

JOHNNY ST. CYR
I [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell
Manuel Manetta

1

The guitar is a rhythm instrument; it has a tendency to give a dance orchestra some snap. JSC would use drums, bass and guitar in a three-piece dance band rhythm section. Most of the large white bands used guitars; Lawrence Welk uses guitar now; Isham Jones used it in the old days. The public made the banjo popular; Guy Lombardo set the precedent when he used banjo player Mike Pingatore in his band (WR seems to think Pingatore worked with Paul Whiteman, but JSC says it was with Lombardo.) [Compare Leo Walker, The Wonderful Era of the Great Dance Bands, p. 16]. JSC was playing guitar with [A. J.] Piron, at Tranchina's at Spanish Fort, when banjos became popular; at Piron's suggestion JSC made a banjo-guitar out of a regular five string banjo body and a neck he made out of a piece of oak; the banjo was strung and fingered just like a six-string guitar. JSC was the first banjo player with a dance orchestra in New Orleans. Sears, Roebuck had a banjo-guitar on the market at the time, but it wasn't much good. JSC used his banjo in 1917 with Piron, and with Fabe [Marable] on the boat, whom he joined in 1918. When the boat was in St. Louis, JSC bought a Vega banjo-guitar and case worth one-hundred and forty-three dollars for twenty-five dollars. (He borrowed ten dollars from George "Pops" Foster to get enough money for the purchase). JSC used the instrument on the boat, which he left in 1920; he then used it on other jobs around New Orleans; he worked with Manuel Perez at Willie Washington's Pythian Temple Roof Garden [from the opening?] (others in the band: Mercedes Gorman [Fields, piano]; Willie [J.] Humphrey [clarinet and sax?]; Henry Kimball [bass]; Joe Wynn, drums). During that time, Joe Oliver sent for JSC to make records with him in Chicago. (JSC is requested by WR to tell of the Roof Garden's getting a roof; it had been open

to the elements, but Willie Washington persuaded the officers of the Pythians to have the Garden covered, so they could have entertainment there, rain or shine.) JSC replaced Bud Scott, who went to New York, with Oliver. [September 1923.^{or later?} See W. C. Allen and Brian Rust, King Joe Oliver, p. 79.] Oliver had recording contracts with three companies at the time; they were OKeh, Gennett and Columbia. Louis Armstrong suggested that Oliver send for JSC. Oliver's band worked at the Royal Garden until four in the morning, so getting up rehearsals for recording wasn't easy; JSC was added to the band (at his suggestion) at the Royal Garden, not as a musician, because the union would have objected, but as an added attraction, hired by the management of the club, which didn't have to pay anything for his services, as he just wanted to learn the numbers to be recorded. JSC learned the numbers; he made the three recordings [i.e., three recording sessions] with Oliver. During this time, the band with which Darnell Howard was playing [and leading], at the Arcadia (Sunnyside and Broadway), needed a banjo player; Paddy Harmon, owner of the place, had had two banjo players, neither of who was audible with the band, so he fired them; JSC says most of the banjoists then were soloists, not band musicians; Harmon required that any banjoist looking for the job should play an audition. JAS played the audition, was hired. He was familiar with numbers as bands in Chicago received these numbers [i.e., as sheet music?] at the same time. Oliver had virtually the same program. JSC mentions that the bass player with the band was George Wright. JSC worked at that place about two months. During that time, Charlie Cook got recording dates for Columbia; JSC was called in to replace banjo player

Shelby, who was old and was losing his hearing, and becoming crabby because of it. JSC and the Cook band made the Columbia recordings; then they went to Richmond, Indiana, and recorded for Gennett. Cook offered JSC a job if he should decide to leave the band working for Harmon. About three[?] later, the band at Harmon's got its two-week notice of dismissal; they went to Harmon's office at the Dreamland (also owned by Harmon, and where Charlie Cook was playing, too), where they learned the notice was official. JSC later told Cook the band was fired because Howard and the drummer, [Richard?] Curry [spelling?], were flirting with the guests. Cook told JSC that Howard's ambition was to have a band better than Cook's. Some of those in Cook's band: Freddy Keppard [cornet]; Jimmie Noone [clarinet]; Joe Poston [alto sax?] (of Alexandria) [Louisiana]; Elwood Graham; Clifford King. [Compare same photograph mentioned by WR]

WR says Georg Brunis, trombonist, says Paddy Harmon invented the Harmon mute; JSC verifies the statement; he says he doesn't know if Harmon invented it, but he held the patent. JSC still has a silver-handled umbrella Harmon gave "us" [the band?] Christmas Night, 1924. WR says it [the Dreamland?] had been torn down. JSC says Harmon was the man who built the big stadium in Chicago, and was president of the operating group until his associates in the venture got control and ousted him; JSC thinks the move must have caused Harmon's death, from grief. Tex Rickard is mentioned. The stadium was built about the time [Jack] Dempsey was champion, says WR. He [Harmon?] also promoted wrestling; there was wrestling there [?] every Monday night, when the band at the Dreamland was off.

Ala 4000DB

344

"[Freddy] Keppard was the Louis Armstrong of his day; he set a precedent for hot trumpet players." Keppard played violin before he began playing trumpet. Keppard had trouble getting a trumpet player for his job at (probably) Fewclothes's [cabaret], as all the trumpet players liked to play the balls [i.e., dances] held at the various halls (e.g., Economy Hall) on those nights (they made a little more money and could play for the girls at the balls). Fewclothes complained to Keppard about the absence of a trumpet player on those nights; Keppard explained, and said he himself would learn trumpet if he had one; Fewclothes met the challenge and bought Keppard a trumpet. Keppard took lessons from Manuel Perez, and was playing trumpet on the Fewclothes job in about six months; in about a year, he had become a sensation as a hot trumpet player. Perez and "those guys" were on the legitimate side. Keppard was at his best when he was in New Orleans, playing with the Olympia Band. Keppard played more of a legitimate style in 1926-1927, when JSC heard him playing with big bands; he was a good reader. JSC says people are mistaken about the early New Orleans bands; there might be only two or three men in the band who could read, but they played all the popular numbers, and they had to be able to read to do that. They played the Scott Joplin numbers, which are not easy. [Does not follow. RBA]

[Compare John Slingsby article in JSC folder notes on.]

End of Reel I

JOHNNY ST. CYR
II [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell
Manuel Manetta

When a band would get a good number, they would sometimes cut the name off the music so that other bands couldn't get it, [i.e., the sheet music].

[Freddy] Keppard was the husband of a sister of Jimmie Noone, but only in New Orleans; when he was in Chicago, he was married to a woman from Bay St. Louis [Mississippi]. Keppard and Noone worked together a lot in Chicago. Noone was a kid when Keppard and Noone's sister got together; Noone ran away from home to live with his sister and Keppard; Keppard would take him on jobs with him. When Noone expressed the desire to play clarinet, Keppard got him one, and arranged to have George Baquet teach him. JSC says Noone developed his own style, and that nobody else played just that style; Noone always concentrated on a good tone, not worrying about volume or fast fingering. [Compare recordings for his tone and fingering!!!RBA] JSC says Keppard left New Orleans about 1917, [Compare other interviews, notes and publications on this data. RBA,] when Dink Johnson came to New Orleans to get men to organize a band (WR says it was the Original Creole Jazz Band, and according to Dink ^{And Bill} Johnson, it was organized in Los Angeles, with Keppard being summoned from New Orleans) to go on tour for Pantages. JSC says [A. J.] Piron and Clarence Williams had a music publishing company in New Orleans then, which was where Dink came to get the men. Bill Johnson, bass; Dink, drums; and Norwood "Gi Gi" Williams (who later lived in Watts [California]), guitar, were part of the band. George Baquet played clarinet on the tour until they got to Philadelphia, where he decided to reside, so "Big Eye Louis" [Nelson] came from New Orleans to replace him. The band

broke up in Chicago, JSC thinks. WR says Jimmie Noone told him that [essentially] the same band settled in Chicago, where "Big Eye Louis" left them, and that Noone replaced him; the band was no longer working for Pantages. WR thinks the [original] band broke up in Boston; JSC says he thinks the band was playing at the Entertainers, in Chicago, when Noone was summoned to replace "Big Eye Louis."

JSC played with Charlie Cook's band, with Noone and Keppard [in the band part of the time], from around December, 1923, until around October, 1929. JSC first went to Chicago on September 23, 1923, and worked first with Joe Oliver [see Reel I]; he then played with Darnell Howard for a few weeks, before joining Cook [see Reel I]. Paddy Harmon is mentioned. JSC tells of playing a job with Cook at the Edgewater Beach Hotel one very cold night. Cook's band was playing at White City (63rd and Cottage Grove), having left the Dreamland, when JSC and three others (out of 14) were laid off, an economy move requested by the management of White City; it happened sometime in October, 1929. This was about the time the depression struck. Shelby, the other banjo player, had already been fired by Cook; Shelby had been with Cook a long time, which was the reason Cook kept him on when JSC came into the band, but Shelby became too cantankerous, so he was fired. [unclear]

Henry Martin [guitar?] and Red Dugas, drums, are mentioned; they lived together. [unclear]

JSC was born April 17, 1890, downtown on Columbus between Derbigny and Roman [streets]. His father played guitar and flute, but JSC never heard him play, as his parents separated when JSC was about five years old;

the next time JSC saw his father was when the father was on his death bed, ^{from lock-jaw} when JSC was about eleven years old. JSC had one brother and one sister; neither played music. When JSC's parents separated, his mother moved the family to Conti between Dorgenois and Broad [streets]; when JSC was eight years old, they moved around the corner to Broad between Bienville and Conti; about two years later they moved to Rocheblave between St. Louis and Conti, where they lived when the father died.

The first music JSC remembers hearing was played by Jackie Dowden, mandolin, and Jules Batiste, guitar; they called themselves "Jack and Jill." They worked at a cooperage. JSC describes Sunday afternoon parties the employees of the cooperage would have. Jack and Jill played fish fries on Saturday nights, picking up "liquor money." JSC's brother worked at the same cooperage, attended some of the Sunday afternoon parties, and invited the group to have a party at his house. Jack and Jill provided the music; JSC got his mother's guitar (she could play in only two keys, C and G, which JSC learned from her), went outside, was invited to play with them, and did pretty well. Batiste offer to teach JSC more about playing guitar; JSC accepted, and began going to Batiste's house every Sunday morning for a lesson. Batiste began taking JSC on the fish fry jobs; JSC was about twelve years old at the time. JSC became accepted as a member of the band, which was known as the Consumers's (Brewery) Band, as they got beer [free?] from that brewery. Ferdinand Valteau was sometimes added on violin. JSC began attending dances when he was about fifteen, but he would listen to the guitar player at the dance, so he learned more and more about his instrument. JSC got married when he was seventeen; he then moved into

FILE - JOHNNY ST. CYR
 II [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
 August 27, 1958

8

the house left the family by his father, the house on Columbus Street where JSC was born. [A. J.] Piron lived on Columbus Street, also, about three blocks from JSC; Piron and Paul Dominguez had a barber shop on Claiborne between Columbus and Kelerec; it was a hangout for musicians. Piron, then with the Olympia Band, brought all the music that band played to his shop, where he helped JSC with the chords; JSC eventually learned all the tunes the Olympia Band played, a considerable number. Rene Batiste was playing guitar with the band at the time; Piron liked JSC's playing, and decided to let him book small jobs referred to him, Piron, so that JSC could play the jobs and get the few men needed from the Olympia. In that manner, JSC was heard by other musicians. He began to get calls from Willie Santiago and Joe Brooks to replace them on occasional jobs.

