

CURLY LIZANA
Reel I [of 3]
May 18, 1966

Also present: Florian [spelling checked
against his signature---PRC] Joseph Lizana,
Jr., Richard B. Allen, Betty B. Rankin.

Florian [spelling checked in Soards', 1933---PRC] Joseph Lizana was known as "Curly" during his music career; RBA says he found out CL's real name from a picture of the Five New Orleans Jazz Babies. CL tells of being found through the telephone exchange when his caller was able to identify him only as "Curly," the clarinet player."

CL has never heard of "Picou Lizander," who supposedly lived across the lake in Bay St. Louis or Pass Christian. CL, however, was a barber, so RBA says CL taught a man and the man got CL's name mixed up [cf. John Handy, Reel ?].

CL was born July 31, 1895, in Pass Christian, Mississippi. His family were musical; they once had a 9-piece orchestra; members and instrumentation: father, trumpet; two sisters, piano; CL, clarinet and trumpet; cousin Ed [Ducresson?], trombone and bass; cousin George, bass. CL was self-taught in music; he bought [methods?]. The family orchestra played only around the house, not for money. CL's first job for money was in a theater in Pass Christian. He agrees with FJL, Jr., that he and his sister played music for silent movies in Pass Christian around 1907. CL also played in serenade bands; the serenade bands "drank liquor and played music under the windows." There were no particular times, such as birthdays, etc., when serenades occurred; they were spontaneous. CL and his sister played for silent movies (no live acts) over a period of about 1 to 1 1/2 years.

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When CL and his brother, Ferdinand [?] came to New Orleans, they introduced the idea of singing waiters. Ferdinand was later a veterinarian. CL and Ferdinand worked in cabarets, including the Cadillac Club, which was near the Absinthe House. CL tells of being hired by the owner of the Cadillac Club, Joe Julian; CL was playing in a jam session one night at that club when Julian walked in; all the others in the session figured they would have to leave, but Julian was so taken by CL's playing that he hired him, and never again let a musician read music in his establishment. (CL says jazz comes from the heart.) CL tells about trombonist Henny Brunies, with whom he played; one of ~~the~~ Brunies' tricks was to operate the trombone with his foot as he played, CL and Ferdinand had a pianist with their singing waiters routine, but CL can't remember his name. When he quit being a singing waiter, CL was in and out of New Orleans; he worked at some of the places on the lakefront at West End, including Thom's Roadhouse; Bruning's, at Bucktown, is mentioned.

CL says that when he first came to New Orleans, there were no musicians, no bands, "no nothing." [!!!RBA] RBA mentions that FJL, Jr., had noted that CL came to New Orleans as a singing waiter in 1909. CL remembers Jack "Papa" Laine, the name of Johnny Fischer (CL thinks there was another Fischer, too), trombonist Happy Schilling, with whom CL played many times. CL doesn't remember Steve "Ted" Brown, but he says everybody knew his brother, Tom Brown. CL knew the Christians; RBA says he still sees trombonist Emile Christian, who once was a trumpet player, and their Brother, Charlie Christian, was a trombonist. CL remembers bassist Chink

Martin, who still plays every Saturday night aboard the steamer President [with the Crawford-Ferguson Night Owls]. CL mentions violinist Fischbein (he says that is the real name of Max Fink), who played hot jazz on his instrument. RBA mentions trombonist Joe "Red" Margiotta, who with Steve Brue [sp?], Bud Loyacano, Tony and Sam Margiotta, had the Triangle Jazz Band. [Check this info.] RBA]

RBA mentions a photograph of the Original New Orleans Jazz Band. CL says he went to New York with a band to make money; they arrived in New York one day before the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, and opened at Tom Healey's on Easter Eve, 1914. [Cf. H. O. Brunn, The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band.] The band also played at Reisenweber's, on Loew's (Theatre) Circuit, Pantages and the Orpheum circuit; the band also had a 2-year contract with the Ziegfeld Follies, but CL was drafted during World War I.

