

EMILE BARNES
Reel I--Summary
August, 22, 1960

Enola? (Emile) Others Present:
Mrs. Barnes (at the first)
William Russell
Ralph Collins

Emile Barnes, nicknamed, "Mealy", used to practice every morning when he first got up before doing anything else. That got the music in his head, and it stayed with him in his mind all day. He'd usually practice about an hour. If he were going to play that night, then anything would be simple to him as long as he had that song in his mind; it was something like you were playing it. I didn't understand it at the time, but he sees it now. Russell says some people think it is a good idea to look over their music right before they go to bed and dream about it all night, but Emile never tried that. In the evening, he liked to sit around in the quiet and maybe try something he had run through a day or two before and see what different ways he could do it. He used to play plenty up the stairⁱⁿ scale^{off}?, but now since his mouth is tender, he can't go up like he used to. He can go up maybe once or twice but can't keep it up. Mr. Collins says it's hard because you have to bite on that thing.

The plastic reed Emile uses now is probably a year old. He

first changed to a plastic reed about eight or nine years ago or maybe longer. He loved those cane reeds though. He used to get them from a Frenchwoman on Decatur Street, who would put them aside and save them for him. They were good reeds, ~~handmade~~ and imported from France. Some fellows had to make their own reeds. The ones he used had a beautiful tone. It took Emile a while to get used to the plastic reed, but after he did, they were all right. He worked from a "1" up to a "2 1/2". [Harold] Peterson told Russell how Emile used to select

his reeds so carefully, even used a magnifying glass. Emile used a "2" on the cane reed, but with a plastic, he uses a "2 1/2."

on Claiborne St. and his
Those years when Peterson was [?] with these boys, they were just babies. He was on Claiborne and St. Peter. He was the first person Emile started getting his reeds from. He was a nice fellow and liked to talk. Emile was always particular about his reeds and mouthpieces.

Emile was not ? [unclear] also called with Lay.
Emile preferred a heavy ^{mouthpiece} with a wide opening. He tried filing them down a couple of times, but they would start to squeak.

Emile has got to put a lot of pressure on his horn. He says a

clarinetist is not supposed to use the pressure he does. Many clarinet
players that come out and pick it all night long, they'd drop it and
run right now [], but Emile can't do that. Emile got that
from [Lorenzo] Tio [Jr.?] who would trim off the small edging on his
reed. ^{his} Signey Vignes ^{the} [sp?] used a heavy reed too. [Sidney] Bechet
^a used an enormous reed, about a "2" and that's what started Emile using
it. In those days they didn't have plastic; the cane reeds would run
up to about a "3 1/2". Now Russell says they have some that are "4"
and "5". George Baquet used a "2" also. Men like Baquet and ["Big
Eye"] Louis [Delisle] had a pretty tone to their horns, Bechet too.
Collins says Emile sounded a little like Louis on a record ^{1st Louis} Emile made.
Barnes says ["] that old time stuff "don't get out of ^{you} here" [?]. Emile
says if you ^e had a trumpet ^{tune} or a string ^{on} [bass?], [Arnold] Metoyer
and Charlie Love, who's been sick and is weak now, ^{by} could play that thing.
Charlie could blow it just that easy. ^{... remember they call him the lion. In his interviews} Metoyer could finger a trumpet
as fast as you finger a clarinet or anything else. ^{he played clarinet} He was triple
tongued. Charlie played so sweet. [Big Eye] Louis, George Baquet

and those men could play the horn, and you could hear Baquet two

blocks away from the other horns.
blocks away when he was playing a funeral. Emile says Baquet played

He played B flat.
a B flat clarinet in parades. [^] He doesn't remember if Baquet played

an E flat or not, but he doesn't remember that many of those boys

played an E flat. Willie Parker gave Emile an E flat clarinet, but

it [his fingers] ^{became} got so "crowded." ^{9'} You have to get used to it, or you

jam. Most everything in a funeral [march] is up [i.e. high]; they

never come down. ^P Emile would support the other players. When Emile

was playing, if anything happened that one of the musicians wanted

to take down his instrument or dry his lips or something, Emile would

fill in the gap, but he can't do it anymore.