Guitar players JSC heard [and studied] in the dance halls were Rene Batiste, Joe Brooks (from downtown), a better player than Batiste, and Willie Santiago, better than any in that area. Santiago played mandolin and guitar; JSC thinks he was with the Superior. Brooks was with the Imperial, and Batiste was with the Olympia. Brock [Mumford?], with the Eagle Band, was just mediocre. Bud Scott was one of JSC's "ideals" as a guitar player; Scott was older than JSC; Scott was a man when JSC was about fourteen years old. Scott never did anything for a living but play music, which is why he looked so young [in later years?], says JSC. Scott was playing at Lincoln Park, with John Robichaux, in that time.

At Lincoln Park, a brass band played a concert from two until six, every afternoon; the "string" band, or dance band, took over the duty at

w/w eight; Robichaux and both bands; Robichaux played bass drum in the brass band, violin in the dance orchestra. There were dramatic presentations in the afternoons at the park; there were also balloon ascensions in the afternoon³, while the concerts were being held. Snow, who had the park, was the first to make the ascensions; Buddy Bottley, a pimp and a friend of Snow, began making the ascensions. The only accident was when Bottley decided to go higher than was safe, and landed in Lake Pontchartrain. Tillie Lewis also began going up in the balloon.

Johnson Park was built right back of Lincoln Park. Buddy Bolden played; the first time JSC heard him was from Johnson Park, although JSC was in Lincoln Park. It was the only time JSC ever heard Bolden play. Bolden had one certain theme he would insert into everything he played.

✓ (JSC scats.) —

MUS. TRANSCRIPT 3

End of Reel II

JOHNNY ST. CYR
 III [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
 August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell
 Manuel Manetta

JSC says that when he was about ten years old (1900), the hottest band was the Golden Rule Band; personnel: Bab^b Frank, piccolo; Jimmy Brown, bass; Alcide Frank (brother of Bab^b), violin, [leading by WR here]; Louis Cottrell [Sr.] or Mack Murray [check spelling], drums; Batiste Delisle, trombone [leading by WR here]; Adolphe Alexander, Sr. (father of "Tats" Alexander), trumpet (who played alto [horn] in later years); Rene Batiste, guitar. [Compare JSC article given to A.N.O.J. by John Slingsby] The Golden Rule Band was not called hot; it was called ratty, the term used then which means the same as hot; Creoles wouldn't let their daughters go to a place where the Golden Rule was playing, as the music was too ratty; the Golden Rule Band was barred from playing in the Francs Amis Hall, as it was a place of dignity. The Golden Rule was also barred from Perseverance Hall, but they played at the Economy, at Cooperators (then called Hopes Hall), at the Globe and others. The Golden Rule was the first hot band that JSC can remember. In later years, the Olympia Band was the hot band. The Superior Band is mentioned. The Imperial Band was very good, but was more on the legitimate side. Some of the Olympia personnel: Freddy Keppard [cornet]; "Big Eye Louis" [Nelson, clarinet]; JSC recalls that [Alphonse] Picou was the original clarinet player with the Olympia band, and was later replaced by Big Eye Louis Nelson. Picou went to the Imperial Band; Nelson joined the Olympia; then Nelson joined the Superior, and George Baquet joined the Olympia, which then went on the road. Baquet was chosen for the road trip, as Nelson wasn't a good reader, and Baquet was; when Baquet quit the band, in Philadelphia, Nelson was summoned to replace him [see previous reels];

SOHNNY ST. CYR
 III [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
 August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell
 Manuel Manetta

[A. J.] Piron [violin]; Willie Santiago [guitar]; "Tite" Rouchon [spelling?],
 bass. Some personnel of the Imperial: Manuel Perez [cornet and leader];
 George Fihle, trombone; (Vic and Oke Gaspard were playing with John Robichaux);
 George Baquet, clarinet. Jimmy Brown played bass with the Olympia, sometime
 after Rouchon left. Eddie Vinson played trombone in the Olympia. JSC thinks
 Cottrell, Sr., was playing drums with the Imperial Band then. WR says Dee
 Dee Chandler played drums with Robichaux at one time; JSC says Cottrell
 played with Robichaux at one time, too. In the Superior Band: (Big Eye
 Louis Nelson played in it at one time; he played in most of them; the
 personnels of bands changed from time to ti e); Bunk Johnson [cornet?];
 Eddie Atkins, trombone; Billy Marrero, bass and manager; Joe Brooks [guitar].
 Richard Payne was a guitar player; WR mentions that he was shown in a
 photograph of the Superior Band one time. [Compare this photograph]. *Piron and band
 early.*

WR asks about uptown bands like
 [Buddy] Bolden ~~is mentioned~~. JSC was very familiar with the Eagle Band,
 from uptown New Orleans; personnel: Frankie Duson, trombone [and manager];
 Joe Johnson (who looked something like [Thomas?] Jefferson, although not as
 tall), trumpet (and very good) (Bunk Johnson also played with the band at one
 time); "Jim Dandy" Lewis, bass; Jeff Mumford, guitar; Henry Zeno, (who was
 great) drums; Sidney Bechet, clarinet.

JSC knew the Humphrey family from Jim on down, including Willie [E]
 Humphrey (the elder); Willie Humphrey liked to travel, so he would play
 in New Orleans a while, and then join a circus which would come to town.

JSC khinks trumpet player Edward Clem was from St. Rose or Laplace,
 or somewhere up the river; he was a fair trumpet player. WR mentions "Ned",

a trumpet player; JSC doesn't remember him. Andrew Kimball, [trumpet], was ~~more of~~ ^{always} a legitimate trumpet player; he worked with John Robichaux, whose band was somewhat like that of Guy Lombardo; it was not a hot band.

Lorenzo Staulz replaced Brock [Jeff] Mumford in the [Eagle Band?]; Staulz was younger than Brock. JSC spells Staulz's name "Stawls;" he says it had no "z" in it [see Soards, 1921]; a brother, Stanley Staulz, lives in Los Angeles and is a bricklayer; another brother, Sidney, now dead, was a plasterer. Lorenzo was one of the best guitar players uptown; he was well-known for his vulgar songs. He had a cleaning and pressing establishment, and was a presser by trade.

Talk of old bottle dealers, who blew on tin horns; JSC says they could play as much on their horns as "Buglin' Sam" [Dekemel] can play on his bugle. "Buglin' Sam" sold waffles; he would play the blues on his bugle. [Compare his records.] ^{So would Bottle Man.}

JSC was born and raised Catholic; he was married first as Catholic, to a Catholic wife; when he married again, it was to a Methodist, by a Methodist preacher, so JSC joined the Methodist church. Talk of music in churches. JSC heard music in Baptist and Methodist churches in his youth. WR says Bud Scott and Mutt Carey ^{and others} said they thought some of the early dance music was influenced by music heard in the churches; JSC says the Baptists have the same rhythm and style as the blues. ^{You could dance to their hymns.}

JSC wasn't allowed to follow parades when he was young, but he would follow the ones that came near his home a block or two; he also heard advertising bands playing on furniture wagons. ^{drawn by horses.} JSC played alto [horn] with the Tulane [Brass] Band, and several jobs with Henry Allen, Sr. JSC was inspired to play alto by the melophone playing of Davy Jones, when they worked together on the boat; Jones was comparable on his instrument to

Louis Armstrong on his; Jones learned saxophone while working on the boat, perhaps getting some lessons from Norman Mason. [Compare Norman Mason interview.] *Jones got to be one of best on saxophone.* *Jones played Cello parts like trumpet (on telephone)* JSC tells how Louis Armstrong got his first [good?] instrument; Armstrong was working with [Kid] Ory; Ory bought an instrument for him, for which Armstrong was paying when he got the job on the boat; Ory took back the instrument; (Fate Roy Marable is mentioned); Streckfus, captain of the boat, told Armstrong he would get him an instrument, for which Armstrong would pay a bit of money each week. The band went to St. Louis on the train in 1918 and 1919 [JSC's first years on the boats?]; then they began working up the river and back down on the boat. "Baby" Dodds is mentioned. JSC tells of their getting on the boat, St. Paul, in Davenport, Iowa, where the Streckfus boats were kept during the winter. Talk of how Armstrong responded to his new instrument, made by Harry B. Jay. JSC says the band was great; the music was new to St. Louis. JSC left the boat when it began making "tramp" trips (i.e., a week here, a week there, etc.), because the crew and band had to live on board; during the first years JSC worked the boat, it spent the winters in New Orleans, the summers in St. Louis, and JSC could live in town.

JSC went to Jazzland in St. Louis, which was run by Tom Turpin and his brother Charlie, says WR. Booker T. Washington Theater is mentioned; Jazzland was right behind it, on Market Street. WR says Jazzland is now a filling station. WR mentions the Rosebud, or the Hunting and Shooting Club, where the Turpins had a saloon, and where Tom Turpin played piano. The St. Louis red light district closed when JSC was there. [Compare Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, They All Played Ragtime.] JSC mentions the

✓
Chauffers/s Club. JSC sat in with a band at Jazzland one night; Turpin was giving a macaroni dinner for the boat band. A good piano player, John, was there; "Russian Rag" had just come out; it was a tough number. JSC, Pops Foster and Baby Dodds were sitting in; the leader called for "Indian Blues," probably to trick JSC and Foster, as the band played the introduction of "Russian Rag"; ^[St. Cyr's] the New Orleans musicians had been playing that on the boat for six weeks, however, so they caught the change immediately. JSC says the boat would get the new music first, as the publishers mailed directly to the boat, billing by the month. Jazzland was just an open yard; WR says he heard it had a tent over it; JSC says that must have been later. *MUSIC SIGNAD COVERED, THE 1ST OPEN.*

JSC got his style of playing bass notes [alternating with chords? Compare records] on the guitar from Jules Batiste, who used it because he played for fish fries a lot with only two instruments, and the style was best for the duo. JSC worked a lot of jobs with small combos, omitting the bass instrument, so he used the bass style on his guitar very much. JSC also got some of his style from Bud Scott.

End of Reel III

JOHNNY ST. CYR
IV [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell
[Members of JSC's family?]

JSC recommends the use of banjo in dance bands, as it is more popular, although his preference is guitar; the guitar "was the first rhythm instrument used in a Dixieland band." In New Orleans, the banjo became popular about 1917, although it had been popular in the East prior to that; "down in New Orleans, the guitar was always the rhythm foundation of a band." JSC advises getting tenor banjo, as the banjo-guitar has to be specially made; he mentions Dr. [Edmond] Souchon, who had one made for himself. The plectrum guitar is four-string; it is tuned the same as a five-string banjo, but lacks the fifth string, which is tuned to a high "G" [tuning of the fifth string usually depends on the key in which a tune is played--PRC]. The plectrum is tuned C-G-D-A. The banjo-guitar JSC got for twenty-five dollars in St. Louis [see previous reel] is the same one he used in Chicago for the Hot Five recordings and for playing with [Charlie] Cook's orchestra, and is the same one he has now. JSC used guitar on the Jelly Roll ^{S. Morton} ~~Martin~~ recordings. Talk of guitars: WR says [Manuel] "Fess" [Manetta] preferred a guitar with a round hole, rather than one with clef holes [i.e., "F holes"?]; JSC says the round hole guitars project a bigger tone than the other. JSC prefers the patent tailpiece on a guitar, rather than the way the bridge is glued to the body of round hole guitars, as the bridge will sometimes come unstuck. Nick Lucas had an expensive, [round?] hole guitar which could cut through a ten-piece band without any amplification; JSC doubts that Lucas has ever used an amplified instrument. A guitar made of thin material and having a shallow body will produce a big tone. Talk of strings. JSC makes his own picks, from toothbrushes, combs, etc.; he can get a better grip on them than the standard, manufactured picks.

