

unedited first draft

AUGUST LANOIX
REEL I, TRACK 1
April 19, 1961

INTERVIEWER: William Russell
ALSO PRESENT: Ralph Collins,
Clarence Gabriel
NOTES: Richard B. Allen
SUMMARY: Dan Weisman
TYPING: Dan Weisman

[WR says, we are recording Mr. Lanoix...]

I am August Harry Lanoix. The address is 2224 Conti Street.

[WR says he is interviewing, along with Ralph Collins.
Harold Dejan will be back later.]

I was born in New Orleans in 1902. I was born on Philip and Bernard [in the Garden District]. [My birthday is] August 13, 1902. My father was a guitar player.

There was one man that he worked with that was very famous, but he was a violinist. I can't think of that man's name, now. He was very famous.

It wasn't [John] Robichaux [or A.J. Piron]. It goes way back, way before those fellows. It wasn't Jimmy Palao. I've got his name on the end of my tongue. Not Valteau or Jimmy Palao...

[WR says it may come to me later, so don't worry about it.]

That's all [my father played,] just guitar. [My mother] didn't play [any instruments]. None of the rest of the family [played]. I had brothers, but none of them didn't take up anything.

I didn't take up music until around 1919. At that time, I was around 17 years old. I started out on the trombone. I was

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taking lessons from Professor James B. Humphrey. Jim Humphrey.

I tell you--I had a cousin. He was a clarinet player. He was the one that urged me to start music. He had an old violin. He gave it to me.

I went to old man Humphrey. He told me: you're wasting your time fooling around with an instrument like this. Because this instrument is not dying out. It's done died out.

He, in fact, advised me to take up the trombone. So, that's why I settled on the trombone.

[My cousin's name, the clarinet player] was Albert Gabriel. They'd call him "Dude." He was formerly from Algiers.

He wasn't exactly my cousin. He's my wife's cousin. But, when I met up with my wife, and the family, her family...She played piano, and her daddy played trumpet.

Her brother was a drummer at that time. Now, he's playing saxophone. He don't live here. He live in Detroit.

The rest of them--why, they were too small. My brother-in-law, he plays piano. He used to play banjo. He played for a while with Louis Dumaine.

Just by getting into that family, that's how I started into that music. [My wife's father name] is Gabriel--Clarence Gabriel. On trumpet. That's the one on that picture there. [The trumpet player].

He had the National Jazz Orchestra, at that time, around

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1918. Up until about 1924, or 1930, I think, he was still playing.

We used to play with him. Then, we played with others. Then, those two brothers and myself, we formed a trio. We played all around.

When trios wasn't famous, we had a trio. [Our instruments] were banjo, bass, and clarinet. We played at Victor's out here. I think it was Chartres and Toulouse. [WR says, it's still there.] We played about two years.

I used to go twice a week [to lessons]. He used to teach at his home on the 4500 block of Liberty Street [way Uptown]. [He charged] 50 cents [for] private lessons.

He had an orchestra, and the orchestra...used to go around to different one's houses. They'd practice each week. They had a certain night, they'd go, and they...

The club used to furnish the refreshments. They wouldn't have nothing but cakes and ice cream, soft drinks, something like that. [Like a party, WR says.]

Each week, the different students would meet. Those that were advanced enough to play in an orchestra.

Then, they would, probably, play; maybe, at some church benefit, or something like that. They had a house party at some of the club members' house, and different things like that.

I used the Carl Fisher method [on trombone]. I had to sing

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the numbers first, and then count. They taught me, not the way they teach like this...

[AL shows a method for counting beats, and refers to pianist Clarence Gabriel, who is also in the room.]

[CG] could play [yet], but he doesn't have a banjo. [WR wants to interview CG another time, and explains that Tulane University is interviewing older players.]

The lesson lasted about half-an-hour. He was strict. I went to him. That was around 1920. I stayed with him until around [19]21; or the first part, middle part of [19]22, something like that.

Then, I got in this military band there. They had this man, Professor [Paul] Chaligny. I stopped taking lessons with Professor Humphrey by being in this band. And he was teaching this band. So, I was taking private lessons from Chaligny.

