before I leave I'll send it to you.” To be quite honest, I didn't believe it. I guess I didn't know Harold very well at that time. Two weeks later a parcel arrived. My wife phoned me at my office and said:

“Someone sent you a leather cap. Do you know anything about it?” That’s the kind of guy Harold is, - a warm and generous person, colorful too! A wonderful bandleader, a good business man and a fine musician, who can look back on a great career in New Orleans music.

In 1982 we got together in New Orleans and Harold told me his life story. The following article is mainly based upon the conversation we had then. After writing out the 3 hours of interview, I came up with 66 additional questions. I sent them to Harold and he went through all the trouble of answering them all.

The usual reference books were used (Rose and Souchon - New Orleans “A Family Album; Tom Stagg and Charlie Crump - New Orleans, “The Revival; John Chilton - “Who’s Who in Jazz) and many details were checked with interviews from the Tulane Jazz Archive. Other sources will be mentioned in the text.

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Harold Dejan was born February 4, 1909 on Miro Street between St. Louis and Conti and reared in the Treme’ section of New Orleans. His father’s name was John Dejan, his mother’s Elodie Planchard. His grandmother spoke only French. His parents spoke French when they wanted to say something the children shouldn’t hear. John Dejan was a boss drayman, he owned trucks, wagons and horses and later on had his own gas tank.

“If you wanted to move your furniture or anything like that we would come. We used to come from second and third stories with piano’s. They didn’t have no elevators the. Four of

us, you know, a piano was nothing! It was a good business. I had a very good life.”

There were no musicians in the families of Harold’s parents. His mother, however, was a very good singer. She sang all the big opera numbers at home. His younger brother Leo (born 1911) became a very fine trumpet player and is still active at present in California. His first cousin, Ferdinand Dejan was a banjo player. He was a member of Don Albert’s San Antonio-based orchestra.

“Him and Danny Barker started playing around the same time. They were two hell of ukulele players!”

Harold’s interest in music was aroused by the bands advertising for dances.

“They didn’t have bills or placards and things like they have now. They would go from corner to corner by each barroom with the wagon. They hired a furniture wagon, sometimes they hired one of my daddy’s wagons. They fit the band just right, you see. The trombone player sat at the end where the tailgate was. When Kid Rena was playing a dance and Chris Kelly or Punch Miller another dance, like one at Economy Hall and one at Co-operator’s Hall, if they meet on that corner, the one the people liked the best that’s the dance they’d go to. They called it bucking.”

Harold got his first music lessons from Professor Nicherson. He wanted to study with Lorenzo Tio Jr., but Tio had gone to New York with Armand Piron. Harold never knew his teacher’s first name. Professor Nickerson was in his forties or fifties then. He was a concert violinist.” His daughter Camille was a concert pianist and a very good singer. Harold used to sing Creole songs with Camille accompanying him on the piano.

“Professor Nickerson taught at his house. He had a big room with a beautiful baby grand piano. He lived on Galvez between Canal and Iberville. He used to teach us all in line like a school. You have the violin, the clarinet, the trumpet and they all had their music and he listened at them and correct them when they were wrong. He made them play simple little numbers they all could play together, similar to a school but he really taught you to play your instrument. The school only taught the kids enough to pass their grade. Professor Nickerson wanted to make a concert clarinet out of me. But I listened to Georgie Boyd, Lorenzo Tio, Willie Humphrey and all of them clarinet players. When he later saw me with jazz music in my clarinet case he almost had a fit. He told me to get that trash out of my case!

I could play the classical stuff. I had it from rehearsals. When I was in the Navy Band later on there was no problem for me. I could look at the conductor with half an eye cocked and play “Poet and Peasant” or “March of the Chocolate Soldiers,” anything . . . it didn’t bother me!”

When Harold found out that Tio was back in town he went to see him but Tio had to leave again. Albert Nicholas was living about three blocks from the Dejan’s house, so Harold asked him to teach him. According to Harold, Nicholas was a marvelous teacher. Time didn’t count when he taught a student. He decided when it was enough. Nicholas liked Harold very much and used to tell him: “I’m gonna make an Albert Nicholas out of You” and Harold replied: “I don’t care if you do, I sure wish I could play like you now!”

“After the first lesson he had straightened me out very well. When I went for the second lesson, he showed me a letter that King Oliver had sent him, asking to join his band.”

While he was waiting for Tio to come back, Harold had some lessons from a friend of his father, Frank Crump, another fine clarinet and saxophone player who had studied with Tio. Crump used to stop at the Dejan house every night coming him from work.

“I had them good horns and he wanted to blow them. You see my brother Leo wanted a trumpet and my father bought him one. He had to have his tonsils taken out and the doctor said a trumpet would be good for him to straighten his throat. So Leo had that beautiful gold trumpet and that made me ask for a saxophone and my father gave me one.”

Leo went to Professor Paul Chaligny for lessons. Chaligny, who lived on St. Claude near Dumaine, about a hundred feet from the Masonic Temple Perseverance Hall, was a mail carrier but also a fine trumpet player and a good teacher.

“He only charged 25 cents a lesson. He wrote his own theory book, he had a beautiful hand-writing. I went there with Leo and I learned to play the trumpet too.”

Paul Chaligny had a brass band and both Harold and Leo played in it and so did Chaligny’s son, a trumpet player.

When Lorenzo Tio came back, Harold started to take lessons from him and Leo went with Manuel Perez. Both Tio and Perez charged one dollar a lesson. When a student didn’t prepare his lesson well, Tio wouldn’t accept his money and sent him home to study more. When he was teaching he had his clarinet with him. In the method book he used there was a top and a bottom line, the lead and the obligato. The student would play the lead and Tio would play the obligato. Next Tio played the lead and had the student play the obligato. After a while Tio made Harold

get together with Louis Cottrell Jr., another of his students, and let them play duets.

“He showed me how to make my own reeds, how to make my own pads. He kept one of those white gloves in his pocket all the time. When he played at the Country Club with Piron and he felt there was air escaping from his instrument, he made a new pad with a piece of that glove right on the spot. Tio had a beautiful sound. Barney Bigard, when he was with Ellington, sounded a lot like Tio. Albert Nicholas and Louis Cottrell sounded a lot like him too. Tio made me come out to Tanchina’s on week-ends when I didn’t have to go to school. Sometimes he let me sit in with Piron on easy numbers. Piron was a strict leader. He would look at you when you came at a job like they do in military service, see that everybody was clean and then he said: “Magnifique, magnifique! That’s how I like to see my band!” He was a wonderful man.”

Whilst we were talking about Barney Bigard with the Duke Ellington band, I asked Harold if there is any truth in the rumor that Lorenzo Tio sold some of his compositions to Ellington.

“Yeah, “Mood Indigo,” “Sophisticated Lady.” Those numbers that made Duke Ellington famous were written by Tio. When his brother Louis said: “Lorenzo why you wanna do that?” Lorenzo replied: “I make one today, I’ll make another one tomorrow.” Made him no difference! That’s why I like so much to play “Sophisticated Lady.” I like the way Johnny Hodges played it. That’s another one of my favorite alto players. When I took Bill Russell to Louis Tio to interview him, he told this story about Lorenzo selling compositions to Ellington. Louis Tio played guitar but I never saw him with a band.”

I asked Harold if it was true that he studied with Theodore Purnell, Alton's brother. Harold said he gave him his first lesson and then Teddy passed him like lightning striking.

"You know what happened? Theodore could go out in the District every night and sit in with those bands in the cabarets. My people didn't allow that. I went in the District, you see. Lorenzo used to take me in the District on Saturday nights sometimes or on Friday nights with Piron's band, but I didn't do no jammin' or playing on that, you know. When my daddy first bought me a long-pants suit, Tio said: "I'll start to take you with me, son," He called up my mama and told her" The kid's gonna be a little late tonight cause we're taking him with us to breakfast." I was used to getting home past six o'clock in the morning. I had to go drive that wagon for my daddy the next day but my mama said: "Don't wake up that boy, he just came in!" Some of these days I played a job for five, six hours, be kinda tired. I hear my daddy say: "Wake up boy, you gotta go and get that team" and then mama" Wake what up? If you need him later on you call and I'll send him." So when he got in a jam, had so much work up there, he'd call and I'd go around and get one of the teams and go to work"

Harold played his first professional job around 1923 at the College Inn on Rampart, between Canal and Iberville, replacing his good friend Lucien Johnson, the clarinet and alto sax player, when he could not make the job.

"I still had my bloomer pants on. I had my model T Ford, I was about fourteen years old. In the band at the College Inn was Ernest Roubleau (banjo) and a guy called "Tink" Baptiste playing the piano. (Sic: In an interview with Bill Russell and Ralph Collins (Oct. 14, 1960) Harold said the name of the piano

player at the College Inn was “Coochie” and the drummer Vernell “bowlegs” Joseph.) He used to live on the corner of Bienville and North Claiborne. The College Inn was on the other side of Rampart. The District was on this side of Rampart. There was a drummer too, probably Nolan “Shine” Williams.”

At that time Harold started to play in brass bands too. He played some jobs with Celestin’s Tuxedo Brass Band but never as a regular member. He played with the Holy Ghost Brass Band under the direction of Pinchback Touro. He joined the Union which met at St. Katherine’s Hall on Tulane Avenue at that time.

“That’s when Lorenzo Tio told my daddy that he would put me in a brass band if he bought me an e-flat clarinet. So my daddy bought me one cause he liked to hear Eddie Cherie play it. Other good e-flat clarinet players were Lorenzo Tio, Willie Humphrey, George Lewis, John Casimir and Louis Cottrell.”

Other members of the Holy Ghost Brass Band were: Wooden Joe Nicholas and Alcide “Big” Landry (trumpet), Wills (snare drum), Corella, a Jamaican, baritone and alto horn. The bass horn player lived in the 9th Ward and his name was Grammer.

When Harold started to fool around with the saxophone, his big idol was Earl Fouche’ who played with the Sam Morgan Band and recorded eight magnificent sides with that band in 1927.

“He played some alto and soprano, I rate his soprano playing better than anybody I ever heard. He used to come to my house at 10 o’clock Sunday morning. I told him that all I wanted to do was play like him. But we never copied a style. I have my own style. When I first got my saxophone, I went to Lorenzo Tio

who showed me the changes from clarinet to saxophone. He played tenor sax himself with Piron. Louis Warnick, from across the river, was the alto sax players with Piron.”

Soon Harold played his first job on the saxophone at the Japanese Tea Garden at Milneburg. (Sic: The Japanese Tea Garden was at Milneburg right where the seawall started, between Bucktown and the seawall and near where the train Smoky Mary terminated it's run (at Moreau's grocery store). The personnel at this place consisted of: Willie Darensburg (violin), Harold (alto sax), Louis Gallaud (piano) and “Big Foot” Bill Phillips (drums) a great drummer according to Harold).

“There was a band next door to us. They had a saxophone player Mickman. Every night they closed at about 11 o'clock, we'd be open till 1,2,3 o'clock in the morning. All I could do was read the music and hold a note on that saxophone. A lady was singing at the Japanese Tea Garden. Her first name was Vera and she lived on Josephine Street. she told me: “Harold, don't change that style of playing, everybody can understand what you play.” I told her: “Yeah they got to understand cause all I do is play what I see on this music.” She liked my playing and all the tips she made, she put in the kitty for me!”

Harold stayed about 8 to 10 months at the Japanese Tea Garden, then he went to play with Son White (Edward Washington) on the steamer Ouchita, which ran from New Orleans to Cameron, Arkansas. Son White washed dishes during the day and played music at night. Harold played saxophone, Louis Gallaud piano, Ernest Roubleau was on banjo and Son White on drums.

“When I played on that boat I used to get lined with the roustabouts. Sometimes in the day I said I needed a little exercise

and joined them. The captain liked me for that. He told everyone on the boat: “Don’t charge him for nothing.” I could get anything I wanted. I was on the boat in the Summertime when school was closed.

Around the same time his brother Leo began to lead a little band, the Moonlight Serenaders, started by Sidney Cates. They had Leo Dejan (trumpet), Harold (alto sax, clarinet) Henry Caznave, (alto sax, clarinet) Sidney Cates (banjo) Arnould “Bazoo” Thomas (drums). (Sic: There is a photo of that band on page 142 of New Orleans - A Family Album. The year 1921 given there seems a bit too early. Harold sure looks older than twelve on this photo and Leo certainly more than ten!) The moonlight Serenaders played mostly for social and pleasure clubs and there were plenty of them. They all had parties and dances. Out of this small band came a larger one later on. They changed the name into Black Diamonds because there was another Moonlight Serenaders around, a white band started after the Dejan group and probably not even knowing about them. Sherman Cook, who was the master of ceremonies at the Humming Bird Cabaret (in the District right around the corner from the Entertainer’s), told them that if they added a few musicians to the band he would give them some jobs.

Harold doesn’t know when the change of name took place but he said that in 1928 the Black Diamonds were still active. The personnel: Leo Dejan, Alvin McNeal (trumpet), Eddie Pierson (trombone), Harold Dejan, Eddie “Big Head’ Johnson (alto sax), Reese Corbette (tenor sax), Herb Leary (piano), Reuben McClennon (banjo), August Lanoix (bass), Sidney Montegue (drums).

“With the Black Diamonds we played at the Pelican and at the Astoria, both on Rampart, and at the Pythian Temple Roof Garden on the corner of Saratoga (now Loyola) and Gravier, the building’s still standing there. We played orchestrations, numbers like Panama Rag, That’s A Plenty, Mood Indigo and stuff like that. The same numbers we play today.”

Back to our chronology. When Harold got off the steamer Ouchita, Lucien Johnson asked him if he would like to go on the road.

“I told him to ask my daddy and mama. The reason my daddy let me go was they had a sister living in Baton Rouge, that’s where the band was booking. So I went to Baton Rouge and played with Sax Jefferson’s outfit (I went to Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas with them) and with the Deluxe Orchestra. Me and Lucien were the only guys from New Orleans with Sax Jefferson. He played bass horn himself. This was a ten piece band. I played with them for about two months. This gave me the taste of the highway. We used to stay at the Indian reservation in Oklahoma. I liked to see the women weave blankets and beautiful scarfs.”

Back home, Harold joined Bebe Ridgley’s Tuxedo Band. Ridgely used to work with Celestin but after they broke friendship, they both had their own Tuxedo band. With Celestin, Ridgley had played trombone, in his own band he changed to drums. Harold remembers the following line-up: Leo Dejan, Gilbert Young (trumpet), “Red” (trombone), Harold Dejan (alto sax), Felix Goff (clarinet, tenor sax), Sweet Emma Barrett (piano), “Daddy” (banjo), John Porter (sousaphone) and Bebe Ridgely (drums).

