“Words of Mouth”

Jazz Oral History Interviewing

by

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Scholarship in Oral History

The very nature of the 'folk' content of oral history demands a very scholarly attitude by the researcher/interviewer. "Research learning without wisdom, without scholarship, is like a box of encyclopedias on a pack mule's back." A researcher's abundance of facts does not make him a scholar. Research is an occupation; scholarship is a state of mind, a habit of the mind, and a way of life. A scholar is much more than a researcher. This observation is noted by J.L. Lowes:

"Humane scholarship ... moves and must move within two worlds at once - the world of scientific method and the world, in whatever degree, of creative art. The postulates of the two are radically different. And our exquisitely difficult task is to conform at once the stipulations of each without infringing on those of the other. The path of least resistance is to follow one and let the other go. Research, which is the primary instrument of science, is felt to be the easier and it is also the more alluring. I too have heard the Sirens sing, and I know whereof I speak. And so we tend to become enamoured of the methods, and at times to forget the end; to allow, in a word, the fascination of the means to distract us from the very object for which they are employed. And that end is, in the broadest sense of the word, interpretation - the interpretation, in the light of all that our research can reveal, of the literature which is our field."

- "The Modern Language Association and Humane Scholarship," PMLA, 48 (1933)

A scholar should enlist his/her fellow colleagues, and two principles should be stated: 1) Let others know what you are working on; and 2) Keep up with what other scholars are doing. Remember in scholarship one advances learning when he shares with society his research material.

There are four requisites of good scholarship in writing: 1) Accuracy of facts; 2) Soundness of reason; 3) Clear explanation of the topic; 4) unaffected, terse, lucid prose.

The jazz scholar/researcher's job is, in part, constructive - to add to the body of knowledge relating to jazz history and the people who made it (musicians and listeners) - and, in part, destructive - to expose, dispel, and expose the mistakes made in early jazz scholarship. Jazz scholarship, like all other forms of scholarship, involves a great deal of detail work in which no margin of error is allowed and over which the analytic intellect must constantly preside. It is not for the impatient or the careless; nor is it for the easily fatigued.

Scholarly research (like the study of law) requires a thorough command of the principles of evidence, a knowledge of how to make one's way efficiently through the accumulated materials (written and oral) on a subject, and a devotion to both accuracy and detail; it calls for resourcefulness - knowing where to go for one's information and how to obtain it - the ability to recognize and follow up leads, and tenacity in pursuit of the facts.

The jazz researcher must have a vivid sense of history, the ability to empathize - to put himself in another place and time; to be able to adjust his intellectual insights and imaginative responses to the social, cultural and intellectual framework that existed during the period being studied. In the study of jazz, that requires being able to place one's self in late 19th or early 20th century New Orleans. Intellectual curiosity, shrewdness, precision, imagination - the lively inventiveness that constantly suggests new hypotheses, new strategies, new sources of information, and, when all the data is in, makes possible their accurate interpretation and evaluation.

Uniting all these qualities and imparting
coherence and meaning to the facts collected, must be a creative imagination. The researcher should seek that final piece of information that will crystallize the work already done into a significant truth.

The obligation of every honest scholar is to look as hard for, and at, the inconvenient facts as those which suit his theory. His goal is the discovery of truth through confirmation. His method: 1) to collect all the evidence that has any connection with the subject/hypothesis; and 2) to give as much consideration to evidence that weighs against the hypothesis, or that tends to support an alternate one, as is given to evidence substantiating the hypothesis.

Beware of the five pitfalls: 1) Unwarranted generalization; 2) unwarranted specification; 3) failure to allow for prejudice and emotional distortion in sources; 4) unhistorical or oversimplified reading of language; 5) the attribution of modern judgment to another age.

The researcher must also allow for: 1) the complexity of phenomena; 2) opposing tendencies or doctrines; 3) the prevalent attitudes, presumptions and values in questions at the time under examination; 4) the variant forms a doctrine or concept may take under the auspices of different writers and in different eras; 5) whether the body of evidence is large enough to justify or is it the unusual or the exception from the norm? One must ask oneself if he/she accepts the cliches and stereotypes handed down from previous writers (prevalent in early jazz writings) who failed to ask themselves these same questions?

One must also master the vocabulary of the era, the environment and even the different races involved in the subject under study.

Remember the goals of research scholarship: efficiency and accuracy. To be a good researcher, one must be skeptical. Once a mistake is set adrift in the world of history, it not only harbors the original untruth but swells and proliferates. One reason myths persist despite exposure is that they are often more picturesque than the frequently prosaic truth.

A dangerous tendency among scholars is the failure to distinguish between good and bad texts. Valuable as interviews may be, never accept them at face value. Apart from their frequent unreliability as to specific dates, places and other historical facts, the recollections of those who “were there” are usually idealized, embroidered through sheer exuberance of the artistic imagination, colored by compelling motives such as the desire of self-justification, or are simply undependable because of the lapse of time between the events narrated and the moment the interview is conducted.

The challenge of evaluating primary evidence is complicated when the recollections of several eyewitnesses, all presumably reliable, differ. Every statement has to be analyzed in view of the character, reliability, temperamental sympathy and possible bias of the contributors.

Like good detectives, as we analyze primary evidence, we must analyze the factors that produced the perspective offered by the narrator — we must know how, why and under what circumstances the narrator arrived at that perspective. Thus, the true value of an oral history interview is established not by what is said so much as by the outside research performed by the interviewer which enables the perspectives offered in the interview to be placed in a context that establishes the relationship between narrator and the subject of the interview.

The more emotional a person is, the less likely he is to provide an objective version of an event or a judicious opinion, and the over wrought terms in which a piece of evidence is phrased may well cast doubt upon its dependability except as an index to the narrator’s state of mind.

Consider the reputation of an author. This helps define the critical standards and popular literary tastes that prevailed in successive eras. Although the usual movement of reputation and influence study is chronological, the same material and methods can be used to reconstruct the literary atmosphere of an age and then to account for individual aspects of literary tastes and practices during a period. This same approach can be applied to other phenomena such as music.

Once we learn which musicians of an era were widely heard and which were out of favor in a period, we are better equipped to account for the themes and devices, the spirit
and purpose of particular musicians or groups.

**INFLUENCES**

Influence refers to the wider, more profound, more subtle and intangible effects that a knowledge of one musician’s work has upon another. The influence of the source must be narrowed to the specific borrowing. These influences may be at large in the age itself, restricted to a cultural tradition or to a particular musical movement.

Similarity does not necessarily mean causal relationship. Often a musician’s reputation is enough to influence another musician still in his or her formative stages. We can determine this by studying the reputation of musicians. We can show how musicians were affected by another’s styles, techniques, and attitudes; how many critics urged their contemporaries to emulate a particular musician.

If we discover many similarities in style or manner of execution which are both idiosyncratic and fundamental, then we have reason to believe that one drew from sources where these elements also were common. The challenge then becomes to document these influences and show how they developed.

Did our subject hear the musicians from which he seems to have borrowed? We must try to get inside the mind of our subject, to understand the way that mind worked, the habits of his nature, and the stimulation and sustenance from which he drew — the musical traditions upon which he drew, the age, the atmosphere of the times and the region.

It is not the origins that matter in the long run but the comparison which the discovery of the source makes possible. If one musician derived dominant ideas from another, it is our challenge to establish how he modified it and impressed it with the stamp of his own intellect.

Every manifestation of influence is part of the evolving record of musical tradition. We strive ceaselessly to clarify the cause and nature of change in the musical art. Every piece of music belongs to a process that is both continuous and communal. To trace its way down the stream of history, the new colorations it has acquired, the banks it has washed, the new growth it has nourished, is to define more precisely both its nature and that of all the subsequent work it has touched.
Jazz Oral History Interviewing

ORAL HISTORY

Oral history is: “the recording of the thoughts of a person from direct or indirect personal occurrences within knowledge and understanding of his interpreting events of the past.”

Oral history is as old as language itself. It was the most important means of carrying forward the sequential pattern of events before the development of written history. It is also contemporary and has progressed along with the technological advances of our time. We are now beyond the tape recorder — into audio/visual techniques with listening devices so sensitive that they invade the privacy of our everyday life.