[Humphrey's main instrument] was trumpet. He used to go around with this little club band that he had. With the club band, he played C-clarinet.

He could play violin too...He did urge me to get a certain type of mouthpiece, and I did. Not too...now, the name of it, I forgot that.

But, it was a small, not too big mouthpiece. It had a deep cut, and the rim wasn't so wide. As far as the name of the mouthpiece, I've forgot that.

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I bought the trombone...from someone. I think it was a Holton slide trombone.

I happened to change on to the bass by being in this military band. They had two other fellows which you see on there with trombones. And me. I made the fourth one, I believe. They didn't select one of those men on there.

There was a boy. I believe his name was Gussie [Lachoff?]. He's on that picture. He wanted to form an orchestra, which he did.

We used to rehearse a long time with the three trombones. So, they said that was too many trombones for a 10 piece band. They only had two trumpets. They couldn't use three trombones.

They didn't have no bass. So, they says to me, why not you get a bass? Well, I didn't know where to get a bass from. Things were kind of tight at that time. That was...around [19]24, [19]23, I think it was.

What I did...I know you've heard of Dave Perkins. They used to rent instruments. To make a rehearsal on a Sunday night, I went off [to rent] a bass for 75 cents.

I had it on the streetcar, [and] made that rehearsal right here on Iberville. That's where this fellow was living. He was living there, or his sister...They had a piano there.

That was the first time [I played bass, right at the rehearsal.] I didn't know anything about it. I tried to bow it.

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So then, I had to learn something about the bass.

I went under a fellow. At one time, he was a good violin player. Maybe you heard of him, Wendell McNeal. [WR has.] I taken bass lessons out of him. He was playing bass at that time.

I studied under him about a year. Then, I went out for myself, and practiced with what little I knew about music from the trombone.

That's how I came along. With him, and his daughter. We used to practice, as I said, with that trio. And fooling with this other band at the same time. We got together, [as a trio] after this band broke up.

They never did succeed. All they did was rehearsal. They never played one job during the whole time of rehearsal; about, I'd say, maybe a year, or so.

The trumpet player was the leader. Gussie Lachoff. But, the only band he played with was this military band.

That's when we got this...went on with this trio. We did very well. We used to play music. Orchestrations. They'd give [CG] the banjo part. [Manny] Gabriel took the clarinet. He was starting to learn saxophone at that time--the clarinet, and the saxophone.

We used to play an orchestration for those three pieces from top to bottom. That right, Clarence?

When "Three Little Words," came out, we were playing in a

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speakeasy back on Perdido Street. That was during prohibition time. "Three Little Words," came out. We didn't buy it. Just picked it up, and played it.

Fellows used to say, you sound just like the fellow playing on the record with Duke Ellington. I was playing the same thing...After we played a while, then we bought the orchestration.

[Humphrey] always tried to advance us. (Street noise.) If you could, somebody would, maybe, give you, or lend you a part. You'd bring it there. He would help you...

[That's why Humphrey] told me, I was wasting my time fooling with the violin. He wanted me to get on an instrument that I could get out of.

I played several jobs on trombone with my father-in-law and others. "Duck" Ernest [Johnson] used to play bass, and I played jobs with him.

And this fellow here, [in the picture.] Where I'm playing the bass horn with him. I played trombone with him. With [Dominique] "T-Boy" Remy.

[WR discusses a picture that, last week, Joe Harris got confused on. JH's father is on there. AL has trouble identifying others, but identifies Jimmie Noone.] I knew him. Knew him by seeing him playing.

[There's a picture there, WR says] of a jazz concert. Benny

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Goodman...at the [Municipal] Auditorium for the National Jazz Foundation...

[WR identifies Sidney Desvigne's Big Band, and, apparently reading from a program, names tunes: "Shuffle Rhythm," "After Hours," "Backroom Boogie," "See See Rider."] He played all that.

Teddy Wilson with Benny Goodman's Quartet. [Let's see what else with Sidney Desvigne's band, WR continues, while reading the program. "See See Rider," with Myrtle Jones; and "Good Morning Blues," with Myrtle Jones.']

I Made some records singing both those numbers, years ago. "See See Rider." It was never issued. "Pistol Packing Mama." Then, Teddy Wilson played solos in the quartet.