RBA reads from an inscription on the back of a photograph: "Original New Orleans Jazz Band in vaudeville, 1916. F.J. Lizana, clarinet; Roy Mazon, trombone (from the North); Harry Burke, drums; Warren LaCoste, piano; Charlie Deichmann, trumpet and violin." Burke and Deichmann were from New Orleans; LaCoste was from Lafayette, Louisiana. [CL says the band name was the Five New Orleans Jazz Babies; he tried to reorganize after World War I, but had no ~~success~~ success?] Deichmann was the only musician in the band able to read music. It is mentioned that the Brunies brothers appeared on the [New York?] jazz scene later than CL and the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. RBA comments on photo of Alice Morley ~~for~~ [sp?], singer with CL's band; CL says they got her through an agent in New York; she was the only one of three singers they had who tried out with the band; the other ^{TWO} ~~two~~ stayed with the band only one day each

Alice Morley sang the standard Dixieland numbers and her own numbers.

CL tells of going to his first rehearsal with the service band; the other clarinetists, although able to read, were unable to play a particular solo; CL, unable to read, ~~played~~ played it from memory; he was assigned first chair over his ^{OWN} ~~own~~ protest; because of his refusal to play the solo correctly anymore, he was placed in "the brig," from which he was released two days later by a captain from the intelligence department, who had CL assigned to intelligence duty because CL could speak French. CL ~~learned~~ learned French from his mother and father, who spoke the language at home; CL says he didn't learn English until he began attending school. His father was Spanish, his mother French.

After discharge from service, CL returned home to Pass Christian for one day; money was scarce, so he went on to New Orleans, where he obtained work playing music with a band at Thom's Roadhouse.

End of Reel I

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Also present: F.J. Lizana, Jr., Richard B. Allen, Betty B. Rankin.

After CL's return to New Orleans, one of his jobs was as head of the repair department at Werlein's. Paul Whiteman and his orchestra came to town; Roy Maxon was playing first trombone with him, which was surprising to CL, as Maxon hadn't been able to read music at all when he was in CL's band [see Reel I]; Maxon explained to CL that he had concentrated on learning everything about the trombone, ~~wxx~~ and had been successful enough to obtain the job with Whiteman, with whom he remained for many years.

CL's first music job when he returned to New Orleans from the service was with the band at Thom's Roadhouse; personnel of that group varied; he was there two or three weeks only. [CL was at Morrison's in 1928?]

RBA reads from a photograph about the New Orleans Jazz Babies, 1919, with Henry Brunies, trombone, Merritt Brunies, trumpet, and CL, clarinet and sax. CL took up sax after the sax became available in New Orleans, which was some ~~time~~ time after he had left the army; he was one of the first in New Orleans to have a sax; a musician at the Absinthe House had begun playing soprano sax, and was the only other saxophonist CL knew; CL then got a soprano, which she played for about a year before switching to alto sax.

Jules Cassard, who also could play bass, trombone and sax, was the pianist with the Five New Orleans Jazz Babies; Cassard, like Roy Maxon, could play chordal accompaniments on piano; others in the Jazz Babies: Harry Burke, drums; Merritt Brunies, trumpet; Henry Brunies, trombone; CL, clarinet and sax. (RBA asks about drummer George Triay [or Trahan]; CL says he did not play steadily

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with any band. RBA says he thought he once saw a picture with Triay [or Trahan, according to CL] playing drums with the New Orleans Jazz Babies.) The Jazz Babies played in just about every place ~~wirto~~ playing in in New Orleans; FJL, Jr., asks if the band did not open the Silver Slipper, the Nut Club, La Lune, and others, and his father agrees that they did. [Cf. Merritt Brunies, Reel ?]

RBA comments that CL is shown in a 1919 picture playing a Boehm system clarinet; CL says he was one of the first to do so. CL says [Alphonse] Picou wanted to teach him clarinet, and had encouraged CL to get a Boehm system, telling him he would be able to execute more-difficult passages on it. [AP played Albert system. Cf. photographs. RBA.]

The Jazz Babies played popular music, and their own originals, such as "Angry," which CL claims he composed. He sings the song. Besides playing in New Orleans, the band might take a trip to Pensacola [Florida], or Mobile [Alabama], and then play all the towns on the way back to New Orleans, Talk about a Negro who [had different words to the same tune as "Angry" ?]. RBA mentions blind trumpeter, Blind Gilbert; CL agrees that he now lives in California. CL tells about Blind Jack, a pianist who sometimes played with him; Blind Jack could arrive at any location unaided.