Allen Nevins, a scholar from Columbia University in New York City, is given credit by some for discovering the potential of oral history. Nevins named this method of collecting materials of historic value as ‘Oral History.’ Others claim that the impetus began in the South (in Louisiana specifically) where folklorist John A Lomax recorded the historic interview with Hudie Ledbetter.

Like most history, oral history began with the first person who either remembered for future recall the conversations he had with another person, or when the art of writing was developed, wrote down the thoughts he had heard from others. Formal, organized oral history endeavors began developing after World War II with the advent of the modern tape recorder.

The word history comes from the Greek _historia_ — information, inquiry. Its definition is given as: “A systematic narrative or account of past events.” The first known historian was the Greek Herodotus, who was, first and foremost, a narrator in the true mold of an oral historian.

While major colleges and universities began the main thrust to collect oral histories, by its nature oral history belongs to the common people and its practice soon escaped academia. Soon local historical societies realized the benefits of incorporating oral history activities in their operational procedures. The oral history movement also has enriched the gathering of tangible items: photographs, written materials, etc.

THE INTERVIEW

When considering conducting an oral history interview, first ask yourself the reason for the inquiry. Next, find the person best suited for acquiring the knowledge you seek.

Throughout this pamphlet, Buddy Petit will be the subject we want to find out about.

Many of us perform oral history interviews every day but do not realize it. Much learning in our youth takes place via oral transmission. Much could be gained by inviting senior citizens to school classrooms, not only for their knowledge, but in the availability of subjects for young minds to inquire into, thereby learning oral history interview techniques and skills. Any knowledge acquired this way will be either useful or interesting to someone, sometime. This ‘someone’ is our most important audience, perhaps yet to be born. This future, ultimate researcher (perhaps 100 years hence) might find our present methods and technology archaic but will find the facts in these interviews conducted in the closing years of the 20th Century extremely interesting.

Oral history preserves human speech in content, emotions, and inflections. Recorded visual contacts can tell us even more about history, its customs and morals. Interviewing is an art. An interview is explained in the Manual of Style (Beauregard/Malcolm-Bowman) in simple terms as:

“A question and answer session between somebody who is curious about a subject and
somebody who knows a lot about it."

To be a good interviewer one needs two things: 1) curiosity and 2) the ability to ask good questions. A good interviewer will first brainstorm the specific elements he wants to cover and list questions that will enable him to do so. (See Appendix VII-A) Before the interview, check available sources to gain the necessary background information needed for a successful interview. Acquire this from books, film, photos, etc. Ask questions of lay people and experts before questioning the interviewee—from herein called the ‘Narrator.’

Collect any additional data and familiarize yourself with the area that your subject (in our case, Buddy Petit) lived and worked. Take pictures, drive around the area or town (in Buddy’s life, White Castle, Mandeville, and New Orleans). Look for landmarks and buildings from the era that the narrator might discuss. Brainstorm a list of things you want to observe. Questions asked to the narrator should require more than ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers. Questions should include words like ‘why,’ ‘how,’ ‘when,’ ‘what happened after that,’ ‘give me an example,’ etc.

The interviewer should endeavor to acquire prompt, informative dialogue with perceptive, intelligent, meaningful, and challenging investigation, having researched the background, available information, the past and present environmental situation, and the past experiences of the narrator. Review all these sources prior to the interview. Remember, as an interviewer, at times you must be candid, and at other times reserved—but always with integrity, making the person you are talking with feel comfortable and willing to relate the information you seek. Be sure to keep confidential all material requested by the narrator.

TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS

Remember an interview is not an equal, two-way dialogue. Limit your remarks. You are doing the interview to get the narrator to tell ‘his’ story. Try to limit your remarks to the beginning niceties, but do establish a rapport. It is not necessary to relate a long story about what someone else said in answer to a question or your personal experience on the subject. Don’t let the narrator turn the tables on you. (See Appendix I) A good narrator will be interested in what you have to say, but never allow him or her to become the interviewer. It can and will happen unless you prevent it. The best protection is to be prepared for the interview so you can keep advancing the process.

Ask one question at a time and ask open-ended questions — ‘Why ...?’ ‘How ...?’. Instead of asking: “Did you work with Buddy Petit?” Ask: “Who did you work with in Buddy Petit’s Band?” Or: “Where did you work when you played with Buddy Petit?” Or, “What was it like to work with Buddy Petit?”

Brief questions are best and easiest to reply to. Remember to give the narrator time to think about his answers. A good many years might have passed since he played with Buddy Petit (Petit died in 1931). Questions consisting of one or two sentences, but addressing only one particular subject, seem to be the most effective at drawing responses.

Many narrators drift from the initial question. If questions are multiple, or needing more than one answer, it is the responsibility of the interviewer to make sure all questions are answered. While you should prepare a general agenda of questions you want answered, don’t be afraid to vary from your plan — questions asked or answers given sometime awaken other questions. Don’t interrupt the narrator; just make a notation and follow-up when the opportunity presents itself.

The narrator, when answering a certain question, might remember some other fact and insert this fact either during or after he answers the question. It may be wise to listen to what he has to say and then continue your line of questioning. He may be talking about something you didn’t know about or that you didn’t think about and his remarks may prove valuable. The narrator, if asked multiple part questions, might only answer the first or last one asked. It is your responsibility to secure as much information as possible. Unanswered questions are your responsibility. These unanswered questions may never get asked again and the answers will be lost.

Remember also that you may be a stranger to the narrator and that should affect the way you begin the interview. Start with factual,
non-controversial and non-delicate questions. Give the interview time to develop—allow the narrator to become comfortable with you. Once a rapport is established, the narrator probably will answer the more personal, delicate questions. If the interview is biographical in nature, begin with reminiscences of childhood and related experiences. Ask pertinent questions on early background, environment — ‘the way it was’ material. Never interrupt a good story with a question—just jot the question down for later use.

The narrator might have trouble describing people he knew from the past—names, ages, etc. It will help him to describe the person’s appearance or any character traits (for instance, Chris Kelly almost always had a cigar in his mouth). Such recollections might help jog his memory. Don’t let moments of silence from the narrator bother you. Give the narrator an opportunity to reflect on the past and a chance to arrange or remember facts he has not thought of for a long time. You must also make yourself relax—maybe jot a few words in your notebook. An experienced interviewer will also have moments of silence—-like a rest in music—a welcomed contrast to straight talking for 90 minutes. Time is needed for both participants to reflect on what was said, or what is to be said.

Try to phrase your questions so that what you are asking is what will be understood and answered by the narrator. But, do not worry if your questions are not ‘expertly’ phrased. With some narrators your ill-constructed questions may tend to put the narrator at ease. Don’t fumble with questions but phrase the questions, and your brief dialogue, to fit the narrator. One does not phrase a question the same way when asking a college professor and asking a 100-year-old fieldhand.

At times, the narrator may turn to non-pertinent subjects or materials—in fact, this is a common occurrence. Try to re-direct his attention back to the track of your interview. Sometimes, there is no alternative to politely interrupting the narrator. The best approach is to do this by asking a question: “May I inquire, before moving on, who were the members of the Petit Band?” Or some other question.

Many times a negative approach will bring a reaction from the narrator better than a positive one. For example, you will probably get a stronger response by asking this question: “I understand Louis Armstrong was a better trumpet player than Buddy Petit, than you would by asking: “I hear that Buddy Petit was a very good trumpet player.”

It might be important and interesting to know where the narrator was when certain well-known incidents occurred, and what, if any, role he had in the incident. Perhaps if the event or incident appeared in a local newspaper, ask if his observation differed any from the published account. Let him air his point of view, making sure that asking him to do so is not appearing to doubt his accuracy. Leave that for later scholars. What is important is the narrator’s recollection of the events.

