

[Allen:] [Unintelligible] [You have ?]

[Cornish:] Well, that's the gang he was with when he married me.

[Allen:] Oh--when he married you he was with--

[Cornish:] When we married, that's the gang he was with when he married me.

[Russell:] When were you married? You remember the year?

[Cornish:] Huh, do I! I married--he married me in nineteen and twenty-two.

[Russell:] 1922?

[Cornish:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] And he was playing with the Eureka then?

[Cornish:] He was playing then with them; that's the band that he was playing with, the Eureka Brass Band. Oh, it was a good band, too, I'm telling you.

[Allen:] And--you must--

[Cornish:] John Casimir could tell you a plenty about him, too.

[Russell:] Yes, we'll ask him sometime.

[Allen:] Yeah. I got to see John soon, anyway; he's a good friend of mine.

[Cornish:] John Casimir played with him. Didn't John, didn't he tell you?

[Allen:] Oh, yes; we're going up and see him, too. Exactly what day were you married? Do you remember the day of the month?

[Cornish:] Heh?

[Allen:] The day of the month you were married?

[Cornish:] I was married in nineteen and--yeah, I have the license.

[Allen:] Oh, yeah.

[Cornish:] Uh-huh. You want to see the license?

[Allen:] Oh, we'd like to.

[Russell:] [Could do that ?]; then we can get his full name and all from it, too--that doesn't give his birth date, though, does it?

[Cornish:] I have his birthday; here it is.

[Russell:] Oh, yes.

[Allen:] Oh, yes. Well, we'd like to see the license, you know, and--

[Russell:] You'd want to look through that.

[Allen:] He was such a great man, you know, and--

(machine off)

[Cornish:] But now, when you have a baby, they have birth certificates; everything is new style.

[Russell:] Yeah, put it right down as soon as you're born now.

[Cornish:] Yeah. That's my license.

[Allen:] I forgot to tell you I just left Kid Punch. Remember Kid Punch, the trumpet player?

[Cornish:] Oh, yeah.

[Allen:] He said to tell you "hello." He said--

[Cornish:] He know Willie good.

[Russell:] Uh-huh. He knew him, he talked a little bit about him.

[Cornish:] And Sam Morgan--

[Allen:] Oh, yeah.

[Cornish:] Sam Morgan died, though.

[Russell:] Yes. His brothers are still living, though.

[Cornish:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Isaiah.

[Cornish:] I don't see none of them; none of them don't come around me no more.

[Russell:] We saw Isaiah just a couple of days ago, on the street, and then he was down at my place.

[Cornish:] What y'all going to do? Have--make a book, eh?

[Allen:] No, we're saving this for Tulane University. We might

make a book later.

[Cornish:] Oh.

[Allen:] But we--well, at the university--thinks it's worthwhile to save the voices, and this tape is supposed to last a hundred years.

And--

[Cornish:] Oh, that's what y'all going to do. Oh, yeah, I understand.

[Allen:] And--anyway, it's such a wonderful thing, they want to keep it in the library up there.

[Cornish:] They got plenty--most all them good musicianers is dead, though.

[Allen:] It's terrible.

[Cornish:] They all--the ones they got now, there ain't nothing to them.

[Russell:] No, I don't think so, [not] as good as the old ones.

[Cornish:] Oooh--a man told me this morning, he said, "Lord," he said, "them old ones was the best."

[Allen:] Oh, yes. Well, we want to talk to all the people we can find who knew them.

[Russell:] That man you were talking to--did he know the old musicians, too? was he a musician?

[Cornish:] What, the man I was talking about?

[Russell:] Is he an old-time?--

[Cornish:] No, he just--no, he ain't no musician at all. And--it's a lot of them what Willie played with--[Albert] Warner, he's in the Eureka Brass Band; John Casimir and them used to play, with all of them used to play in the Eureka Brass Band, you know. But some of them died.

[Russell:] We talked to Mr. Warner just last week.

[Cornish:] That the one got the sliding trombone?

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Cornish:] Didn't he tell you what kinda man my husband was?

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] Did Mr. Cornish play a slide trombone when you first met him or did he play the valve?

[Cornish:] No, he played sliding trombone and then he used to play a horn sometimes he'd play a horn put over his head.

[Russell:] Oh, that's a tuba, maybe.

[Cornish:] I don't know what it was, but--

[Allen:] Sopsaphone.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Cornish:] Yeah. But he was crazy for the slide. And warner can tell you he was a good, he could play, too. Didn't he tell you?

[Russell:] Yes.

[Allen:] That's right.

[Cornish:] And the Eureka Brass Band was the best they had. Was the best they had going, but after he took sick and drug sick so long and all, look like it went down. John used to play with him, John Casimir.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Cornish:] Yeah.

[Russell:] When did Mr. Cornish take sick? Do you know how long he played?

[Cornish:] No.

[Russell:] How long he could play.

[Cornish:] No, I couldn't tell you that part 'cause I had forgot it. But I had him all on my hands. Nobody to help me with him, you know, and my hands was full. 'Cause he turn para--he was paralyzed, you



see.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Allen:] When did he die? You say how many years ago?