The New Orleans Jazz Babies played mostly for dances, although they also played some advertising and some parades; CL never played for prizefights, however; he liked ^(bowing?) bowing enough to want to become a professional, but his father discouraged him.

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RBA asks about the time after CL left the five New Orleans Jazz Babies. CL was in the orchestra at the Ringside, owned by Pete Herman, in 1922-3; there had been usually only five men in the band, but there were seven at the Ringside. Harry Burke was in it; Oscar Marcour, jazz fiddler, was with the band. CL, like Marcour, knew Emmett Hardy; CL says he knew Hardy when Hardy was just beginning to blow his horn; he heard that Hardy did pretty well. CL says he himself started Pinky Vidacovich on his horn; CL was then playing at Thom's Roadhouse, with fiddler Max Fink; Vidacovich came and sat, holding his instrument, with CL in the band. CL knew Sharkey when Sharkey was around 17 years old; CL tells of taking Sharkey to Biloxi for a week's work, when Sharkey could hardly play. RBA mentions that Sharkey had just played in Texas for a week, with Emile Christian and Harry Shields in the band; CL knew the Shields, according to FJL, Jr. Johnny Lala (name supplied by RBA), now a butcher, was a good trumpet player; Lala also plays piano as accompaniment. FJL Jr, mentions the Butcher [spelling checked in Lafayette Telephone directory---PRC] brothers, now operating a business in Lafayette, who played in bands with CL; one was a was a drummer.

Angelo Palmisano was the banjoist at the Ringside; he could play melody and /or accompaniment. Oscar Marcour was the violinist. There is an unidentified bassist in the photograph. Burke was the drummer. A tenor saxist is shown; CL says there was also an alto saxist. [No doubt CL himself.] As there was

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no trumpet in the band, Marcour played melody and variations on his violin, The pianist was from Chicago or New York.

CL went to Baton Rouge and the Standard Oil Band some time after leaving the band at the Ringside; the Standard Oil Band was large; CL read when he felt like reading; the leader was [Weller?? Weber?]; there was a jazz band within the big band. RBA lists instrumentation of the big band. The jazz band from the big band consisted of eight pieces; they could play anything. RBA mentions "Livery Stable Blues;" FJL, Jr., says he thinks that was a specialty of the band which went to New York; CL says his band went on the road in vaudeville while the other bands stayed in New York and made the money.

End of Reel II

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Also present: F.J. Lizana, Jr., Richard
B. Allen, Betty B. Rankin.

CL makes rooster crowing sounds [as used in "Livery Stable Blues"] and plays "Angry" on the clarinet. CL says he loves saxophone.

CL says "Old Man" Weber "imported" him into the Standard Oil Band [see CL, Reel II]; besides playing in the band, CL was also a still worker in the Standard Oil plant. Discussion of home brew. The Standard Oil Band played mostly special engagements, E.G., Mardi Gras, concerts, etc. When CL left the STANDARD Oil Band, he first returned to New Orleans; then he went to Floridatown, and played in circuses in Mobile, Pensacola, and other towns.

The Purple Derby Orchestra was a jazz band consisting of 8 men who played many instruments. CL was the leader; other personnel: Gerod Levison, tuba; W.P. Finkel; Joe Mitchell; Chink [(not Martin) ?]; Bob Robinson. CL thinks Mitchell was the pianist; he also played marimba. [See Curly Lizana file for copies of scrapbook]. More personnel: Joe Waddel, Edward J. Powers ("the Sax Wizard"). FJL Jr., says Powers was a guest. CL says Powers played tenor sax (and clarinet according to RBA); CL played soprano and alto saxes. [See Xerox copy of scrapbook]. The photograph of the band being discussed was taken in the Rathskellar of the Battle House Hotel, Mobile; the band usually played subdued music, with occasional moments of jazz. Floridatown was a summer resort and pavillion about ten miles from Pensacola; CL made tours, playing in Mobile,