Walter Lord, for instance, notes that far more survivors of the Titanic said they were in the last lifeboat to leave the ship than could possibly have fit into a lifeboat. Later he found that no group in a lifeboat was in view of another, so each boat probably thought they were in the last lifeboat. You can point out, very tactfully, that you have heard or read other accounts of the incident your narrator is relating. This could cause him to revise his story or to bring out other facts to support his view.

Record “off the record” remarks. Later you can remove them if the narrator insists on removing them. Better to never shut the tape off. Only stop the tape if the interview is interrupted by outside factors such as phone calls, or emergencies. It is usually best to do the interview without anyone else present—only the two of you. Seldom can you succeed with two or more narrators. It may be okay to have two people asking questions.

The optimal length of such interviews is about 90 minutes. Many of your subjects will be older and may tire easier. It is up to you to stop the interview and return at another convenient time. Excuses can be made. The interview is for acquiring information, so don’t use the time to show off your vocabulary, knowledge, etc. It might be good to summarize for the narrator after a long discourse, or when you are not clear on what was said.

Try to prepare and follow a chronological outline, beginning with the narrator’s early life. This helps the narrator and the interview itself by helping provide a basic form and
flow to the interview. If possible, have a time line on the person's known events and activities. (See Appendix II—a time line on Emmett Hardy I used in writing and article on his life.)

Always remember to listen! Too many interviewers, after asking a question, begin thinking of the next question. That question might even by answered in the narrator's response to your earlier question. Being preoccupied with formulating your next question could cause you to miss the answer you are seeking. (See Armstrong interview, Appendix III)

Maintain your rapport with the narrator with eye contact, nods, etc. It is hard for a narrator to talk without any reaction from you while he is replying to a question. React to what is said—laugh, frown, or whatever—but react, show some interest in what he says. It is okay to agree or disagree at times with certain statements, but try to maintain a neutral role. Some psychology can be most helpful during an interview along with tactfulness and some insight into the feelings and moods of the narrator. You must find the right chemistry. Many times the second interview will progress much more smoothly than the first. Remember, a person's moods change, and you might be interviewing a slightly different person the second time around.

In the second interview you should be more familiar with the narrator's story and mannerisms. Come prepared again, having typed the first interview and taken time to analyze it, study it, and understand all the answers. Be prepared to use some of the previous interview as material for 'lead ins' for continued stories. One can also use repeated questions to double check the accuracy of the information given in the earlier interview. You do not need to tell the narrator that you are testing his accuracy. The narrator, by hearing some of the facts presented in the first interview, may realize that he did make a mistake and then can correct it. He may also have remembered some additional material once he reads the transcript. Remind him that these early pages are just the first draft of his interview.

Another test that should be given to the narrator at this time is to repeat some fact you know to be true and test his knowledge of it.

If he repeats the story as you know it, he can be counted on as being accurate and knowledgeable. Example: QUESTION: "Where on the North Shore did Buddy Petit live?" If the narrator verifies that Buddy did live on the North Shore but he isn't sure exactly where, that is a good sign. If he says that Buddy lived his entire life in Metairie, he is talking about some other Buddy Petit.

Many times the use of a tape recorder makes a narrator nervous. He may not respond well, or he may flatly refuse to start the interview until you turn it off. This happened to me once when I was conducting an interview for an article on Chris Kelly. The men sitting in front of a corner bar would talk to me, but they didn't want their names used or their words put on tape. I was a stranger to them and they were afraid I was a policeman or a lawyer and what they said might in some way be harmful to them. I turned off the machine and immediately they opened up and gave me some valuable information about Kelly and his house, which was just across the street from where we were talking. If this happens to you, then note-taking becomes very important.

NOTE-TAKING IN AN INTERVIEW

Use a loose-leaf notebook that can be spread out, taking notes only on the left side page. The narrator's order of events may not be chronological or he may remember a fact about an event he spoke of earlier. You can place this new fact along side the material you wrote on the left side of your notebook. First make sure you put the data of the interview—name, date, place, time, etc.—on page one.

Do not doodle. Any excess manual activity could distract the narrator. It also inhibits your own note taking, interferes with concentration and breaks eye contact. Facial expressions and gestures of the narrator give important clues for understanding and remembering—pay attention to them. Make your notes complete and clear so they have meaning for you days, even weeks, later. Notes need not be complete sentences.

Note-taking is a process of selection, condensation and compression. Above all, write legibly. Also leave blanks for words and phrases you might have missed. Ask about
them at the end of the interview or at the end of an answered question. Clarify the missing words. Develop an abbreviation for common words and recurring terms. Example: the word ‘with’ use w/, the word ‘each’ use @
Use initials — BP = Buddy Petit. If words are emphasized by the narrator, underline them, or if quoted use “”. Write down any thoughts of your own that occur to you while the narrator is talking. Something the narrator once said in an interview I was doing made me think: “I’m going to check that in the Punch Miller interview at Tulane.”

The ideal set-up for an interview is to use both a tape recorder and a notebook. The recorder captures the narrator’s words as spoken while the notebook provides a medium for you to keep track not only of the flow of the interview, but of thoughts you have as well.

Circle names, locations, books, etc., mentioned by the narrator (See Appendix X). These can become additional sources for your investigation. Be very attentive for clues such as “you’ll see what I mean later,” or “this is very important.” Mark these statements with asterisks. Follow up on these clues if the narrator does not. These follow through efforts could lead to valuable discoveries that could enable you to make comparisons, clarifications, or discover contradictions. Also, watch out for numeration. Example: “There are three steps to this process ...” Make sure you receive and make note of all three. If not, ask for them. Other key phrases and words to pay close attention too are “finally,” and “exactly.”

Make sure you understand the ending of one idea and the beginning of a new idea. Make sure you close quotes and parenthesis. Always note the narrator’s examples. After an interview, these will clarify many ideas which may have seemed more abstract during the interview. Be very attentive to the end of any statement made by the narrator and be especially attentive near the end of the interview. Many narrators who do not try to pace themselves, will try and cram half of all they know into the last few minutes of the interview. This is true especially in a lecture-type situation. Try to end the interview on a closed story or statement.

Once the interview is terminated, take the time to record additional ideas or questions that might occur to you. Do this immediately after you leave the company of the narrator. Review the notes as soon as possible and rearrange some phrases if necessary. Be assured that your interview techniques and note-taking will improve with practice and experience.

### NOTES ON LIBRARY MATERIALS

Note-taking from books about your subject is an important step prior to the interview. It is very important to acquaint yourself with as much material about your interview subject as is available in books and other documents.

The steps: After an overview of the material used, identify key ideas or facts; then begin a paragraph reading. Next, extract, summarize, and record. Facts dealing with dates, places, names need documentation. The facts that deal with concepts, theories, or ideas need only be summarized and condensed. In condensing large portions, use the ‘intro, thesis, body and summary’ formula (See page 55 of ‘How to Study in College’ by Walter Park).

Sometimes a whole paragraph can be reduced to one word. Remember, note-taking insures your understanding of what you read and can summarize in your own words. Some important points may be restated as diagrams, maps or figures, which may be quicker or easier to understand. The five R’s of note taking are: Record, Reduce, Recite, Reflect & Review.

### INDEXING CASSETTE TAPES

Use your digital counter on your cassette recorder to keep an index of where each story is on the tape. Remember that this count may vary slightly from machine to machine.

The other way to index a tape is by time of five or 10 minute segments. Each method will take time, but will save time when you have to go back to the tape for reference.

### TRANSCRIBING FROM TAPE

Transcribing the interview tapes is a long, time-consuming process; but, the transcripts are much easier to use than the tape itself. A researcher can read through a transcript more quickly than he can listen to the tape. No-
tated words, if transcribed correctly, are more accurate and more quickly comprehended. Those by a speaker on a tape may not be clear. Example: The words heard as 'lettuce spray' may have been spoken as 'let us pray.'

If you have another person do the transcribing, be sure to check it carefully. One not familiar with jazz terms or names can make mistakes. I once had a very intelligent person transcribe an interview for me. While it was mostly accurate, there were some names (of musicians, streets and places) that were misspelled or missed because of ignorance. Examples: The name of Emile Tosso was written 'Tossill,' the names of Tony Parenti and Santo Percora were left blank, and the names of two theaters (the Orpheum and the Greenwald) were misspelled. These examples underscore the importance of the interviewer checking the final draft of the interview transcript for errors.