[Cornish:] He died in 19, 19 and 42.

[Allen:] 1942? And the date is almost today, huh?

[Cornish:] Yesterday.

[Allen:] Yesterday?

[Russell:] Just yesterday.

[Cornish:] He died in January on the 12th. That's when they sent me the telegram from Alexandria; that's where he died [unintelligible].

[Allen:] Was that a Veterans' hospital?

[Cornish:] Yes! It's a big place out there. I used to go a long way to see him.

[Allen:] Well, he must have been in the, in which war? One of the wars.

[Cornish:] He was a Spanish-American soldier, you see.

[Allen:] Oh, I see.

[Cornish:] Yeah. They mix them all up together in different wards. They do, you know--they mixes them all up.

[Allen:] I just wondered if he played music during that war, if he was a--

[Cornish:] What war?

[Allen:] The Spanish-American war.

[Cornish:] Uh-uh; I believe--I don't think he did. I never knowed him when he was in the war, 'cause he was young, you know, then; I never knew nothing of him then.

[Allen:] You say you're seventy now?

[Cornish:] I'm seventy. Oh, I see.

[Allen:] Let me check this with you: it says, "William Cornish"?

[Cornish:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] And you're Mrs. Isabella Davenport, now Cornish--you were Miss Isabella Davenport?

[Cornish:] Was. Uh-huh.

[Allen:] You were married on the 30th day of November, 1922, "same being duly recorded in Book Number 48, Folio"--looks like 103--

[Cornish:] Yeah; and the preacher [is] dead.

[Allen:] Oh, I see--

[Cornish:] The doctor's dead--[named ?] Rev. Robinson, up on First and Dryades--he died; been dead.

[Allen:] T. F. Robinson.

[Cornish:] Yeah, he dead.

[Allen:] And that's in the parish of Orleans it's recorded.

[Cornish:] Yeah, it's recorded and everything, but he died.

[Allen:] We'll look it up if we want to get any more, 'cause this Henry Lanauze, I guess his name is, or Lanauze--

[Russell:] Oh, we won't need that anymore, I don't think. But we wondered, now about his birth date; didn't you say you have his?--

[Cornish:] I got that, I got that pat; don't worry, I keeps that.

[Allen:] Thank you very much, Mrs. Cornish.

[Cornish:] Uh-huh. But there ain't nothing to this.

[Allen:] Well, it's nice to know--

[Cornish:] But I keeps it.

[Russell:] Oh, yes; thanks for that.

[Cornish:] Yeah, I keep it. Now when you get married, they have a great, big, long ringamarole and all kind of stuff [unintelligible]; this was a little, bitty old piece of paper they give me. Yeah, I--

[Allen:] It's a nice thing to have.

[Cornish:] Yeah, I got his--

[Allen:] Wish I had one.

[Cornish:] You ain't got none?

[Allen:] I don't have a piece of paper. Wish I had.

[Cornish:] You never married?

[Allen:] No, not yet.

[Cornish:] Well, you may, someday.

[Allen:] I've come close, but not--let's see: you say he was born?--

[Cornish:] Uh-huh, he was born in August the 1st, in 18 [and] 75, and his age, as it stands now, is eighty-three. Well, [if he had lived until August 1--I mean, if I live [until] August 1 ?], when he come in again, that make him eighty-four.

[Russell:] He'd be eighty-four in?--

[Cornish:] Uh-huh. He had a good age on him, ain't he?

[Allen:] Yeah.

[Cornish:] You see, when he went to war I didn't know nothing about that; he was with his mother. His mother was one hundred and five when she died.

[Allen:] Gee.

[Cornish:] She used to live with me; she died with me.

[Allen:] Did his mother play music, or?--

[Cornish:] No, she didn't.

[Allen:] She, I suppose?

[Cornish:] No, sir, not of my knowing, because when I married him she was old, old, you know?

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Cornish:] She was, and I took her with me to stay with me, and done for her.

[Allen:] I wonder what religion he was raised in. Did his mother go the church?

[Cornish:] Well, his mother was Baptist; she belonged to church up on Adams and the riverfront, somewheres uptown, and he was blessed Baptist. And when he got, when he joined [the] church, he joined, I joined the Perdido Street--Perdido and Howard [now LaSalle Street], under the pastor's named Rev. Delques [spelling ?].

[Allen:] Yes. Now--I was wondering, Bill; that's Mahalia Jackson's church, isn't it?

[Russell:] That might be the church; Mount Moriah is on Adams up there--or, it's not on Adams, it's near Adams--

[Cornish:] The church his mother belonged to was [on] Adams towards the river; it was up on Adams Street.

[Russell:] [There are] two or three little churches up in there.

[Cornish:] Yeah. Well, her's is a large church, right in near, going towards the river. *[Lafayette and Perdido Sts. Feb 12 1922]*

[Allen:] Yes.

[Cornish:] 'Cause I used to carry her up there in a cab all the time; that's how come I know it.