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Pensacola, Floridatown, and other places. RBA reads, " It says something about 'Dance at the Merry Gardens tonight. Purple Derbies present Mr. L. E. Clark, New Ideas in Trumpet Syn-
 copation.'" CL thinks Clark was from Chicago. RBA says the Merry Gardens were/was probably in Floridatown, which is mentioned in the advertisement. The Purple Derbies wore purple derbies. ^{to work. Made Purple Derby with rubber feet.} RBA reads that the Merry Gardens was a hotel and pavillion on Escambia Bay. RBA reads about a New Year's dance in the Green Room of the Battle House. Another item mentions that the Purple Derbies Orchestra will play in the Green Room for dancing every Wednesday and Saturday nights for a certain period of time. RBA reads about "C. L. C. script" dances every Friday. FJL, Jr. says CL had a famous slogan at the time; it said: "If you can't dance, hang on and ride." The Purple Derbies also played over Pensacola radio station WCOA. RBA continues reading from scrapbook [See Xerox copies for details]. The band played at Sander's Beach, Florida, during the summer of 1927. They played in Andalusia, Alabama. It was planned that CL teach music in the Milton, Florida school; he can't remember why the project was abandoned. FJL, Jr. says that CL has no high school degree. CL has taught, however, giving students elementary lessons but not teaching on a very advanced level; he used a method [book] in his teaching. RBA reads about an engagement CL played for Bosco's in Slidell [Louisiana]; the words "rock and roll" appear in the advertisement, so RBA assumes the engagement was in later years.

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An engagement at Eaton's, at Henderson Point in Mississippi, was also in later years. FJL, jr., says the period when CL played at Morrison's Cafeteria has been omitted. CL was then in charge of the repair department at Werlein's; he was engaged to play twice daily at Morrison's, once at noon, the other around 5 p.m. He also worked as a replacement for a musician in the pit orchestra at the Saenger Theater. RBA mentions Al Gallodoro, who played at the Orpheum, with Joe Fulco, Howard Voorhies, Mike Caplan et al; CL remembers all of them except Gallodoro [cf. Al Gallodoro reel]. RBA says it is mentioned in the Prelude, a magazine published by the musicians union, that CL was playing at Morrison's in May, 1928; in October, 1928, according to the magazine, CL was playing with Buzzy Williams, (now a night watchman at Pan American Life Insurance, according to RBA) at the Club Slipper.

CL remarks that he seldom hears from some old acquaintances; he has recently received a letter from Joe Martin, pianist, with whom CL played years ago. CL has known Buzzy Williams for years. RBA mentions that Abbie Brunies played at the Slipper at one time. There were two Morrison's Cafeterias; ^{ONE OUT ON THE HIGHWAY} CL played in the one in town [in 1927, there was one Morrison's, at 412 St. Charles, according to Soards' for that year--PRC]. RBA says the union magazine records a motion CL

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made that musicians shouldn't contract work they couldn't fulfil; CL tells of having a contract for work in Shreveport, of being told he had to join the union, of his not joining the union, and of losing the job.

Talk of various musicians who worked at Werlein's at one time or another, including Johnny Hyman, Howard Voorhies, Eddie Bentin, and "Blind Jack;" the last was employed as a piano tuner.

FJL, Jr. says that after CL played at Morrison's, the Slipper, the Nut Club and La Lune, CL dropped out of music so that FJL, Jr. could go to school; the time was around 1931-32. He says CL played at Morrison's during the Depression, so he probably had gone back to work there "after these other engagements." He says CL didn't go back to music "until these little small bands that he got together." RBA remarks about a picture from Hambone Inn, in Handsboro. [spelling checked in atlas--PRC], Mississippi; in the band there, CL played alto sax and clarinet; Bobby [^{"Little Bobby"}unintelligible] played guitar; Dan Seals, the owner, played bass and guitar, and was the vocalist; CL's job there was in 1952; the jobs at Bosco's of Slidell, and Eaton's Club were also about the same time. CL agrees with RBA that he didn't return to playing music until around 1950. In 1952, according to FJL, Jr., CL was playing at Biloxi's Back Bay High School on Saturdays with Merritt and Abbie Brunies.

RBA mentions clarinetist John Handy; CL says Handy was old when he himself was young; RBA says perhaps the clarinetist

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is the son of the other; CL thinks the elder Handy played bass; he was from Pass Christian [cf. John Handy reel ?]. RBA says Handy told him CL helped him get started on clarinet, and that CL was a barber at the time. CL says, "I've been a little bit of everything, and not much of nothing." FJL, Jr. says CL has been a barber, a plumber, a construction foreman, and a shipyard worker, among other things.

End of Reel III