It generally takes six to 10 hours of transcribing for each hour of interview. Bring your transcript of the first interview to the second interview so the narrator can look it over. In addition to making corrections, allowing the narrator to review the initial interview might also prompt further recollections.

Two bits of caution: 1) Make sure the narrator can read; and 2) the narrator may want to rewrite some portions of the typed interview and might remark: "Did I say that?" or "I didn't say that." or "I didn't mean it to come out that way." If that happens, stay calm, and record whatever changes the narrator wants to make to the transcript of the earlier interview.

EXPERTISE AND TECHNIQUE

The best way to improve interviewing technique is to continue to gain experience. To gain fluency, self-evaluate the tapes of previous interviews you've conducted. First, prepare the index, then jot down questions for the next interview session. Listen to the old tape for the questions, comments or procedures that were successful and for the things that weren't. Check the techniques you used that were successful. Example: Maybe some negative statement/question opened up the narrator's reluctance to elaborate on the answer. Or, the opposite might have happened and a negative approach created tension. On one interview I did, the narrator would not say a negative thing about anyone and would not answer any negative questions. With him it was a strong religious dogma: 'Never say anything bad about anyone.'

Silences seem to be longer than they really are during an interview. Be sure and listen carefully to the answers after a long pause. The narrator may have forgotten the question or lost some concentration during his thinking process. He may need some prompting or leading questions asked. This might help his memory during silence. Be careful not to interrupt the narrator's train of thought. You have to become sensitive to his feelings, and get to know his characteristics and mannerisms as you conduct the interview, sensing when he needs prompting or when to sit and wait attentively. He might even have forgotten the question and is embarrassed to ask you what the question was.

RESEARCH BEFORE AND AFTER

The process of pre-research into the subject of the interview is the most important part of the oral history technique. Approximately eight hours of research is necessary for each hour of live interviewing. Once the interview is concluded, it may dictate more research. If it is a very successful and informative session, the result may call for more extensive research into new avenues and clues uncovered in the interview. One must be fully aware of the availability of material and resources for such research (See Appendix V for locations in New Orleans used before and after the Humphrey interview).

It is a good idea to get together with the narrator prior to the actual interview to establish rapport and to explain the subject of the interview. The narrator might have photos, scrapbooks, etc., that he can have available at the time of the interview for your use.

Use your best judgement on other statements that might be ambiguous or incongruous. Keep the transcript in the narrative, conversational style of the tape. Don't change it to an essay style. When transcribing, do a portion, then review what you've typed. Check for correct word transcription, spelling and note moods or inflections of the narrator in parenthesis. But, keep the oral flavor
heard on the tape.

LOCATION OF THE INTERVIEW

The location of the interview is important. A location should be discussed at the first meeting with the narrator or over the phone once contact is made. The narrator may feel more comfortable in his own home. If so, try to make arrangements to limit distractions during the interview. If the narrator has a housemate, perhaps that person could be enlisted to limit disturbances during the interview. The outdoors is not usually a good setting, as there are normally more background noises there than indoors.

To include a spouse in the interview can be both good and bad. One interview was best with the wife of the narrator present. He was 101 years old and his wife was very helpful with making him understand the questions. Another interview was not as successful when the spouse was included. Again, a meeting is best to help determine all the things needed for a successful interview.

INTERVIEW CONTROL

You must keep control of the interview, but you must do this with diplomacy. Using eye contact, nods, or interjecting certain statements or comments at the right time will allow you to retain this control. The surest means of keeping control of an interview is to be thoroughly prepared for it. Be sure questions are "open-ended" and enable the narrator to elaborate and associate the facts in his mind easily.

JAZZ INTERVIEWS

Many of the people doing person-to-person interviews are trained to conduct them. In the field of jazz research, many of those interviewing lack both the interview training and the musical knowledge. They do not have an educated background in jazz, the history of the area they are doing the interview in, and most are not jazz musicians, but amateur jazz lovers or a journalist assigned to the task. This set of circumstances or even combinations of them have resulted in much misinformation about the early days of jazz music.

To become a good interviewer in the jazz field, one must possess knowledge in music history and theory, some psychology experience, and, above all, an ability to understand or play jazz. If you do not have either the skill of interviewing or playing jazz, seek out a person in the field in which you are weak and enlist his help.

In Appendix IV I have detailed a complete musical scope/outline for use in analyzing the music presented in an interview. Using this outline one can find all as much as possible about the music taped.

The progress and the development of the field of jazz research is accompanied today by an abundance of information/speculation concerning the nature, origins and history of jazz.

From the explorations of Pythagoras concerning musical acoustics, through the use of the Fibonacci mathematical sequence employed by Bela Bartok, to the present experiments with synthesizers and new tuning systems, attempts are being made to describe and discuss the phenomena present in the art of music, particularly jazz.

The study of music history appeared during the 17th and 18th centuries. These early music scholars were concerned with such discoveries as the origins of music, the biographies of important composers and critical evaluations of composers of the past and present.

It was not until the 19th century that music scholars applied the disciplines to make the study of music an increasingly important addition in the field of the humanities. They created the field of musicology. This knowledge and discipline is now being applied to the origins and study of jazz. Jazz history is at the crossroads of musicology at the present time. What was and is needed is a disciplined and scholarly approach to the field of jazz. The chief tools will be analysis and synthesis.

The analysis method: — verify factual material (very hard to do)
— interpret the facts discovered
— break down complex problems to smaller ones.

The synthesis method: — work with material common in jazz — rhythms, harmonies, melodic contour, etc., that combine to make a jazz composition.
APPENDIX I — An Out of Control Interview

After a completed answer from the narrator, the interviewer, after a very long pause, says:
I: “Uh .... Uh .... Let's see, what facts of your life are we missing? .... Uh’
N: “Well, there is my background”
There is another pause as the narrator waits for a question about his background, but it doesn't come. He finally continues:
N: “You didn't get to ask me ...”
The interviewer interrupts the narrator, saying:
I: “Oh, okay .... go ahead.”
N: “My grandfather was a singer, my grandmother a singer, my daddy was a singer and a violin player, had a nephew that played piano, two or three uncles played professional ...
”
The narrator continues for another three or four minutes. There is another long pause after the narrator completes his answer. The interviewer finally speaks:
I: “Uh .... Let's see .... What fact of your .... “ His voice dies down and he sounds like he is mumbling something. After another long pause the interviewer asked a question that was answered before by the narrator:
I: “You studied under Tio?”
N: “Yes.”
The interviewer should have phrased the question so it cannot be answered by just a yes or no. He should have asked: ‘What did Tio teach you’ or ‘What material did he present to you in a lesson?’ But, after the narrator answered ‘yes’ there is yet another long pause. Then the interviewer finally says:
I: “You don’t have to stop talking.”
N: “He actually was my teacher.”
Another long pause. The interviewer says:
I: “You don’t have to stop talking.”
N: “Well, that's okay.”
The long pause that followed this exchange is broken when the narrator says:
N: “You know Bob Wolff? He has done a lot of research on me, a lot of stories.”
I: “Uh huh.”
N: “Do you know Bob?”
I: “Yeh.”
N: “A wonderful guy, man.” He pauses.
I: “Uh....”
N: “But you seem to have an interesting job here in this place which I think is one of the greatest things since I've been here.”
I: “Well, I...”
N: “How did you come about this?”
I: “Oh that? I was just around at the right time.”
N: “Oh, well, you know, that's a good thing. To be around at the right time.”
I: “Yeh .... but, we're not interviewing me.”
N: (Laughing) “But you have to ask the questions. Find out who the fellow is.”
I: “Ooh .... we .... let's see .... I've just about run out of material .... uh .... Was there anything else I haven’t asked you about?”
N: “Well, there’s about my married life and ....”
The narrator goes on telling of his wife and moving from New Orleans to Houston and then to New York.
You may draw your own conclusions as to the ability of the interviewer presented here.
APPENDIX II — Use of a Time Line

Time Line — Oscar 'Papa' Celestin
 stil incomplete at time of interview, hope to fill-in blank dates 1917 — 1925 and 1931 — 1937

1884 — Born January 1.
1902 — Began playing.
1906 — Moved to New Orleans.
1909 — First professional job.
1910 — Tuxedo Brass Band or orchestra. Tuxedo Dance Hall job.
1913 — Suburban Gardens.
1914 — Villa Cabaret.
1916 — Suburban Gardens.
1917 — Original Tuxedo Band (dance band).