The musicians used to call him "Bird." He'd be all over the
clarinet. A lot of men would take their time and play it slow, but

Emile was up and down and in and out. It was a pleasure for him. He

Before they used A & B [6] clarinets.
used to use a C clarinet after he used the B flat clarinet. [^] A C clarinet

was like a violin, it would go most anywhere. It was a lead instrument,

not like the clarinet Emile plays now. On his clarinet, you can ~~come~~

come in on a clarinet, trumpet, trombone, bass, or something like that, then you can take a number and variate, go in and out of the melody.

The C clarinet has a closer fingering than the B flat. Emile always

used the Albert system. With the Boehm system, he says you can go up

[the scale] like you want, just with your hands. It's much easier,

everything is there. But with the Albert system, you have to make it

a certain way, one up and three down or something like that. It

seems harder. Now it's hard for him to make. That's his weakness

now to play way up above the staff. When they used to take lessons,

they thought that to make high C was disagreeable to the ear, but now

they make anything. He could make high C various ways, according to

what was most convenient. He used to make it by pressing three fingers

down and gripping the mouthpiece. Collins says he noticed Emile sort

of slides into the note, Emile says that is a habit he had, to keep

the melody, keep the feeling and make it more expressive. To hit right

on the note sounded brutish to him.

Another thing he does when he is playing is never start off right

off with the trumpet because some are slow and some start fast. He usually gives the trumpet about a bar lead and then comes in under him. If everyone is already playing, he can go where he wants. A man who is in the habit of using music but doesn't have the music in front of him might leave the number [melody] and play something else. That happened to Emile ^{at a time} recently. A fellow he was playing with left the lead, went around him and went too far out, Emile had to come in and then he came back in with him, but the audience didn't realize it.

Emile says a person has to love music to play music. When you love music, nobody can bluff you, "you're going to be good." All the time he was playing, he's never gone anyplace and was turned down. ^{He picked up} He used to play at Ed Dimaggio's Alley near St. B^Ernard Circle. There was a market in front where the circle is now and behind in the alley toward St. Bernard Street was the barroom. The alley was behind Claiborne on the St. Claude side of Claiborne and you came in through ^{the alley to the barroom} St. Bernard. ^{the alley} Musicians from uptown and downtown would come there to

roll poker dice for drinks. Pete [Bocage], Red Allen, Robert Taylor, Willie Santiago, who played guitar, and Emile's uncle Billy [Marrero] on bass all used to go there and play, sometimes until 5:30 in the morning. There were a lot of women around there too. They called it the Alley and it was owned by Ed Dimaggio.

Billy Marrero's wife was Emile's mother's sister. Simon, John, Lawrence, and Eddie Marrero were all his cousins. Cíe Frazier was related to Emile on his uncle's side, but Lawrence Marrero was related on the aunt's side. They had good times in those days. In the daytime, about three or four P.M., they would play a game called "Cross" with a drink. The loser had to buy the drinks. This was more than forty years ago.

6:37 Emile played with many musicians but he's forgotten some of their names. Today, few of the musicians who play together know each other's right names. A lot of them know Emile Barnes only by "Mealy." Russell says Kid Thomas [Valentine] had a band playing last Sunday, there were seven bands for the Mason's parade in Shakespeare Park, and he didn't

even know the names of many of the men in his own band. Many people
used to spell Billy Marrero's name wrong, ^{and you would it} Emile says to get it right,
you'd have to see Billy. Some called him Billy Moran.