“This trombone player “Red” - I can’t remember his real name - was the most amazing man you ever met in your life.

When we would leave a job, like going to the next town, we would put on our traveling cloths. Red traveled in his tuxedo suit and he'd get on the bandstand and looked just as clean as I was. I've never seen him change. He only had an extra shirt. He stayed clean but he never changed." That banjo players, "Daddy," he played so much banjo, something like Caffrey (Darensbourg) but not as good as Caffrey."

Harold Dejan also played with Kid Harris for a while at the Last Roundup (the Old Virginia Kitchen in the 800 block of Bienville). Kid Harris played trumpet, his wife was on piano, John Handy was on clarinet and also sax, Clarence "Little Dad" Vincent on banjo. Tom Copeland (probably_ on bass and either Nolan Williams or Son White on drums.

"John Handy first got his alto then and he came to the job. He could play clarinet, he could play some clarinet! So Handy got his alto, fooled around with it and in about a month he was the gutbucketest alto player you ever heard!"

I have some more loose ends of Harold playing with different bands early in his career, but for which he was unable to give an exact date. So I'll put them in here, but they could as well fit in with the chronology elsewhere.

He played a couple of dates with the great Chris Kelly.

He played on the S. S. Madisonville with Leo Dejan (trumpet) Sadie Goodson (Billie Pierce's sister) (piano) and Reuben McClendon (banjo).

Harold also played at the Willow Inn on Downman Road, with Georgie Boyd on clarinet and Udell Wilson (from Kansas, Missouri) on piano. Boyd could take his clarinet apart while playing and he also could carry on an intelligible conversation without stopping to play. He had a terrible cough.

When he couldn't make a job he often sent John Casimir in his place.

After Harold left Ridgley's Tuxedo band (or when it disbanded) he joined Clarence Desdune's Joyland Revellers. It was Earl Fouche' who came by and asked him to come with the band. Fouche' worked with Desdune as long as the band stayed in New Orleans but he did not go on tour with it. Harold played tenor sax with Desdune.

"I didn't like the tenor sax but I got one just to get in the band."

Harold remembers the following line-up: George McCullum Gregg "Titty Tat" Williams (trumpet) and later Alvin Alcorn, Raymond Brown (trombone), Warren Bennett (clarinet, piano), Oliver Alcorn (clarinet, soprano sax), Lucien Johnson (also sax) Harold Dean (tenor sax), Harry Fairconnettue (banjo), Henry Kimball (bass), and Nolan Williams (and later Judge Riley) (drums). Clarence Desdune himself was playing violin and banjo. When the band arrived in Jackson, Mississippi, to open the Savoy Ballroom there, two additions were made to the band: Little Brother Montgomery (piano) and Eugene Porter (sax). They took Gene Porter out of Joe White's band led by Doc Parnsley. Little Brother quit when they reached Omaha, Nebraska. Blues singer Irene Scuggs had sent for him for a recording session. In his place came a pianist from Achison, Kansas. Her first name was Vivian but Harold could not recall her last name. She was a fine band pianist but not as good on the blues as Little Brother. When he played the blues people would stop dancing and gather around the piano.

In Meridian, Mississippi, Kildee Holloway was added to the band.

“I can never forget him because we told him to get his suitcase to come with the band and he came back with a little paper bag. I said: “Why don’t you go for your suitcase?” and he said: “This is it!” He got to be a fine trumpet player, he played with all the best bands around like Celestin and Desvigne.”

Gene Porter left the band to go to New York and work with Don Redman. Harold has a lot of stories about the life on the road.

“In St. Joe, Missouri, we played in a dance hall where they had a rope across the dance floor for the whites on one side and the coloreds on the other side. Before that they all used to dance together, but they had a humbug and they had that rope afterwards. We stayed over the Charleston Cabaret, that’s when I first got drunk! I was about 21 years old. You see Shine (Nolan Williams) got drunk in St. Louis and he had that little steamer trunk, and he dropped it and busted this man’s beautiful cigar and cigarette display case in the lobby, a glass case. I got so mad at him and I told him: “This is the last, take care of yourself!” Shine called me a sissy because I didn’t drink so I said: “I bet you I could drink more than you.” Everybody in the band put up money for the bet. So we sat down at the Charleston Cabaret in St. Joe, at 8 o’clock that night. They put a fifth of whisky in front of him and a fifth in front of me. I was cutting mine with soda water, he drank his straight. So we sat down there all night. I was dancing too. Little Brother sat down at the piano and played and sang the blues. Everybody stopped dancing then. That liquor was doing me nothing. I felt my ears were a little bit dead and my lips were a little bit dead like at the dentist when they shoot that Novocain in your jaw. They brought us another half a pint. They said to me: “Son, you must have been drinking before,” and I

said: “Never took a drink, my daddy didn’t allow me to drink although we had all the liquor we wanted, cause my daddy made wine, cognac, whisky, he used to make everything.” It was about 4 or 5 o’clock in the morning then. I was killing the alcohol with dancing. Nolan was just sitting there all washed out. I was laughing at him. Shine fell off the chair. I picked him up, put him on my shoulder and brought him upstairs and threw him in the bed. Snow was falling down outside. I went to stand in the snow for a little while. Desdune got scared and he warned me: “Son, you gone kill yourself!” It was 6 o’clock then. I reassured him: “If I was drinking and I couldn’t drink that liquor in that time, I would stop. I just wanted to show that fool that I could out drink him. “When we arrived in Omaha, Nebraska, Desdune took me to his doctor and told him about what I did. After the examination the doctor told him: It would have killed him as well but he’s as solid as a barrel of rattle snakes!”

Another story goes like this:

“At that time they had a little fighter in St. Joe. He had beaten everybody on the boat. I said he couldn’t fight. Raymond Brown and Shine Williams asked if I wanted to fight him. I said: “How much you gonna give me if I do?” They said they would give me 20, 25 dollars. That was a lot of money. I had plenty of money, but they didn’t know. I had been boxing at school. I just came from St. Mary’s Academy where we had a good team. We used to beat all the schools. You got yourself a black eye for a little gold medal, about the size of my little finger nail, but all the girls was clapping for you, so you didn’t care about it. I found out that the fighter in St. Joe was a fake. I bought me a pair of tights and I whipped that guy from the time the bell rang till the stop. He couldn’t raise his hands. He just couldn’t fight! So I got my

little 25 dollars and treated the band. I could buy the band 2 or 3 dinners for 25 dollars in them days. You had a big plate of food for 35 cents. So we had a wonderful time. I led a beautiful life, a beautiful lovely life, all my life. I never wanted for nothing in my life. I never had no worry because I never was lazy. I didn't mind working."

When he was traveling with Desdune, Harold kept the band bus, a model A Ford, at his house. He lived on Dumaine, between Prieur and Roman, and had a big, beautiful driveway.

When Clarence Desdune died of cancer in the throat, his nephew Oscar Desdune took over the band. That's when Harold left.

"We were close to Omaha, Nebraska, and we didn't make any money then, 25 cents a man that night. I went in a grocery next day to buy a pint of milk and that was a nickel. I thought that something was going wrong, so I went home. When I came home in 1929 I had \$9900 in my 98 cent suitcase. My mama wanted to know what I had in that suitcase and I told her: "All green shirts, baby!" She opened it and asked where I got all that money from and I told her that I saved it.

Harold Dejan was always a good business man. When on the road his fellow musicians wanted to buy a souvenir he sold it to them at half the price and still made money out of it. When he came home he put all his horns under the bed. He had clarinet, soprano, alto, tenor, baritone saxes, the complete reed family.

"I said to myself, I'm gonna need a job. I'm not gonna drive those big trucks around here. I wanted to have a job before my daddy put me back on one of them big trucks."

Soon he found a job at an oil station on Prieur and Bayou Road. He was working there for three days when Sam Peck (real name probably Peckerary) came by and offered him a job playing music. Sam and his Brother Joe Peck were running the Popeye, a club on Decatur Street. Harold told Sam that he wasn't going to play for one dollar or for one dollar and a half a night. So he got two and a half dollars and the band got one and a half. They made good tips every night. The band at the Popeye consisted of: Ernie Cagnolatti (trumpet), Harold (alto sax), Louis Givern (piano), Robert Davis (drums). Later on Benny Benoit (banjo) was added.

“When I worked at the Popeye I would leave the place and go to the middle of the block at mama's, about fifty feet from the Popeye. Then I leave there and go to the Kingfish on Decatur, picking up 4 or 5 dollars, then to the Rose Bowl, also on Decatur. Decatur was bigger then than bourbon is today. I every place we played for about 40 or 50 minutes. On my way home I bought food for all the girls who were waiting for me at the step at Joe Sheep's a place on Dumaine and Claiborne that used to stay open all night. We had breakfast right there at 6 or 7 o'clock in the morning. You had a pork chop with a teaspoon of potato-salad on it for a dime. I could have been a millionaire if I was tight. I never knew how to hold a dollar but I was happy. I never had a bad moment in my life!”

After a while Cagnolatti had to leave for some reason, probably his day job, and Kid Howard replaced him.

Probably in the same period Harold and Cagnolatti played a lot of Saturday night fish fries on Caffin Avenue about two doors from where Mother Katherine, the hoodoo woman lived. Cag's younger brother Wilbur was on drums. Fish fried

originally started on Fridays because of the Catholic ban of eating meat on that day. Eventually it became a Saturday night function. At the house where the fish fry was being held, a red lantern was hanging in front. Usually the musicians played for food and drinks. Other musicians coming home from their job would stop, eat a bite and sit in with the band. Later on there were less fish fries because of the high costs of the permits.

Back to the Popeye.

“After playing there for a while, Kid Howard used to get drunk every night. He had that drinking problem. He used to play drums once you know and I remember we played a job with him, my little brother Leo and me on Franklin Avenue and I turned a drink down, because I wasn’t drinking and my little brother either. So Howard said: “What are doing man? Better give it to me.” So afterwards I would always get a drink and give it to Howard.”

One day Harold went to see Joe Peck and asked for a raise for himself and for the band. Howard went by in the daytime and told the owner that he was willing to take the job for two dollars a night and one dollar for the band. When Joe Peck told Harold that he couldn’t give the raise, Harold left and Kid Howard brought in a band and took over the other places too like Mama’s, the Rose Bowl and the Kingfish.

“However I had no hard feelings against Howard. Afterwards I played with his band and with his brass band. No hard feelings! I got married around that time and sometimes when I needed money, I would pawn a horn. Never pawned the alto though.”

Around 1930 Harold started to work at the Rio Rita Club on Jefferson Avenue.

“It’s still there. Across the street they used to have rodeo’s every Sunday and the bootleggers used to come in there from different places with a carload of beer. We played in the front and they unloaded the bootlegger’s stuff in the back in the warehouse. We were there just for a front cause sometimes nobody wouldn’t come in the place at night and the man just told the cook” “Whatever Harold wants for his supper at night, cook it!” So every night when I’d go there I tell the cook what I wanna eat at twelve o’clock that night, the whole band would sit at the table.” The personal at the Rio Rita was: Joe Phillips (and later on Mike Delay) (trumpet) or Lawrence Douroux or Ernie Cagnolatti (trumpet), Harold (alto sax), Burnell (and sometimes Lester) Santiago (piano), Casimir Paul (guitar), William Joseph (drums).

It was Bill Joseph, Frog’s brother, who gave Harold his nickname Duke. They had a lot of work down St. Bernard Parish, mostly for white people, and Bill said: “Man, man we’re raising all the hell around here like Duke Ellington’s raising all the hell in New York. Why don’t you change the band into Duke Dejan’s Rhythm Boys?”

So afterwards Harold called the master of ceremonies at the Rio Rita and suggested to change the name of the place into the Cotton Club like in New York. The master of ceremonies talked to the owner and they changed the name. Harold says it’s still called the Cotton Club right now.

Then Harold heard about an audition for a band on the S. S. Dixie. This ship made a round trip from New Orleans to New York every 17 days. He went to inquire about it and found out that they already hired a band. Still he insisted on talking to

the man responsible for hiring the bands and eventually convinced him to listen to his band in view of a later job.

“I had a theme song called “Lies That Made You Happy” and we played that. Everybody stood up. I had that terrific piano player Burnell Santiago. Before we would play some more numbers we were hired. Mike DeLay didn’t have his own trumpet yet. I had to lend him mine.”

On that first trip the band comprised: Mike DeLay (trumpet), Harold (alto sax), Burnell Santiago (piano), Casimir Paul (guitar), Cleo Young (bass). Harold made a couple of trips on the S. S. Dixie, then they discontinued using bands and Harold went back to the Cotton Club. He played there on and off from 1930 to 1936. Just after he came off the S. S. Dixie he also worked at the My Oh My Club. They had Joe Phillips (trumpet), Harold (alto sax), Lester Santiago (piano), and Lionel Torregano (drums).”

“When I came off the Dixie I worked at the My Oh My Club, a sissy club at Bucktown right where the seawall starts.”

Harold spent some time with Manuel Perez’ Band too when the latter got off the Roof Garden. He remembers some of the musicians in that band: Perez, Maurice Durand (trumpet), Earl Humphrey (trombone), Alfred Williams (drums) but is unable to recall who the others were. About Perez he had this to say:

“Perez was a top trumpet player. He was strong! Kid Howard was too. Perez was a first class musician. He had a band playing at the Country Club and all those swell places. When he came off the Roof he made up another band, the Imperial Serenaders. His brass band was the Imperial Brass Band, Eddie Cherie was playing e-flat clarinet.”

Harold was a member of both the Imperial Serenaders and Maurice Durand's band. Durand lived on Deslonde Street in the 9th Ward and used to get all the jobs down St. Bernard Parish. During the day he worked at a broom factory. He played on all the weddings and St. Joseph Day parties.

When Perez broke up his band, Harold stayed with Durand, worked with Kid Howard, had his own band at the Cotton Club and worked with Arnold Depass' Olympia Band at the Crystal Palace on Clio between Dryades and Baronne. All the boys from Brown's Velvet Dairy would buy him ice cream every night because he didn't drink. Depass was an insurance collector and he used to get a lot of work for weddings and parties. The personnel of the Depass Olympia Band consisted of Elmer Talbert (trumpet), Harold, Eddie "Big Head" Johnson (alto sax), Edna Francis (piano), Benny Benoit (banjo), Depass (drums), Tom Copeland (banjo).