[Russell:] Did Mr. Cornish say if his father ever played any instrument, or any of his [other relatives ?]?

[Cornish:] No, his father was in the war.

[Russell:] Did he have any brothers that played music?

[Cornish:] No, uh-uh, just him.

[Allen:] His father was in the war?

[Cornish:] His father was in the war before him.

[Allen:] Was he killed in the war or did he live after.

[Cornish:] I don't know; he died; his mama told me he died here. I never did see him in my life; I don't know nothing about him.

[Russell:] You mean the Civil War or the Spanish-American War?

[Cornish:] No, my husband was in the Spanish-American War, so his

father must have been in the war before; must have been in the "Silver war", because he drew a pension and it must have been off of the war he was in. [Therefore was with the union ?]

[Russell:] Yes, that's right.

[Cornish:] Yeah. She lived 'till she was one hundred and five, the way she had it counted. Might have been older than that; well, you see, people them days didn't know their age. Ain't that pitiful? They got people now don't know their age.

[Allen:] Oh, sure.

[Cornish:] Yeah, I meets plenty people they don't know how old they is; I ask how old they is; they say, "I don't know, Miss Bella." Ain't that pitiful?

[Allen:] Uh-huh. Did you ever know of a fellow named Buddy Bolden [who] was a cornet player?

[Cornish:] [No, he was] with my husband, but I never did know him.

[Allen:] Uh-huh. Did you know any of the other fellows?

[Cornish:] No, I didn't know them; they played with him, you see. All of them mostly lost their minds, 'cause I heard my husband talking about it, you know. That's the picture what you seen.

[Russell:] Oh, yes, that's--

[Cornish:] And that's the picture they took and didn't give to me, I went all in that neighborhood hunting for that man; I never could find him.

[Allen:] Well, we may be able to find a book that has it, for her.

[Russell:] Yeah. His wife is Dr. [Leonard] Becket's wife is still living, too, there.

[Cornish:] I know they took the picture--you remember.

[Russell:] I know he had it--

[Cornish:] He sho' had it; I give it to him and he promised to bring

it back to me.

[Allen:] Well, we, we ought to could make a copy, somehow, huh?

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Allen:] 'Cause I'm sure that picture's in a book, you know.

[Cornish:] Well, that's a pity; he, they should have given it back to me.

[Allen:] They should have given you the book, too, if they used it for that.

[Cornish:] I don't know what they done--but he remember. 'Cause I remember his face--I remember your face.

[Russell:] I think Dr. Becket showed me the picture once; he had it.

[Cornish:] Yes, yes.

[Russell:] I know he wasn't trying to steal it; he was going to return it to you, but I guess he died before he got back here.

[Cornish:] He died. I went down there in that neighborhood, but I never did, you know, get no details about it or nothing.

[Russell:] That other picture, then has the two little white boys, was it, that he was teaching music? *[Photo reproduced in book "In Search of Buddy Bolden" by MARQUIS, before p. 79]*

[Cornish:] Yes, with them white boys, some little Jew boys, out front of town. I don't know what I done with it; I'm got to hunt for it for you.

[Russell:] Did he teach many pupils; did he teach music sometimes?

[Cornish:] Oh, he used to show the childred around in the neighborhood, you know, before he was with me, 'cause he told me that. But after he was married to me, well, he just played all the time; oh, he always played, played for plenty people.

[Allen:] Did you ever know "Dad," "Little Dad" [Clarence Vincent], who played banjo? I just wondered; he's supposed to [have] played with your husband.

[Cornish:] I didn't know him then.

[Allen:] I heard a funny story about how they got in a fight one night; Dad was so small he could rum between your husband's legs.

[Cornish:] My husband was a big man.

[Allen:] He was a tall man, then, huh?

[Cornish:] He was six feet and three inches and weighed two-hundred and ninety-seven pounds.

[Russell:] Oh, that big?

[Allen:] uh, uh.

[Cornish:] And he could blow the horn, too--don't you think he couldn't! Oooh, [he] had the record on that.

[Allen:] Oh, yes.

[Cornish:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] He must have been one of the very first ear musicians to really develop a style.

[Cornish:] He used to play--he used to play out here on Perdido Street in a place him and Buddy Bolden and all of them, you know, 'cause he had told me about it. But--

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Cornish:] He used to play all out on the basins and everywhere. Yeah, that was about, I guess from the way they talk, it must have been about the first little band started off, or something--I don't know; you see, I don't know nothing about that part.

[Russell:] Do you remember any of those dance halls down on Perdido, like the Masonic Hall? Did you ever go there?

[Cornish:] No; no, I never did go to dances.

[Russell:] Never went.

[Cornish:] No, I never worried with dances. But I know he used to play all around, in them halls around.

[Allen:] Well--not to get too personal or anything--did your religion keep you from going to the dances?

[Cornish:] I never did care for it.

[Allen:] You didn't.