Collins asks Emile if he played much at Big 25. He says he and
Sidney Bechet ^{sat in} played there when they were very young, just coming up,
but they weren't paid. Big 25 was a barroom with a small space on the
side for dancing and tables all around. The Big 25 had a regular band
but Emile was never hired there. He and his friends, [Alphonse]
Picou, and Charlie McCurdy, would sit in ^{in place of Alphonse} Sidney [Bechet] lived on ^{and}
St. Bernard Street ^{partly} about eight or ten blocks from Emile. ^[Thy?] Emile never

had a clarinet case, ^{partly} they carried it in a paper and sometimes when he
and Sidney would sneak into the district, he would hide his clarinet
in his pants, ^{under his arm beneath his coat} down the side. Those days were altogether different
than now.

One day Emile took a trip to the graveyard and ¹ looked at many of
the old graves. He started wondering and came back to the place where
Big 25 had been and saw ^{"cribs"} [] and different barrooms and parking

lots where 25 years ago they had a [flat shade ^{said} ?] there and a parking lot behind and a place where you'd go in and get a drink or something,

all the way across there. Emile just scratched his head and said who

would have thought things would be like that. Russell says up until

a few months ago they still had Jelly [no. T. [antiles] ?] [---?] Lala, [---?] 1945

in the sidewalk there. Emile didn't notice that. He says it's a

strange thing for a person that knew that to go there and see it now.

Russell says he didn't know much of it in the old days, he remembers

the Big 25, Tuxedo and the Entertainers, and Pete Lala's was there

until after the war, but it's a parking lot now. Emile says Rampart

is entirely different too. Story is about all that's left. An old

Chinese [7] place was there on Basin Street where he used to go in

and get a plate of red ^{and get a plate of red} for a nickel ^{and get a plate of red} and it's gone now.

END OF REEL I

EMILE BARNES
Reel II--Summary
August 22, 1960

Others Present:
William Russell
Ralph Collins

Emile says all the area [around Basin Street and Rampart Street]

is strictly business now, sedate and up to date. Russell asks if the

place on Perdido Street where the new City Hall is now used to be

[Kenny's ⁹?] Hall. Emile says yes, it's different to him now. The

way it is now, it's a beautiful building; they're remodeling, but the

remodeling is being done so far apart that there is a big difference

in it. Emile thinks they should do it like they did the Vieux Carré,

they should be restored. Anywhere you go, you'll see beautiful places,

like in France and Germany, where the places are old but they look

up to date. What makes the people come around to see things here when

they got better things up there [in France and Germany? ^{SPB}]. Artesan Hall

has been torn down, too, sometime within the last six months and is

a parking lot now. Emile says people will be living in parking lots

pretty soon at the rate the population is growing if people keep tearing

down houses. Everything they do is for your benefit, but it would be

nice if the older people were able to let their children see things

like that; it might put ^{more} some sense in their heads. But with all the

the remodeling, the first thing the kids are going to say is "oh, that's old time." What you know they never will know. Emile says he thinks this [project] of recalling the old numbers [the Jazz Archive] is one of the greatest things to be done because that will stay and it's coming back. It's got to come back because the music the youngsters play now, you can't tell what they're playing. Now, you go to a dance, and they don't play any waltz, just the same tune. You follow it with a type-writer and you'll end up where you started. That's one thing that stopped Emile from playing; after fighting around here, he played with ^{with Andrew Jefferson whom} Andrew [Morgan?] down at the lake. He told Emile he'd have to get ^{Andrew Morgan} somebody to work if ^{say Jefferson, his people? RBB} [who wouldn't join around?]. Emile said he'd work and asked who was working for him. He said Charlie ^{[Love], Alex Bigard} [] and Eddie Dawson. When he told him that, he was satisfied.

1:17 A friend of Emile's told him his brother in Baton Rouge wanted a good Dixieland band and was willing to pay for it. Emile said with piano it ought to run into a six piece band. After he made an agree- ^{Andrew Jefferson?} ment with the man, everything was all right. He had Clifford [] ?]

on banjo, somebody on piano, Emile, himself, [Walter] "Blue" [Robertson] ^{trumpet}

and a saxophone. They were "right there with that old foolish music."