Somewhat later Harold led a band himself at the Crystal Palace. They had pretty much the same line-up but they had Coby Brown on bass.

"Big Ike used to live on Claiborne. He was a very strong trombone player. Later on he moved to St. Philip between Claiborne and Robertson."

Harold was asked to join the W. P. A. band but he declined the offer because he had that band with Arnold Depass' Olympic Serenaders.

Around 11934 he started to work with Henry "Kid" Rena's band at the Gypsy Tea Room. He gave following collective personnel: Kid Rena (trumpet), Big Ike Robinson or Eddie Pierson (trombone), William Houston or Alton Purnell or Walter Daniels or Benny Turner or a girl called May (piano), Clarence

Tisdale (banjo), Tom Copeland or Percy Gabriel or Burke Stevenson (bass), Joe Rena (drums).

Harold was very explicit about the alto players: first he and Willie Humphrey were on alto. After Willie left Walter Delarose came in on alto. When Delarose joined Leary, Joe Harris came in.

The eccentric dancer and blues singer Benny “Rubberlegs” Williams was at the Gypsy Tea Room too. The regular master of ceremonies was Buddy Touro. He was the bartender during the daytime. Smiling Joe Pleasant was leading the chorus girls and sometimes acted as master of ceremonies as well. Two of the “gypsies” were Rose (Harold’s wife) and Olivette West (Mike DeLay’s wife).

My wife used to stage the shows at the Palace. She and Thelma Theophile made all the costumes for the girls to dance. I used to live in an apartment upstairs from the Gypsy Tea Room. Kid Rena was one of New Orleans’ favorite trumpets. Sometimes he was so drunk they had to carry him from the bandstand. He sat down and you’d never know he had a drink if he wouldn’t stand up. he could blow that horn!”

Harold stayed with Rena until he stopped playing. When Kid Rena died in 1949 he was a pall-bearer at his funeral.

In 1936 Harold again took a band on the S. S. Dixie. This time the line-up was: John Brunious, (trumpet. Harold (alto sax), Lester Santiago (piano), Smiling Joe (guitar), Chester Zardis or Percy Gabriel (bass), George Henderson (drums).

“I had my little cousin playing trumpet, John Brunious. I had told him to learn to read music and so he did. I went to his daddy and said: “John, I’ll take this kid with me to New York if you buy him a new trumpet. He can’t go to New York with that

old horn.” He went to Werlein’s and bought him a new trumpet. Black (Lester) Santiago was on piano. I took Smiling Joe on guitar. He was a terrific tap dancer too. On drums I had George Henderson. He lived on Roman and Orleans. I had to get on the boat that morning and I went to his house at 6 o’clock in the morning and his wife told me he was at the seawall fishing. I went to the seawall and got him. Chester Zardis played bass. Chester did a trip and Cleo Young did a trip. Afterwards I had Percy Gabriel. When we went to New York they liked him at the Big Apple (123rd Street and 7th Avenue) so Percy stayed in New York and Gene Porter (tenor sax) went with me to New Orleans in his place.”

When they came off the S. S. Dixie they always had a dance on Wednesday night on St. Philip and St. Claude and they used to have a crowd like they have today at Preservation Hall.

“We had a band contest with the Alley Cats. They had Peter Lacaze on trumpet and Lionel Torregano on drums. I had John Brunious, Lester Santiago, smiling Joe and myself. We had a contest every time the boat came in. Packed and jammed it was. You couldn’t get in.”

In 1942 Harold joined the Navy. Leo had joined the Navy first and was in the training station at Great Lakes. Harold was in Algiers Naval Station.

“My half-brother Joe Lopez had been in the Navy during the First World War, so I didn’t want to join the Army. It had to be the Navy or the Marines! I was trained at Great Lakes. When we came back to New Orleans I became master of arms of the band. My predecessor was putting the boys on report for almost nothing and the chief didn’t like that. George Williams (Claiborne Williams’ son) was directing the band. He was not

only a good trumpet player but a fine saxophone player as well and a number one pianist. He's selling piano's in California now."

There were three different bands: a big orchestra, a military band and a Dixieland band.

Harold came up with the following collective personnel: George Williams, Gilbert Young, Vernon Gilbert, Bertrand Adams, Robert Anthony, Henry Russ (trumpets), Thomas Brooks (from Nashville, Tenn.), Little Red (from Texas) (trombones), Adolph Alexander Jr. (alto sax, baritone horn), Harold Dejan (alto, tenor and baritone sax, clarinet), Paul Barnes (clarinet, alto sax), Herbert Trisch (from Baton Rouge), (alto sax, William Casimir (tenor sax), George Williams (piano), Frank fields (guitar), Booker Washington (bass), Cie Frazier, Henry Russ, Big John (from Wylie, West Virginia) (drums). Harold gave the following comments:

"I played clarinet and baritone with the big orchestra, tenor sax with the military band, alto with the Dixieland outfit. Polo Barnes played solo clarinet in the symphony orchestra. Frank Fields was originally on guitar but in about two months he was playing more bass then Booker Washington. Cie taught Big John to play the bass drum.

The Dixieland band was: Robert Anthony (trumpet), Little Red (trombone), me on alto sax, Thomas Brooks (piano), Frank Fields (bass), Henry Russ, drums."

In 1946 Harold was discharged from the Navy. In about two weeks he had a job. Paul Moliere, the drummer, wanted him to join his band at the Opera House on Bourbon and Toulouse. John Handy had been with Moliere but he wanted to go to the Silver Slipper.

“When I went there, Handy quit to go to work at the Silver Slipper where they paid only three dollars a night while with Moliere he got the regular scale of six dollars, but at the Silver Slipper they made so much tips. They made 80 or 90 dollars a night. So I went to the Opera House and the owner said: “Can you read music?” I said: “Of course I can read, I come out of the Navy Band. Why do you ask me a question like that?” “Well,” the man said, “my wife’s got a number the band couldn’t play for her, “Rose of Washington Square.” I promised him to do the number that night. I stood up and played it for her that night. The boss told me if I played that song every night he would give me a dollar raise. So I had seven dollars a night. I got another dollar raise for dressing. My daughter helped the wife of the boss with an act she was doing and I got another raise.”

At the Opera House there was only a trio: Harold (alto sax), Sammy Hopkins (piano), and Paul Moliere (drums). Harold played the show there, then went to another place and earned a double salary. In 1947 Paul Moliere and Sammy Hopkins left to go to Ponchatoula to play with Ernest Moliere, Paul’s clarinet playing brother. Wallace Davenport came in on trumpet and Frank “Little Daddy” Moliere on piano. After a while Wallace had bought a new house and a new car and he wanted to have his own band. He went to the Robin Hood and took “Little Daddy” with him. Earl Palmer came in on drums. Harold bought him a set of drums. On piano they had Louis Givern. Later on Herb Morand was on trumpet and when he left Willie Pajeaud replaced him. Then Earl Palmer had to leave.

“So I got C. P. Johnson’s nephew on drums. He had been in the Navy too. He could play more tom-toms then C. P. Johnson although C. P. had the reputation of being the world’s greatest

tom-tom player. We were making good money. I had to carry it in my saxophone case, put the saxophone under my arm. There was too much to put in my pockets!”

When the Opera House was sold, the new owner wanted somebody cheaper. Harold and Willie Pajeaud started going down the river every week-end, down to Port Sulphur, Buras and Venice. With them they had Father Al Lewis (banjo) and Fats Houston (drums).

“At that time I wanted to be an embalmer, so I went to the Louisiana State College of Mortuary Science on the G. I. Bill and studied embalming. I wanted to go in business on my own. I wanted a place different from any place in the City of New Orleans. I wanted a place where you would call me and say: “Harold, go set up a Baptist wake at that place for me: and I’d set up that wake. I didn’t have enough money to do it the way I wanted to, so I kept playing my horn.”

After the Opera House, Harold went to the Palace Theatre on the corner of Dauphine and Iberville. He stayed there until the place closed. He had his own band there for a while but most of the time they hired musicians themselves. Thomas Jefferson, Daddy Moliere, Dave Oxley and Freddie Kohllman worked there.

In 1951 Harold played at Mama Lou’s with his own band and with Kid Clayton (trumpet), Raymond Glapion (guitar), and Andrew Jefferson (drums) in 1952.

At the Happy landing he worked with Lionel Ferbos (trumpet), Herman Antoine (banjo), and Albert Jiles (drums).

At the Harmony Inn he had Willie Pajeaud (trumpet), John Smith (piano), and Alex Bigard (drums).

Then followed a very successful period with the Mighty Four at the Melody Inn on Kentucky and North Claiborne. On the cover of MONO MNLP 9, Barry Martyn, who recorded a reunion of the Mighty Four in 1963 for his own record label (Music of New Orleans or MONO), tells the story of this very successful little group. Because this record is almost impossible to find today I take the liberty of quoting a small part of the liner notes:

“One day in 1953 Alex Bigard dropped into Peterson’s Music store, to get a pair of sticks and learned from the owner that a certain Mr. Haydell, owner of a lunch bar way downtown called the Melody Inn, was thinking of putting on dances for the neighborhood crowd and was in need of a band. Bigard went home and called Haydell telling him about his great band. When the owner asked Bigard the name of the band he was told the Mighty Four. Bigard got the job and drove over to try and hire Harold Dejan. Harold fell in and Alex then called on Lionel Ferbos and George Guesnon and within 24 hours he had his Mighty Four.

They opened the following Friday at 9 p.m. and from that first night “captured” the crowd. The second week they were there Haydell moved back the lunch counters and put a rope round the band to save them from getting crushed and the next week a proper bandstand had been built of solid wood as to hold back the wild crowd. The barroom was always packed to capacity an hour before the band started. The musicians would play any tune requested of them and if they didn’t know it then Lionel Ferbos would go to Werleins next morning and buy the sheet music and write out all the parts so they could play the number that night. The liquor flowed and the good times rolled For

almost three years the band held at the Melody Inn but then the owner died and the place was turned over to one of the waiters. The policy was changed and the band folded.”

Harold adds the following comments:

“We used to cook there at night. The place would be smelling so good that people used to come by asking where that food came from. We let regular customers come back to the kitchen and get them a plate of food. After Guesnon left John Smith came in on piano. We played things like Mambo Number Five or Dark Eyes. This was a very popular group. I used to walk the bar at night when playing. Imagine me jumping up that high on and off the bar, never stopped blowing! The girls had hats passed all around the tables, “Let’s get Harold some money, Go and get back on that bar!” “Once a night is enough” I said.”

Around 1954-55 Harold also played jobs together with McNeal Breaux (bass), Clem Tervalon (trombone), Wallace Davenport (trumpet) and sometimes Emma Barrett (piano), and Cie Frazier (drums).

“Emma used to get some good jobs, she was terrific!”

He also played for a while at Gaspard’s on the corner of Bourbon and Conti. They called Gaspard the mayor of Bourbon Street. John Brunious was on trumpet, Burnell Santiago played piano and Lionel Torregano was on drums. Annie Laurie used to sing there too. She became famous with Paul Gayten’s rhythm and blues group.

After the Mighty Four disbanded in 1956, Harold went back to the Happy Landing with Willie Pajeaud (trumpet), Ernest Roubleau (guitar), and Eddie Dawson (bass). He didn’t stay there for a long time because he had a lot of work with Willie Pajeaud all over town.

When the melody Inn was sold again the new owner wanted the Mighty Four back at his place. The second Mighty Four had Lionel Ferbos, Harold, John Smith and Alex Bigard.

We're approaching now the moment when Harold started his now famous Olympian Brass Band.

In his long career Harold had been playing with probably all the brass bands in New Orleans. In 1946 he had joined the Eureka Brass Band. In 1960 he was recorded with the Eureka at Moisant Airport outside New Orleans but the recordings remain unissued. He also played with John Casimir's Tuxedo Brass Band and with the George Williams Brass Band. Following the advise of his good friend Willie Pajeaud he put together his own brass band in 1958. Originally they called it the Eureka Number Two.

"At that time I was using the name Eureka Number Two because me and Willie Pajeaud were playing together. When we had two jobs at the same time he'd go to the Eureka and I'd take my little aggregation. When Barry Martyn came to town, he told me to change the name because I shouldn't be making fans for another brass band. I called it the Olympia in 1960 because of the name of the band I had been playing in with Arnold Depass and also because there was an Olympia early in New Orleans jazz history. So I called it Dejan's Olympia Brass Band. I got three bands now. I'm on top and I'm gonna stay there. If I ever get off the top you could bury me!"

We'll leave the Olympia for a moment and come back to it later. Harold was one of the first people to play at Preservation Hall, at that time still Larry Borenstein's Art Gallery.

"Me, George Colar (Kid Sheik), Emanuel Paul, John Smith and Ernest Roubleau, Larry Borenstein used to pass the

basket around. When we felt like stopping, we stopped. We look at that basket and if it was enough we would go! Then it became a regular place with a dollar admission and they started to call it Preservation Hall. At the start there was all different bands every night. I was playing on Sundays with Punch Miller. I'm still on Sundays now. On New Year's Eve I always play with Kid Thomas' band when I'm in town."

Today Harold is still residing at Preservation Hall every Sunday night. The usual personnel of his Olympia Serenaders consists of: Milton Batiste (trumpet), Louis Nelson (trombone), Harold (alto sax), Emanuel Sayles (banjo), Anthony "Tuba Fats" Lacen (sousaphone) and Frank Parker or Stanley Williams (drums). Sweet Emma Barrett was on piano until shortly before she died.

In 1951 Harold recorded with Kid Sheik for the first issue of Barry Martyn's MONO label (MONO MNLP 1).

In 1962 the first LP by the Olympian Brass Band was recorded and issued on MONO LP 5. In 1963 Barry Martyn recorded the Mighty Four with the original members brought together again for the occasion (MONO MNLP 9).

In 1965 Harold Dejan played with Paul Barbarin's Onward Brass Band for the funeral of Lester Santiago. The funeral was recorded by Cosimo Matassa and issued as a two record set on the New Orleans based Nobiltiy label. This album is a fascinating document as the entire funeral was narrated by A. Grayson Clark, the director of Dixieland Hall at the time. "Mr. Matassa followed the march from the funeral home to the church and on to the cemetery carrying without complaint a fifty pound unit of equipment and valiantly strove to protect it from the rain

which seemed, also, to be mourning the passing of a great jazz man” (Lone Anderson in the sleeve note of *Mobility* LP 708-709).

On June 5, 1965 Harold went to England on a holiday arranged by Barry Martyn.