[Cornish:] You know, when I was a child [being] raised up, my papa was very religious--we [are] Methodists--and papa never did allow us to go to no dances 'till after we come to be grown. Well, we didn't wish [to go]. My papa raised us very religious that's why.

[Allen:] Where were you born?

[Cornish:] I was born in Biloxi, Mississippi, in Creoletown.

[Allen:] Oh, I see.

[Cornish:] My papa was a Frenchman.

[Russell:] When did you move over here?

[Cornish:] Oh, I come over here with white people when I was young, off and on; come over here and work for them; then I'd go backwards and forth, you know.

[Russell:] How did you happen to meet Mr. Cornish? Did you hear him in a band someplace?

[Cornish:] I think<sup>v</sup> [that was ?] in the street, and everything; that's how come I got acquainted with him. I used to watch for the music, you know, with the children--I'd have little children with me and we used to watch the music and everything.

[Allen:] Would he be playing in a brass band?

[Cornish:] Yeah, he was playing in the band, brass band, he was--yeah. Oh, I've seen him plenty times in bands, playing, [be]fore I ever knowed who he was.

[Allen:] Did he play with the Eureka long, [did he say ?]?

[Cornish:] Long time, yes; John [Casimir] can tell you how long he played there--yeah, 'cause John joined it.



[Allen:] He was with the?--

[Cornish:] He was playing in, he was playing in the Eureka Brass Band when he married me and he had been playing, I guess, a long time then. But I don't know how long, you see, 'cause I never did keep, you know, trail o' anything like that.

[Allen:] I just wondered if he was one of the founders of that band, or something, you know. You know old man Willie Parker's still alive. You remember him--the bass drum player?

[Cornish:] Yeah, I remember him.

[Allen:] We'll ask him about it, 'cause he told us he was one of the founders and I believe Cornish may have been, but--

[Cornish:] Cornish made the Eureka Brass Band; that's the band Willie made; he was the one made that.

[Allen:] He was one of the founders?

[Founders of that, him and this fellow you talking about. He's still living?

[Allen:] Willie Parker.

[Cornish:] Yeah.

[Allen:] He's up in his eighties now; he may be in his nineties.

[Cornish:] Now, he knows me good.

[Allen:] He's down at--

[Cornish:] I never sees him.

[Allen:] He's on St. Philip Street, I think in --1314 I believe it is.

[Cornish:] Yeah. You been to his house.

[Allen:] Oh, yeah; we talked to him, too; he's a nice fellow.

[Cornish:] He can tell you about Willie. He ever told you anything?

[Allen:] Oh, yeah.

[Cornish:] Oh, yeah, he's good; he knows. He--they all used to come see him when he was sick.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Cornish:] But I thought he was dead.

[Allen:] He's one of the old-timers.

[Cornish:] Yeah, I didn't know he was living.

[Allen:] Glenny died--do you remember old man Glenny, Albert Glenny?

[Cornish:] I don't know.

[Allen:] He was eighty-eight years old. I don't know if he ever played with your husband.

[Cornish:] I don't believe he played with Willie.

[Russell:] He might have; he played with Bolden, so he might have played with Mr. [Cornish].

[Cornish:] Yeah, might have been.

[Russell:] How long was Mr. Cornish sick, about ten years before he died, or would you say five years? How long?

[Cornish:] He was dead twelve years.

[Russell:] And before that, how long was he sick, do you [remember]?

[Cornish:] Oh, he wasn't sick; when I married him--he was healthy as a pig.

[Russell:] I know, but I mean was he sick maybe five years before he died, or ten years? How long was he?

[Cornish:] No, it was, he was, he was [sick] all together [at once]; he had strokes.

[Russell:] Kept having strokes?

[Cornish:] Uh-huh, kept having strokes was the strokes he had. Then after he kept a-having them, you see, he got so he couldn't walk. He used to couldn't talk once--yeah. And the first stroke when he had it, he fell up there on the corner of Rampart and Julia, and he was playing in the band then.

[Russell:] Oh, is that so?

[Cornish:] Yeah, they was playing in the band; they come run[ning and] got me. And I told them, "Bring him on home." And he stayed up in the bed five days; he couldn't talk, so I got the doctor, so [that's i come to find it was a stroke he had. But, see, they repeated.

[Russell:]

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Uh-huh.

[Allen:]

[Cornish:] Yeah.

[Allen:] I guess that was the last time he ever played, huh, was it?

[Cornish:] He didn't play much after that; he couldn't, because he couldn't use his arm--you see, his arm went paralysed and turned. Oooh, he sho' did hate that. God, he loved music; he'd rather play music than eat. Yes, he did.

[Allen:] Do you remember any of his favorite tunes that he played?

[Cornish:] He used to play so many. He used to play "When the Saints Come Marching On." I know he was crazy for that. And "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"--they used to play that for the dead, mostly--he was crazy for that. Yeah. The band turned out with him when he died. [He ?] wanted--a whole lot of bands wanted to come; I said, "no." The whole was from all around in the city they wanted to come play for him--"Bella, why didn't you send for us?" I said, "no, indeed, that makes too much of a--ooch, makes too much of a [bigamaroo ?]." He didn't want it, he said, when he died. If I'd done like he told me to do--he say if he died in the morning, "bury h in the evening." He didn't like all that, you see. He suffered a long time before he died.