This other Dixieland band. I guess that was the group. Well, here's Pinky [Vidacovich] and his New Orleans Jazz Band. "Panama," with Monk Hazel. "High Society" with Irving Fazola. "Basin Street [Blues]" with Claire Nunn.

They had several bands from New Orleans on there, too. Benny Goodman and his Quartet was there. They broadcast part of it on WDSU broadcast...October 4 and 5, 1944. [cf. Esquire Yearbook.]

There were two concerts there. At the [Municipal] Auditorium. National Jazz Foundation. (Pause.)

O.K. Excuse the interruption...Let's see. Remy's Golden Leaf [Orchestra]. That's Joe Harris's band. That's Eddie Dawson [on trombone]. [I'm over here on tuba.] I don't know the other sax

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players.

That's Louise Delvaille [on piano]. She's dead...That's Joseph Jamon [on trombone]. [The drummer is] McGee. I don't know his first name. This was around [19]31.

I played trombone - not with this group - but with that trumpet player. He got the name "T-Boy" from his daddy. That's a French name, means little boy.

[AL introduces his wife, and asks the spelling of Delvaille's name, who was also an organist. WR refers to a May someone, on the photograph. She was also organist at St. Katherine's Church on Tulane Avenue. She was a very good musician. WR spells, and tries to pronounce Delvaille's name.]

[T-Bone's band picture] was taken on the Pelican Dance Hall. That is not my instrument [referring to the tuba,] but I had one.

That horn belonged to a fellow named Turner. I had a tuba. I started that in [19]28.

But, this band. I forget his name. I think he was a foreigner too. He was from British Honduras. I just remember his first name. This is the band [that] caused me to have a tuba.

[This is Dejan's Black Banner Orchestra, 1928, the picture says, WR notes.]

That's Eddie Pierson. [Standing in the back in the dark coat] is Leo Dejan [on trumpet].

That's Alvin McNeal. He's the nephew of the one that I spoke

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about, Wendell. Alvin...was a very good musician. [He's next to the drums.] He's also dead. The drummer is Sidney Montegue...

This is Edward Johnson on sax. [He's active.] Now, that's Herbert Leary [on piano]. I worked with him from [19]32. I worked with him 17 years.

This is a boy named Reese Corbette. He's not from here. Lives in California. I think he stopped playing music a good number of years ago. Tenor.

That's...His name is Reuben McClenon, banjo. He don't play anymore, either. He drives a truck for the Southern [] Company. [He's still around town.]

That's me. What I looked like. [You look different, WR says.]

That's Harold. [That's Harold Dejan there. He looks different too.]

That's [Sherman] Cook. He was a dancer. Leo played violin also. He had his violin there.

That's Harold's brother. He was a very good musician, too. I don't know if he still plays. I think he lives in California.

[WR thinks he plays some, but isn't very active.] He was very good. He was very strict for a youngster when he was young. He controlled that band.

We worked on the Pelican. At that time, the Pelican, the Economy Hall, Autocrat [Club]. We did quite a bit of work.

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You might have heard of a band that was very famous called the Sunny South...The Sunny South was formed from this band.

You had Dejan, Pierson, Montegue. I think, that was all. They had Richard McLean. I think he played guitar with them. The bass player...I don't remember who they had on bass.

This was the band that caused me to...the string bass was antique...and I had to get a bass horn.

I didn't get a sousaphone. I had a German helicon bass. Wraps around, and the bell came out...I happened to find a good one in a pawn shop. That's why I used a helicon bass.

I played with Kid Clayton, and Kid Rena. I went under the professor with the bass horn...(Can't remember the name.) He wasn't exactly a teacher, but he was a very good musician. Joe Howard. I taken bass lessons from him.

[Louis Armstrong says he taught him on the trumpet, too, WR says. So, I guess, he was a sort of a teacher, too]. He was. But, at that time, I don't think he was worrying about teaching too much.

He also played with the Dumaine band. They taught him a lot. Of course, he started playing banjo with Amos Riley. You'll get all that.

We played only spots, nights [at the Pelican]. When other bands wouldn't be there, that they had. Because, at that time, I think Walter Pichon was playing up there.