WR mentions Jules [Batiste], who helped JSC begin learning to play guitar. JSC didn't learn to read music until he got on the boat, in 1918; he learned notation and how to build chords from a book. The he and George "Pops" Foster bought method books for their instruments at the same time in St. Louis, and studied them together. JSC advises young people to learn how to read at the outset of their music studies, as reading ability is now necessary more than it was when JSC was learning; he does advise them to practice playing by ear, too, however, as ear training is best for playing dance music. Ear training helps a person develop a sense of rhythm. JSC says he and his contemporaries played syncopation that the educated musicians of the time couldn't notate; today there are musicians who can write anything anyone can play.

JSC always thought of what chord he was going to play next in a piece. JSC has always had a natural sense of harmony; he always tried to find as many chords as possible to harmonize a melody. He played many more changes than most of the other guitarists, and that was the one thing which made him very popular. Joe Brooks and Rene Batiste were good guitarists in JSC's earlier days, but he played more changes than they did. JSC was also good at making modulations. WR says Ed Garland says he is not conscious of chords, or sometimes even keys, when he is playing his bass. JSC says many other people can play this way.

JSC says Ernest McLean is another Les Paul; McLean's father is [Richard] McLean (who now plays bass, says WR, but who once was a guitarist in JSC's class, says JSC); JSC says, "Ernest would put both of us in the sewer." Ernest is a single-note technician; he knows chords, but is not much of a rhythm man in a band. Ernest can play any instrument's part on the guitar. Rhythm is the main job of a guitar in a band, but if a man

JOHNNY ST. CYR
IV [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

can take a solo, he should. IF JSC could have a band, he would like to have Ernest as first guitarist; all JSC would want to do would be play rhythm; he'd want to feature Ernest on solos.

Talk of rhythm guitar and banjo. Single and double-stroke mentioned. In the "hot", or last chorus, everyone in the band can cut loose, including the bass, which should have been playing mostly on the first and third beats; the bass is entitled to play four beats to the measure in the last chorus. The drummer should play his bass drum in the same manner as the bass. JSC mentions Buddy [Burns?] and Mike [DeLay?]. JSC says he himself plays for the people who pay for his music, not for the musicians and critics, who usually get in free anyway, and don't spend anything once they are in. JSC says some musicians who should know better are afraid of what other musicians will say about their playing if they don't show off their techniques; JSC says he has been playing the same way for forty years, and the people still like it.

One thing which made New Orleans music a definite style was that the New Orleans bands didn't try to copy any bands from other places.

End of Reel IV

JOHNNY ST. CYR
V [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell

Continuing talk about the distinctions of New Orleans bands, JSC says the musicians got along well together and loved to play music; they would always find the correct tempo for any tune, and play it at that tempo thereafter. JSC mentions playing with Charlie Cook's orchestra; he says Cook might put out a new number which didn't go over well with the men, so they would put it away; some time later, a member would say he had heard the same number played by another band (e.g., Horace Heidt), and that the number was good. JSC says it was good because the other band had worked on it and made it good, by making various changes (e.g., tempo, rhythm); he says the New Orleans bands did the same thing, utilizing the ideas of the individual band members. JSC says the new generationn thinks it is the numbers that make a Dixieland band; the old bands played all the popular numbers, but in a certain style. "One thing that has killed Dixieland is the people are not dance conscious anymore; when people danced, they could appreciate Dixieland music." Dixieland was dance music. Taxes helped stop dancing. JSC mentions Lawrence Welk, saying the dancers in his audiences do not include teen agers; the older people are not bringing their children up to appreciate good dance music; the teen agers are listening to rock and roll, on juke boxes. Musicians enjoy playing for dancers [rather than playing concerts--PRC].

Talk of foot patting when playing; JSC usually doesn't, never having got into the habit; he is one of the few musicians who doesn't; doesn't think it's necessary, but is not against it.

JSC mentions going to hear Jess Stacy, in or near Manhattan Beach [California], with Berta Wood in the party; Stacy probably heard JSC on recordings, and may have heard him on the boats, as Stacy came from Cape Girardeau, Missouri, on the Mississippi River. WR may have heard JSC around Canton or Hannibal, Missouri, or Quincy, Illinois; JSC says they played all through there. WR was never on the St. Paul; he used to watch colored bands on the J.S.; JSC says white bands played the J.S. until 1920, when some musicians from Chicago were brought in to work that boat. WR was studying classical violin, and his teacher considered it bad even to listen to the [jazz] music. WR mentions the Capitol. JSC, who had heard many bands and worked with many bands, considers Fate Marable's band of 1918 and 1919 "was one of the greatest jazz bands I've ever worked with, and Charlie Cook was next (for a big band, a fourteen-piece band)."

When his band finished at the Plantation Club, Joe Oliver decided to try his luck in New York; Louis Armstrong decided to stay in Chicago. Armstrong spoke to Mr. [Fern?], of OKeh records, asking him for recording dates for a small group he was forming; he was answered in the affirmative, so Armstrong got Kid Ory (then in Chicago), Johnny Dodds (then working at Kelly's Stables, but available for recording) and JSC (still with Cook, but also available for recording). WR says Richard M. Jones in 1938 told him he was working for OKeh at the time of the Hot Five recordings, and that he used his influence to get the group the recording dates; JSC says Jones had influence with OKeh, and may have been working for them, but the OKeh people knew Armstrong from his recording with Oliver. Jones tried to get work as talent scout for OKeh, and was able to get recording dates for a combo

consisting of himself, JSC and Albert Nicholas; JSC says Jones wanted to get his numbers on records, so that he could get royalties from them. WR says Jones probably wrote some of the descriptive material in some of the Okeh catalogs, including one called "Blue Book of the Blues." Armstrong organized his Hot Five, which made its first record. (Each staff artist at Okeh was allowed [a minimum of?] one recording per month). [Compare discographies.] Their second recording was of "Heebie Jeebies", written by Boyd Atkins, who was in Chicago then; Atkins wrote only the music, however; Armstrong wanted words for a vocal, so he wrote some on a slip of paper; while making the master recording, Armstrong dropped the paper, so he began scatting; the record "went like wildfire." JSC says that vocalized signatures (e.g., Bing Crosby's "buh buh ba boo") stems from Armstrong;s scat chorus on "Heebie Jeebies."

"Gut Bucket Blues" was recorded because Armstrong had rehearsed only three numbers for a recording session, and four were needed; someone suggested they play a blues, and JSC suggested that he alone play an 8-bar introduction, with the band coming in after that. The introduction made it different from the other blues. JSC says that after Armstrong had introduced the individual band members on the record by calling out their names as they were featured, Mr. ^JFern said, "What are you doing, writing a letter home?" Johnny Dodds was to introduce Armstrong's solo, but he "froze" and messed up the take; Ory took over the job of making the introduction. Dodds couldn't play without patting patting his foot, so someone got a pillow for him to pat on during the recording sessions. JSC and Lil Hardin sat at the recording sessions; the others stood. JSC talks about the recording equipment used, and of some of the positions he had to assume at the various sessions. JSC tells of his first session, with Joe Oliver, for Gennett, at Richmond,

WR suggests
Indiana. JSC ~~thinks~~ "Dippermouth," "Snake Rag", ~~[leading by WR]~~ and "Royal Gardens Blues" were among the tunes they recorded then. [Compare disco-

graphies.] The Gennett session was the first time JSC had recorded using a microphone [!!! *Maybe thinking of Paramount session, possibly recorded at Audograph Studio-D.* RBA]; the Okeh and Columbia recordings were made with

[acoustical] horns. The Jelly Roll [Morton] recordings were done with microphones, in late 1926 or early 1927; the band was organized only for the recordings. Morton would talk himself into the best jobs, and then talk himself out again; he persuaded Brunswick-Balke [-Callender] Company to record his band on Brunswick label, which had been reserved exclusively for white artists (Vocalion was a subsidiary label, used for "race" recordings); the Brunswick company told Morton to have about four rehearsals, paying each man four dollars per rehearsal (an unusual practice); Morton was told that his band would be great, but needed a few more rehearsals; Brunswick officials told Morton they advertised all over the world, and that he would get publicity he couldn't buy; they suggested that the benefits of the publicity would be worth his recording for them for nothing; Morton said he didn't need the publicity, that his name would sell the records; end of that association. [Compare discographies.] Then Morton's Hot Peppers made their recordings for Victor. JSC made two recordings [sessions?] with Morton [compare discographies]; sidemen were getting fifteen dollars per side for recording; Morton decided that was five dollars too much; JSC wouldn't record for ten dollars, as the recording company was paying the fifteen, so Morton got Bud Scott for ten dollars per side for the other records. JSC was on "Sidewalk Blues", "[Original] Jelly Roll Blues", "The Chant", "Black Bottom Stomp", "The Pearls", [or?] "Wolverine [Blues]." [Compare discographies] Omer Simeon was on clarinet; George Mitchell was on trumpet;

Andrew Hilaire played drums; Johnny Lindsay played bass; JSC played guitar; Kid Ory played trombone; Morton was on piano. Simeon said Darnell Howard was not the violinist on some of Morton's recordings; Clarence Black, an orchestra leader around Chicago, played violin on the records; JSC says he thinks it was Black. WR says there is a violin on "Someday Sweetheart." WR says he thinks Simeon played a bass clarinet solo on the same record; JSC doesn't know. WR says maybe Barney Bigard and Albert Nicholas were the other two clarinets on "Sidewalk Blues;" JSC says the instrumentation changed when he left; he doesn't remember recording with a violin. JSC never worked with Morton in New Orleans; Morton was "a lone wolf", playing mostly in sporting houses. He would sometimes sit in in the night clubs; JSC remembers hearing him play at Pete Lala's and at Rice's [saloon]. JSC agrees that Morton was as good as he thought he was, but says Morton didn't have to brag about it. Morton had his own style; JSC says Fats Waller, Earl Hines and [leading by WR] Teddy Weatherford (he met latter in Chicago) each had his own style.

End of Reel V

JOHNNY ST. CYR
VI [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell

Jelly Roll [Morton] was "a wonderful guy to work with. He knew what he wanted, and he gave you time to work it out." He gave the musicians a lot of liberty, but didn't want them to go too far from what he wanted; he would let the musicians put in their good ideas.