“Barry wanted me to be his baby’s godfather. He offered to pay a ticket for my wife too, but she said no. she wouldn’t fly to Canal Street and she didn’t go!”

Although this was a holiday Harold sat in with Barry’s band on several occasions and recorded an album with the cream of British New Orleans style musicians. It was issued as *New Orleans Anthology N.O. A.-1* and featured a Young Olympia Brass Band on side 1 and a dance band on side 2.

This is one record I never could lay hands on. If anybody who reads this should have this album or MONO MNLP-1 (another one I’m missing) let him please contact me. (M. Joly, Lysterbveslaan 4, B-2830 Rymenam, Belgium). It got a rave review in Mike Casimir’s little magazine *Jazz Times*.

I can’t resist quoting a small part of a concert review of Harold Dejan appearing with Barry Martyn’s band at the Ken Colyer Club in England: “Harold took the stand and they kicked off with “Victory Walk.” The music started swinging like nobody ever imagined it could.” (*Jazz times*, August 1965)

On Christmas Eve 1965 a dance hall reopened at Tchoupitoulas and Napoleon Avenue. The residing band had Kid Sheik Colar (trumpet), Harold Dejan (alto sax), Clifford Brown (electric guitar), and Andrew Jefferson (drums). This was right across from where Tipitina’s is now. Harold and Willie Pajeaud played at Tipitian’s before it was called that way. They had John Smith (piano) and Papa Smith (drums).

“Me and Pajeaud closed the last jitney dance (the LaVida) in the City.”

When on August 28, 1966 Zutty Singleton paid his first visit to his native city since 1924, he was greeted at the Union Station with a band consisting of John Simmons (trumpet), Dick Douthwaite (from England) and Nick Polites (from Australia) (clarinet). Harold Dejan (alto sax), Emanuel Paul (tenor sax), Allan Jaffe (sousaphone), Norwell Glass and Len Ferguson (snare drum) and Booker T. Glass (bass drum).

At the end of 1966 or the beginning of 1967 Harold took part in a concert for the Musicologists National Fraternity Council together with Jack Bachman and Ernie Cagnolatti (trumpet), Paul Crawford (trombone), Hank Kmen (clarinet, tenor sax), Danny Barker (guitar), Bill Humphries (banjo), Chink Martin (bass) and Chester Jones (drums).

Early in 1967 the Olympia was featured in a move for the U. S. Information Agency. In the Spring of 1967 Harold played once more with his old friend Eddie “Big Head” Johnson for the marriage of Ice Farceur’s son. Others in the band were Percy and Willie Humphrey, DeDe and Billie Pierce, Louis Nelson, Sing Miller, Simon Frazier (Cie’s piano playing brother), Narvin Kimball, Chester Zardis and, of course, Cie Frazier.

In 1967 the Olympia played in Washington D. C. for the 4th of July celebration. In September 1967 Dave Oxley (drums) was leading a band in a new Minstrel Show at the Bayou Room on Bourbon. Other members of the band were: Henry Hawkins (trumpet), Harold (alto sax), Leo Thompson (piano), Edgard Blanchard (guitar). The entertainers included “Lazybones,” “Pelican The Kid” and “Smokescreen.”

“Smokescreen is Kidney Stew’s little brother.”

In October 1967 the Olympia went on a first European tour as part of an expedition to promote tourism in the South. They played in 17 different countries. Several recordings are known to exist (Rome, Paris, London) but all remain unissued. In July 1968 the band went back to Europe and recorded in England on the steps of St. Martin in the Fields and on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral, both in London. Another recording was done in Berlin on August 1, 1968 and issued on Saba MPS 15196.

In the spring of 1971 the Olympia finally made it's first American record (Audiophile AP 1008).

I could go on for pages listing all the activities of Dejan's Olympia Brass Band. They made at least 10 European tours. They played for Royalty and Presidents. They did a 90 minute stand in front of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and Pope Paul VI came to a window of his Vatican office to get a better look.

They played in movies (one of the most famous being "Live and Let Die" a James Bond Film) and in numerous television shows.

In 1977 they were part of "Fat Tuesday and All That Jazz," a Mardi Gras-related extravaganza developed by Allan Jaffe in which the band performed with dancers of the Arthur Hall Afro-American Ensemble of Philadelphia.

The list of musicians who were, or still are, members of the Olympia Brass Band is impressive. I'll have a try although I know it will not be complete.

Trumpets: Ernie Cagnolatti, Kid Sheik Colar, Andy Anderson, Milton Batiste, Clive Wilson, Chris Clifton, Edmund Foucher, Teddy Riley, Reginald Koeller, Lionel Ferbos, Kid Thomas Valentine.

Trombones: Louis Nelson, Albert Warner, Earl Humphrey, Gerald Joseph, Paul Crawford, Frank Naundorf, Worthia Thomas, Homer Eugene, Wendell Eugene, Lester Calliste, Freddy Lonzo.

Reeds: Louis Cottrell, Jesse Charles, Leo Thomas, Emanuel Paul, Manny Crusto, Lars Edegran, Joe Torregano, Darryl Adams, David Grillier, Ernest Watson, Donald Minor.

Bass Horn: Anderson Minor, Wilbert Tillman, Allan Jaffe, William Grant Brown, Anthony "Tuba Fats" Lacen.

Drums: Cie Frazier, Henry "Booker T" Glass, Andrew Jefferson, Nowell "Papa" Glass, John Smith, Leroy "Boogie" Breaux, Benny Jones, Andrew Green

Banjo: Emanuel Sayles

The Olympia played for the funerals of many New Orleans greats like George Lewis, Alphone Picou, Papa Celestin, Kid Howard, Jim Robinson, Billie Pierce and Albert Burbank.

After the Audiophile issue in 1971 three other American LP's followed:

-Here Come Da Great Olympia Band - Preservation Hall VPS-4

-Dejan's Olympia Brass Band and Serenaders - own label BBs-1

-In a Gospel Mood - own label - OBBG-2

The last album features the singing of Lillian Boutte' (One Mo' Time), Edgar Poree and Rickie Monie.

In 1981 the band recorded in Holland during a church service and at a concert (Beerendonk 99912).

Further more in 1981 there was a private issue by Lykes Lines in New Orleans featuring the Olympia Brass Band and the Loyola University Saints Band. Harold wrote me recently that a new record is in the making, featuring the singing of Sylvia “Kuumba” Williams, member of the original “One Mo’ Time” cast. In running the Olympia Harold relies a great deal upon his assistant leader Milton Batiste.

”I played on a Sunday with Anderson Minor. I heard Milton Batiste and I was amazed by his playing. So because Cag couldn’t walk that much anymore I offered him a job with my Olympia. He used to be a helluva rock and roll player! I like him like a son, that’s why I made him assistant leader of the band. He does most of the business for me now.”

So here we are in 1983. Harold has been in music for more than sixty years and he is still going strong. He loves people and they love him back. There is always room in his band for visiting musicians to sit in. At 74 Harold is one of the most active musicians in New Orleans. He has his three brass bands working, he has his Olympia Serenaders every Sunday night at Preservation hall. Let him have the final word:

“I’m well kept. I graze on good pastures!”

Baby Dodds
by Ronny Soderberg
Feb. 1951

In April, 1950, Baby Dodds suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. For many days he lay in a critical condition. When he recovered, his doctor told him to either stay and recuperate in

the hospital, or to leave New York and get a long rest. Baby immediately took the plane to Chicago.

When he arrived there, on June 1st, only his old friend Natty Dominique was there to meet him, and Natty works at the airport.

I dropped around Baby's house recently, and found him looking well. I snapped his picture, asked a few questions, but I didn't want to tire him and there is much more I'd like to hear about and from Baby. This much, I did learn:

Baby Dodds was born on Christmas Eve in 1894. In the Uptown section of New Orleans. Named Warren, for his father, he was immediately called Baby because he was the youngest in the family.

After he started high school he resented the use of this name by his schoolmates, and it wasn't until after several battles that he discovered his brother Johnny had put the boys up to the whole thing.

His mother died when Baby was nine, and her ambitions for her youngest son to go to Tuskegee and study medicine died with her.

By this time, Baby was part of the 'second line' in the street parades, and when he heard Mack Murray's drum he knew he'd found the musical instrument meant for him. "Mack's drum," said Baby, "was the head of a banjo with heavy, red cord strung across the bottom. It didn't look much like a snare drum but it was wonderful. I haven't heard the likes of it since!"

Baby's first teacher was legendary Dave Perkins, top tram man at the time. Later on, Baby took lessons from Walter Brundy and Louis Cottrell.

The first job came easily. In 1915, it was with Willie Hightower's "American Jazz Band," After playing for dances in the St. Catherine church Annex, there would be jam sessions, usually on Sundays, at Hightower's home: Willie on trumpet, Roy Palmer on trombone, Joe Welch on violin, and Baby on drums.

"Which bands did you play with?" is a hard question for most New Orleans musicians to answer because, generally, they played with all of them, at one time or another.

Later on, Baby joined Sidney Devigne's band, in Storyville. Then he switched to Manuel Manetta's band, and after that he joined Bunk Johnson's Eagle Band, When the regular man, Henry Zeno, died he was replaced by Henry Martin, and when he left, Baby got the job. His big break came, according to Dodds, when he became drummer in Oscar Celestin's Tuxedo Band.

By 1918, after Storyville closed and most musicians had left for greener fields, Baby joined Fate Marable's band on the riverboat. After that he did not see much of New Orleans but he did spend a lot of time in St. Louis. Then, Armstrong and Dodds quit Marable's group, and returned home.

Two weeks later King Oliver called him to San Francisco, and Baby went. But when Oliver left for Chicago, it took a lot of persuasion by brother Johnny to get Baby to go along with the band: his secret ambition was to see Honolulu, and Chicago was so far away..

What Oliver accomplished in Chicago is now jazz history. The Lincoln Gardens became the Mecca for jazz lovers. George Wettling, Art Hodes, Jess Stacy, Benny Goodman, Floyd O'Brien and other youngsters at the time were inspired by the

King's band when they came to hear the hottest music in Chicago.

Baby stayed in Chicago after King Oliver left for New York. He played with Arthur Campbell, and others. From 1928 to 1930 he was at Bert Kelly's Stable with Honore Dutrey, Freddy Keppard, Bill Johnson, and brother Johnny. Baby tells about one kid who hung around watching him manipulate the drums. He was Gene Krupa.

His biggest thrill, said Baby emphatically, was when he spent six wonderful weeks in France during the 1948 jazz festival in Nice.

Since I'm no a musician, I asked Baby just what is expected of a drummer in a good jazz band. "He is expected to beat and to inspire the rest of the band," answered Baby, and then went on to explain how a poor drummer will hold a band down and tend to discourage the other members.

The big question now is, will Baby Dodds ever play again? According to his doctor, he should not touch the drums if he is interested in prolonging his life. But Baby thinks the doctor could be wrong!

The important thing, of course, is that the world's greatest drummer, in the opinion of many jazz authorities, is still around to remind jazz enthusiasts of jazz's great heritage.

**Sidney Desvignes
March/April, 1960**

Sidney Desvignes was born in New Orleans September 11, 1895. He died December 2, 1959. Pneumonia was the cause of death. The reason for this delay in reporting his demise, is due to

the fact that although Desvignes has been living in California for many years, he has not been active in music at all. Sidney passed away at the “Olive View Hospital” in Pacoima, California.

Desvignes’ first experiences with playing jazz in New Orleans was in the old restricted red-light district at the “101 Ranch” Café. He also is identified in the personnel of the old “Excelsior Brass Band,” and also the “Maple Leaf Orchestra.” Later, he joined Fate Marable aboard the S.S. Capitol, replacing Joe Howard. Louis Armstrong was first cornet, Desvignes second.

When Satchmo joined Joe Oliver in Chicago in 1923 (Sic: 1922), Sidney moved up to the first chair on cornet, and Amos White assumed the second chair. This orchestra made one record, and as far as we know, it is the only one by which we can remember his work. Following the job on the Capitol, he worked for several years on excursions between N.O. and Cincinnati, on the S.S. Island Queen. The personnel of the bands during this time included such greats as Red Allen, Eddie Cherie, Bill Matthews, Louis Barbarin, Fats Pichon, Pops Foster, and Al Morgan. This continued until about 1927.

In late 1928 or 1929, he returned to New Orleans for a short stay, attempting to imitate the large white bands which were prevalent at that time. He enjoyed some sort of success with this type band, but not too long afterwards, the bottom dropped out for jazzmen around New Orleans. His last attempt to keep an organized group going was in 1932, aboard the S.S. President. Soon after this, he moved to California permanently.

His first attempts at earning a livelihood in California was by operating a night club. This venture was not altogether successful. Later on, he operated a restaurant with better success. He was still in this business at the time of his death. It was

especially known to feature New Orleans dishes, and patrons reported the food excellent.

Sidney rarely mingled with jazzmen unless they came to his place of business, and very seldom attended functions having to do with jazz. Such an authority as Berta Wood reports that the last time she saw Sidney was when George Lewis played in California, and that Sidney appeared a bit discomfited by being there.

He is survived by his wife, and one son. The son resides at 2715 Marvin Street, Los Angeles, California.

Small of stature, very light complected, we recall Sidney played “dates” across the lake at Pass Christian, Biloxi, Mandeville and Covington. He frequently had “musical battles” with another former jazz great, Buddy Petit. Their styles were entirely different. Petit played ‘rough and ready,’ while Sidney played the true and straight and hot. One particular feature in which these two contemporary cornetists resembled each other was that when they really blew, their necks and cheeks would puff out a mile!

Sam Dutrey

by Mona MacMurray

Spring, 1982

Clarinetist Sam Dutrey, Jr. Was the son of early jazz clarinetist Sam, Sr. And the nephew of well-known trombonist, Honore Dutrey. He died while playing a job at the New Orleans Rivergate Convention Center in July 1971.

He played an early session at Maison Bourbon on the corner of St. Peter and Bourbon Streets that day. Kid Sheik and I had been with him there from 5:30 until he got off at 7:30. He sat with us during the breaks and we had been talking about the fact that Sheik's doctor told him he had diabetes and had put him on a diet. Sam said, "Oh, I've had that for years and have been on that diet for a long time; it isn't complicated at all, I can get you straight on that."

When he got off the bandstand at 7:30, he packed his horn and said, "I'll have to rush off to get home and change clothes; I'm working at the Rivergate tonight." He started off, took a few steps then turned around and called back, "Now look, Sheik, you and I are going to get together and I'm going to get you straight on that diet. You won't have to worry about pulling that list out of your pocket every time you want to eat something. We'll get together, you hear. So long!" He waved and walked out the door.