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Sometimes, we'd play with other bands. Two bands contest.
That's [19]28.

Like I said, if that other band hadn't [stopped]...some of the fellows drifted, like me. I went, and played with Clayton because he was in the jazz field with the Dixieland. He was playing a lot more, getting a lot more work than they were, because they had a big band.

Cook was a regular member. He contracted a lot of jobs for us. [10, 11 pieces. That's a pretty big band, WR notes.] We played a couple of hotels, the Monteleone for different sororities, and all like that...

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SUMMARY: Dan Weisman
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I was using the bass horn in [19]26, [19]27, something like that. Everybody - all the bands - [used] nothing but bass horns.

I know men that were famous bass violin players went on tubas. Henry Kimball, Jimmy Johnson, all those fellows were playing tuba at that time.

They'd seen all the other bands that used to come in here. They had sousaphones. Then, they'd say the band looked out-of-date. That's why they wouldn't want [the string bass].

That lasted, up until around, somewhere around [19]35, or something like that. Then, they started dying away, and the string basses started coming back. [I never did get rid of my string bass.]

I tell you what I did do when I bought this bass I have here. I bought that bass from Werlein's. I got rid of the bass horn that I had, the helicon bass. I traded it for the string bass.

I played [parades] with [Kid] Rena's brass band. [Dominique] "Ti Boy" [Remy] played in the Eureka Band. [He was the leader.]

[Kid Rena] never did have an organized brass band. He used to use 10 [pieces]. That was around [19]29. We had two trombones, three trumpets, a baritone, alto, bass, clarinet, two drums.

They didn't use no saxophones, at that time, in the brass

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band. That's why some of the fellows today--they don't have no brass bands because they use too many saxophones.

They don't produce the music like the baritone, and the alto did. Not to me. [WR doesn't think so either. The sax tone changes the sound of the band completely.]

They had some alto, and baritone players in those days...I know one alto player. He just died...Isidore Barbarin. He was one.

Adolphe Alexander. I don't know if you remember him. [WR knows his son.] His daddy. I mean the daddy. He played a good baritone, too. The son...

They had several other guys...There's one fellow. I think he must be dead, too. Georgie Hooker. I think he was from Algiers. [WR has heard the name.] He was formerly a trumpet player. He was a good baritone player.

They had one fellow. He played trombone. He used to also play baritone. Buddy Johnson...

Harrison Bradley. He was a baritone, and trombone player. He was there. I don't know if he's dead.

[WR is sure he is dead, and mentions Harrison Barnes, who died a year ago, as playing trombone. He played with Hooker, and played baritone horn some, too. There must have been a few around, we never got to hear.]

They had a fellow - I don't know his name - but Alexander's

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daddy. That's where he gets the name, they call him "Tats."
[i.e., Adolph Alexander Jr.] It was from his daddy used to call
him "Taton." It was just a nickname they called him. It must have
had a meaning, though. But, I don't know.

He played in the Excelsior Band. He played baritone. They
had a fellow who used to play alto, but I don't know his name....

[George] Moret was the leader [of the Excelsior Band].
Harrison Barnes, and Buddy Johnson was the trombone player for
that band.

[Lorenzo] Tio [Jr.] played clarinet. The young Tio. Louis
played in that band, too. Louis Armstrong. [WR says LA talks
about old man Moret.] Peter Bocage, too, played in the Excelsior
Band.

At the time, when I played with [Moret], my brother-in-law
was playing clarinet. Clarence's brother, [Manuel Gabriel], the
one I showed you on that picture. Manuel Gabriel. Everybody calls
him Manny.

[WR guides AL through that brass band picture again, asking
him to remember the names.]

This is the fellow I was telling you about before. Lachoff.
[The picture is torn right through his face to the left. He has a
little short cornet, he's holding.] That's why it's short.

That's Walter [Fugeller?], cornet. That's Alonzo Turnitch,
trumpet. Now, that's Adolph White, trombone. Adolph White. He

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used to work for [].

Now, this fellow. His name was Scott. But, his first name. I don't have it.

This is Martin Gabriel. That's the one I was telling you about [that] had the famous jazz band. He also had a famous jazz brass band....