Emile told Andrew it was wrong to play that, the people ^{didn't want} already had it,

and Emile didn't want to be bothered with it. He wanted Emile to change

his style of music. Emile said all right, put it back the way ^{to the real style?} they

started. The younger people were ^{in there} the ones spending the money, the

older people ^{the other musicians except for the pianists would not} weren't even there. The drum was going bing, bing, just ^{change}

pulling you. Emile was nervous and said he just couldn't change his

music. ^{The more} [Andrew?] paid him off, and they parted friends, but he quit ^{since they got musicians like that there.}

playing then altogether. He laid up there about five or six months and

couldn't get any work. A [?] cousin called him and tried to get him back,

but he told him he wasn't playing. ^{The man from the River Bell} He wanted him to get him a band,

and Emile sent him some men. He hasn't had a [Dixieland?] ^{[which was] straight} band there

yet. ^{[the musicians] They change up.} they all change. Play the same thing over and over, "rock and

roll" music. That's what the youngsters want. That's why so many

places use jukeboxes, they save money that way.

Emile never had any trouble playing in a three or four piece band

in a [honkey] tonk. Tonk music was more blues than cabaret music,

cabaret music was more "love,"

such as [I Know You Better Than
Someone Else] [Tough?]

Russell mentions the tonks uptown like Spano's and the Red Onion.

The Red Onion was on Rampart and is a pawn shop now. Spano's was on

Poydras Street and Liberty Street. Johnny Dodds and Bunk [Johnson] worked

there. Emile worked all around there too. The bigger bands used to

play one block after Canal on [Dryades Street ?] at the Pythian Temple

Roof Garden and somewhere near the Pelican. Henry Martin, Johnny

St. Cyr and others worked around there. Emile played there a few

times, but he was mostly a cabaret man, playing in the district or in

the tonks, low class. The uptown and downtown men all worked the same

way. Emile knew Sam Dutrey [Sr.], a clarinet player uptown. He was

pretty good. Willie "Kaiser" Joseph, the brother of the bass player

John Joseph, was a friend of Emile's too. He used to visit his home

in St. Charles [parish] with Amos Riley, whom Russell has met, and Edward

Clem, who had a patch over one eye and played a cornet on the order of

Charles [Love] but a little rougher. Amos Riley, too. Clem wasn't

exactly a reader or a head man, he just spelled.

A few years ago, Emile went up to a picnic at White Castle, [La.] with Kid Thomas [Valentine]'s band. The Black Eagle band, a local band that played around White Castle and Morgan City, was coming too. They used to have the habit of breaking in on another band and tearing it to pieces. The Black Eagle came but they didn't ^{touch} get an instrument on the music stand. Emile wouldn't let them do anything with his horn. They told a fellow about it, and this fellow offered Emile \$40 a week, room and lodging to stay there and play, but he didn't want to stay. ^P Kid Thomas didn't have a saxophone at that time. Saxophones weren't very popular then. Paul [Barnes] used to play sax and was ^{twice as good as} good, ~~better~~ than on clarinet, but after starting on sax you can't get back to clarinet, the fingering and the tone is too different. Emile likes a sax when the man can play sax and clarinet. If he were playing with a large band now, he should be playing a B [flat] tenor sax. He ^{It would shove your brains up} had a sax once, but didn't like the "boom" of it. It's more like the ^{electric} guitar, which he doesn't like either. In a small band, he likes a small

piano because there's too much tone on a big piano. It holds too long.

A grand piano is all right for a concert or a big orchestra.

[Handwritten: at the time of the ... with ... on Aug 21?]

Emile would like to have a good band with someone like DeDe [Pierce]

on trumpet, [Louis] Nelson, Emile, a drummer like Cie [Frazier] or

[Handwritten: a son of ...]
Dave Bailey. Emile played with Bailey at the [Beatus--?] Hall at the

[Handwritten: from American Legion Dance Hall]
corner of Music and Claiborne. There's still a big hall there. He

also played at Luthjen's and Woodmen of the World at Urquhart and

Almonaster Avenue, but they don't allow colored bands there anymore.