A few hours later we were at Preservation Hall and someone called to tell us that Sam had collapsed on the first break and was dead when the ambulance arrived. Shortly after the call we went across the street to Johnny White's bar to watch a memorial program on television for Louis Armstrong who had died on July 6, and saw Lil Hardin Armstrong who had been performing, collapse and die during the show. Musicians always say that death comes in three's - and that July in 1971 seemed to prove it.

When I first met Sam Dutrey I wondered why I hadn't read anything about him. In search of the answer to that question I learned that he was very difficult to interview, not because he wasn't amiable, but because of his taciturn nature. At that time

there was no record of a successful interview with him so I decided to try my luck. As a result, just about six months before his death I got a long interview with him. It took a lot of time, tape and patience, but once he got going everything was fine. I used the reel-to-reel tape and have a total of about two and a half hours since I had put it on the slowest speed so I wouldn't have to interrupt the interview to change tape too often.

Jerry Green and Sam were long-time close friends and a few weeks earlier had toured Japan with Kid Sheik. During the trip Sheik shot a lot of color slides and on the night of March 23, 1971 Sheik, Jerry, Sam, his friend Ida MaeGay, and I were in my apartment looking at the slides, talking, having a few drinks and preparing for the interview. Jerry had to leave early to pick up his wife who had attended a meeting that night. After he left we set up the mike and got started.

The beginning was a bit rough, it went like this:

MM: Sam, when were you born?

Sam: 1909, March 13

MM: the Jazz Family album gives the date as "about 1915"

Sam: Wrong

MM: Where were you born?"

Sam: New Orleans.

MM: Do you know the address or the neighborhood:

Sam: Lowerline Street between Wall and General Haig.

MM: Where did you go to school?

Sam: McDonogh; from '24, to Willet, from '35 to New Orleans University.

MM: What level did you reach, what grade?

Sam: I got out in the third year of college.

MM: What did you study”

Sam: Lessee . . I went to college to be a doctor.

MM: You took pre-med?

Sam: No, I got out, they wanted to tell me what to do and I didn't want to do it.

MM: When did you first start playing music?

Sam: I think I took classes at age eight from my father.

MM: Your father was a famous musician.

Sam: Yes, he was a musician.

MM: What was his full name?

Sam: Samuel D. Dutrey, Sr.

MM: Where did your father play?

Sam: He played at Spanish Fort, Milneburg, and all those places and all those houses they had out there at the lakefront.

Once we got into the music Sam opened up a bit and after a while we all just forgot about the tape recorder and let it run for almost three hours. There's a lot on the tap that I haven't transcribed because it was just a rambling on about some non-music and not always interesting subjects actually - just general conversation. But, at this point we got into a discussion about Sam, Sr. Which brought out the strange fact that Sam did not speak to his father for about 15 years.

He confirmed the fact that his father was born in 1888 but couldn't remember the day or month, and in reply to the question about the musicians his father played with, he said, "All of them in the jazz book (the Family Album of Jazz) who were playing during his time: Amos Riley, Alphonse Picou, Lorenzo Tio and all of those people."

He wasn't specific on any of the places his father played except for one. "The only thing I can really recall is when I was a kid and one time I wanted to go hear him play but they wouldn't let me. It was the Buffalo Square up in the 7th Ward, a 'no minors allowed' place."

He said that his father could play all instruments and when I asked what his father's favorite instrument was he replied, "Well, he never would tell me, but he played alto and clarinet most of the time."

Although he took lessons from his father at about age eight he mentioned that he "got into a jumbug and quit speaking to him for about 15 years. "he wouldn't go into detail except to say that "I just wanted my own way and that was all." He also wouldn't discuss if or when he made up with Sam, Sr., who died in 1941.

Sam's earliest professional job was with Jerry Green, "Lessee . . . I think it was when we opened up a drug store when I was living uptown. There was Jerome Green on banjo, myself playing clarinet and Son Lennis on drums. Just the three of us." They got eight dollars and all they could eat and drink for the job. In talking about his friendship with Jerry Green he remembered, "There was a fellow back then who looked just like Jerry. There was no relationship but they used to pass for brothers, just kidding you know. You couldn't tell them apart. I knew all of Jerry's brothers but I didn't know about him.

"Back then when his grandmother put the whip on him, she used to put it on me, too. She herded both of us, we were friends as well as musical companions.

"We had a little group, George Williams, Jerome, myself, and Willy Lennis, that's all we were using at the time. We

played at different places for people we knew and fraternity houses and parties and all that.”

Jerry Green is a little older than Sam, he was born on June 23, 1903, not in 1899 as listed in the “Family album.” They went to the same college but Jerry went there earlier than Sam did. He says of their college days, “Well, I was learning clarinet in elementary school and Jerome had gone to college and the lady who was in charge of the music there asked him if he could get me to join the college band, and that I did. But who would believe it, an elementary student in a college band! That” why I went to the school after I finished high school, still playing in the band.”

Sam’s only recollection of his mother is that she died on Christmas Day when he was about two years old. He remembers that after her funeral, he was standing with his grandmother at the gate and saw another funeral passing. “I told my grandmother that they were bringing Blanch back, that’s the only thing I remember.”

His grandmother raised him. Two brothers died, one before he was born and the other not long before the interview; he had a sister still living at that time. The brother played clarinet for a while but wasn’t seriously interested in music and quit playing completely.

Sam started playing regularly with Isaiah Morgan, then went to the Entertainers Club with Willie O’Connell and “after that I joined Sidney Desvigne’s band and stayed with him for quite a while. We went on the boat up to St. Paul. After that I went with Joe Robichaux. It was about 1933. We played here in town and all over the states; Texas, Louisiana, South and North Carolina, Indiana, Michigan and all those places. We stay out in different towns for three or four months at a time.” The band

members re recalls, were, “Joe Robichaux, and we had Kildee Holloway, trumpet; John LeRoy, trumpet, Jack Willis, trumpet; Waldren Joseph and Clem Tervalon, trombones; Willie O’Connell, Dingus Kidshaw, Joe on piano, Cyril Orvis and myself on tenor and, lessee, Jeff from Jackson, Mississippi and Maurice Justin, alto.”

Sam made his home in Opelousas, Louisiana from 1923 until his death. He owned a home there but came to New Orleans to play music and to relax and have fun. He’d stay in town for about two weeks at a time frequently. In the late 1940’s he played with Freddie Kohlman’s band. “We had a band for quite a spell but disbanded because we didn’t think we were getting enough money. Lessee . . . it was from about 1947. We had a tight combo, there wasn’t anyone near who could excel us. There were Waldron “Frog” Joseph, Jack Willis, Freddie, myself, Jerry Adams, Quentin Baptiste. We played mostly army, marine and naval bases and then quite a few spot jobs, a few clubs. We played out of town in Springfield, Illinois; we stay there two years. Then we went to Evansille, Indiana and stayed there about ten months. We left there and came south and played about five or six weeks in the Rhythm Club then we went to Sid Davilla’s Mardi Gras Lounge and we stayed there, I don’t know for sure but it was about one or two years and after that we played at the corner of Louisiana and Carondelet for an indefinite period.”

Asked about where they played in the two out-of-town jobs mentioned he said they played at the Holiday Inn in Springfield and the Show Bar in Evansville; “When we changed jobs we packed up and went somewhere else.”

On the subject of why he did so much traveling out of town he said, “The money was out there, they weren’t paying

anything worthwhile in New Orleans. About the most you could make was sixty dollars a week and that wasn't anything. My whiskey bill was \$65 a week."

After Freddie Kohlman's band, Sam got tired of running on the road and decided to stick around home for a while. "I think the other fellows from the band were doing better than I was, but I went to Lake Charles and made my living there." He didn't have anything to add about the time he spent in Lake Charles and I didn't pursue the question because he didn't seem to want to talk about it. So changing the subject some I asked, "Did you ever do anything but play music for a living?" "No," he said, "and that shows that a man could make a living playing music only. I did it and made a good living. I'd wait for my price when they asked me to play I'm going to get my price or I won't play, that's for sure. But there are exceptions, like those good fellows when we went to Japan. Well, I'll accept anything they give me because it's a nice job. We got along like brothers, no arguments. He was referring to his tour of Japan with Kid Sheik's band in late 1970. During that trip he and Jerry Green played together for the first time in many years and he said he enjoyed that very much.

When he started to talk about Japan he got really enthusiastic. "Oh well, I'll tell you, it was remarkable over there, really nice. The people go so far out of their way to do things for you. They put on a party and it was really swell, I'm telling you. The jazz club over there took us to Expo70 and I want to tell you something, nobody in the world would do what those people did for us. They came to the hotel, picked us up and we had coffee then we had cabs to the Expo and we went to the American House. After that we went to lunch and after lunch we walked

around. When we went back to the hotel we had showers and went down to supper and then they had a big party for us. All of that was free, they really treated us fine.

“I’ll tell you the truth, if I could be born again, I’d rather be born over there, that would make me a Negro Japanese. Those people go out so far to please you, that you would rather be over there than there, that’s for sure. And you don’t have to study Japanese, they all speak English as well as we do.

“The food was really good. It’s just like in America, you get something you want anywhere. I didn’t always go to restaurants, sometimes I’d stay in the hotel and get a piece of cheese, some crackers and a cup of cocoa at the snack bar. And I was crazy about the sandwiches they make. I ate a lot of salads, too and they were good, kept you full.”

That tour of Japan was Sam’s 12th trip out of the country. The earlier trips were mainly to Cuba, generally with Joe Robichaux. In 1936 the band traveled all over Cuba with the Knights of Pythian.

At the time of the interview Sam had been playing jobs around New Orleans for several months, and here the talk got around to the state of jazz in general. He said that in Opelousas there was pretty good jazz. They played a lot of the same things that are played in New Orleans. He mentioned one band in particular, The Creoles, that was very good. The band was made up of people who worked in one of the city’s stores and they ranged in age from about 28 to mid-50’s. They played around town and the people of Opelousas seemed to like jazz, but Sam thought there could be more of that type music made available. He had plans to try to get bands to play dances at church halls like they were doing in New Orleans. He thought it would bring

out the older people. He mentioned that recently he had played a job in a Catholic church hall at Miro and Congress Streets and said, “You wouldn’t believe those settled people out there, they marched and second-lined and really enjoyed the music. He also talked about the dances held at St. Augustines with Andrew Morgan and Milford Dolliole providing the bands. There were dances and suppers serving spaghetti or fried chicken and everyone had a good time. We were still going to them during that period.

He said, “Except for Preservation and Dixieland Halls, there isn’t too much good jazz on the streets any longer,” and then added that Dixieland Hall was going to close. Dixieland did close on April 12 that year. it was really sad. Al Clark had closed down once before but re-opened, however on this closing he said he just couldn’t make it. We talked about how we hated to see it close, there were good musicians playing there and whenever a musician got sick there would be a benefit concert. Then Sam said, “Well, I’m trying to find out who the people are who lease the place and will try to talk them into letting me lease it, and I’ll keep it going.” That was a nice dream but arrangements had already been made to lease the building to a porno place.

“There’s still some hope,” he added. “Maison Bourbon has good jazz and the Court of Two Sisters, Thomas Jefferson is there now. I don’t know what they’re going to do with that place where the Red Garter was, across from Maison Bourbon, but it is going to cost a lot of money for the lease and remodeling. They can make something there with the right people coming in.” As it turned out a good jazz spot, Crazy Shirley’s opened there not long after.

From here the conversation went off music and on the subject of diets, Sam who was 6 feet 4 and a half inches tall had just brought his weight down from 275 pounds to 212. His advice, “Eat the right food every day, probably same food you’re eating now but less and don’t use much salt.

Sam also had plans to make a lot of money, “I’m going to make about five million dollars in four years. I don’t know how I’m going to do it but that’s what I’m going to do.” He said he was going to buy an airplane, learn how to fly it then use it to fly all over, anywhere he wanted to go and that any band he worked with would have to fly with him. “Don, you like flying?, I asked and he said, “No, definitely, I do not like flying but it's a good business venture. It costs a lot to run a plane but you come out all right. All during this exchange he kept grinning, not really serious just sort of day dreaming out loud, and added some more things he planned to do with the five million dollars, like opening some more jazz spots.

The next subject to come up was the mess that Carnival 1971 was with all the street people in town making such a mess of the Quarter and when asked what he did during carnival he said, “nursed my sore finger.”

About that sore finger, Cap’n John Handy’s funeral in Pass Christian in late January was a big affair. Most of us went over in a bus, but Sam drove and on the way home almost lost a finger. “The car stopped, maybe the motor was too hot and I decided to see what was happening, and put my hand under the alternator and it did its thing. It’s a good thing I went with the alternator or “I’d have lost the finger. It was badly cut, all pushed to the side just like a switch engine. But, we had an ice chest with food and cokes and a lot of ice so I froze the finger

until I could get back in town to get it taken care of, which was 9:25 that night but it healed fine with just a slight scar.

After that the talk went from the result of the music unions merging - how it came down on the hiring of union musicians by most of the organizations who couldn't afford the prices and hired non-union bands to politics - and Sam suggested we play it back . . . so we spent the next couple of hours talking about what was on the tape - too bad I didn't have another recorder going for that!

The night Sam died, Sheik and I came back to my place to listen to the tape again and to end an epilogue . . . mentioning the last time we saw him. On paper a lot of his answers seem stilted, but even on the tape, you can hear the little chuckle in his voice. Sam was a tall, very dignified and beautiful man. We still miss him very much.

Eddie "Daddy" Edwards
July/Aug, 1963

On Tuesday, April 9th, 1963, Father time drew the curtain a little bit closer on the group of New Orleans Boys that called themselves the *Original Dixieland Jazz Band*. Of the original five - Nick LaRocca, Larry Shields, Henry Ragas, Eddie Edwards and Tony Spargo - only Tony is left. Ragas died very soon after the band came into prominence at Reisenweber's in New York City (His place was immediately taken by J. Russel Robinson, who, incidentally, is very much alive and operating a very lucrative music publishing company in California.)

Larry Shields heard the call on November 21, 1953, and Nick LaRocca followed him on February 22, 1961. If we take into

consideration the first band with which Eddie Edwards was affiliated, we can add two more prominent jazzmen to the list: Alcide “Yellow” Nunez, the clarinetist who started out with Johnny Stein’s Dixie Jazz Band, died several years ago; while Stein himself (known by his half-brother’s name - and actually baptized John Philip Hountha) went to his reward September 30, 1962. So we can truly say that the O.D.J.B. was of a fairly hardy stock.