Kid Ory had a policy of trying to chase other advertising bands away, by playing better; sometimes he would have his band stay so long, trying to make the other band leave first, that the job would extend over the intended number of hours; the club officials would insist they finish the intended route, so the band had to work overtime for no more money. Johnny Dodds and JSC both complained to Ory. (They had just played an advertisement for the Valley Boys, and had to get from downtown^w to Lincoln Park, which was uptown, where they were to play the dance). JSC quit at the end of that job. JSC got into Ory's band when "Stone[wall] Matthews", guitar player in the band, showed up dirty and hungover at a job at the home of prominent people; his brother, [Lewis] "Chif" [Matthews], trumpet with the band, quit too when Ory told Stone to go home. Ory's bass player, Ed Garland, recommended JSC to Ory as replacement for Stone; JSC had played a few jobs with violinist Johnny Garland, Ed's brother. Mutt Carey, trumpet, joined the band at the same time as JSC. The band got a lot of work. Most all the men had other jobs: Ory was a stonecutter; JSC was a plasterer; JSC thinks "Montudi"[^] [Ed Garland] had a job. JSC tells about loaning small change (which was never repaid) to a few men so they could gain admission to a dance or buy a drink there; JSC says the cost per night to the band would be about seventy-five cents which was very little compared to the following and popularity it helped the band achieve.

JSC free-lanced for a while after leaving Ory. Joe Oliver, then working in the District, decided to organize a band to play jobs outside the District, as business there was off because the police were threatening to close it; JSC was invited to join Oliver's band, which was named the Magnolia Band. Some of the personnel: George "Pops" Foster [bass], JSC, Roy Palmer or Ernest Kelly, trombone, and Henry Zeno, drums. The band played [more or less regularly?] at the Tulane Gym, where some of the [college] boys gave him [Oliver] the name of "Monocle", as he had a cataract on one eye. Later, the band got a once-a-week dance job at a place at Protection Levee and Oak; it was run by "Butchie" Hills. JSC had played at the place with the Tuxedo Band, and his experience had been that on a rainy night ⁵⁶⁴² would tell the band he wasn't operating that night. One night he was to work with the Magnolia Band there, he waited until the rain stopped, called to find out that the dance was on, and reported to work late; he explained to Oliver that when he had worked with "Bebe" Ridgley's Tuxedo Band, Hills would send them home on rainy nights, without even paying them carfare. (JSC says he thinks Hills disliked him because Hills's wife told her husband that JSC was different from the rest, that he was nicer. Willie Hightower beat his wife, Lottie [Hightower], for the same reason. It was in Chicago, where Lottie was secretary of the musicians union. Willie had asked JSC if he wanted to work with Lottie on JSC's off nights; reply was affirmative; JSC helped Lottie carry music; he picked her up in a taxi, and took her home the same way, paying all the fares; Lottie expressed her appreciation of JSC to her husband, who beat her. JSC severed his relationship with the Hightowers. WR mentions Baby Dodds, who mentioned Willie Hightower's bad disposition.

JOHNNY ST. CYR
VII [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell

Continuing the story of JSC, Joe Oliver, "Butchie" Hills and the rainy night: Hills didn't operate that night, Oliver became angry, etc. About two weeks later, JSC saw [A. J.] Piron, then working at Rice's (Marais and Bienville), who told him Oliver was working at Pete Lala's (Marais and Iberville) with Kid Ory, and that he had a sign advertising that Joe Oliver, formerly of the Magnolia Band, was now playing there with Ory. JSC went to see Oliver; Oliver told him why he had let the Magnolia Band drop (he mentioned George Foster's and JSC's lateness); JSC said it was all right with him, but that Oliver should have let the men know he was breaking up the band. When the District closed, Ory and Oliver took their band into the "field" [i.e., playing casual jobs]; they used Lorenzo Staulz, a good friend of JSC, on guitar. JSC helped some youngsters learn to play; they were Joe Johnson [not the trumpet player] (JSC loaned him a guitar), Randolph, clarinet, Raymond Brown, trombone, (his brother) Batiste Brown, trumpet. The Ory-Oliver band was playing an advertising job for the Valley Boys; the kids decided to follow them, playing a tune after the Ory-Oliver band did every time they stopped. The crowd liked it. The barroom customarily gave the band a bottle of liquor if they stopped outside. At each stop, they gave the kids a drink also!! (Laughter.) At a stop near JSC's home, uptown, he was asked to play with the Ory-Oliver band, as Staulz hadn't shown up for the job; JSC finished the advertising job. At the Flattop Bar (Eagle and Spruce), JSC was asked to rejoin the band; JSC said no, but that he would play when Staulz couldn't or didn't make a job. Sometime afterward, Oliver went to Chicago. JSC worked with Piron, at Tranchina's, through 1916 and part of 1917. Piron and Clarence Williams organized a music publishing company; JSC was a handyman there; one of his numbers, "Mama's

JOHNNY ST. CYR
VII [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell

Baby Boy", was published there; he never got a dime for it. Lorenzo Staulz had sung dirty lyrics to the tune; JSC and Piron wrote different lyrics; JSC hummed the tune and Piron took it down. Later, JSC was to make a tour of the Orpheum circuit with Piron and Williams, who would be plugging their songs; a comedian named [Will?] Davis was substituted at the last minute by Williams, according to Piron. Piron left Tranchina's to make the tour; Arthur Campbell was in charge of the band, which comprised Peter Bocage, Johnny Lindsay, Louis Cottrell [Sr.], Phillip Nickerson, JSC and Campbell. [Lorenzo] Tio [Jr.] was also in the band, playing clarinet. Gus Buckel was the head waiter; Felix Tranchina, son of the owner, was running the place; the band followed his orders of not playing when patrons were not buying; Buckel reported to the owner that the band was loafing; the owner called Paul Dominguez, then playing at another lakefront place, the Moulin Rouge, and asked him to get him a band; Dominguez told JSC, who told the rest of the Tranchina band; the band quit. Tio played the only wind instrument in the band at Tranchina's; Bocage and Piron played violin; JSC played banjo; Phillip Nickerson played guitar; Bocage doubled on xylophone; John Lindsay played bass; Arthur Campbell played piano; Cottrell was on drums. JSC says it was a sweet outfit. Campbell was from New Orleans. WR says he made a record with [Freddy] Keppard once, in Chicago. When the Tranchina band, led by Campbell, quit, [Papa] Celestin's band went in; Celestin's band was too loud, so when Piron came back to town, he was hired again, at his terms. JSC was the only member of the band who wasn't given a raise by Piron. After JSC had recorded with Oliver and with Armstrong, he wanted to have "Mama's

Baby Boy" recorded; he wrote Piron, requesting information about the tune, but Piron didn't answer. Returning from Chicago, sometime later, JSC met Piron, who had recently received a lot of royalty money, and who had taken over the [Pythian Temple] Roof Garden (abandoned by Willie Washington, who had decided the place couldn't make money; he had too much competition, including the Tick Tock Club, operated by Beansy [Fauria]; (Eddie Pierson is mentioned, trombonist with the band Piron was rehearsing for the job; Piron told JSC "Mama's Baby Boy" had never been published; JSC knew otherwise. Piron got his just deserts in the end, etc. He had to close the Roof Garden.

The Tick Tock was the same as the Astoria Hotel; a plastering contractor, John Winston, bought the place and made the Astoria Hotel; Winston sold out to Braden, who later received financial help from Beansy, who eventually took over the property. The place was a hotel when Braden had it, "but they knocked all the partitions out of it--"

End of Reel VII

JOHNNY ST. CYR
VIII [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell

JSC thinks Jimmy Palao died in the winter of 1925, perhaps in January or February of that year; JSC, Freddy Keppard and Jimmie Noone went to the funeral in an open car, when the temperature was fourteen degrees below zero; they got into the wrong funeral procession, so when they made that discovery, they went back home. JSC worked some spot jobs with Palao in New Orleans around 1908; Palao was a good dance orchestra violinist, what then was called a "business" violinist; there was nothing flashy about his playing; JSC doubts that he would have been good at concert music. Palao probably hadn't worked much in Chicago, JSC thinks, as violinists were in abundant supply and no great demand; some violinists in Chicago who played much better than Palao and [A. J.] Piron (the greatest violinist in New Orleans, says JSC) were Darnell Howard, Clarence Lee, Clarence Moore, Clarence Black, Will Tyler and Eddie South. Palao became a saxophonist. [Compare photograph of White Sox ball game in Rudi Blesh, Shining Trumpets.]

"Red Happy" [Bolton], drummer, died in Canada sometime in 1924, or thereabout; JSC had joined Charlie Cook in December, 1923; Happy came to Chicago in the Spring or Summer the next year, visiting the Dreamland, where JSC was working with Cook; a group [jazz band] going to Canada needed a drummer; Joe Oliver recommended Happy, who was loaned a set of drums by Andrew Hilaire, drummer with Cook; Oliver agreed to be responsible for the drums, which were valued at eighty dollars. Happy died on the trip; the drums disappeared; Oliver paid for the drums. According to Lee Collins, Happy was a good scat singer and entertainer; JSC says Happy was a good buck dancer, too. Happy, "Black Benny" [Williams] and Henry Zeno were

JOHNNY ST. CYR
VIII [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell

drummers of about the same type; they were flashy. They all were from uptown. Happy had been in the Jones [Waifs] Home, the same as Louis Armstrong; he was older than Armstrong.

Andrew Hilaire, now dead, was born in New Orleans, but left when he was quite young; he learned his music in Chicago. WR mentions [Omer] Simeon.

Paul Dominguez was a very good violinist; he and Piron (also a barber; both were in the same shop; Piron learned barbering from Dominguez), played violin duets together when business in the barber shop was slack. WR says Dr. [Edmond] Souchon pointed out a place next to the [Big] Twenty-five [on Franklin, ^{now} ~~near~~ Crozat], saying the Piron band made its headquarters there; Dominguez's shop, however, was on Claiborne between Columbus and Kerlerec, in the same block with the [present] musicians union building. Someone else had the shop mentioned by Souchon, which was on Elk's Place [^{not near there}], Dominguez was never popular as a dance orchestra violinist; he was inclined more toward the classics.

WR mentions Johnny Lindsay, bassist; JSC says his brother, Herbert Lindsay, played double stops on his violin; in fact, everything he played was in double stops. The father of the Linsays played guitar.

The three-piece, two-man band was comprised of Phillip ["Willie"?] Nickerson, guitar, and his brother, Sam Nickerson, bass; Sam would also whistle the melody of the number, while he and Phillip accompanied.

The better New Orleans violinists were Peter Bocage, Piron, Dominguez and Palao. [Ferdinand] Valteau was a violinist from the old days; he was very nervous; he was an old-timer even before JSC began playing guitar, when he was eleven years old.

In the old [stock] orchestrations, the violin played straight lead sometimes and an obligato sometimes. JSC explains the sectional structure of those orchestrations, noting that the use of the last eight measures of a tune as an introduction was standard. JSC says modulations [between the first and second strains?] in an orchestration were common. JSC says that before wire brushes were introduced, drummers used sand [paper] blocks during low-volume parts of an orchestration. He says bands would often play soft choruses, featuring the strings, after the first chorus or two of the tune, after which the brass winds would return for about two louder choruses, the last one of which they would "just kick it around." JSC says it is not so that the early New Orleans bands could play in only one key and couldn't read; he says there were always at least three men in the band who could read. They didn't play loud always, either; they could play hot jazz soft. JSC mentions that Louis Cottrell [Sr.] would sometimes play a continuous roll on his snare drum, with accents on the second and fourth beats. WR mentions Baby Dodds and Tubby, who both commented on Cottrell's fine roll. The violins in the old bands could always be heard, as the other instruments didn't play so loud that they would be covered.