[Russell:] Did he ever practice at home? Did he ever take his trombone out and play music here?

[Cornish:] Oh, the band used to come up to my house when we stayed out front of town, and practice in the kitchen.

[Russell:] Oh, they did?

[Cornish:] Yeah, every Thursday night they used to come; every Thursday night they practiced in there. And then when they'd get done there, they'd go somewheres else and practice; they practiced at one another's house, you know. They all used to come here and practice in the kitchen.

[Russell:] I just wondered if he ever got out his music, or something--did he ever practice from his music out here, just by himself, sometime?

[Cornish:] Oh, yeah, he'd [unintelligible] take his music out and play, play, you know--he played by note; he never played by ear.

[Compare Jazz men Albert Warner, Sunny Henry, etc.]

[Russell:] He didn't play by ear, then?

[Cornish:] No, indeed, 'cause he had a little bag he, I ma--he had made, and he used to hang that over his shoulder, you see, and he'd put all his music in there what he had to play--yeah. Most all of them in that band would have to play by note, you know.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Cornish:] Yeah, they have to play by note. Man, they used to come there and practice till twelve o'clock, you know, at night, with him.

[Russell:] Where did you live in those days? Was that down on Perdido or out this way on Perdido?

[Cornish:] No, I used to live on, on, on, on--oh, they done tore the house all down--I used to live on, on Rampart, back in the yard between, between Gravier and Perdido--but it was back [where ?] I used to come on Rampart Street. [unintelligible]. But they done tore all them houses down.

[Russell:] Everything.

[Cornish:] Everything is tore down--I gets lost when I go out there--everything is lost.

[Allen:] Is that where the Martins live, right around there?

[Russell:] Remember Mrs. Martin that took care of the school?

[Cornish:] Yeah, I know that she lived on, she lived on Perdido; she lived on Perdido, right by the school.

[Russell:] Oh, yes.

[Cornish:] Yeah. She died, too.

[Allen:] I guess some of those children played music, didn't they?

[Cornish:] I ain't never seen nothing; I don't know.

[Allen:] I don't remember. Louis Armstrong talks about him in his book, you know.

[Cornish:] Maybe they did play; I don't know them--I never knowed them that good, nohow.

[Allen:] I like this picture he sent him [unintelligible].

[Cornish:] Yeah, he sent that about two weeks after he was dead.

[Allen:] It says: "To my boy"--

[Cornish:] Yeah, crazy for Willie, he was.

[Allen:] "Wm Cornish"--that's the abbreviation for William, I guess.

[Cornish:] Yeah, that--yeah, "W" for William.

[Allen:] "Wm Cornish, from Louis Armstrong. 8/17/31."

[Cornish:] Uh-huh. Two weeks after he was dead I got that.

Everytime he come to town, Willie and them would get the band and go meet him at the depot, and parade him all around. Oh, they was all good friends together, you know--yeah. [Compare Albert Warner, Reel I, p. 19]

[Allen:] Do you remember, by any chance, when Buddy Petit died? I'm trying to remember.

[Cornish:] I don't know, I don't know.

[Allen:] Buddy Petit was a cornet player?

[Cornish:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] I think he died around that time, you know.

[Russell:] Did you know Louis Armstrong when he was a boy, down in that neighborhood?

[Cornish:] Yeah, I used to see him, but I didn't, you know, know him, like hear husband talk about him so my husband was crazy for him. He was raised out in the [Waifs'] Home.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Cornish:] Yeah. The lady what raised him, she's my president over me now.

[Russell:] Oh, is that right?

[Cornish:] Uh-huh. And her husband, he died.

[Allen:] Well, what was her name?

[Cornish:] Her name, her name [is] Mrs. Jones. She raised him in the Home.

[Allen:] Oh, yeah.

[Cornish:] Yeah. And her husband died.

[Russell:] Oh, yes, that was about a year ago, or two years ago--

[Cornish:] He died--

[Russell:] I remember.

[Cornish:] Yeah. They buried him from down there on Dumaine and, Dumaine and Claiborne, 'cause we had to turn out with him, and carried way back there where they used to live and then come all the back. They had the policemen on the tricycles. They had so much, much limousine and so many people and all they had to have the traffic clean.

[Russell:] I remember; I walked by there that day.

[Cornish:] We were all day long; I was so tired when I come home I couldn't sit straight--all day. Carried money and brought all the boys out, you know, and all the maids and everything. It was sad, though.

[Russell:] He's the one they called Captain Jones?--

[Cornish:] Captain Jones--yeah, he died.

[Allen:] What organization are you a member of?

[Cornish:] Who?

[Allen:] You, you collect money for some organization, don't you.

[Cornish:] No, I, I, I belong to the Veterans' Society.

[Allen:] Oh, I see.