1925 — Recorded for Okeh/breakup of Tuxedo Band.
1926 — Pelican.

1930 — Garden of Joy/Pelican.
1931 — Buena Vista Hotel in Biloxi.

1939 — Gave up trumpet.
1940 — Comeback.
1941 — Welder at ship yard.
1944 — Accident.
1946 — Comeback.
1949 — Paddock Lounge.
1953 — White House/President Eisenhower.
APPENDIX III —

Q: Louie, let me get your dates down here.
LA: Born in 1900, Fourth of July, 12:00 at night, and they called me the firecracker baby.
Q: What were you doing around 1915-16? Hanging around looking for work? 
LA: I was playing in Henry Matranga’s Honky Tonk at Perdido and Franklin. See and I would get in there, that’s how to get in to know these greats like Pops Foster, Sam Dutrey, Joe Oliver, Buddy Petit. All them boys were blowing you know. But they had too many gigs, you know we had 106 bands of combination of six pieces like that. And they was all working. That’s how much work there was in N.O. So when they say go get Little Louie, I’d substitute for one of the fellows that played with Earl and quite naturally I got to know them like that, understand? I went to the Silver Lead Band which was Sam Dutrey’s band. They were playing at the Gardens. That Palm Gardens. Their cornet player didn’t show up that night, so they had me come up, but Sam hadn’t come yet. But I didn’t know Sam Dutrey. You know, he’s one of those sectics, played a lot of clarinet. So when he comes upon the stand he looked at me... “What are you doing here, boy?” I said, “nuttin’, mister, I just (Louie says this very timid.) The other boys says, “leave that boy alone, he goin’ to play with us tonight.” So Sam says, “I’m just kidding, Son.” I was scared of him all night.”
Q: How old were you then, Louis?
LA: About 16 or 17, yeh.
Q: Were you born in N.O.?
LA: Yeh. I was born back in James Alley ...

SKIP TO TALK ABOUT ADV. WAGON

Q: What do you mean — play on the wagon?
LA: In those days they had a furniture wagon — a long wagon that hauled furniture. Had one horse, later they got two. They hire that furniture wagon for a six-piece band. They called that tailgating. The bass and trombone sit on the tailgate, even it up and the rest of the boys in the wagon, like the drums and guitar and trumpet, the slides on the tailgate so he can shove out, and he can relax his bass, sitting down on the back of the tailgate.
Q: One thing I don’t understand. Who would hire the wagon?
LA: Now the next thing — say, for instance, this gentleman gave a dance at the Economy Hall, another guy, he give a dance at the Funky Butt Hall. (That’s where Buddy Bolden played.) That’s the hall everybody know, they named it Funky Butt and its now famous by that name. Now it’s a big church there. So, for instance, you give a dance, and this gentleman gives a dance, he wants his band to draw a crowd, so they chain the wheels, and they make them two bands blow — and the one that gets the ovation from the crowd, probably the next night get a crowd for the ball — see they give in Monday night — I was just a kid, diggin’ on this and even when Pops Foster used to play with Joe Oliver, and all the greats, and Joe, he liked me at that time and he was a popular man, and I got, could play a whole lot of horn in my little way, but Joe always said now if you ever get on a corner, in a wagon and playing for some place, and we come up, stand up, see what I mean. And he would just play ordinarily and it’s all right. But one Sunday I didn’t stand up and, Oh God, ... (Oliver really blew him out)
Q: Now ... Joe, Who Joe?
LA: Joe Oliver, King Oliver. See, in my day he was the top man instead of Buddy Bolden. See B.B. was the great man in Joe Oliver’s day when he was a kid. B.B. was Joe’s idol. Buddy, they all had something on the ball, certain techniques, and Joe told me about B.B. I noticed Joe, M. Perez, F. Keppard. They were old fine, old man Moret. That’s how I summed them up. I came along as a kid. Now B.B. is a great man, but to me he blew too hard. Understand? He could blow a whole lot of horn, but sometimes like musicians you take uh, I summed it up from styles they have and lot things they have, like bop came in and he got a phrase coming up, probably just one note, so he can figure he can make that note, so he make a lot of notes to get around that one. Well, B.B. would blow so hard, you see his veins, you know, and finally, he blew his brains out. Now here come a guy like Joe Oliver, with
that — he was the most creative of all the trumpet players I heard in N.O. But after Bunk Johnson, had a better tone. He was a relaxed man. Bunk Johnson reminded me of Buddy Hackett. It came out pretty.

Q: Let me ask you this, Pops — How much did you make in those days?
LA: Well it was big money according to the times. You have to realize in those days you could buy a suit of clothes for about $10.00. You take 1915. I got $1.25 a night. I could take care of my mother, my sister, and buy a suit of clothes at Wagners on top, tailor made, playing at a honky tonk. George got $2.50 to play at Economy Hall. Joe Oliver and all those good musicians in the red light district, which you call Storyville now days, they only got $1.25 a night. Joe Oliver got $1.25 top money. He took care of family with that and everything, and had money in his pocket. Because everything was cheap in those days, you understand? I remember Joe sent me in his place one night at Pete LaLa’s. Now Joe knew that I wasn’t capable of sitting in his chair, but he figured I needed that money so he said, “you play in my place.” I could play in those days. In the orphanage they taught me to play the Saints, in the little brass band, the bugle institute and play the Saints so the boys could march to church. That night I’m employed and Pete LaLa comes up and says, “where’s Joe Oliver?” I don’t know, I said. He told me to come in his place. He go to take the night off. (Louie slurred his speech talking to Lala.) He wanted me to make that money, because I had a little difficulty and momma needed the rent and Joe was always a kind man. But Pete LaLa knew it was a set up and every time he got a chance, he walked slough-foot, you know, he come up to me, he pointed at me, ‘put that mute in that horn.’ ‘Yeh, yeh Sir... and later, Lord, later I’d forget... I told you to put that mute in that horn.’

QUADRILLE

LA: The Quadrille is a dance that they did around 12 at night and where they get this Tiger Rag come from. Introduction to a Quadrille (Louie sings it on tape).

ABOUT PLAYING DANCES

LA: And here’s another thing. Now Les Brown, he’s playing here tomorrow night. He’s playing at a bar room. We played, well, they wouldn’t call it a bar room, they call them dance halls. The band don’t get on the stand until they play at least 1/2 hour in front of the hall for people passing by. They play 1/2 hour and people come by with a shopping bag, and some go in. And that’s how we got a chance to hear Buddy Bolden.

Q: What was the roughest place you played in?
LA: Well I think the Brick House was the roughest joint I played in, over in Gretna. On Saturday night a honky tonk by the Jackson St. Ferry. We didn’t know about gangsters, we called them hoodlums.

Q: Did you come close to getting killed yourself?
LA: Well, lots of times but you stay on the bandstand.