JSC taught Sidney Bechet to count [in music]. Sidney's older brother, Joseph ^{us}Bechet, was a plasterer and also a guitarist; he and JSC were working together at plastering for the same contractor; Joseph asked JSC to hear his brother Sidney play clarinet (the instrument belonged to another Bechet brother, Leonard); Sidney, then about thirteen years old, impressed JSC, who invited him to play with him at his [JSC's] house; Sidney was fine,

especially on blues (WR says Sidney told him that the first number he ever played was called "I Don't Know Where I'm Going But I'm On My Way"), but he had a tendency to gain or lose a beat occasionally. JSC had him come around to learn how to remedy that; Sidney caught on rapidly. JSC had Sidney go to Artisan Hall one Sunday afternoon, where Manuel Perez and "Big Eye Louis" [Nelson] Delisle were among those playing for a teenagers dance. Sidney sat in a few numbers. Big Eye Louis later told JSC Sidney was terrific, and agreed to give him a few pointers. Piron later heard Sidney, and advised him to study with the uncle of Lorenzo Tio, Jr., Louis ["Papa"] Tio. Louis Tio taught him, but was negatively impressed by Sidney's unorthodox prowess on the clarinet. [Compare Sidney Bechet, Treat It Gentle, p. 79]. About two years later, when Frankie Duson or Bob Lyons needed a clarinetist for a particular funeral, someone suggested Sidney; he didn't have a clarinet, so an old beat-up one was procured from a pawn shop (the owner, Jake Fink, gave it away); JSC says Sidney "cut up a breeze" with the instrument when he played the job. Sidney soon began playing with a piano player at Buddy Bottley's place at Gravier and Franklin; (Bottley was also known for ascending in balloons); Bottley bought Sidney a clarinet and a new suit of clothes. When he left Bottley's place, Sidney went with Frankie Duson's Eagle Band (JSC thinks). WR says Sidney told him that he played trumpet on some parades; JSC says that might have been true, as Sidney was adept at playing instruments; WR says Bunk [Johnson], perhaps, told him that Sidney had played trumpet at one time. After Duson, Sidney went to Chicago, then to New York and on to Europe, where he played with Noble Sissle and with Will Marion Cook.

JOHNNY ST. CYR
IX [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell

[For DeLandro or D. Landry? Cf. Swords City Directories]

Guitarist Frank Landry[^] is mentioned; [Emile] "Stale Bread" [Lacoume], who played home-made instruments [and guitar?](and who died about ten years ago, says WR), played with Landry. Landry was about forty years ahead of his time, playing the type guitar that is being played today. [By whom? RBA.] Landry also played mandolin. He could play lead with his fingers, while using his thumb to play his own accompaniment. WR mentions Snoozer Quinn, another guitarist who employed a similar technique. Landry used a pick when playing mandolin, but mostly used only his fingers when playing guitar. Landry liked JSC's playing, when JSC was only a child; Landry asked JSC's mother to let JSC go on jobs with him, but the mother refused, saying JSC was too young. Landry didn't work with bands; he sometimes played mandolin to the accompaniment of another guitarist, or played accompaniment for another guitarist; they would play in barrooms and would pass the hat; Landry didn't sing, but most of those he hired to hustle the barrooms with him were good singers. [Compare Frank Amacker on FL, Reel ?RBA]

Bassist George Jones used number eight thread in his bow; he sawed through a "G" string every night, and used a spool of thread every night. He was known as "George the Rhymer." Jones was hired for a lot of conventions; he could make up songs on the spot, using information supplied him about various members of the convention by other members. Jones was noted for being able to conceal tip money in secret pockets from the other band members. Jones worked at the Bungalow, at West End, for a long time; JSC worked with him at the place next to that, Jim Thom's roadhouse. Also working in the group with Jones and JSC were [Ferdinand] Valteau, violin, and

[Oscar "Papa"] Celestin [trumpet]. JSC joined the group on the recommendation of Valteau and Celestin. JSC tells of some of the differences he and Jones had about establishing a "kitty" and of Jones's attempts to evade putting all the tips in the kitty. JSC quotes earnings, salary and tips. Talk of tough policeman Dutch Krummer, who once put Jones and his band in jail "on credit", as they hadn't done anything; they were working at the Bungalow at the time. JSC tells of his first encounter with Krummer, who through JSC's efforts was thrown out of the place by the owner, Thom.

JSC tells of finding guitarist Tom Benton drunk at the [Big] Twenty-five, of walking him to the corner where Benton's girl friend lived, of being arrested for drunkenness with Benton when Benton reviled a police patrol, and of their subsequent release the following morning. JSC was working at Tranchina's, at Spanish Fort, at the time. JSC lived on Edinburgh Street at the time (he lived there [at least?] thirty years). [Compare City directories.] Benton was a fair guitar player, not out of the ordinary; he was a good picker rather than a band player; he played mandolin a little; he chorded well on the piano.

Zue [Robertson], trombonist and pianist and a very good musician, was probably one or two years younger than JSC, although he died about fifteen years ago, says WR; JSC says Zue began playing out [i.e., in public] before he himself did. Robertson was out-spoken; he was very emphatic in his criticism of people who didn't measure up to his standards of musicianship.

JOHNNY ST. CYR
X [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell

34

Zue [Robertson] liked shows and circuses; he liked to travel, too; , he might be playing in a band in New Orleans when a show of some sort would come to town; the next thing anyone knew, Zue would have joined the show band and left town. Zue was a nice person to get along with; he just didn't like bad musicians sitting in the band he was playing with.

Johnny Garland, brother of [bassist] Eddie Garland, made a percentage deal with a priest at St. Katherine's Church and Hall to have dances at the hall every Saturday night, using [Kid] Ory's band. (Buddy [Burns?] enters, departs.) Eddie Garland worked in the band. Johnny, a violinist, although he didn't play with the Ory band, had a little voice something like that of Alton Purnell. One night Johnny Garland absconded with the receipts and went to New York. WR says Eddie Garland reports that Johnny is in poor health, and living in Philadelphia, if at all.

. . . .

The Streckfus family is mentioned.

Jelly Roll Morton is mentioned. JSC says he believes that because most of the old-time New Orleans musicians had other jobs, they were strong and their music was strong because of their physical strength; they didn't dissipate so much if they knew they had to go to work the next day, for one thing.

JSC says the variety of tempos played by New Orleans bands was a distinct characteristic of them; when Joe [Oliver] went to Chicago, his band became very popular because of the variety of tempos they played, and because the rhythm was so steady; the Chicago bands played only fast tempo. JSC says the fastest numbers played by old New Orleans bands were slower than

the tempos played now, and slower than the Chicago tempo. The older New Orleans bands played dance tempos; the tempos played today are suitable only for listening. The old bands played a lot of waltzes and schottisches; JSC says the tempos of "Sophisticated Lady" and "Stars Fell on Alabama" are perfect for schottisches. The schottische was a beautiful dance; JSC describes the differences. JSC would like to make a movie of the various types of social gatherings there used to be in New Orleans, from penny parties through fish fries to balls. The old-time bands played all the latest numbers, as soon as they could get them; they would play them in their own manner.

JSC says bands playing for dancing play better. The melody was always predominant in New Orleans bands; some instrument was always carrying the melody, regardless of what the others were doing. The melody was played straight once, then varied. The bass and Bass drum played a solid two-beat rhythm, while the guitar [or banjo] and piano played four-beat. The snare drummer played four-beat. Everybody played four-beat for the last, or hot, chorus.

New Orleans musicians played better because the individual musicians got along so well together and all loved music; JSC says the trouble with bands today is that the minute a band becomes successful, petty jealousies develop, dissension occurs, etc., and the band breaks up. Interchangeability of good players in the old New Orleans bands is mentioned; Manuel Perez, Bunk Johnson and Freddy Keppard are mentioned in that context.

Count Basie's band is mentioned by WR as being a modern riff band; WR says (perhaps) Sidney Bechet used to play a riff he called "Doing the Joe Petit." JSC says some of the riffs did have names; the bands used them

sparingly, however, and only in the last chorus; anything out of the ordinary was done in the last chorus; the term for "every man for himself" was "everybody get a window." The pretty part of the old bands was when the band would play softly; then all the instruments and their relationship to the others could be heard. No one tried to overpower the others in the band. The old bands featured good tone and harmonizing.

. . . .

Joe Streckfus is mentioned.

End of Reel X

JOHNNY ST. CYR
 XI [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
 August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell

Begins c. 5 mins in on side 2 of copy reel.

The practice of playing only on the afterbeats [i.e., on the 2nd and 4th beats only] was called "Boston rhythm" by Baby [Dodd], according to WR [Compare Natty Dominique, reel ?]; JSC says one of the Jelly Roll Morton recordings [on which JSC plays] has a section in which the whole band [with the exception of the melody instrument--PRC] plays on the afterbeats ["Sidewalk Blues"--PRC].

Joe Streckfus, Jr., the oldest of the brothers, played piano; Roy Streckfus, next in age, played violin; Johnny Streckfus, next in age, played trumpet [see Verne Streckfus interview]; Verne, the youngest, played violin. JSC says when the old man [father of the brothers] began running excursion boats, the three older boys were the first band used on the boats. JSC says the Streckfus people would take beautiful packet boats and gut them, rebuilding them into the excursion boats with dance floors. JSC thinks the first [excursion] boat the Streckfus line had was the smallest one, the Sidney; later came the J.S., a larger boat; then came the St. Paul (300 feet long by 50 feet wide; 25 feet was cut off later, because the vibration when under way was too violent; the Streckfuses did all the work themselves, as they were accomplished in many trades). JSC tells about the strength of Joe Streckfus. The Capitol is mentioned. The boats wintered in Davenport, Iowa, with the exception of the one which operated in New Orleans during that season. [Compare Vern Streckfus interview and Streckfus literature]. When JSC first began playing on the boats, in 1918, a local [New Orleans] band was put on the Sidney; the regular band, led by Fate [Marable], was sent by train to St. Louis to play on another boat. Most of the band were not union members at the time, so they joined [in St. Louis?]; Louis Armstrong,

XI [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Baby Dodds, JSC, Sam Dutrey (JSC thinks), Joe Howard and "Bebe" Ridgley were not union members at first. WR shows two pictures; JSC says the first one taken was on the Sidney, with [George] "Pops" Foster on bass; Johnny Dodds is shown in the picture, but JSC says he wasn't with the band, that Sam Dutrey was playing [clarinet] with them at the time. [Compare The Baby Dodds Story as told to Larry Gara, p. 24]. [Henry] Kimball is the bassist in the other picture, the later one. WR mentions Davy Jones [in one of the pictures], who lives in the Los Angeles area now. The other picture was taken on the Capitol; shown are Kimball, Boyd Atkins, JSC, Davy Jones (playing saxophone then), Norman Mason, Louis Armstrong, George [Brassiere--Brassear] [spelling?] (who was an All-American [football player?] in California [later?]), Baby Dodds. The boat was redecorated every year. The following year, Sidney Desvigne had joined the band on the Capitol; Pops Foster is shown playing tuba; Eugene Sedric, Norman Mason, [?] Thomas, [?] Jefferson (who replaced Fate, who didn't want to go back to New Orleans), JSC, Ed Allen, Desvigne, [Floyd?] Casey of Cape Girardeau, Missouri (drums), and Harvey Lankford (trombone). JSC recommended Peter Bocage as the replacement for Louis Armstrong when he left to join Joe Oliver [Compare Louis Armstrong, Satchmo...] but Bocage didn't want to leave New Orleans, so JSC recommended Sidney Desvigne, who took the job.