Edwin Bradford Edwards, Sr. Was born in New Orleans in 1892. His affection for the music of New Orleans became evident at an extraordinary young age. Legend has it (and this story is not given the “O.K.” by his family) that when he was a gangling, freckled face kid riding a bicycle about town, he became so enamored by the music and the rhythm he was hearing all around him in the streets that he sold his bike for \$5.00 and purchased a battered old second hand trombone. We are not sure if he was entirely self-taught, but doubt it seriously, for he was extremely capable of fast reading, and frequently took jobs in theatre pits with orchestras composed entirely of “readers.” He also became quite proficient on the violin, and not infrequently occupied a chair among the “longhairs.”

It is a well known fact that much bickering and arguments went on within the ODJB. We need only to refer you to Mr. Harry A. Brunn’s book on the ODJB, practically dictated by Mr. LaRocca himself, to confirm this statement. It is also equally well known that Mr. Edwards was an astute business man in handling the affairs of the band, and also was more than a little instrumental in keeping the group together as long as it held.

Almost exactly at the time the band reached its pinnacle of success, Eddie went into the army. They had completed a series

of recordings for Columbia and for Victor, and these were selling like the proverbial hotcakes. Their popularity took them into the Ziegfeld Midnight Frolics, where they rubbed shoulders with such celebrities as Fannie Brice, Bert Williams, W. C. Fields, to mention just a few. In 1919 they were booked for a European tour, which included France and England. Here, they displayed their wares in such entertainment “palaces” as the Follies Bergere and Kit Kat Club in France, and in the Hippodrome and Palladium in London. The ODJB made history by becoming the first band to play a command performance before the King and Queen of England. Eddie’s place was taken by another Orleanian, Emile Christian, during this entire tour.

In 1920, Mr. Edwards immediately rejoined the ODJB, and again began a series of triumphs. The band stayed together as a unit until the middle twenties, and with the parting of the ways, he organized another Dixieland outfit that opened at the Silver Slipper in New York. From 1930 and well into the 1940s, he worked with numerous “society” bands. The day for the smaller Dixieland group was gone and “big bands” became stylish. He was seldom without work around New York City, and only visited New Orleans once a year.

The band reorganized to appear in the Texas Exposition of 1937. It was the exact same group, with J. Russel Robinson at the keyboard. They recorded about a half-dozen of the old numbers under modern recording conditions, and the comparison between the discs made in 1917 and in 1937 is nothing short of remarkable. Besides the marked improvement in sound, the ensemble work and the true value of the individual instruments permits a very fine evaluation of tone and musicianship, a thing that was impossible on the old discs.

Milt Gabler, bossman of Commodore, Decca, etc., made a gesture of appreciation towards Edwards, when he issued a 12 inch LP under the title of "Eddie Edwards Dixieland jazz Band." Tony Spargo is the only other member of the ODJB present at this session besides Eddie, but the album is a fine show-piece for the trombone-leaderman, and for Spargo's drumming and kazoo. In all probability, this was the last session Edwards took part in, and it was certainly the first where his name appeared as leader.

Although Eddie's weight had climbed from 180 up to close to 250 pounds, he was an ardent fisherman. On his short trips to New Orleans, he invariably went out to the Rigolets and dipped a line. On his last visit here two years ago his fishing trip almost proved to be his last. Eddie was alone in his skiff in the treacherous waters of the Rigolets. A tug-boat, lugging a string of barges either did not see him or paid no attention to his frantic cries to attract their attention. They passed much too close to him. His skiff was overturned, and Eddie was sucked beneath one of the barges. The bottom of the barge was covered with barnacles, and their sharp shells tore into Eddie's flesh. He was rolled like a barrel, for almost two blocks, underwater the entire time. Good fortune came in the form of a stranger in a speed boat who had witnessed the accident, and through his efforts, Edwards was extracted from beneath the barge, more dead than alive. He was bandaged from head to foot and had to use crutches for months afterwards. This was the last time your reporter saw him, when he visited him at his sisters' apartment on Carrollton Avenue. In spite of his numerous gainful injuries, he was still enthusiastic and exuberant.

In New York City, for many years he coached a boys' baseball team of the West Side YMCA. He also gave music

lessons, played in the symphony orchestra, in dance bands, and occasionally sat in with Dixieland outfits. In his later years, he lived at No. 6 Amsterdam Avenue, in New York, on the third floor of an elevator-less apartment house. This climb up three floors was anything but good for a man of Eddie's years and build, to say nothing of someone who had suffered at least one previous coronary. . . Eddie's trombone, occupies one of the places of honor in the very first display in the New Orleans Jazz Museum. With it are Larry Shields clarinet, Tony Spargo's cymbal, kazoo and woodblocks, advertisements for the very first jazz record they made in 1917, and autographed pictures and letters from various members of the band....

Chinee Foster Dies

Sept/Oct, 1962

Death on Sept. 8 put an abrupt end to the comeback of Abbie "Chinee" Foster. The 72-year-old drummer had just finished two recording sessions - his first since recording with Oscar "Papa" Celestin back in 1927 - when the end came.

Starting his career as both a drummer and a singer with the Tuxedo Orchestra, under the direction of William "Bebe" Ridgley, he belonged to the golden era of jazz - 1917. His contemporary musicians who brought fame to New Orleans included Baby Dodds, Papa Cottrell, Lawrence Marrero, Arnold DuPass, Dede Chandler and John Robichaux.

"Chinee" also had the distinction of playing aboard the S. S. Madison, which plied between West End and the Covington-Madisonville-Mandeville vicinity.

Following the sessions with Celestin in 1927 “Chinee” completely dropped out of the Jazz scene, due to a prolonged illness. Late in 1961, Abbie Foster was rediscovered and asked to join the cavalcade of old-timers playing at Preservation Hall. His comeback reached its pinnacle when he was recorded by Nesuhi Ertegun for Atlantic records, and immediately did another session for Grayson Mills. George

Lewis, Billie and Dede Pierce and Kid Clayton were among the musicians with whom he recorded.

He died at his residence, 2710 Allen Street, and was buried in the rites of the Catholic Church.

Pops Foster

by **S. Marshall Peterson**

May/June, 1967

From May 19, 1892, when he was born at McCall, Louisiana, Pops has traveled extensively, all around the world, helping spread the gospel of traditional jazz with such greats as King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, Kid Ory, Papa Celestin, Sidney Bechet, Bunk Johnson, Sammy Price and Early Hines, and this is naming only a few of the “greats” he has played with in a span of more than 65 years.

Since 1956, Pops has called San Francisco his home. He came out to play at the now defunct Club Hangover at the invitation of owner “Doc” Dougherty who picked each member of the band he wanted to play at his club, with leader Earl Hines. In 1959 Pops took a slight leave of absence to play with the Sammy Price band in the music Festival held in France. Most recently he

has played with Turk Murphy, and the Clancy Hayes All-Stars, and several jobs promoted for him by NOJC members.

Pops has had a long friendship with Louis Armstrong dating back to the time in 1914 when he got Lois his first job with the Kid Ory band. They played on the riverboats together in 1919 and when Pops got married 30 years ago it was Louis who “stood up” for Pops at the wedding. In an interview between Pops and Louis in San Francisco about 1960, an interesting fact was brought out, not too generally known. From 1921 to 1928 Pops was playing the tuba, and then one Friday night, a valve broke on the tuba and Pops couldn’t get it fixed over the week-end, so the next night he brought his string bass to the job and started playing it gain. The boss liked it so well that he said “Forget about getting your tuba fixed,” and from that time on Pops has never gone back to the tuba.

Pops went to the Mardi Gras in New Orleans when he was about 10 or 11, and liked the town so well he never went back to McCall. His first instrument was the cello, but he started playing string bass in 1907. He and his brother, Willie, used to work together, and at first Pops got Willie to carry his bass viol, and Pops carried Willie’s violin case, because he had convinced his brother he wasn’t big enough or strong enough to carry the big bass. This arrangement lasted until Pops got his first job playing a party, and that was the last of Willie carrying the bass for Pops.

In 1908 Pops started playing with the Magnolia Band for \$9.00 per week. Later King Oliver joined this band. The band made more money in tips than in pay, and in fact they even hired a man “to pass the hat” for \$7.00 per week.

Foster stayed with King Oliver until 1912. Although Pops left New Orleans in 1919 to play on the riverboats, as did Louis Armstrong, during the period from 1921-1922 he remembers playing with the Roseal Band, The Eagle Band, Golden Leaf Band, The Superior Band, Imperial Band, Tuxedo Band, Magnolia Band, the Young Olympia Band and the Old Olympia Band. When he was in the marching bands he played the tuba.

When Pops and Louis left New Orleans in 1919 along with Johnny St. Cyr and Baby Dodds, they went up the river to St. Louis, and for the next 7 or 8 years, on and off Pops played on the riverboats. On their first trip they continued on from St. Louis to Rock island, Ill., and Dubuque, Iowa, and back to St. Louis for the opening of the boating season, Decoration Day, 1919. It took four months to make the trip up the river to St. Paul and back to New Orleans. Much of the time was used in waiting for the water to be low enough to pass under the bridges on account of the smoke stacks on the boat. The stacks were lowered for the bridges but even so it was a tight clearance that could be completed only at low water.

In 1921 Pops went to Los Angeles to play with Papa Mutt Carey, and returned again in 1922 to play with Kid Ory. After that Pops traveled between New York, St. Louis and Los Angeles for a long period of time. He became associated with Sidney Bechet both in this country and in France. According to Pops, Sidney was largely responsible for bringing jazz to the Boston area, helping to form jazz clubs in that area, and encouraging the appreciation of traditional jazz.

Pops has been honored to play at three of the Musical Festivals held in France. In 1948 he played with Milton Mezzrow,

in 1952 with Jimmy Archey, and in 1959 with Sammy Price's All-Stars.

"The first number I was taught to play" says Pops, was "Closer Walk with Thee," but it wasn't until Early Hines wrote a special arrangement for him, that Pops had an outstanding solo on this number. Another of the tunes that Pops is famous for is his "The World is Waiting for the Sunrise." This solo originated when Pops was "covering" for the piano player in the band who did not know the solo, and Pops didn't want the boss to know.

Pops, now going on 76, has no idea of retirement. He has already made three tours of Europe and Africa, and now has plans to go on his fourth European tour, starting early in 1966. To those of you who have had the privilege of knowing Pops Foster, you will agree that not only is he an exceptionally fine musician, but that he is a real gentleman and philosopher and a person you are glad to call your friends.

Four New Orleans Clarinetists

**Sidney Arodin, Irving Fazola, Edmond Hall, Raymond Burke
by Gilbert M. Erskine
Fall, 1975**

The New Orleans source of jazz, and hegemony of the New Orleans style in the first third of this century, are no longer seriously disputed anywhere. Critics, historians, and writers continue to marvel at the achievements of the New Orleans musicians: coherence, order, and sensitivity right in the middle of a colossal ensemble attack; a profound sense of the blues woven into the fabric of their phrases; and their development, in the 1920's, of the long, fiery, melodic solo line. It was inevitable that

jazz styles would split and branch as times changed, but there is no gainsaying today of the values of the classic New Orleans recordings, or that the style was *sine quo non* in the first high level of vitality American jazz reached.

At some point in the New Orleans milieu, the evolving instrumental components of the dance band were permanently fixed; rhythm, plus a front line of cornet, clarinet, and trombone, and an occasional saxophone, violin, or 2nd cornet. Probably for economy, the bands traveling the vaudeville circuits and for distant jobs used the basic front line of cornet, clarinet, and trombone familiar to most of us. Given the improvisational nature of the music, this trio component provided an ideal balance for jazz counterpoint. And given the ethos of the jazz spirit - triumph, tension, an affirmation of enduring strength, a basic sense of joy - these horns could surge into a thundering ensemble without the clutter and chaos a multiple line of instruments would cause.

Each component horn had a circumscribed role, yet there is the wonderful paradox that each musician had virtually unlimited freedom in the manner he chose to conform to his role. There is the further paradox that, far from being merely a matter of rhythm, time, and chord changes, the interplay of horn lines in the New Orleans ensemble is so tricky a business that there were times when even the best New Orleans musicians could not reach that cohering ensemble swing when everyone knows it is right. Northern musicians in the 20's, especially in Chicago, absorbed the essence of the New Orleans style, but only a handful were able to master the difficult and demanding art of ensemble counterpoint jazz. The members of musicians with superior capacity for ensemble improvisation has always been small.

We can only speculate about the role and contribution of the clarinet in the formative years of jazz. Certainly the clarinet developed more rapidly than the trombone (recordings show that as late as 1924 many trombonists were still executing awkward bellows in support of the other horn,” . . . like a sick cow dying in a blizzard.” (In trombonist Dave Kaer’s apt description). One might say further that the early clarinet styles were in a constant state of flux. A comparison, for example, of the playing of Larry Shields and Alcide “Yellow” Nunez, in the years 1917 through 1919, with that of Leon Rappolo and Harry Shields, recording just a few years later, shows what a radical change there was in the white Dixieland school in just a short period. George Baquet and Lorenz Tio, Jr. recorded in the early 20’s, but their examples proved only adumbration’s of the works of those magnificent Kings of the New Orleans Jazz clarinet - Johnny Dodds, Leon Rappolo, Sidney Bechet, and Jimmy Noone - who dominated the reed playing on the important early jazz recordings. Following these at different levels were Omer Simeon, Tony Parenti, Barney Bigard, Sidney Arodin, and Albert Nicholas. Individualism and the infinite variety of the New Orleans jazz clarinet were clearly seen as the 1920’s ended.

This article takes a cursory look at four New Orleans clarinetists on works of exceptional merit recorded in subsequent decades (two in the ‘20’s; one in the ‘50’s; one in the ‘60’s), examining and comparing their playing in the context of this brief pattern of history.

SIDNEY ARODIN (1901-1948). *Wingy Manone and His Orchestra. Zero (OK 41570, 10/3/34).* Manone-trp, George Brunis-tb, Arodin-cl, Terry Shand-p, Nappy Lamare-g, Benny Pottle-sb, Bob White-d.

Santo Pecora's old tune, *I Never knew What A Good Gal Could Do*, that trombonist Pecora had recorded with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings (Paul Mares-crt, Leon Rappolo-cl, Charlie Cordilla-ts, in 1925 (OK 40422)). Manone's group has the sane relaxed insouciance the NORK issue has, and Wingy borrowed some of the marvelous effects the NORK used; the reintroduction of the verse after several choruses, and the paraphrase of King Oliver's *Dippermouth Blues* solo in the bridge of the last ensemble chorus.