[Cornish:] Yeah, I belong to the Spanish-American War; I belong to the branch what he was from, you see--I'm in Number 9 Auxiliary, and we turn out with the dead. And then I belong to another one uptown they call the Relief Corps Number 4; well, we turn out with the women, then we turn out with soldiers, too, if they want us--you know, if they die--if the family want us. We turn out with them.

[Allen:] And the women dress a certain way at funerals?

[Cornish:] We dress all in white--yeah.

[Allen:] And do you?--

[Cornish:] We carry flags.

[Allen:] Do you carry--do you ever have a parade? [Do] these organizations ever?--

[Cornish:] No, we turn out just with the dead, you know.

[Allen:] Just with the dead--not parades.

[Cornish:] [If they have any dead ?], yeah, we turn out with them when they die.

[?] [Allen:] Go ahead.

[Russell:] I was wondering about Mr. Cornish--when he, after he was married did he play any dance jobs?--

[Cornish:] Oh, yes that's what he took care of me with; he played all around. Oh, my God--I had a big calender on the wall, and everytime you'd see the white and the colored was coming and he'd put them dates

on there, all them days--he was always playing. Oh, that's what he took care of me with.

[Russell:] Just a small band? Not the whole, big Eureka Band? Just a little--

[Cornish:] No, just a--no, sometime it'd be a little small band they would have--him and John and them together. Oh, he was always playing. He [was] musical, child; he was crazy for the music.

[Russell:] Did he work at any other job?--

[Cornish:] I don't know.

[Russell:] In the daytime?

[Cornish:] No, not while he was with me; I don't know.

[Russell:] Just music is all he worked?

[Cornish:] Music he played. Before he was with me, he told me he used to play out, used to work out there to the, to the Grain and Elevator place out there to the, on the river--you know, out there on Jackson and something, out that away he used to work, but--. Willie made good money playing music, you know--

[Russell:] Oh, yes.

[Cornish:] That's what he made money with; I'm telling you, they made their money then. I believe them men made better money then than they make now, because they didn't have--now they got music box; people give a dance now, they go get a music box, <sup>[if jukebox - pre-recorded music, not live bands]</sup> put it up in the hall. And he used to down--he used to play down in Violet [La.] a whole lot around after he was with me. Ooh, loads of times he used to go down there and play--yeah. Then he used to go around and advertise in a big truck, they did. Oh, yeah, they used to play, all right; that's what he supported me with, so you know he must have made good, eh?

[Allen:] Uh-huh.



[Russell:] Yes.

[Cornish:] [unintelligible] (Can't hear anything here)

[Allen:] I just wondered if--

[Cornish:] But now, uh-uh; they ain't like that no more.

[Allen:] I'm trying to think of some of the musicians from this neighborhood--like--did you know "Black Benny" [Williams], by any chance, a bass drum player?

[Cornish:] Yeah, I--no, I didn't knowed, didn't know him all that good. I know him through my husband. He stay down on Perdido Street, too; he used to live on Perdido between Howard [now LaSalle] and Liberty, on that side of the banquette--'cause I went there and looked at him when they laid him out. He used to play drum.

[Allen:] Wonder if his family was around? I guess they still [are ? around]--

[Cornish:] I don't know--

[Allen:] We could go ask in the neighborhood.

[Cornish:] Yeah. I don't know nothing about where his people stay, or nothing--not Black Benny, I couldn't tell you.

[Allen:] Uh-huh. And "Shots" [Louis Madison] was from back around here wasn't he, Bill?

[Russell:] Yeah, "Shots" lived a little bit farther back--

[Cornish:] Well, "Shots" died. I know he has a sister live back on Perdido Street, but she done move 'way downtown. He died; yeah, "Shots" died.

[Allen:] Where did his sister live on Perdido and?--

[Cornish:] She used to live on Perdido back there and, and--somewheres back of Perdido, way back--but she moved from there years ago; moved downtown somewheres.

[Allen:] Well, we'll find her, too.

[Cornish:] Yeah.

[Allen:] We want to talk to as many families--

[Cornish:] Families as you can. I understand you. Sure, that's the onliest way you can get it straight, you see.

[Allen:] That's right.

[Cornish:] Like that. Different ones you go to.

[Russell:] Do you remember Bob Lyons, who had a little shoe shine place down on?--

[Cornish:] Oh, yes, I know him--a little short man, but had the great big bass.

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Cornish:] Used to put it up over here at my house. He died. Old Bob--yeah, he went down; he sho' could play a bass. Used to play with Willie. Had that great big old thing he [used] to play. Now you don't see that no more.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Cornish:] That old music was the best.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Cornish:] 'Cause the music what they playing now ain't nothing but-- I don't know--it's different. Don't you find it different?

[Russell:] I think so.

[Allen:] Oh, yes.

[Cornish:] Yeah, everybody say that.

[Russell:] That's right.