The [Pythian Temple?] Roof Garden is mentioned.

JSC's first recordings were made with Joe Oliver [see previous reel]. WR says he can't believe that Johnny Dodds was shorter than Louis Armstrong, although he knows he is. [Louis Armstrong's] Hot Five is mentioned. WR

shows a picture of [Richard M.] Jones's Jazz Wizards, with [Albert] Nicholas. JSC made some recordings with the [Chicago] Hottentots; JSC identifies his playing on one of them, "[Put Me] In The Alley Blues", on Vocalion, WR thinks. JSC thinks Brunswick put out the Vocalion records [he was on?], as Vocalion wasn't in business at the time. [No. Compare discographies. RBA].

JSC tells how he got recording dates with Okeh for a friend of his, Lillie Delk Christian; the first two tunes she cut were with JSC and Jimmie Noone, with whom JSC was working at the time; the tunes were "Baby O' Mine" and "Lonesome and Sorry", and they were cut on speculation. The recordings were accepted, and a contract was made between Okeh and Miss Christian. JSC also appeared on Miss Christian's next two sessions.

Pianist Eddie Heywood [Sr.] was supposed to play piano on a recording with singer from Detroit; the singer didn't want a piano; JSC, who had worked at the Dreamland from eight to twelve midnight and at the Apex Club (later called the Nest) from one to six in the morning, had a recording session with Louis Armstrong [i.e., in Lil's Hot Shots? RBA] at 10 A.M. the same morning; then Erskine Tate came in to record, and he had JSC stay over and record with him. (WR mentions Freddy Keppard, who recorded with Tate; JSC doesn't remember if he played on the recording session on the date mentioned above; WR mentions "Chinaman Blues", the Vendome Theater Band, and trombonist [Fayette] Fats Williams; JSC doesn't know what any of the names had anything to do with the particular session with Tate.) After he got home, JSC was called back to the studio to record with the singer from Detroit. JSC never knew the woman's name; he says he is sure the records were released, but that she never recorded again for Okeh.

JOHNNY ST. CYR
XII [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Also present: William Russell

She [^{Lilly}~~Lily~~ Delk Christian--see preceding reel] made several recordings, using a piano player instead of JSC on guitar (at the request of the recording company), after recording with JSC. [Compare discographies. Unissued masters? RBA] JSC made so many recording sessions, which he considered as just more work, that he doesn't remember a lot of them he was on.

WR. . . WR says the band [?] had one arrangement they tried out on drummers; Baby [Dodds] read it correctly, straight through, and the other bandsmen expressed surprise that a musician from New Orleans could read so well. JSC tells of working at the Orchard (WR says it is probably now Pete Herman's), located at Conti and Burgundy, with Manuel Perez, trumpet, Paul Dominguez, violin, and Butsy Hernandez who owned the place [JSC means Zutty?], drums and "stickman" [i.e., bouncer^{ee} PRC]. JSC tells how Butsy and Zutty threw two sailors out of the place.

From the Orchard, JSC and Perez went to work at Willie Washington's [Pythian Temple] Roof Garden, opening the place after it had had the garden roofed over; JSC and Perez were the nucleus of the band. WR says [Manuel] "Fess" [Manetta] told him he was fired from playing piano at the Roof Garden because the son of the past grand chancellor of the Knights of Pythian, the organization which owned the temple, didn't like him. The stepson's name was [J.T.? --Jakie?] Brown; a girl whom Manetta had dated, and who [later?] dated Brown was named Corinne. Talk of the people who ran the Guidry and Allen restaurant, which was at Howard^{new location} and Gasquet (now Cleveland). Jelly [Roll Morton] is mentioned. The Guidry and Allen people later took over a barroom at Villere and Gasquet; there was nightclub on the second floor of the place, too.

"Toodlum" took over the place Buddy Bottley had when Sidney Bechet worked for him, at Gravier and Franklin. WR mentions the Zulus. The Astoria is the only one of the old places still standing [or operating?] [along Rampart Street]; the Pelican is gone; the Twenty Grand, which was just downtown from the Astoria, is gone.

Aaron Harris was just a gambler, and a tough character. "Knock on the wall" was a dealer who ran games at the Midway (Bienville, between Prieur and Roman. "Toodlum's" real name was Napòleon Williams, or Napoleon something [or Johnson? RBA]. "Boar Hog" and "Toodlum" ran the games at Toodlum's place at night; "Bottom of the Pot" ran them during the day; the game was "Kotch", a card game. (JSC says a lot of card games are sometimes played for fun, but Kotch is strictly a gambler's game.) JSC tells how Aaron Harris, who had picked a fight with "Bottom of the Pot" in the game at "Toodlum's" place, was killed by "Toodlum" and/or "Boar Hog", who shot him that night because nobody could do what Harris did in the game at Toodlum's place; the assassins were acquitted. [Compare Jelly Roll Morton, Riv 12"LP].

There was no music in the gambling places.

The Big 25, another gambling place, was a night club at one time; Paul Dufauchard operated it as a gambling place, changed it to a night club when police closed it, changed it back to a gambling place when police closed it as a night club. It was torn down about 1955, says WR. PD is the only gamekeeper in New Orleans that JSC knows of who did anything with his money. WR mentions Lulu White and Tony Jackson in connection with buildings associated with them. Talk about areas which have been cleared.

Talk about guitar strings. JSC likes the volume an amplifier gives; he is able to hear himself; he says, however, that Nick Lucas has an expensive, unamplified guitar which will cut through a ten-piece band. JSC has never been able to afford an expensive guitar, he says. JSC was popular in the old days because his guitar playing could be heard in a band; most guitarists couldn't be heard. JSC made banjo-guitars for Lorenzo Staulz and for Louis Keppard. JSC mentions Tom Benton; he made a neck for a banjo-mandolin Benton used. JSC says he himself and Staulz were the best guitarists uptown; the best downtown were Joe Brooks and Willie Santiago; Santiago was better than any of them; he was also a very good mandolin player.

JSC's mother was a seamstress and a laundress.

End of Reel XII

JOHNNY ST. CYR

Also present: William Russell

XIII [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

Talk of a fluting machine, used by JSC's mother in her laundry work.

Talk of curtain stretchers.

JSC played school until he was ten years old; then he actually went to school, a private one operated by an aunt and uncle of Professor [William?] Nickerson; it was in St. James Hall, which was on Derbigny between Bienville and Iberville. JSC passed the fifth grade by the time he was fourteen, when he went to work as a plasterer.

JSC tells of lining sugar barrels, which he did when he was about twelve years old.

JSC attended St. Katherine's School for one session; he returned to the private school after his first communion.

WR mentions trombonist Louis Nelson. Lot of talk about streets and plastering.

End of Reel XIII

[Restricted]

JOHNNY ST. CYR
XII [of 13]--Digest--Retyped
August 27, 1958

40

Restriction: Until death of Z.S.

WR mentions that Zutty [Singleton] once tried out with [Charlie] Cook's band, but was not able to read the arrangements; Zutty had the same experience with Charlie Elgar's band.

the house left the family by his father, the house on Columbus Street where JSC was born. [A. J.] Piron lived on Columbus Street, also, about three blocks from JSC; Piron and Paul Dominguez had a barber shop on Claiborne between Columbus and Kelerec; it was a hangout for musicians. Piron, then with the Olympia Band, brought all the music that band played to his shop, where he helped JSC with the chords; JSC eventually learned all the tunes the Olympia Band played, a considerable number. Rene Batiste was playing guitar with the band at the time; Piron liked JSC's playing, and decided to let him book small jobs referred to him, Piron, so that JSC could play the jobs and get the few men needed from the Olympia. In that manner, JSC was heard by other musicians. He began to get calls from Willie Santiago and Joe Brooks to replace them on occasional jobs.

Guitar players JSC heard [and studied] in the dance halls were Rene Batiste, Joe Brooks (from downtown), a better player than Batiste, and Willie Santiago, better than any in that area. Santiago played mandolin and guitar; JSC thinks he was with the Superior. Brooks was with the Imperial, and Batiste was with the Olympia. Brock [Mumford?], with the Eagle Band, was just mediocre. Bud Scott was one of JSC's "ideals" as a guitar player; Scott was older than JSC; Scott was a man when JSC was about fourteen years old. Scott never did anything for a living but play music, which is why he looked so young [in later years?], says JSC. Scott was playing at Lincoln Park, with John Robichaux, in that time.

At Lincoln Park, a brass band played a concert from two until six, every afternoon; the "string" band, or dance band, took over the duty at

eight; Robichaux and both bands; Robichaux played bass drum in the brass band, violin in the dance orchestra. There were dramatic presentations in the afternoons at the park; there were also balloon ascensions in the afternoons, while the concerts were being held. Snow, who had the park, was the first to make the ascensions; Buddy Bottley, a pimp and a friend of Snow, began making the ascensions. The only accident was when Bottley decided to go higher than was safe, and landed in Lake Pontchartrain. Tillie Lewis also began going up in the balloon.

Johnson Park was built right back of Lincoln Park. Buddy Bolden played; the first time JSC heard him was from Johnson Park, although JSC was in Lincoln Park. It was the only time JSC ever heard Bolden play. Bolden had one certain theme he would insert into everything he played. (JSC scats.)

End of Reel II

[WR:] As a brass bands?

0241 [JSC:] As a brass band. They would be out in the Park [Lincoln].
They had a bandstand out in the Park. They'd play out there from
two 'till six -

[WR:] No dancing out there?

[JSC:] No dancing, no, just a concert. Then, they'd be off until
eight. Then they would be called a "string" band, dance orchestra --
would play for the dance that night.

0256 [WR:] That would be Robichaux's band again?

[JSC:] Oh, yeah, he had both.

[WR:] Both his brass band and --

[JSC:] He played bass drum in the brass band and he played violin
in the dance orchestra.

[WR:] Remember --

0264 [JSC:] And they used to have shows out there. Used to have the
stock company used to play dramas.

[WR:] Oh, really-

[JSC:] Out Lincoln Park. They'd have about two hours of the dramas
out there, then the ball. They also had balloon ascension in the
afternoon.

0275 [WR:] That was afternoon -

[JSC:] Yeah, in the afternoon, while the concert was going on. ~~HAD~~
the balloon ascension 'round out -- the concert would start about

two o'clock and then--say about 3:30 or 4 o'clock they had a
balloon ascension.

0284 [WR:] Was Buddy Bottley? Do you remember him?

[JSC] Snow was the man that really had the park. And began going
up himself.

[WR:] Snow?

[JSC:] Snow, yes. And then, Buddy Bottley, he began to go up out
there. He got in good with Snow, and he got to be the stick beater
[i.e. "stick man", i.e., bouncer] around there and he began to go
on up. And Snow had an invitation for anybody who wanted to go
up in the balloon and he'd rehearse them how to cut loose.