Q: Can you remember any one thing that happened like that?
LA: Yeh, right here at Liberty and Perdido when I was playing for Henry Ponce. He was a Frenchman who was a big pimp in the district. He was a good looking Frenchman and I say at that time he must have been 45 or 50 years old. He come to the district and opened up a night club, a honky tonk at Liberty and Perdido, on this corner across the street was a grocery named Segretta’s. Well, all them band negroes, hung out and got their cans of beer on credit and things like that. Well, this man, the crowd followed him that knew him from the district and the other people that hung around where we did alright. One Sunday morning, after we had done played all night Saturday night, he was talking to me, I’m standing on the sidewalk and I didn’t know, and he didn’t know that Segretta had hired about four negroes to take jim and they had 45’s right on that corner. I’m standing there talking to him. Blah, blah, blah... And all of a sudden, I look around and there they are, everyone of ‘em pointing these pistols... bang, bang, bang. And Henry Ponce says, ‘OK, wait a minute.’ He run back and got his pistol. But I’m standing there like shorty the barber (Louie was frozen) and I’m all right till Henry Ponce runs them cats a block from Liberty and Perdido to Howard and Perdido. The minute he runs down that way everybody run to me and say ‘Are you hurt?’ And that’s when I fainted.
APPENDIX IV — Jazz Research Methodology

Organization of Music Research for Jazz

1) Systematic question of musical style:
   1 — principles underlying formal organization of the music.
   2 — nature of melodies used.
   3 — nature of harmonies used.
   4 — music and elements that make up the music.

2) Historical: Temporal sequence of events and their implications supply background that gives meaning to information discovered in systematic section.
   1 — conditions under which the music was written.
   2 — preceding events which had a bearing on the music.
   3 — subsequent events that were influenced by the music.

3) Musical idea and style.
   1 — the idea that is to be expressed — can music express non-musical ideas? Ex.: can music picture a mountain?
     a — heteronomous — yes.
     b — autonomous — no.
   2 — the means used to express the idea (cliches)
     a — established musical style
     b — musical styles of the past
     c — experience with new means of expression

4) Form — four aspects
   1 — pattern aspects — (kinds that are studied in music form classes)
     a — well defined division into sections
     b — repetition — exact or modified of sections of pattern strophic form — repeated over and over.
   2 — procedural aspects — like ostinato bass or cantus firmus, using imitation and motivic interplay, variation.
   3 — extra musical aspects — extra musical program or textural considerations (after 16th Century text's popularity gives way to instrumental music).
   4 — multipartite aspects — integration of smaller forms into large complex forms (suites, concertos, etc.)
   5 — forms:
     a — juxtaposition of phrases — formal consciousness very strong
     b — continuous expansion of motives — more jazzlike.

5) Harmony — consonance and dissonance — chords and progressions, relationship and rhythm

6) Texture — monophonic, homophonic, polyphonic, freistimmig, auflenkugspraxis

7) Auxiliary fields:
   1 — acoustics
   2 — psychological
   3 — aesthetics

8) Orchestration and performance practices — size, instrumentation, etc.

9) Comparative musicology — music of primitive and non-European cultures.

10) Philosophy of music histories
    1 — narrative approach — events in form of story, no interpretation
    2 — programmatic — interpretation of events to derive practical or moral values from the history.
    3 — genetic — finding relationships of cause and effect between isolated events of history. A and B — showing how B couldn't have taken place without being influenced by A — good for fine arts.
       a — continuous artistic progress — past, present, future.
       b — cyclic theory:
1 — great man theory
2 — periodicity of music theory (300 year pattern)
3 — continuous metamorphosis — state of flux.

11) Sources of music history:
   1 — primary sources:
      a — material remains — musical instruments, painting, etc.
      b — documentary:
         1 — records of births, marriages, deaths, etc.
         2 — posts or jobs held
         3 — personal or musical organizations
         4 — programs of concerts
         5 — announcements and reviews of musical events
         6 — correspondence of composers
         7 — personal diaries, notebooks and the like
   2 — secondary sources:
      a — encyclopedias, general histories, special studies, etc.

12) Research Methodology: awareness of research problems — the student many times thinks after completing class that he has finished learning history.
   1 — working hypothesis:
      a — clear statement and the nature of problem to be studied
      b — methodology to be followed in arriving at the solution
      c — statement of results
   2 — location of material:
      a — Has problem already been given a satisfactory solution — should you go on or stop?
      b — What work has already been done than can contribute to solution? Maybe take a different approach.
      c — Are the materials needed for solution available to the researcher?
   3 — organization of material:
      a — outline of project
      b — introduction of problem.
   1 — historical material
      a — general historical and sociological background
      b — biography of the composer
      c — historical data concerning the music
   2 — stylistic analysis
      a — analysis of individual composition
      b — analysis of general musical style
         1 — form
         2 — texture
         3 — melody
         4 — harmonic idiom
         5 — instrumentation

13) Conclusion — summarize major points and present final solution
APPENDIX V — Research Centers

PLACES IN NEW ORLEANS

There are a number of research facilities in and around New Orleans that a visiting researcher should know about. I suggest first a visit to the Jazz Museum in the Mint (Esplanade and Decatur streets). I would also suggest a familiarity with certain books on New Orleans jazz.

The Tulane University William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archives are an important source for jazz material. Researchers should be aware of the following reference materials available in the Jazz Archives:

1) Bibliographies of approximately 600 musicians, including transcripts of the oral interviews made possible by grants from the Rockefeller Foundation.
2) Graphics — shelf list card and/or subjects files on photographs, posters, motion pictures and cinema. This material is available for examination and there is a service for duplication.
3) Index to Goffin — Material of the early French jazz writer.
4) Indexes to New Orleans newspapers — Daily Item & Daily Picayune, 1890-1900; Daily Item, 1900-1912.

The Jazz Archives are located on the fourth floor of the library. On the third floor is the Louisiana Room, where one can look at old maps, magazines and other materials on New Orleans. I have found many items pertaining to jazz there. On the second floor is the microfilm room, where you can look at N.O. newspapers and other sources that have jazz-related material. The Louisiana Room also has copies of old telephone books.

Other items of interest in the archives include:

- The Nick LaRocca Collection. The famous trumpet player of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band gave his jazz materials to the jazz archives, and there is an extensive interview with LaRocca that every jazz scholar should read.
- The name authority file — includes composers — compiled by sheet music project funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.
- Notes on LP’s and 78 rpm phonodiscs. You can ask to hear these records plus the tapes of many interviews. You should not only read the transcripts of the interviews, but it is important you hear the actual interview on tape.
- Index to the Soard’s City Directories — in Richard Allen’s material. Soard’s Directory is a good source for names, addresses and listings of businesses in New Orleans dating back to the 19th century.
- Vertical files — bands, discography, musicians’ union Locals 174, 496 and 174-496, persons and subjects.
- Many other collections are housed at Tulane Jazz Archives, including those of Al Rose, Dr. Edmond Souchon, Harry Souchon, Bill Russell, John Robichaux, Roger Gulbransen, and Raison Crawford.

The archives publishes a quarterly newsletter. In order receive the newsletter, merely put your name on the list at the archives.

The Jazz Map and the Jazz Tour are also available for your examination.

Address:
William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archives
Howard-Tilton Memorial Library
Tulane University
New Orleans, LA 70118

The archive’s phone number is (504) 865-5688. A call to check the hours is suggested.

The New Orleans Jazz Club’s & the Louisiana State Museum’s Jazz Museum is located in the Old U.S. Mint along with the state museum’s collection. It is on the second floor of the Mint. The first jazz museum in the world holds an extensive collection of jazz artifacts, records/tapes, pictures, magazines, etc. Don Marquis (author of In Search of Buddy Bolden)
is the curator. The Jazz Museum is located at 400 Esplanade Avenue. Telephone (504) 568-8215. A call to check operating hours of the museum is advised.

The Louis Armstrong Foundation has the most complete collection of facts and memorabilia regarding its namesake in the city. The Foundation, through its efforts to preserve Armstrong's legacy to jazz as well as keeping the history of the music itself alive, sponsors lectures and exhibition on New Orleans jazz. The Foundation is located on the third floor of the Mint, the same building that houses the Jazz Museum.

The Amistad Research Center is perhaps the largest archives on the history of Black America. Old Negro newspapers, collections on social clubs and the papers of Fletcher Henderson and his old piano are in the collection. While not an archive for jazz music, there is much material that is useful to research on social and environmental conditions that affected jazz. I have found pictures of old social clubs that used jazz that have not been published.

The Amistad Research Center is located on the campus of Tulane University.

The New Orleans Public Library's Louisiana Collection is one of the best in research on the city and its citizens. Old maps, magazines, books, microfilm and card files on New Orleans, its history and its people are recorded here. I might warn you that getting the birth records, marriages, etc., of a subject can be a tedious process. Ask a librarian to explain the rules to you.