[Cornish:] Oooh, so many people comes and asks me about my husband; they had a man come here about three weeks ago and he say--somebody showed him where I live--and he come and he say, "you Cornish' wife?" Say, "yeah." He say, "well, where is your husband?" He say, "oh, we miss him so much." [The man] play in a white joint. I say, "my

husband is dead." He didn't know what to say when I told him that. You see, he was well-known amongst white people, that's what it was-- he was well-known--he used to play for great big dances for white people; he used to play for big weddings and everything. They'd come get him, all right. Well, he knowed how to play, that's why; if he didn't know, they wouldn't have hired him.

[Russell:] No.

[Cornish:] Uh-uh. Yeah, he used to make them men dress so nice; now the men don't dress like that. And he used to play a whole lot for the Zulas, but they got so they didn't want to pay him the price; he quit playing for them. And when he played for them, they had to dress proper.

[Russell:] Did they wear uniforms?

[Cornish:] Yes, indeed; my husband, my husband used to make them wear a coat, a nice, black tie, black shoes and [then ?] [a] nice pair of pants and a white shirt, and they used to be good. Warner can tell you how they used to dress. But now they dress any old kind of way. And in the summertime they wore a nice white shirt with a tie, and all go nice. Then my husband used to tell them, "Now, don't y'all drink when you playing" [and] they didn't drink, neither--they didn't drink. They used to play good. But 'tain't like it used to be no more; everything is changed.

[Allen:] Did he lead a dance band, then, huh?

[Cornish:] Huh?

[Allen:] He led his own band?

[Cornish:] Yeah, a band he called the Jazz Hounds--something--I don't know what it was. And he used to have that, some kind of string band; they used to get plenty music, too--used to get plenty places to play. Maybe John could tell you about that, you know.

[Russell:] Yes, we'll ask him.

[Cornish:] Ask John, 'cause John remember that--'cause John played with him so much. Oh yeah, when I lived out [of nine ?] he used to send me way here, when John lived on Perdido Street, at night and John would tell--Willie Tell, he say go back there and tell John [to] be such-and-such a place tomorrow or tomorrow night. I'd come back here for him. He always had plenty music [jobs], always with music.

[Allen:] That John is hard to catch, too; he's a busy man.

[Cornish:] Oh, John is a--John's always gone; he never home. And I believe he's working, too, you know.

[Allen:] Oh, yeah, he works funny hours.

[Cornish:] Yeah, he works out, too, you see; my husband always stayed home and they could catch him. And if they didn't, all I had to do was just go--if any white people or anybody come after Willie, all I had to do was just go right around the corner by Roshack's [spelling ?] there on the corner; he'd be right up in there with the gang. I'd always find him, all right.

[Russell:] Well, that Roshack's--

[Cornish:] Yeah, it's, all that's tore down.

[Russell:] That was down on--

[Cornish:] That was on Perdido.

[Russell:] And Franklin, about?

[Cornish:] Yeah, right at the corner. All that tore [down].

[Russell:] Do you how that name was spelled? I never did know what that name is--Roshack--

[Cornish:] Just called it Roshack's Barroom, they called it.

[Russell:] Roshack's Bar.

[Cornish:] Yeah.

[Allen:] Who was in front of that: "Cook Shop's Son?"

[Russell:] Oh, yeah, there's a little cook shop--

[Cornish:] Yeah, yeah, the cook shop there.

[Allen:] He was a drummer "Cook Shop's Son."

[Russell:] Yes, he was a drummer--

[Cornish:] He was a drummer.

[Russell:] The lady that ran it, her son was a drummer. What ever happened to Mr. Cornish's old trombone? Did you save that, or?--

[Cornish:] No, I sold it.

[Russell:] Sold that.

[Cornish:] Yeah. He told me to sell it; wasn't no use of me keeping it.

[Russell:] Oh no, there's no need for you--I just wondered: did he ever save the old one he used--onetime he had one [that played like a cornet].

[Cornish:] No. You know what he would do when he--know how my husband do? Like if he got a old sliding trombone and he'd keep it about two years or something like that, and he'd get rid of it; he'd send to New York after another one, and he would take and get--

[Russell:] Trade it in.

[Cornish:] Yeah, he'd trade it in. And when he died, the one what he had, he hadn't had it no more that about two years.

[Russell:] [unintelligible].

[Cornish:] And when he fell with the stroke, he broke it, but we had it fixed, you know--we did. And then he had him a strap made, you know, for--[unintelligible] he got a man to make him a strap and he'd put that horn, put that strap on his shoulder and on his neck, and he'd play right along with that good hand. It was in him [music ?]; it just was in him, and the doctors told me he couldn't play no more, you see--it was against him.

[Russell:] Yes--

[Cornish:] 'Cause he walked so much--oooh, they used to walk. I seen the time he used to go in parades and they'd walk from round by Roshack's around there, and walk way up there to Louisiana Avenue, then turn around and come 'way down and come out Dryades and come down Rampart. You know, that's some walk.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Cornish:] And he say it didn't do him nothing, and he never did suffer with his feet. He had good feet, eh?

[Russell:]  
& Uh-huh.