0305 [WR:] Just one person go up at a time?

[JSC:] Just one person at a time, yes.

[WR:] Did you ever have any accidents or anything?

[JSC:] Nope. The only accident they ever had was Buddy Bottley,
went up higher than he should. Snow knew the height that the
balloon, you know, could go. He knew the height at the rate of
travel it went. AND when it get a certain height, he shoot a pistol
and that way the signal for them to cut loose. Buddy Bottley, he
was a pimp and notoriety as he could be. Wanted to prove he could
go higher than anybody else in one of the dog-gone thing, see.

0320

[WR:] (Laughter)

100 [JSC:] Snow shot the pistol about threee times. Buddy kept going

way up before he cut loose. When he did come down, he came down in Lake Pontchartrain.

[WR:] Oh boy. (JSC chuckles).

0338 [WR:] [That's] quite a long way off, too!

[JSC:] Yes, it's a good ways off. And he came down in the Lake, just happen the Lake-- the Lake's shallow, you know.

[WR:] Yes.

[JSC:] Fell about three blocks out into the lake; it's still shallow out there, see.

[WR:] Did they lose the balloon or did they-- I guess they got it back.

[JSC:] No, they got it back. Some guys in a skiff came to his rescue when they seen the balloon settling down there -- (laughter) -- some guys out there in a skiff or a motorboat, went to his rescue. They towed the parachute in.

[WR:] Served him right for trying to show-off! (Laughs)

[JSC:] Yeah! (WR laughs) That was the only mishap they had out there. And there was a girl by the name of Tillie Lewis. She lived back there. She was the only girl [she], had about five brothers. And she began going up in the balloon.

0374 [JSC:] Yeah, then they built the Johnson Park right back of the Lincoln Park.

[WR:] Yeah.

0380 [JSC:] And Buddy Bottley used to play out there. Not Buddy

Bottley. I want to say, Buddy --

[WR:] Bolden.

[JSC:] Buddy Bolden. That's the first time I ever heard Buddy Bolden play when they built Johnson Park. But I was over in Lincoln Park.

[WR:] Yeah.

[JSC:] And they were adjoining. Well, I could hear him. He used to blow out -- the music stand was right on the corner of the building.

0398 [WR:] Uh-huh.

[JSC:] See; he used to blow out the window at Lincoln Park. You know, blowing at the guys over there.

0400 [WR:] Yeah.

[JSC:] So that's the first and only time I've heard Buddy Bottley play.

[WR:] Buddy Bolden.

[JSC:] Buddy Bolden. I will say Buddy Bottley.

But he had a certain theme, that-- I don't know whatever he played he'd get that theme in there. It's something go like this. (JSC scats) Most anything he played --

0417 [WR:] That little riff in it. Yeah. He'd have that little riff in it. Might near everything he played have that little riff in it.

[WR:] He'd work it in there somewhere.

[JSC:] Yeah, somewheres. *along the line.*

[End]

Reel 1

Reel # 1.

R: As far as the job of a guitar in a band --- if you can start on that--

SC: Well -- a guitar is a rhythm instrument, and it has a tendency to give a dance orchestra some "snap" -- a sort of foundation to an orchestra.

R: If you were going to only use 3 rhythm in place of 4 -- what 3 would you enjoy working with?

SC: Three rhythm? Well You take bass drums and guitar, like the regular old New Orleans bands. And you just can't beat it for a dance orchestra. Now, when you go into concert work or something like that -- why, maybe you could eliminate the guitar. But you'll find that most of the name orchestras --if I must be blunt about it, most of the white orchestras take Lawrence Welk, for instance, he has a guitarist in his orchestra. Isham Jones, in the old days, used a guitar. Well, most of the New Orleans bands used guitars.

R: While we're talking about guitars --- --- the difference in guitar and banjo -- which works out best?

SC: Well it's a matter of choice. I mean, the public made banjos popular. I think, to my knowledge, Guy Lombardo when he used Pingatore on the banjo, set the precedent for banjos in dance orchestras.

R: Was that Lombardo or Whiteman?

SC: No -- Guy Lombardo, to my knowledge.

R: --- Pingatore played with Whiteman for a while, didn't he?

SC: I remember him as playing with Guy Lombardo.

R: You might also explain a little bit about your banjo -- was it really Tuned like a guitar?

SC: When the banjo became popular I was working with Firon out at Tramcino's Spanish Fort in New Orleans, playing guitar -- and Firon said to me. "John, banjos are getting popular now." He said, "You're pretty good at woodwork -- suppose you get a regular banjo and make a guitar neck for it yourself." He said, "You'd use the same fingering you use on the guitar. If you take up tenor it's a different fingering and you would have to start learning all over again." He said, "But a banjo guitar would be an easy switch." So I took his advice and bought a Stewart regulation banjo -- 5-string banjo--- and I got a piece of oak wood and made a neck for it myself -- regular guitar neck.

R: --- take an old guitar and take the neck off it. It would have to be a long ---

SC: No, no -- I made the neck --- made the neck out myself from scratch.

R: You made that yourself? What kind of pegs did you use -- little machine screws?

SC: Well I used regular guitar pegs.

R: Six strings, huh?

SC: Six strings, yeah.

R: You said five.

SC: I bought a five-string banjo, but I took that neck off, and I made a six-string neck for it.

R: Did it have a resonator in those days?

SC: No, it had no resonator -- just a plain old banjo.

R: Had plenty of tone ---

SC: Oh it had much tone, yes. It was a Stewart -- one of the best banjos made. It was a Stewart shell --- it was just the neck that I changed on it.

R: Did you use the regular guitar tuning?

SC: Regular guitar tuning.

R: Guitar strings ---?

SC: That's right -- same strings and all. And it was ---- I was the first banjo player in New Orleans. First banjo player to play in a dance orchestra in New Orleans.

R: Did they have the guitar-banjos on the market at that time?

SC: Sears and Roebuck had one, but it was a common instrument --- it wasn't much good. But I used the one I had from 1917 ---- I used it out at Trancino's with Piron and when I went to work on the boats with Fate in 1918 I used it. And when I got to St. Louis --- there was a fellow had a pool room in St. Louis. He had bought a banjo and he never made any time with it. And so Fate and the boys in the band used to go over and play pool. And he told Fate, "Listen." he said, "Do you have a banjo player in your band?" Fate said, "yes". He said, "Well I've got a good banjo here --- I know it's a good one. I don't know if it's the kind he uses, but tell him to come down to see me and I'll let him have it cheap." So Fate told me about it, and I went down to see him --- and it just so happened it was a banjo-guitar, made by Beeger-(sp?) VEGA.

R: Oh, a good one.

SC: Yes it was a tough instrument. The instrument at that time was worth \$125 -- And he asked me what I'd give him for it. "Well now, I want to get it as cheap as I can." I said, "You set your price for it and if it's too much I'll tell you." He said, "I'll take \$25 --for it ---- banjo and case, man! The instrument was worth \$125 -- and the case was worth \$18. Sold me the whole thing for \$25. I just had \$15 on me at the time. I gave him the \$15 and then I went back to George --- "Fops" Foster and got \$10 more and got it. That was a wonderful instrument. I used it ---- I used it on the boat and I left the boat in 1920, and I used it around New Orleans playing different spot jobs. When Willie Washington opened up the Tamp Roof Garden --- I worked up there with Manuel Perez, Mercedes Garman, Willie Humphrey, and old man Henry Kimball; and a boy by the name of Joe Wynn was playing drums.

R: That's the same picture that we had ----

SC: Yes -- that's right. And during that time , Joe sent for me to play with him, to make some records with him in Chicago.

R: While we're talking about that picture, you might finish up that story. That was on the opening night of ----

SC: When they covered the Temple Roof Garden. It used to be open before then. And they had to give out rainchecks on rainy nights --- so Willie Washington, the man who was operating the dance there, he made a proposition with ~~the house~~ ^{the house of Pyralis} if he could borrow enough money to cover the Roof Garden so he could operate rain or shine, he would pay the interest on that money until the loan was paid, which he did; I was there at the burning of the mortgage on it. So during that time ----

R: That was a dance, I believe you said, for the doctors and ---

SC: Doctors and druggists. That was the opening night after they covered the Roof Garden.

R: The band always played on that ----

SC: Yes, up on the balcony. And while playing there Joe Oliver sent a telegram asking me to come to Chicago to make some records with him. Bud Scott had been playing with him, but he left and went to New York. And when Bud left and he had a contract to record with three companies -- Okeh, Gennett, and Columbia -- he mentioned in the band that he didn't know where to get another banjo player that could play ---- type of music that they played. And Louis Armstrong was the man that suggested sending for me. So Joe sent me a telegram and asked would I come to Chicago and made me a proposition of \$75 a week --- 3 weeks' work-- and all expenses. I wired him back, "Send the tickets." So he did and I went to Chicago. I played with -- recorded with him. In fact, after I got there he was wondering how he was going to arrange for rehearsal, because the men were working 'til 4 o'clock in the morning.

R: Working in the Royal Garden?

SC: The Royal Garden --that's right, we were working at the Royal Garden and he said it would be kind of hard on the men to get them up for rehearsals. So I told him, "Well how about me sitting in with the band at night? I don't know anybody in Chicago; I don't know anywhere to go but here. I can sit in the band and learn the numbers while playing with the band. So he said: "We've got another problem --we've got the union to contend with. We're not supposed to have more men on the music stand than what the job calls for." So I told him, "Well, how about booking me as an added attraction, hired by the house." He said, "That ought to work. Let's go down and talk to Miss ---- (I think it was Miss May I think was the one that had the Royal Garden at that time).

And we'll go down and talk to Miss May about and see what she says." We went down to the office and explained to Miss May what the proposition was just wanted to sit in with the band to learn the numbers, and that it wouldn't cost her anything. Miss May said, "Well, Joe I heard the man play with you (all) the first night he came here." She said, "He's back in the fold hire him. I like his work! But I just can't afford to hire another man." "But" she said, "if that's all he wants to sit in with the band," she said, "I'll tell the union that I've got him hired as an added attraction." So sure enough, man, the third night I was on the music stage and here comes the business agent --- "Hey Joe, whatcha call this?" Joe said, "What?" He said, "This banjo

player here!" "He's hired as an added attraction." "No, don't hand me that -- don't hand me that!" "Well, all right, let's go to the office." "Yeah, let's go to the office and get this thing straight here. Man just come in town and you got him playing here ---". So they went to the office and spoke to Miss May about it. She said, "Yes, I hired him. I hired this man as an added attraction. This man's a good banjo player, and he's hired here for three weeks." (This guy *Fed Marshall (?)* -nothing he could do about that.)

R: That would be like an entertainer -- didn't have to go through the union is that right?