City Hall and other city governmental buildings have records. Records on land, titles, etc., can be gotten there plus items such as health records and old marriage records that fulfill state law requirements can also be obtained. The Archdiocese of New Orleans (which has records kept in Baton Rouge) can also be a good source of information.

The Historic New Orleans Collection is at 533 Royal. The permanent collection is comprised of important holdings of maps, architectural records, manuscripts, books, drawings, paintings, prints and ephemera associated with Louisiana in general and New Orleans and the French Quarter more particularly. Phone (504) 523-4662.

There are a number of jazz scholars that make New Orleans their permanent home, including William Russell, Richard Allen, Al Rose, Don Marquis, John Joyce, F. Hatfield, Danny Barker, Michael White and many others who have devoted much time and energy to researching, writing and preserving the city's jazz heritage.

The New Orleans Jazz Club has numerous members and board members who may be contacted for information about jazz in the city. Contact Mrs. Francis Fernandez at (504) 455-4874 for more information.

Another source are the remaining musicians some of whom played as early as 1910 in the city. Securing personal interviews depends on their willingness and availability. The best way to arrange such an interview would be to contact one of the jazz scholars and enlist his/her assistance in lining up the interview. Many of these musicians are willing to talk but they may have been interviewed dozens of times and most of these interviewers do not pay them for their time. Be sure to be prepared for the interview. The people who made up the audiences for these early jazz years can also be very useful and informative as they were more aware of what was happening on the scene since the events were special to them.
## APPENDIX VI — Outline for an Interview

1) **History:**
   - Research — collect and study information on the subject and his past activities. Get informed on area's social, economic and cultural conditions.
2) **Outline material collected in research; list chronologically.**
3) **To Interviewee:**
   a) Inform him of the purpose of the interview and the planned project.
   b) Attempt to get candid information of lasting value — but anecdotes are good!
   c) Inform him of mutual rights — editing, literary, legal, etc.
   d) Honor his requests not to use certain facts.
4) **Interview:**
   a) Honor and guard against social injury or exploitation of interviewee.
   b) Conduct interview with respect for human dignity.
   c) Strive to prompt informative dialogue through challenging and perceptive inquiries.
   d) Conduct interview in a spirit of objectivity, candor and integrity.
5) **First Meeting:**
   - Informal talking; get to know each other, ask about using tape; relaxed atmosphere, comfortable setting/location.
6) **Questions:**
   a) Ask open-ended questions and have interviewee elaborate on answers (no 'yes' or 'no' answers).
   b) Try to follow chronological order in interview — don’t skip from early past to recent times.
   c) Questions best answered by interviewee on one-on-one setting (interviewee might not answer the same if others are present).
   d) Verify facts.
   e) Try for more than one session.
   f) Ask follow-up questions where appropriate.
   g) Check technique:
      1. Did I follow up stories with good questions?
      2. Did I interrupt any good stories or facts?
      3. Did I make follow up outline as soon as possible?
      4. Did I find 'holes' in story line and find out what facts are needed?
7) **Techniques to remember about interviewing:**
   a) Follow an outline — begin with early life.
   b) Remember to listen.
   c) Control the interview but maintain rapport.
   d) Feel free to agree or disagree — but try to maintain a neutral front.
   e) Communicate in the vernacular of the interviewee, if possible.
   f) Ask only one question at a time. Get an answer to that question.
   g) Allow time for a response — silence is sometimes necessary for interviewee to collect his thoughts.
   h) Guide the conversation — reclaim control if the interviewee goes in another direction.
8) **Review interview as soon as possible after it is completed.**
APPENDIX VII-A — A Sample of Questions Prepared for an Interview

Interview with Willie Humphrey about his grandfather James Humphrey

QUESTIONS


How did he get jobs? Who paid for Magnolia lessons? Where did he get instruments from?

Routine for teaching lessons? Materials used? Techniques used in rehearsal; conducting, tuning, dynamics, seating, etc. Warm-ups, names of marches, and music used? Any actual music left?

Jefferson Parish — Where is store at? (Ridgley)
Places taught at — St. Sophie, Point a la Hache, Belair, Deer Range?
Time on train from New Orleans?

Why musicians left before 1915 hurricane?

Where and when did his bands play? Who paid for uniforms?

Did he mention anything about the jazz music of early times? Did he like it or play it?

Connection of Morgan with James?

What were the bands like at Belair, Jesuit Bend, Ironton, St. Sophie?

Where was he from birth to 1885? Did he come to New Orleans from Sellers direct?

Did he hear or see Kelly play in New Orleans?

Did he work with John Robichaux?

Did he know or hear Bolden?

Did he like success of pupils like Kelly, etc?

Did he do anything besides music?

Why not further up and down or in Thibodaux?

Activity at Shell Beach? Other places like Milneburg, Spanish Fort?

Author's Note: No matter how well one prepares for an interview, the actual conduct of the session will produce surprises or unexpected gems. The interview conducted from the above listed questions produced just such gems, which led to further research, which, in turn, led to the publication of additional articles. As a rule, no interview should lead to a dead end; there should always be some new information produced as a result of it.
Appendix VII-B — Story resulting from interview with Willie Humphrey

Professor James B. Humphrey — Part II

by Karl Koenig, PhD

Continuing the research on James Brown Humphrey brings to light more and more facts on his personal and professional life. Especially informative is a recent interview with William Humphrey the Younger, the grandson of J.B.

Willie remembers his grandfather very vividly, having lived with him while his father (Willie the Elder) was on the road playing music. Willie is very proud of his family's musical heritage which began with J.B. and is continued in the musical tradition by his great-great grandson, Terrence A. Humphrey, a musical therapist working in Hammond Louisiana.

Willie can recall a number of J.B.'s pupils, both Black and white, who came to the Humphrey house for music lessons. He mentions the names of Jim LaRocca, who studied trumpet, Clarke Simmons, a trumpet player with an exceptionally large range, a trumpet player whose last name was Decker with a powerful lip and an amazing endurance ability, James Williams whose father played with Robichaux, and Edmund Washington, a trombonist.

When asked to describe J.B. and his personal traits Willie answered:

"My grandfather believed in thrift. He would never just give us money, we had to earn it. I remember he would buy his tobacco wholesale, the seller thinking grandfather was in the tobacco business, because J.B. would but large amounts of tobacco to save money. The seller found out that it was just to save money and stopped selling J.B. tobacco. J.B. smoked both cigars and a pipe.

Sometimes after he came to New Orleans my grandfather worked on Canal Street. He had a job going around to all the gas lights and putting them on near dusk and out at first light."

As Willie sat back in the sofa of his living room in a house that was in the area that his grandfather lived, one could see the sense of pride he still had for his grandfather and memories long forgotten began to come back and more personal thoughts and details began to be related:

"J.B. would never go and play music for free. While he would play for some charity affairs, J.B. never played his horn without being paid for it. When he was young he played frequently. As he got older his playing days were few. But he still practiced day after day. When he got up in the morning he would pick up his old cornet and practice.

If one was living in our neighborhood he could, as twilight set in, listen to a nice trumpet sound in the air, J.B. used to sit on his front porch during the early evening and play, his cornet being heard for miles around.

He used to practice a number of hours during the day and was one of the best solo cornetists in the city in his day. One of the playing jobs he continued to do in his declining years was the one for the Grand Army Organization. He would march for them in their parades and they would take him to their conventions throughout the United States. J.B. traveled with them to many cities including Los Angeles and Indianapolis. On parades J.B. would march alone out in front of the marching band.