[Allen:]

[Cornish:] But when he was in the war he done a lot of walking, you see, and I guess it come natural to him. Yeah, he done all that walking in the war, [he was ?] in the war, too. 'Cause he never was sick; just all of a sudden that stroke took him.

[Allen:] Well, he had a good age on him when the stroke hit him.

[Cornish:] Yeah, he [had a ?] he was sixty-seven when he died. He had a good age on him. And then, sometimes he played so much; I believe he never did take enough rest--no.

[Allen:] I was wondering who was there with him at Julia and Rampart--you said he was playing there?

[Cornish:] He was playing in the band with them; they had some kind of parade, it was. I dis-remembers--

[Allen:] Oh, he was playing in a parade?

[Cornish:] He was playing in a parade when that happened.

[Russell:] He was in the Eureka.

[Cornish:] He was in the Eureka Brass Band then.

[Russell:] Do you know his favorite cornet player was? Did he ever say who he thought were the best cornet players, or who he

liked? Any close friends of his that?--

[Cornish:] He never did say.

[Allen:] He never did say who he thought the best trombone [player was]?

[Cornish:] No, all of them--no, he, no [unintelligible] everybody used to give him the praise, you know--he got the praise of everything.

[Allen:] Yeah.

[Cornish:] Warner can tell you that, heh? I know Warner told you.

[Russell:] Yes--he did--

[Cornish:] Ooh, Warner sho' did cry when he died; Warner say he'd never get a partner like him. Well, he just naturally knowed how to play, that's what.

[Allen:] Did you know?--

[Cornish:] And he could lead the band so nice; ooh, you see him lead the band it was something to look at; he really could lead it.

[Allen:] How was that; did he step a special way?

[Cornish:] Yeah, he had--you know, made them steps--you know how they do in them [bands ?]. Oh, he really could lead a band--they give him that; he was good on that. He had that down pat--he had that down pat. He used to tickle me: I say, "Lord, you love the horn." He say, "yeah, I love the horn better than I love you or anybody; my horn comes first; I makes my living with this horn." Ooh, he sho' did love a horn. My God--and the minute that horn got so it didn't want to play--he had two mouthpieces--it didn't play to suit him, you'd see him, again, well here come another one coming. I say, "what you doing?" He say, "I'm going send and get me another horn, that's what." Oh, he always kept good--you know. And he had all kinds of music; ooh, you see the music I had. Had his stand where he put all his music on it, and all. Right after he died, everybody was running after me:



"Mrs. Bella, give me some of it, Mrs. Bella, give me some of it."

They wanted it, you see. He'd buy everything he wanted; he was good like that.

[Allen:] And you gave that?--

[Cornish:] I give the music and all to different ones [who] would come, you know, so many different ones [who] would come.

[Allen:] Who were some of [them]?

[Cornish:] And he could fix [arrange] music, too--you know, he'd take them chords and he could, he could fix the notes, you know, all on them chords and all--he could do that. Where you--I guess he learned all that when he was learning.

[Allen:] Uh--

BELLA CORNISH  
END OF REEL I  
JANUARY 13, 1959



Present: William Russell, Richard B. Allen

Bella is looking for a photograph which she had only a few days ago. It is a picture of Willie Cornish and two little boys; Willie had it when she married him.

Different ones--some of them are dead now--came and got Willie's music after he died. People begged her for it; and she had to move from where she was living on Perdido Street because the house commenced to leak. When she had to move, she let a lot of music get away.

Willie never told Bella who his teacher had been, but she believes he must have had a teacher to learn the music he knew. He could read the notes and could make arrangements. He fixed the cards up himself. She describes how particular he was about the bag he carried music in: "You ought to see him with that thing up on his shoulder...just as particular like that, as if he was fixing to go sit down and eat a meal. And I had to wash that bag...and keep it clean...and he'd stick all that down there, and he had a little thing on the side where he stick the oil for to put on his horn. Then he had two mouthpieces...In the winter-time I had to heat them on the fire..he would stick them where they'd stay warm; he'd change the mouthpiece." She made little bags for the mouthpieces. She couldn't sell the mouthpieces after he died, had to throw them away. Even though he paid extra for them; they were good mouthpieces, "He paid four and a half for them, sometimes more...and the horn cost plenty of money too; don't you think he didn't pay plenty for his horn."

Willie Cornish used to go over to Biloxi, Mississippi to play in big parades for the Odd Fellows, the Patriarchs, etc. This was before he knew Bella. After Willie and Bella were married, Bella's sister got acquainted with Willie; the sister used to

fix dinner for all of the men who went over for the parades.

[All the Patriarchs or Odd Fellows, or just the bandsmen?]

Dr. Leonard Bechet had a picture of Willie and his band--  
Willie standing up there with his slide, Buddy Bolden, all of  
them--it was her picture [she had lent to Dr. Bechet?] but she  
didn't get it back. She went down to Dr. Bechet's and hunted and  
hunted, but they couldn't find it. Dr. Bechet's was in the 1400  
block of St. Bernard [Avenue], but when she went down he wasn't  
there any longer. She did not know he had died until WR told  
her.