That's Alexander Corrella [?], bass. He's from British Honduras. That's an upright. Both of those are small. Look like basses here.

This fellow is named [Charles?] Yseurre...[WR thinks he played with Piron. I think we have his picture with Piron. Is that the one?] That's right. That's him.

Now, this is Edward Brazile...[WR mentions he has a little wire beater in one hand, and a drumstick.] He's also deceased.

[He used the cymbal on the bass drum.] He used to work for the Times-Picayune. He was famous for football. Worked there for years, and years.

This is...Henry Mansion. He was a plasterer. Yeah, Henry Mansion. That's a baritone.

This fellow's name was Bouton. But, his first name? A clarinetist. In the later years, he played the string bass.

Now, that's me. [That's your trombone you're holding there, WR notes.]

This is Joesph Cherrie [?]. [No relation to Eddie Cherrie.]

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That's Lucien Barbarin. he was a clarinetist too.

This is Stafford. I don't know their first names. That's twins. Both of those Stafford brothers [trombone, and alto players].

Now, this man, I don't know his name. They did have another fellow on there playing an alto horn...He's paralyzed now. He's not exactly disabled, but he had a stroke...Amadei. He was a mellophone player. He was on there. There he is. That's him. [Almost torn off.]

You couldn't imagine where that [picture] was taken. Nobody can guess that. That's taken in front of the old Parish Prison, [Tulane and Saratoga.]....

This man, this little fellow--he was a Fugeler. That's this man's son. Played snare drums....

[Another man, his head is just showing], I don't know his name. I did know his name. We used to call him "Papa." He was very old at that time.

[Another picture is marked] Peter Cudie, council, Knights of Peter Clavier. That was a priest. His name...Peter Cudie. Father Cudie.

The council was named after him. That's a Catholic fraternal organization. That's [19]22, I think. [19]22, or [19]23, might have been there. [19]23, I think.

[Those were] white [uniforms we wore. WR says leather

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straps, and belts, and all.] See. Some of them had the pouches. Some of them didn't have the pouches. [We kept music in there.] [WR says they were nice uniforms. White caps.] That cap says leader on it...

This particular council was with St. Katherine's because that's where Father Cudie was...They still meet. They don't have any band, but they still meet there.

[It wasn't far to the parish prison from St. Katherine's Church.] They marched over there that day, and played a couple of numbers on the way going. [WR had heard of that.]

That's the band that Chaligny started. I remember the very [first] day he was going out with the band. I had learned from Professor Humphrey - for a lesson under his son - and he had remarked to me that he didn't think this band was ready to go out on the streets.

But, they went out, and they made a success. He hadn't heard the band. He said he didn't think they were ready to go out on the street. But, they did. They went out that Sunday, and they went for a long time after that.

Some of the men like those...Some of those fellows were old musicians. They hadn't been playing. They just used to be with the band.

Some of those fellows were new, and they took clarinet lessons.

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That's Chaligny's band. This fellow used to practice with the band all of the time. Albert Warner...

[There are no more band pictures in AL's scrapbook.] That's a little nephew of mine's [picture.] He drew that...He plays with a famous musician. He plays with Fats Domino. [His name is] Clarence Ford. He makes a lot of records.

[Here's another one, WR says of a picture.] They got bands on that. That's the same band. Now, you'll see some of the men.

There's one. George Williams. He's not on that [other] picture.

See--that's Lachoff. There's one of the drummers of that band. He's not on that [other] picture.

There's Emile Knox...George Williams was playing drums, but that's the one that switched to trombone. There's my father-in-law again.

That's Amadie. That's one of the Staffords. Now, this fellow. I don't know him.

That's Thomas Mitchell. He was a violin player, too. [Has a bass drum, there.]

This band was mixed up. That's Corpus Christi, and St. Katherine's mixed together. That's Henry Davidson.

That's...Ganier, I know you've heard of him...This is Djalma Ganier...

That's Herman Franklin, [the little short trumpet player.]

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He played with Sidney Desvigne. Also with Celestin when Celestin had a big band....

[Three more clarinets, WR says. One is an alto horn....Remember who this also is there?] I'll tell you who it looks like. It looks like Peter Bocage. [It sure does, WR says.] It might be him.