Rappolo has a low register solo on the NORK side, slap tongue and humorous. Arodin's solo with Wingy, also in the low register, is more interesting. But in all other aspects the recordings show Rapollo's superiority. On *I Never Knew* the listener is always aware of the dramatic, flaring lines of the clarinet; on *Zero* sparks are constantly flitting between the trumpet and trombone in a superb ensemble dialogue, while the clarinet, not quite up to this excitement, is reduced to merely filling in a background. The ensembles on *I Never Knew* are balanced and we hear the horns collectively (and yes, Cordilla's tenor saxophone lines are muddy. It will take a Bud Freeman to show how the saxophone is to be used in the jazz ensemble). Arodin on *Zero*, is heard distinctly, but the listener, is so firmly drawn to the call-and-response patterns of the brass horns that the clarinet lines are overlooked. Brunis, in particular, is in a fine fettle: in his chromatic passages anticipating the chord changes he seems to be giving Pecora a lesson in New Orleans trombone playing on Pecora's own tune.

I don't pretend to know why Arodin is so ineffectual here, except that further recordings with Manone are equally disappointing, and that he would shortly be making a series of

records with Louis Prima that are completely without interest before drifting off into obscurity. Arodin had recorded in Texas and New York in the '20's before recording in New Orleans with Sharkey Bonano (the Johnnie Miller and Monk Hazel sides), and with cornetist Lee Collins, where he played with an urgent fire; his lines taut, spaced, and filled with sudden inflections, showing vast imaginative skill in both solo and ensemble playing.

As we shall see, Arodin is not the only anomaly among the New Orleans clarinetists.

IRVING FAZOLA (1912-1949). Jess Stacy and His Orchestra. *Breeze - Blues* (Variety 8121, 11/30/39). Billy Butterfield-t/Fazola-cl/Eddie Miller-ts/Les Jenkins-tb/ Stacy-p/Allen Hanlon-g/Sid Weiss-sb/Don Carter-d.

This side was made at the same session that produced *Clarinet Blues* and *I Can't Believe That You're in Love With Me* (Varsity 8132), reissued on Commodore and well known among Fazola collectors.

If Manone's *Zero* is a case of a strong New Orleans group with a weak clarinet, the situation here is somewhat just the opposite. I use the qualifying adverb "somewhat" because in no sense are Butterfield, Stacy, et al below par in their performances - it is a matter of a master jazz clarinetist transforming ordinary playing on an ordinary pop tune so that in the end it becomes a performance of eminent quality.

Breeze-Blues was coupled on the Varsity issue with *Breeze-Fox Trot*, the same tune in a faster tempo, and a side totally without distinction. To those who knew Fazola, it is not in the least unusual that he could play so well at one moment and so lackadaisical the next. Faz was lazy, and we are fortunate that he felt impelled to rise out of his porpor during his stay with the Bob

Crosby Orchestra and make a number of outstanding records. *Louse, Louise* (Decca 2032, 3/10/38 has Fazola playing the blues with great brooding poignancy. *Milk Cow blues* (Decca 1962, 3/10/39), *Hindustan and Mournin" Blues* (Decca 2482, 2/6/39), *Jazz Me Blues* (Decca 3040, 2/6/40, and *March of the Bob Cats* (Decca 1865, 3/15/38) show his formidable ability in the small band environment.

Breeze-Blues made during this period, opens with the trumpet, clarinet, and tenor saxophone playing harmony on the slow, sensuous melody lines, with trombonist Jenkins playing an attractive counterpoint. There is a quietness, a lack of motion, as the horns wallow in long, round tones. These qualities spill over into Stacy's solo chorus, then into Fazola's half chorus. The band jams the last half out chorus, and at once Fazola changes his quiet, stately line to one of piercing vitality, arching into the upper register, then swooping down to the blue notes. All the early quietness was deceptive; the song now fairly quivers with Fazola's supercharged blues phrases. In the last measures, as the chord structure moves from the dominate to the tonic, Fazola finds a remarkable inverse melody to ply against the lead horn, and his phrases sing in the listener's ear after the record is ended.

Fazola is without question one of the great masters of the New Orleans jazz clarinet.

EDMOND HALL (1901-1967). Eddie Condon's All Stars. *Riverboat Shuffle* (Columbia LP cl547, 1954), Wild Bill Davison-c/Hall-cl/Cutty Cutshall-tb/Gene Schroeder-p/Walter Page-sb/Cliff Leeman-d.

Edmond Hall is one of the most puzzling of the New Orleans musicians. In his early years he had jobbed with Chris Kelly, Jack Carey, and Buddy Petit, and by the time he left the

Claude Hopkins Orchestra in the middle '30's he had developed into a brilliant soloist, greatly in demand for recordings with swing groups. His credentials, in other words, were impeccable. Yet he could not play New Orleans ensemble jazz with any real effectiveness. Like Sidney Arodin in the '30's, Hall constantly gives the impression that he is with an ensemble group just to play some inconsequential embroidery, not to provide an essential counterpoint.

That this is true is easily seen on this *Riverboat shuffle* track, one of the most exciting Condon group recordings, and certainly the best of the many recorded versions of the tune. Condon's recordings in this period feature a lot of tired musicians playing trifling clichés, but this track and *Blue My Naughty Sweetie Gave To Me* pm Columbia Lp cl616 (also 1954) are remarkable for their spirit and freshness.

Riverboat opens with unison horns exuberantly stating the minor key verse melody over a pulsing beat. It has a virile robustness that is immediately appealing. The horns move into ensemble counterpoint for the chorus, and, as on Manone's *Zero*, the focus is centered on the trade-off phrases of the cornet and trombone. Davison is bold and sassy, Cutshall urgent and wistful, and the two play superb jazz while Hall doodles unobtrusively in the background. There are clarinet, cornet, and trombone solos, a 2-bar drum break, and the groups returns to the verse, and again to the ensemble chorus, with Davison and Cutshall again sweeping the listener along with their alternating counterlines.

Hall is a jazz soloist of immense stature. It is surprising that he did not have the ensemble intuition that most New Orleans clarinetists have as a second nature, but his gifts were

otherwise so extraordinary that it does not really matter in the final measurement of his weight in jazz.

RAYMOND BURKE. (born 1904). Source to Delta. *Original Dixieland One Step* (New Orleans Originals, 2/20/64. Doc Evans-c/Burke-cl/Emile Christian-tb/Armand Hug-p/Doc Souchon-g/Sherwood Mangiapane-sb/Monk Hazel-d.

Jazz fans and critics fortunate in hearing Burke in a jazz environment have unhesitatingly recommended his ability. Most of the jazz audience, however, has had to contend with a string of records of dubious quality, many made with musicians inadequately in support. Or they've heard him in the commercial atmosphere of a New Orleans nightclub, and came away with only a limited idea of his capacity for jazz. The New Orleans Jazz Museum's 1964 album, source to Delta, almost repeated Burke's ill luck in recording. The session had first rate musicians, but, inexplicably, the tracks do not have much that is noteworthy.

The *Original Dixieland One Step* track is the sole exception. It has, collectively, a rousing performance, and further, it has Ray Burke at his very best in a propitious setting, a fact that redeems the whole album. The front line ensemble horns ultimately have the same misbalancing "flaws" as the other records discussed, but also like the others the compensation is more than adequate for the high quality jazz that results.

One Step opens with Christian's joyous trombone glissandos on the first of the multiple breaks of the verse, and we are given an early warming of things to come with Burke's slashing break. The ensemble chorus, then the solos; clarinet, cornet, trombone, and piano float by with quiet lyricism. There is a cornet/clarinet duet in the half chorus, with the same tight lid on the emotional mettle, and with Evans hitting on an excellent

melodic sequence near the end of the 16 measures. Soochow plays the 2nd half of the chorus with his rhythm banjo.

The subtle feeling of tension which has been steadily building is suddenly dissipated as the horns come rolling into the next chorus with the old New Orleans thunder. Christian has a bit of trouble keeping up with the other horns, but it hardly matters with the fiery interplay of lines of the cornet and clarinet. The riff that Evans hit on earlier is now repeated in ringing tones.

Burke decides to raise the emotional temperature a few more degrees for the first part of the last chorus, and he comes soaring upward with some rhythmic firebolts, with Evans responding in kind. With a perfect sense of structural proportion, the horns return a bit to the earlier lyricism after the 16th measure, and the “drifting off” of the horns in the middle of all this wailing tumult is accomplished with incredible sensitivity. Like Fazola on *Breeze*, Burke finds a singing contrary melody line for the last measures leading to the drum break.

With the awareness of structure and the chameleon-like changes in emotional character, Jelly Roll Morton would have been highly pleased with this performance of *One Step*. This is one of the classic recordings in New Orleans jazz, and it shows Raymond Burke to be in the front ranks of the long, distinguished line of New Orleans clarinetists.

Josiah “Cie” Frazier

by Mona MacMurray and Sue Hall

Winter, 1984

For many years, until his recent retirement, Cie Frazier made late-night pilgrimages to the house he was born in on February 23, 1904.

On a hot afternoon in August 1982, in the neat living room of his home at 2014 Onzaga Street, Sue and I were enjoying the warm hospitality of Cie and his wife Eugenia. He was cheerful and very cooperative as we set up tape recorders and started our questions. The first thing we asked was when and where he was born, and got this interesting reply: “At 1123 Touro Street, that’s between Marais and St. Claude. The house is still there and many times at night - and people always think this is a joke - after I leave the Hall _Preservation Hall_ in my wagon, before I come home, I go there and stop and look at the house. My daddy died in 1927 and my momma died in 1960, but I like to go there and sit for a little while and look at the house and think about my mother and father and my brothers and sisters. Nobody’s there at that time of night and I just go there and look at the house and think about my family and I feel good. I don’t stay long, maybe about five or ten minutes, but it makes me feel so good.”

Cie’s name is actually Josiah Frazier, he was one of six children, Sam, Alex, Simon and Josiah and two girls, Vic and Loretta. He and his wife Eugenia also have four boys and two girls.

His father, Samson Franklin Frazier earned his living repairing mattresses and Cie followed him in that trade for a while. “In those days people used to have their mattresses made over. I learned how to make over mattresses, too. I worked for years at a place on Annunciation and Thalia, the Southern Mattress Company. We used to make mattresses for all those big

furniture stores. That was up in the Irish Channel and those white boys up there were bad then, so we didn't fool with them."

Cie's father was one of three brothers, an older brother, John and a younger one, Michael. He also had two sisters, Katherine and Jeanette. Cie's aunt Katherine was married to Emile Barnes, Sr. Who worked with Sammson Frazier at the mattress company, and was the mother of famed New Orleans clarinetists Emile, Jr. (Meely) and Paul (Polo) Barnes. His aunt Jeanette was married to bass player Billy Marrero and was the mother of the famed Marreros, Lawrence, Simon and Eddie. Rosalie Frazier, Cie's mother and the mother of the late pianist Dave Williams were cousins and Dave Williams was also the grandson of Cie's uncle John.

Cie's father played the guitar but, "Only for himself. In those days you didn't have things you have now; there was no television and records didn't come out so good back then either," he said, "I remember when radio first came out, you had those little old weak radios."

Speaking about the rest of his family, he reminisced, "My mother had a beautiful singing voice, a soprano, and she used to sing in that nice high voice in church. The church is still there; they call it St. Roch's now, but it was a Protestant church then, Methodist, on St. Roch near St. Claude (the Thompson Methodist Episcopal Chapel). Louis Nelson's mother played the organ there and his father formed the choir in that church! Nelson's daddy was a doctor and he formed the choir and sang bass in it.

"My oldest brother, Sam played the drums and I took behind him on that. Alex and Simon, they took up on the piano. You see, in those days we had a pianola, My daddy bought it and

you learned how to play it just by practicing on it but I never did learn how to play it. I never did take to the piano.

“Then, let’s see, in 1918 right there on Iberville and Burgundy they had a place called the Lyric Theater. They had vaudeville shows and John Robichaux had the band and there were actors and they had this wonderful drummer and by me going to the Lyric Theater and laughing at the comedians on the stage and seeing the silent movies, I got to like the vaudeville and then, well, by me going to the shows and listening to Happy play drums, well that got me interested. I didn’t know then that by 1928 I’d be playing at the same place with that same band!”

Eugenia, Cie’s wife remembered that when he was just a very young kid he used to sit on the steps of his house and drum with sticks. Cie said that that was true, he was about 14 years old then and his visits to the Lyric sparked his interest in becoming a drummer.

During the interview Cie spoke at length about the Lyric Theater. He seemed to have been very deeply impressed by it and went back to the subject several times during the two hours we taped.

Asked about the first band he played with, he said, “It was a band we made up. “I’ll tell you who was in it - Paul Barnes, he made it up. We were helping him buy a saxophone at a place they called Werleins. We played jobs at night, at that time you played a six-piece job and the musicians got four dollars and the leader got five dollars, that’s the way the bands used to operate. The name of the first band was the Golden Rule Band; it was Paul Barnes and them that had it, and we were like a family, Eddie, Lawrence, Paul and all of them. Eddie Perez played the bass; Lawrence Marrero played the banjo; Paul played

saxophone. I played the drums and fella by the name of Bush Hall played the trumpet.”

In reply to the question about how long the band lasted he said, “Well, we played a lot, but in those days with Chris Kelly, Kid Rena and Sam Morgan bands, well those bands had the reputations and if you made up a new band, you could be good but you didn’t have the reputation. We used to play for balls for Mardi Gras and things like that, like today. Another thing, we played a lot because people used to give parties and all like that and things were wide open. There wasn’t any television and people used to hire bands. Most of them were four-piece bands, a drummer, a piano and maybe a trumpet or a saxophone and he’d play house parties, especially on holidays like Halloween and New Year’s Eve, we’d play in people’s houses. This was in the 20’s.

“Kid Rena, Kid Punch, Piron, they used to play for the rich places like the Orleans Country Club and the Boston Club and the big Mardi Gras balls. After I went in Robichaux’s band I played them, too.

“There was a place, the Temple Roof Garden and there used to be dances there on the roof, especially around the holidays and Piron played them. He also worked at a place out there at Spanish Fort. I remember Louis Cottrell, too; his daddy used to help me. He was a great drummer. He taught me. Did you ever see me play drums with my arms up and out? No, I don’t play like that, I use my wrists. Well, Cottrell’s daddy taught me that. He saw me playing from the wrist and then he started to teach me, I was about 14 years old then.”