SC: No, you see uh --- as long as you're a union man --- you see, I was a union --- belonged to the union. As an added attraction, it's just like you book an act, see? So they couldn't do anything about that. So --- okay, I went along with the band and played the numbers right along with them, and when we come to recording I was familiar with the numbers, you see? And I made three recordings with Joe. In the meantime, Darnell Howard was playing at Sunnyside and Broadway at the Arcadia --- and they were in the market for a banjo player. So he asked Joe, where did you get this banjo player from? Joe said, "He's one of my old boys." He said, "Is there another one down there like him? We need a banjo player." Joe said, "I don't know if there's another down there like him, but he's only here for three weeks, and after you finish here maybe you can talk him into staying." And Darnell Howard said, "Well tell him to call me up when he's finished with you here --- I'd like to talk with him." So when I finished with Joe, I called him up, and he asked me to come over to his house, and we had a talk. So he said, "We need a banjo player in our band. But there's one hitch to it; would you mind playing a tryout?" I said, Well, what have I got to lose? It doesn't matter to me." He said, "I'll tell you why -- *Fatty* Harmon and I have two banjo players." He said, "you couldn't hear either one of them in the band." He said he paid them for two weeks and got rid of them in one week. He didn't keep them the two weeks. He said he promised he wouldn't hire another banjo player unless he could hear him play.

R: You wouldn't think you could hear a banjo that easy with a pick ---

SC: No, well you know, most of those banjo players up there are soloists.

R: Only one string -----

SC: Yeah --- soloists. They were no band banjo players -- you know -- no chord men. There were great banjo players -- many good ones up there, yeah. But they were not for the dance orchestra -- they were no chord men. So he made an appointment (?) with him to go out one night and try out. I went out on the job with him. Well I was familiar with all the numbers -- all the bands got the numbers the same time in Chicago. Their's was practically the same program that Joe had. And I sat in with the band -- playing with them just like I was playing all my life, you know. The bass player, John Wright, said. "Usually a man sitting in with the band plays scared; here this man sits in with the band and plays like he's played with the band all his life!" So after Darnell told me he (?) the other banjo players --- I mean it was a point to be heard -- they had me sitting right in front, with the front line, see? So he said, "You're playing loud; can't you play a little softer?" I said, "I can play softer, but you said you couldn't hear (?) the other banjo players, and I wanted to be heard!" He said, "You're heard all right!"

couldn't hear

(laughter) So, I softened down a little bit, and after awhile I got loose. So he set me in the back, between the bass player and the drummer. So after we knocked off that night -- they usually have a dressing room right back of the music stand -- and he said, "You can leave your instrument here. You don't have to take it if you don't want to." "Leave it here for what?" I said. How many nights do you have to try out here before you get a job?" He said, "Oh, you're hired! You'll get paid for what you did tonight!" I said, "Well that's different!" So I played with him there about two months, during which time Charlie Cook had some recordings with Gennett and Columbia. And he had a banjo player by the name of Shelby -- played both banjo and cello. Shelby had got old and lost his hearing -- played out of tune all night -- and he got cross and crabby. If the fellows would tell him he was out of tune he'd get cross. So Charlie Cook asked me would I make the recordings with him. I told him yes. so he called a rehearsal -- I rehearsed with him. We made recordings with Columbia, and we went to Richmond, Indiana for the Gennett people, and made recordings there. So after we completed recording in Richmond, on the way back on the train, he told me "Well Johnny, it's not ethical for one leader to persuade a man out of another bandleader's band." He said, "but if anything happens --- if you decide to quit the band, or you get fired from the band, you've got a job with me." I told him, "Thank you." And, oh just about three weeks after that we had ~~Fatty~~ --- on Friday the 13th--- I never will forget it -- ~~Patty~~ Harmon gave what you call a voodoo dance, you know --- and people with their witch costumes, and all that stuff. So about --- well we played up until the intermission and during the intermission one of the floor managers came up with a letter about this long, see? --- and gave it to Darnell. So Darnell looked at it, and said, "Man, this must be a joke!" I said, "What's a joke?" He said it's notice --- two weeks' notice for the band." I said, "You'd better try to find out whether it's a joke or not."

Patty Harmon

R: ----- nights.

SC: Yeah!

R: ---- trick or something.

EXPENSE and

SC: I said, "You'd better find out whether it's a joke or not --- because I have an opportunity to go to work, and I want to know." I said, "I'm away from home. I've got double expense; I've got (2) of my family in New Orleans --- I can't afford to loaf. And I do have a job in sight." He said, "Well, we'll go down to the office at --- and VanBuren, at the Dreamland. He owned both places; that's where Charlie Cook was playing --- at the Dreamland. So we go down to the Dreamland, and Darnell said, "Mr. Harmon, one of the floor managers gave me two weeks' notice, and I've come to find out if it was a joke." Harmon said, "You saw my name on it, didn't you?" "Yeah" "Well, it's no joke." So Darnell Howard, after we left, said, "Well, don't nobody take nothing. I believe a chance to get another job." Well I wasn't studying about these chances to get another job, you know what I mean. I couldn't afford to take any chances --- I had a job waiting for me. So the next day, Charlie Cook heard about it and called me up. He said, "Do you have time to come to the office? I want to talk to you." I said, "Okay." I went up to the office and he said, "Listen, what's the trouble? I heard you all got your notice. What's the trouble?" So I told him, Those boys -- Darnell and the drummer by the name of Curley --- they were flirting with the guests ~~down there~~ see? And those floor managers resented that, you know, and they must have made a complaint to Fatty Harmon, you see? So, that's how they got their notice." So Charlie Cook said, "Well I think it's

something like that." He said, "Darnell had a good band, but I'm going to tell you, Johnny ---- Darnell always wanted to get a band to beat my band. That was his attitude. We were both working for the same man, but his attitude was to get a band better than mine." There wasn't a chance in the world of getting a better band than Charlie Cook, you see? In the first place Charlie Cook was an arranger, and he knew a lot of people --- a lot of people."

R: Who else was in that band when you joined it?

SC: Charlie Cook's?

R: Yeah.

SC: Well there was Freddie Keppard, who was a New Orleans man; Jimmy Noone; George Poston he was from Alexandria, I think.

R: In other words, it was the same as the picture.

SC: The same group as in the picture there, yes: Albert Graham, Clifford King.

R: Yeah ----- we've got all that on that picture. There's one other thing I was going to ask you. When I was in Chicago two months ago, George Brunis was talking about the Harmon mute -----

SC: That's right! That's the man that invented it ----

R: I could hardly believe it I was going to check, because I knew you knew Harmon. He really did? I didn't believe it.

SC: I don't know if he invented it but he had the patent on it. He's the one who had the patent on it.

R: It's his name, then ---

SC: That's right --- The Harmon mute.

R: Never occurred to me ---

SC: That's the man I worked for. I still have a sterling silver handle umbrella that he made a present to us on Christmas night, 1924.

R: It's all torn down now.

SC: Yes it's torn down.

R: ----- within the last five years.

SC: Well you know he's the man that built that stadium -- the Chicago Stadium.

R: Oh yeah, the big place on ---

SC: Yes Sir --- Patty Harmon built that stadium. He showed us the plans a year before he completed the purchase of the land for it.

R: He was just a promoter in general ---

SC: Absolutely. And after he built that stadium -- he was president of the outfit there and it seems like some of those wise guys got together and demoted him. I believed that grieved him to death. He built that stadium, and he was really a smart operator. Do you know how he got that land? He had buyers, ---- to go and buy up property in there for him -- until he had bought up the whole square. They didn't even know he was the owner. After he bought it all up --- he had some stockholders with him --- and he built that stadium, and when he announced that he was going to build it Tex Rickard put an article in the paper that you don't build stadiums with talk -- it takes money to build it.

R: He didn't think it was going to get done ---

SC: No, he didn't think he was going to get it built. But he did.

R: That was about the time Dempsey was champion and all.

SC: Uh huh, that's right. And he used to promote wrestling, and Monday night was our night off at Dreamland, and he used to promote wrestling up there. Every Monday night he had wrestling there. And he went to New York and got a fellow by the name of Manthevich (?) --- weighed 200 flat and wrestled barefooted. And the only man that whipped him was the old master, Strangler Lewis. And he whipped him with weight -- he was just too heavy for him.

R: Since we mentioned Keppard and Noone, and thry're both gone now and nobody can tell much about them, I wonder if you could talk a couple minutes about Keppard -- how did he play ----

SC: Well -- Keppard was the Louis Armstrong of his day. He set a precedent for hot trumpet players. He was a violinist before he started playing trumpet. And he used to have trouble on Saturday nights and Sundays getting trumpet players to play with him; he was playing in one of the night clubs down in New Orleans. I think it was Fewclothes. And on Saturdays and Sundays he'd always be short of a trumpet player. He used to like to play the balls. In the District the night clubs were only paying a dollar and a half a night at that time, and the balls were paying \$2.50.

R: Places like Economy Hall ---

SC: That's right -- the regular dance halls. They were paying \$2.50, and most of the balls were given on Saturday and Sunday nights. And the trumpet players would go play those jobs because they paid a dollar more plus --- they used to like the girls, see? Playing those night clubs, they just played music. They had a chance to play for the girls, playing those balls. So they'd rather play them than play the night clubs. And they were in demand, so they figured they'd just go and play those balls, and they were glad to get them when they came by, see? So (Fewclothes?) got tired of having no trumpet on Saturday and Sunday night, and he got to hire Freddie, see? So Freddie told him, said "Nothing I can do about it --- I hire the men, and they'd rather go play the balls, and if they play here" He said, "If I had a trumpet, I'd learn how to play it myself!" Fewclothes said, "Do you mean that?" "Yeah, I mean it." He said, "All right meet me Monday and I'll buy you a trumpet, and Freddie started taking lessons from Manuel Perez. And in about six months'

time, Freddie was playing in the joint where he worked. In about a years' time, he became a sensation. He was playing the kind of trumpet that Manuel Perez and those guys never thought of. They were always on the legitimate side, see? He was a hot guy -- and he just went on from there.

R: In Chicago --- You'd heard him back in New Orleans too on trumpet?

SC: Oh, yeah! He was at his best in New Orleans -- playing with the band down there.

R: How *did he* compare when you heard him in, say 1926 or 1927---

SC: Well he was more on the legit side. He wasn't *not so much any more*

R: Did he read much at all?

SC: Oh, yeah.

R: Did he arrange much? He was able to ----

SC: Oh, yeah --- he read good. Good reader. Even at home, taking up trumpet, you know, he had pretty good musical schooling on the violin, see? -- and he just applied it to trumpet. And as he went he progressed, he learned more about music, because a lot of people are mistaken about those bands down there -- there were only about three men in the band that could read. But they played strictly all the popular numbers --- yeah. --- and they had to read to play them

R: numbers come out *all the time*

SC: Absolutely. Played all those Scott Joplin numbers, and those are not easy numbers to play. Those boys played all that stuff, see? And sometimes they'd get a good number, and they'd cut the name off it, to keep the other bands from getting it, see?

R: Getting back to Chicago -- in those days -- was Keppard married to Jimmy Noone's sister?

SC: No, he had another wife then --- a woman from Bay St. Louis. In New Orleans he was married to Jimmy Noone's --- well, I don't know whether they were married or not, but they were husband and wife anyway.

R: I didn't know whether that was up in Chicago?

SC: No, that was in New Orleans, before he went to Chicago.

R: --- Noone and Keppard worked together, I thought maybe they were all ----

SC: Well, I'll tell you -- Noone was a kid when Freddy Keppard and his sister got together. And he ran away from home and came down to New Orleans to live with his sister. Just a kid. And his sister wanted to send him back home. Freddy said, "No, let him stay here -- as long as you let your mother know where he is -- let her know he's with you -- and let him stay here." So Freddy Keppard used to take him on the job with him, you know -- going to play a ball, he'd take him -- sit on