That's Harris...Joe Harris' daddy. His father. That's the same fellow I showed you over there--Bouton [clarinetist.]

There's Adolph Alexander [Sr.] That's Adolph Alexander's daddy [right next to the man who is sitting with the plain clothes.] That's Coella, the same fellow [on tuba.]

Now, that is...see that trombone, [it] is that Louis Armstrong's brother, the trombone player. That's Louis' brother. [WR doesn't know much about Louis Armstrong's brother. RC and AL think that is a full brother.]

I think that [picture] was taken in City Park somewhere. [There's a water tower in the background. A lot of trees with Spanish moss on them.]

There were two bands, or three bands, I think, mixed up all together in that [photo at] St. Monica Parish. I think they had a band at one time [with Louis Armstrong's brother].

[WR counts 17 men, up until the bass drum...18 in that group...19, so it might be two bands. There are about 10 in AL's band.]

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I'm not in that picture. That's before I got in there.
[There are about 30 musicians there, altogether, WR notes.]

[Members of the lodge are also dressed in white.] That was before they wore tuxedos.

Every time they had an initiation there, [we had a parade]...That might have been the day I was initiated. I was initiated in June 1922...

[They discuss a photograph that is very nice, according to WR, and another picture taken during AL's five month stay in Detroit. Mostly a young group, isn't it?] Yes.

That's my nephews, and my brother-in-law, and his sons. There's one of them on the piano. There's another brother. You can't see him. Instead of him standing up, they were playing.

When that picture was made, they used to play in McCloskey's Tavern, in Detroit. They played there three times a week. I worked there about four months.

[Herbert] Leary's Band [in Detroit] was a big band. At one time, he had...14 men. He had two basses.

[AL shows a picture of Manuel Gabriel's trio that had AL and Clarence Gabriel in it.] That's Detroit.

[Here's Leary's Band, 1940, WR says.] Oh, you know him? [Oh, yes.] Now, this fellow. That's Daroux. That's Manuel Manetta's nephew. He's a trombone player. He's also deceased. That's his brother. Well, he's still playing. He's active.

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That's Miss Adams' brother...Dolly Adams, his piano player. That's Carey Lavigne. He's a professor. He's dean of the Gateways School of Music. [WR has met him. WR used to teach out there too.]

This is my wife's youngest brother. He's a bass player. Him and I were playing bass together.

This is Son Johnson. You know him, too, or you know of him. That's me. That's Emile Fricks [?]. He doesn't play anymore. That's Emile Maurice. He's still active.

That's [Lester] 'Black' [Santiago]'s friend. He lives with Santiago, at Santiago's house. He's a drum player.

[WR counts 14 members, not including the girl and AL counts also.] [Harold Dejan returns.] That was 13, including the girl. She'd just sing. [That's a nice picture, WR says.]

Now, this boy, his name is Clarence Anderson. This is Joseph Port [?]. He was a trombonist player. That's Percy Gabriel. Lawrence Daroux. Irving Daroux. That's Casimir, Paul. He's a guitar player...

No, never did [have any regular long engagements.] But, we went as far as Pascagoula. I think we went north as far as Breaux Bridge and Baton Rouge, all the time. We played in the Gulf Country Club out there in Baton Rouge. We played for sororities in the Roosevelt, the Jones, La Louisianne [Hotels]....

[WR asks Harold Dejan if he wants to ask any questions, and

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recounts what they covered. HD asks about AL's switch from trombone to bass, and AL briefly tells the story of switching in the brass band.]

I played with Piron's trio at the Country Club, too. At the time, when he had the big bands, he had a regular spot. They had [a spot] [at the] Royal Palm Garden. I think that was Delechaise and Saratoga. They had a dance.

The only record I ever made was with Charlie Love and Jiles. [RBA noted that, later, AL recorded with Peter Bocage and Louis Joseph on Mono.] They had some pictures. I don't know if you all ever saw, I never did see any of those pictures....

HD says he tried to take AL with him on a job at the Big Apple, but AL wouldn't go and he took Chester [Zardis] [and the track ends...

END OF TRACK 2