[Handwritten: Barnes]
Emile used to play there regularly and Paul [?] went there with

[Handwritten: was not allowed to play. ...]
[Papa] Celestin, Joe [Beatus--?] uses only white bands now too. He

[Handwritten: 2]
used to play on Elysian Fields on Dauphine Street with [Johnny Fay?]

on the downtown, river side right across from the newly remodeled

Teamster's Building. They used to call Johnny Fay the "Gold Key"

because if any of his friends went to jail, he could get them out.

About Chartres on Elysian Fields, there's another hall, but Emile never

played there. Russell heard Louis Dumaine there in about 1945. Emile

worked in a lot of cabarets on Decatur Street.

EMILE BARNES

Reel II--Summary
August 22, 1960

Emile doesn't know where the Tio family came from. He doesn't remember Lorenzo Tio, Sr. They played at the big, high class dances like Mardi Gras as John Robichaux did. Emile liked Lorenzo Tio [Jr.]'s clarinet for a band, but for a funeral band, he liked [George] Baquet. Tio was a good mixer, always laughing and always playing. Baquet didn't play solos in the funerals, they don't have solos in a brass band but you could hear his beautiful tone many blocks away. Russell didn't ever hear Tio in person, just ^{mostly} some arrangements on records. Tio played blues too, and many times they had introductions of a few bars to the blues. There was a hall on Touro and Rampart too, where a school is now. Tio was with many bands, the Olympia [B-B.], Manuel [Perez], [Imperial?], [B-B.], Superior [B-B.], Golden Rule [B-B.], King Oliver, and Freddy Keppard. ^{Also they had} If somebody wouldn't get along or they didn't like his style, they would fire him. Tio was one of those who went around.

END OF REEL II

Emile worked for a living since he was thirteen when his father left home. He raised his brothers and sisters and paid for his brother Paul's education. Paul has more education than you might think, but he's too much like his father: "if he wants it like that, he just wants it like that." Mr. Russell says Paul is a little timid but everyone says he's a gentleman.

Russell asks if [Lorenzo] Tio [Jr.] changed bands so often because he was hard to get along with. Emile says the bands were like that, if they didn't like someone, they'd slyly put a man out, but they wouldn't tell him beforehand. When he'd come to the next job, there would be someone in his place, and they'd say they thought someone had told him; that was their alibi. Things used to be pretty tough in those days.

[Alphonse] Picou wasn't like that; he'd play music very seldom.

He was a tinsmith and very independent. If he would come out,

Now, how he come out, ~~Just~~ with a [spread?]
it was all right; and if he didn't, it was all right. [^] He was such

a nice man; he just liked that big time [?]. However, there were

some [different] things about Picou, too. He was very jealous

of his wife, he'd pretend he was going to play music and then hide

His wife was a musician.
around the house to see what went on. As a tinsmith, he always had

plenty of money. In those days, when a man made \$3 or \$4 a day,

he was making good money. *RC* Russell asks if he was good in those

days. Emile says he's a good man, *and a* pretty good musician. *[i.e., reader]* Now, he

is '80 years old but he still plays. Russell says he really must

love music. *[* *?] Emile says he used to do that.*

He'd sell 10 or 15 mattresses and stop in an alley or someplace

and spend that, *go get some more [money] and spend that.* Where'd

it all go? Everywhere Emile went it was the same thing. *He went in places*

where men won't know to go? and came out without a word, crying baby *?* Everybody said, "My boy, Mealy Barnes."