1Interview of Willie Humphrey by Karl Koenig, Sept. 19, 1981.
members in their uniforms playing his cornet. It was quite a sight, seeing a solo trumpet marching, playing in front of a large group of uniformed Grand Army Veterans. The Grand Army made him an honorary member.²²

I had been very curious how and where J.B. received his education, as all reports spoke of him as a very well educated person. Willie answered:

"My grandfather attended that school that was out on Canal. (Early location of Straight University) He learned there to play some of the instruments and others he learned on his own. He wasn't just a musician. He taught himself many subjects. He was mostly a self taught man. His evenings were spent many times smoking his pipe and reading the classics. His favorite was William Shakespeare. J.B. was a very intelligent and practical man."²³

I also had been wondering how J.B. could have made a living just teaching and playing music. Most early New Orleans musicians had a regular job and played music on the week-ends. There were exceptions such as Chris Kelly who as his wife said; "Made a natural living playing music." I asked Willie how J.B. could support a family on just those earning and how he could travel up and down the Mississippi River teaching. Surely he didn't make that much money teaching a handful of young field hands music?

"Grandfather made his money in real estate. At one time he owned all the land around Cadiz and Liberty Streets. When he needed money he would just sell some land. He never had any real money problems. He lived a very comfortable life from his land. He had a garden for much of his food and I think teaching music was a labor of love. My grandmother, when she first married grandfather used to take in laundry.

He was always down at city hall, looking up deeds and other things. He was known by all the city officials and very well liked and respected by them and by everyone that knew him. He had a half-brother who was a minor public official."²⁴

I was also very interested in finding out about J.B.'s early life and his parents. Willie didn't remember much about his grandfather's early life, having been born in 1900, (that would have made J.B.'s age in the early fifties when Willie might have been old enough to have some recall about early activities of J.B.). In examining the records in Hahnville, Louisiana, there is mention of J.B.'s family. The records list only two families named Humphrey. Alexandre Humphrey was born in 1814, and was married in 1834 to Eulalie, a young woman of the area. J.B. is listed as being born on the Corland Plantation in 1859, with his brother W.K. Humphrey listed birth date as 1857. The records also list two sisters. Was Alexandre J.B.'s grandfather?

J.B. was always well-dressed and could be seen most of the time wearing a dark suit and a derby hat. His red hair turned to a distinguished gray in his later years which were spent in leisure — mostly reading, practicing his cornet, and enjoying his family. J.B. never went to hear any of his pupils' music, such as Chris Kelly. He didn't express a like or dislike for their music but being from the older school of music, didn't really appreciate the new sounds being heard around the city. He trained his pupils in the art of music, not to become classical or jazz musicians, but to become a musician.

J.B. did conduct some other groups in his career besides the previously mentioned

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.
brass bands. Willie speaks of the group that made up a brass band at the Bulls Club:

"J.B. conducted a band that was formed at the Bulls Club. They were a group of club members that were just amateurs at music. They weren't really good players but wanted to form a band for fun. J.B. was hired to teach and train this band.""

Willie mentions the Newsboys Band which J.B. was hired to train and teach:

"Late in his career J.B. was the conductor and teacher of the Newsboy Band. This was a band created for young boys by the New Orleans Item. It was a drum and bugle corps. J.B. had a rehearsal once a week from around 7:00 till 9:00. He was there for about a year. I think it was in the 1920's. He quit, saying that he couldn't continue because of the poor discipline that the boys in the band had.""

This statement was understandable knowing J.B.'s standards. He wouldn't put up with any discipline problems. The Newsboys Band had been organized as early as 1887. It was located at 90 Baronne Street and was a charitable institution taking care of unfortunate young boys. They had a band and a symphony orchestra. There are two mentions of the Newsboy Band in the papers, both in the year 1887:

"Yesterday was one of excitement at the Sportsman's Park, where over 4,000 people had collected to witness the opening game of the series between the New Orleans and the Mobiles. It was overcast and very windy, in fact it blew to such an extent as to materially interfere with play on both sides. Nearly every available seat was occupied; several ladies graced the reserved seats stand, while the Newboys Band furnished excellent music.""

"The Newboys Band was under the direction of E.J. Boye.""

J.B. played at the various pleasure clubs around the city in his early years and knew how to get the music jobs. He was well educated and served as the corresponding secretary for a number of them. In turn his band would receive the dance jobs or the parades and funerals. Willie remembers the paper work J.B. did at home and also mentions that J.B. used an accordion in his dance band, an instrument used by many of the early jazz bands in New Orleans. Willie also remembers J.B. the music teacher and how he wrote exercises and songs for his pupils:

"Ibid.
"Ibid.
"Times Democrat, April 18, 1887.
"Times Picayune, April 2, 1893."
In connection with his teaching J.B. would write various little melodies for his pupils. This was before the now popular method band books had begun to publish. J.B. believed that some of his melodies were being used in various methods still published today. You know one of them. Willie sang the melody given below.

He wrote that and used it in his teaching."

Many of the early New Orleans musicians spoke of J.B. in their interviews at the Tulane University Archives. These interviews shed important facts on the early training of the musicians during the maturin of New Orleans Jazz. First, in an interview with Harrison Barnes, describing a lesson with J.B.:

"So he give 'em the scale, ya know, and he would put down what finger to give for them to get their 'tonation' (Barnes meant what pitch each fingering produced), ya see, of the instrument — first, second and so on, like that on the card. (card = finger chart?) Then he give 'em the scale."15

Charles 'Sunny' Henry also has given a description of how J.B. taught. He describes to Mr. William Russell a lesson he received from Professor Humphrey:

"The first way he'd do, he would get the band on its feet, you see, and then he'd commence with his trumpet, and then again, he'd get 'em all straight first, you see. But the first thing he would do, that battery. (French named for drum section) — that's the first thing he would get straight first, that battery...that's the bass and the trombone and the drum and everything...after he'd get all that straight first, and then he'd jump on the trumpets, you see, and he'd get them. Because that battery, that's the foundation of the band, you see. And so when he'd get that straight, then after that, the trumpets, you see. He'd get on them. And then, when he'd get them straight, all right, he'd say, 'come on, let's go, everybody. But what he would do, he would make that battery get in there first, you understand, and get everybody straight first. (I think Sunny means in using the term get everybody straight was to make sure that the battery knew their parts and were playing the correct notes) and then, trumpets. I gone tell you the way he taught the boys, I think it was the right way."15

Another pupil of J.B.'s was William "Bebe" Ridgley, who remembers J.B. arriving at Jefferson City just across the city limits of New Orleans in Jefferson Parish on the old street car line that used to run down Jefferson Highway as far as Kenner. Ridgley would pick up J.B. in a cart and ride him to the country store where J.B. taught a band class. Ridgley had worked in that store for many years and was part of the band J.B. taught:

"Humphrey concentrated on teaching the musicians to read different music; waltzes, marches in the cavalry mode (6/8 meter), and other forms, as well as standard 'split' time marches (2/4 marches)."16

It was teachers like J.B. Humphrey that taught the old time jazz musicians the skills that were needed to perform the music played in the best of the city's brass bands and the bands that played in not only the society dances but in the many dance clubs that lined the city. In such bands as the Ex-

op. cit. Willie Humphrey.


celsior, Onward, Tuxedo and the Allen bands (bands in which the "Magnolia Gang" musicians played) the musicians needed their reading ability. Sunny Henry, quoted below, explains the necessity for careful reading in the "older" bands:

"When you get in there — let me tell you; in that Excelsior Band and the Onward Band and others ... you got to have a mighty good head to play in that band if you couldn't read. Course, if you could read some, well you could make out, you understand, but them people, they used to put them old heavy marches on you, you had to jump. (jump — faking some notes and passages)"13

Concerning the music that J.B.'s bands played; two quotes explain the style of music arranged for his bands. First Ridgley:

"He'd (J.B.) arrange simple things that were already familiar. With songs, hymns, he would make simple arrangements for them, the tune would already be almost in their heads, but at the same time, they were learning to play the instruments. Jim Humphrey was a good old teacher. Smart."14

Sunny Henry also remembers that J.B. wrote much of their music:

"What kind of music did they play in the Band? Jim Humphrey use to write the stuff. No, there wasn't no overtures, just marches. Played for dancing, yes a little waltzes we used to play."13

Sunny Henry also described J.B.'s writing out parts for the music they played:

"Jim Humphrey used to write out all kinds of stuff. Little light stuff. Would write out split 6/8 marches,

14Ibid.