Asked if he had been still in school at the time he said that he went to the Lutheran School located on Annette Street, the same school that Paul Barnes and Louis Nelson attended but

added, “The highest I went to was the sixth grade. I didn’t have to quit to help support the family; my daddy always worked and took care of us, but I thought driving a truck was more interesting. That’s when I got a job driving a truck for Noah’s Ark.

“I used to be crazy about automobiles and wanted to be a chauffeur. In those days if you owned your own car you didn’t need a license to drive it but you had to go to the old jailhouse on Tulane and Saratoga for a license if you worked out at driving. Noah’s Ark was a store at 1017 Canal Street. They handled all kinds of crockery and glassware. We delivered and I drove the one-ton truck. Being Jewish people, they had a Buick automobile and they lived back by City Park. One day, Mr. Aron, one of the bosses, said, ‘Do you know how to drive a Buick? And I told him that I did, but that I wasn’t a chauffeur, so he said, ‘I’m going to try you out.’ Well, he had a little Dodge truck that had a universal shift like the Buick and a man they used to call Tuts who worked for a bakery on Dauphine and Spain, he had taught he how to drive that kind of truck. Well, Mr. Aron was surprised that I could drive with a universal shift so I got the job and I worked there for a long time.”

That wasn’t the only job Cie had; he didn’t go into details about the other jobs except to say, “That was my first job, after that I worked different places like the mattress company. There was plenty of regular work then.

“Then World War II was threatening and I joined the Navy Band during the war. You could be drafted into the Army, but they came out in the newspaper that they wanted to make up a Negro Navy band and everybody went wild about that. So Louis Nelson, me, Gilbert Young and a lot of those boys went to the

Custom House on Canal Street and signed up. They sent you to Great Lakes to train, that's in Illinois about 50 miles out of Chicago. It was a training place for musicians and seamen."

Her Cie showed us a picture of the Navy Band taken at the Algiers Naval Station. Among the musicians in it were Adolphe Alexander, Harold Dejan, Paul Barnes, Gilbert Young, Vernon Gilbert and Cie.

"I was a Musician Second Class, Louis Nelson, he was a Musician First Class. We met a lot of musicians up there who had never played parade music and I got a good job teaching those boys how to play parade music and bass drums and snare drums. They knew the orchestra work but when it came down to playing bass drums like we do down here, they didn't have that kind of training and I had to teach them New Orleans style, that special parade style music."

After the training at great Lakes, units were made up of a chief and 21 musicians and were shipped out with no choice as to which until they wanted to join. Louis Nelson and several others from New Orleans went to Tennessee but Cie came back to New Orleans to the Algiers Naval Station with the group in the photo he showed us, mentioned earlier. He stayed in the Navy until the war ended in 1945.

After the war Cie again went to work as a chauffeur. "My mother-in-law worked for a Miss Josephine, the wife of a man called Johnny Meyers who handled all kinds of produce. When her chauffeur quit my mother-in-law got me the job for \$18 a week. They lived back of City Park and I used to drive the family car. I used to drive her to Canal Street to Maison Blanche and those places. Then I could just wait around and talk with other chauffeurs while waiting for her to finish shopping."

Cie worked at that job in 1945 after getting out of the Navy, but for a short time only. After that he started to earn his living by playing music.

Several times during the interview Cie would think of something that brought to mind events that were concerned with earlier times. One of these was his work with the WPZ band in the 30's during the depression. Members of the band worked in the fields when they weren't playing music. "They'd get us out in the fields but they called us back when there was a music job to play." He played with that band until 1942 when he joined the Navy. In fact, Cie was the last drummer left in the band since by that time the band had been cut down to about 14 pieces.

We went back further, to the 20's again. Cie's brother Sam was playing with Kid Rena's band and Cie used Sam's drums along with records on an old wind-up victrola to practice.

"I was playing with the Young Tuxedo Band, that was the first band I started with (here we brought out the fact that the Golden Rule Band became the Young Tuxedo Band). In that band we had, let's see, Paul Barnes on alto saxophone, Raymond Brown on trombone, Bush Hall on trumpet, Lawrence Marrero on banjo, me on drums and Eddie Marrero on bass. That was the Golden Rule Band and afterwards we got kinda good and they made us the Tuxedo Band. It was Papa Celestin, Bebe Ridgley, Chinee (Abbe Foster) put me on the drums, and Emma Barrett, the same Emma, a great piano player, she wasn't crippled then."

According to an interview with Cie in 1960 on file at the Tulane University Library's William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive, the members of the Young Tuxedo Band were Dwight Newman, piano; Paul Ben, trombone; Dennis Harris, sax and clarinet; Louis Cottrell, Jr., tenor sax and clarinet; Lawrence

Marrero, banjo; Eddie Marrero, bass; and Cie, drums. They played a wide variety of jobs in places like the New Orleans Country Club, the Athenaeum, the Spanish Fort Country Club and the Boston Club during Carnival season. This was not a marching brass band like the present-day Young Tuxedo. Only the name came down; the original Young Tuxedo Band disbanded.

Cie went on, “I played jobs with the Young Tuxedo a lot. During that time there were a lot of famous bands and Chris Kelly was in one, he was a blues-type man and the drummer with him, he was Buddy Petit’s drummer, Eddie “Face-O” Woods, he was a great drummer and he taught me how to play jazz drumming.”

Questions got around to records featuring Cie, but we didn’t manage to get very far with the subject. “Well, now wait let’s see, my first record was made on, - do you remember the place they called the Dauphine Theater? It was burlesque near Canal Street on Dauphine. Well, it was a building right next door that, in 1927 I made the record with Papa Celestin.

“How I went into the band, here’s what happened, the reason they took me on the job was because Chinee was a heavy drinking man and he had funny hours and he’d get drunk and couldn’t make them hours so I went into the band.”

Sue has a record titled “Paul Barnes and his Polo Players” on which the liner notes read, in part: “Paul and banjoist Lawrence Marrero had a group called the Golden Rule Band in 1921 which featured many of the great names in New Orleans Jazz History, George Washington, Bob Thomas, Yank Johnson on trombones, Bush Hall and Red Allen on trumpets and Cie Frazier on drums. Drummer Cie Frazier was always one

of the best and most tasteful in the city. He was with Kid Rena during the 1920's and toured up north with Stew Thomas' Blue Ribbon Syncopators in 1923. He was with Papa Celestin and John Robichaux in the late 1920's and joined A. J. Piron's Orchestra in 1929 and remained with him until 1932. Then he started his band, the Sunny South Band. It was not successful and in a few months he went with Sidney Desvigne.

“During the mid and late 1940's he cut several invaluable documentaries for Bill Russell's American Music label with trumpeter Wooden Joe Nicholas and clarinetist Emile Barnes. He played with Percy Humphrey and Sweet Emma Barrett and in the summer of 1961 he played with Emile Barnes' Louisiana Joymakers and with Kid Howard's La Vida Band at Preservation Hall.”

One recording Cie did remember was a Papa Celestin recording that featured the song “My Josephine,” written by Polo Barnes. “That was a very big hit,” he remembers, “and Polo wrote it about one of his early girl friends, but her name wasn't Josephine. It was Ruth but the name ‘Josephine’ fit the music better so that's why he used it.”

When he was thinking about the early 20's again, he did a bit of reminiscing. “I went in Piron's band in 1927. That was the same year that Paul Barbarin left to go to Chicago. You got to give that man credit, he caused many musicians to go to Chicago, Paul Barbarin, that is. We all came up together, Paul was living on Touro and St. Claude and I was living on Touro between St. Claude and Marais. That's the house I stop by to look at night when I get off from playing at Preservation Hall, the house where I was born and raised.”

In 1928 Cue played with John Robichaux's dance band after Paul Barbarin and Fats Pichon left the band to form the Pelican Silverton Orchestra. Other members in that band were Peter Bocage on trumpet, Henry Bocage on bass, Charlie Bocage on banjo, Steve Lewis on piano, Lorenzo Tio on clarinet and sax and Louis Warnick also on sax and clarinet. They played at places like the Suburban Gardens, Tranchina's, the Venetian Room which later became the Blue Room in the Roosevelt Hotel.

In the 30's Piron took over Sidney Cates' Sunny South Band and at that time Cie went to work with Sidney Desvigne's Orchestra doing spot jobs. He also worked spot jobs with other bands at the same time.

Before joining the WPA band in 1932 he helped from a band that played in Buras and Delacroix Island on Saturday nights and spot jobs in New Orleans during the week. Along with Cie in that band were Emile Barnes, clarinet; Cie's brother Simon on piano; Bob Anthony on trumpet, and others who changed with the jobs. "Like it is now, if you have a job and can't get one man, you call another one to play."

Along about this time the talk turned back to places he played in with early bands. "We had Tom Anderson's, he was located on "Rampart and Iberville and there were all different night clubs and restaurants and all that. There was a place called 'The Palace' and the "Elite Poolroom,' that was a hangout."

Asked if he played in the District he said "In later years, but now they have that Iberville project there. We played a lot at a place, the Entertainers, it was a beer garden right on the corner of Iberville and Basin. The cemetery was there then, but let me see if I can explain it to you. You notice when you're on Basin Street a little before you get to the Krauss store, if you're looking

for it you can see a little grocery store. Well, back in those days, it was right there, before they had that grocery store. The building is still there back of Krauss.

“They had a place, it’s knocked down now, called the Artesian Hall. It was between Kerlerec and Columbus on Derbigny’ that was for the Creole people. Then they had Economy Hall and the Jeunes Amis.”

At this point Cie jumped into the 1950’s and talked about his trip to California with the George Lewis band. Lewis was in Chicago and had Joe Watkins as drummer but Watkins quit and went to work for Earl Hines; Lewis hired Cie to replace him. Cie tells it this way, “George had a nice band in Chicago and was building up a good reputation. He was offered a job in Los Angeles, California. He has Jim Robinson and Kid Howard and all them and what you call a good jazz band then.”

Cie stayed with the George Lewis Band for a while but then the men just sort of scattered off and played with other bands.

Asked about his favorite band, he said, ‘The best job I had with all the fellas was with Papa Celestin. We played at a place called the Pelican, located on Gravier and Rampart. It was a colored dance hall that featured all kinds of bands and all that.’”

Cie worked on the river boats with different bands but the only detail he went into on that subject was the fact that “Captain Stone would dock you if you were late; he’d dock you pay any time you were late.”

There were still a lot of subjects we hadn’t covered, among them his years of playing at Preservation Hall and his travels, but he was getting very tired so we ended the taping and relaxed with Eugene’s good coffee and cookies.

Albert “Papa” French
by Harlan Wood
Winter, 1978

A giant of New Orleans jazz is dead - one of the few remaining whose roots went to the formative years of Crescent City music. The newspapers in New Orleans put it this way

“September 29th - Veteran jazz musician Albert “Papa” French died Wednesday at Ochsner foundation Hospital after a brief illness, at the age of 66. Mr. French was the leader of the Tuxedo Jazz Band, founded by Oscar “Papa” Celestin in 1910. Funeral services for Mr. French will be conducted from Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church. In 1950, banjo-plucker Mr. French joined the Tuxedo band, the oldest such combo in New Orleans, and in 1958 he became leader. He was performing at Tradition Hall and had produced several albums. Mr. French is survived by his widow, Claudia Samuel French; three sons, Albert Jr., Robert and George French; two brothers, one sister, 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.”

There are a few errors - mostly sins of omission. Firstly, it doesn't say much about the man as a man, and secondly, it doesn't tell you much about his band.

Until he died, Papa played his banjo with artistic pride and sang in his own mellow fashion, entertaining literally hundreds of thousands of people who came to see him from the four corners of the earth. The leader of the Tuxedo Jazz Band, you say. What does that mean? If you research the history of the

Tuxedo, you find, in effect, that you are studying the annuals of New Orleans jazz itself. The two are inextricably tied together.

The band was formed in 1910 by Oscar “Papa” Celestin (1884-1954) and William “Bebe” Ridgley (1882-1961) and it played first in the Tuxedo Dance Hall located at North Franklin Street near the corner of Bienville, in the heart of New Orleans’ famed Storyville. The following year Celestin also formed the Tuxedo Brass Band, a marching group long affiliated with the dance band.

The roster of the Tuxedo bands over the years is much too long to list here, but it reads like a *Who’s Who* of New Orleans music. For example, two early members, Henry Zeno and Manuel Manetta played in bands during the days of Buddy Bolden. In addition, to name a few more, were: Isidore Barbarin, Charlie Love, Baby Dodds, Kid “Shots” Madison, Cie Frazier, Lorenzo Tio, Jr., Louis Dumaine, Abbie “Chinee” Foster, Peter Bocage, the Louis Cottrells (Sr. And Jr.), Big Jim Robinson, Sweet Emma Barrett, Alvin Alcorn, Lee Collins, Octave Crosby, Alphonse Picou, Kid Rena and Waldren “Frog” Joseph. THEN THERE WAS Albert “Papa” French who first played in the Tuxedo as a young man in the late 1920s.

For over 44 years, Oscar Celestin - a master showman - filled the band with musicians of the highest caliber. After 67 years that statement can still be made, as Albert French always sought excellence; he, as did his predecessor, always “brought up” promising young musicians, blending the knowledge and experience of the past with the enthusiasm and wonderment of youth. At the time of his death Papa French had Jeanette Kimball, a veteran of Celestin’s days, on piano and Joe “Cornbread” Thomas who is partially retired, on clarinet on

occasion. The continuity of the Tuxedo is unparalleled in the history of American music.

Speaking of continuity, two of the youngest musicians of today's Tuxedo Jazz Band, Bob French (Papa's son) on drums and Wendell Brunious on trumpet, are filling chairs once held respectively by Zutty Singleton and Louis Armstrong. Wendell, incidentally, at 22 years of age can trace his family's musical heritage through the Barbarins back to the turn of the century.

Over a year ago Papa and his wife, Claudia both, NOJC members, formed Tradition Hall as a family-owned -and-oriented music hall where the Tuxedo alternated with the organization of the incomparable Louis Cottrell. At Tradition Hall, located at 721 Bourbon Street, the traditions of the Tuxedo will continue. Bob French has taken over the leadership of the band and of the Hall. You can safely speculate that the Tuxedo will be around when the last note of the last chorus is played.

In terms of time I only knew Papa French for a few short years, too few. But you could know him for only a few minutes and his warmth showed through, his kindness kindled you, and his love of people was his hallmark. Papa died as an active, playing jazz musician - rich in spirit, honored by all, and proud of his heritage. He wouldn't have wanted it any other way. And, those of us who knew him and loved him and called him friend wouldn't either