Emile used to make mattresses on Marigny and Urquhart. He had

[probably with mattress] the whole house covered. He worked the whole convent *[?]*. Russell

said Maurice Durand worked at a mattress factory in that section,

but Emile says that was on Chartres and Clouet, *most* close to the river,

a different place from Emile's. For stuffing, they used excelsior,

which they used on ships, and what they called a cotton top. The

public used what they called ^{Seaweed} moss. When they renovated a moss

mattress, they could use the same ticking or apply new ticking to

it. If they wanted it heavier, they'd add moss to it. They used

the old box spring mattresses then. } The French people called it

^{micro} It would take two good men to handle it. Some were made

with pine or cypress. Now, they're much easier to handle. But the

mattresses in those days [would last] 10 or 15 years if you preserved

the ticking and kept it from getting dirty. Emile says he thinks

a hair mattress is made from hair that comes from the sea. Mammals ^{not from an animal.}

hair is too short. To clean hair mattresses, they'd wash it in

about four tubs and spread it out for the sun to dry. That would

stay in there four or five years before it would pack down. They

used to use them on ^{ships} the sea; but when the wind mattress came along,

they stopped using them.

Russell brought some clarinets with him and shows them to Emile.

He shows him a part of one made of light colored wood. Emile says

it is a Chinese instrument, but Russell thinks they're smaller
and use a double reed, they're called a musette. This particular
one has real ivory and brass keys, it would be 100 years old. Paul
Barbarin told Russell a story once about Sidney Bechet, who was going
to play a funeral uptown and didn't have a clarinet (it was usually
in the pawn shop or something), so he got one of these old yellow
ones, and played it. Raymond Burke had one like that too, with only
three or four keys. Russell also has part of a flute of the same
kind of wood but cleaner. Emile says, "You can say what you want,
old time things ^{is} are not fancy, but it's there," ² it works. He never
played on anything like that or saw [George] Baquet or the Tios play
anything like it. That was before their time. Russell also has
an ordinary piccolo. Emile used to play piccolo and Bab Frank used
to have them, too. Emile also played a flute. Bab Frank used to
carry them in his pocket. This particular one is the old Mayer ^{Mayer} [E sp]
system, the same as the Albert system, although now they have the
Boehm system on the flute too. Emile doesn't remember how many

keys Bab Frank's had, but he played in a band with it, and the band
"It must have equalized to a C."
played in different keys. Russell says his is about 40 or 50 years

old. The joints slip apart, similar to modern flutes. A B[flat]

clarinet used to pull apart like that. You can pull on the joints *of*

it is too low.
now with a piano too. Ralph Collins brought a 13 key [clarinet?].

or a similar one
the name on it is Henry Gunckel, and it was made in Paris. Emile

thinks a wood clarinet has a better tone than one of hard rubber.

no rings on top & only two side keys on the top
Emile's was about the same as the one Collins brought. Some of the

ones today have two or even three pads. Collins brought a "3"

reed, it's ordinary wood but has a plastic coat over it to stop it

from soaking; it lasts longer. (Emile plays the clarinet.)

Emile likes a big mouthpiece. He likes the tone on this clarinet.

(plays more)
He fingers it the same as he does his own. He uses the trill key

was
on the side sometimes, it's supposed to be faster. He plays the

called forked fingers
D [2] sharp key with his first and third fingers. Many now don't

Collins
use that, but Emile plays the old way. Russell says Emile's fingers

go pretty fast. 1

is a Buffet and
? Emile shows his extra

clarinet, a [Zylrin?], with 15 keys. Collins says he's fix it up
for him. It has ^{the register} an extra key at the back [?]. He says he's real

[old time;] he likes the old instruments, they had better tone.

Emile says every horn he had had to have rubber on it. He gave one
to Collins; ^{EB} he blew it at Clayton's, ^{LR} ~~Emile~~ Emile figures he has had

more than 10 horns, A, B [flat], C and E, about three A's and six
or seven B [flats]. ^{of which the music came in different keys} He used the A's for old tunes, like from the
"Red Back Book of Rags," which he used to know well.

Emile played with the best and the worst, but he didn't care
who it was as long as he was working. That's not like some like
Paul Barbarin, who picked the men he worked with. When Paul started,
he was with Emile, but after he went away and came back, he wasn't
much of a mixer anymore; he kept to himself. That's why men don't
know much about him or talk about him.

END OF REEL III