

JOE RENE
I [of 4]--Digest--Retyped
April 7, 1960

Also present: William Russell,
Richard B. Allen, Marjorie T. Zander,
Paul Crawford

JR says someone made a [motion?] picture of the funeral of "Black Benny" [Williams]; JR and "Red Happy", [Bolton] were grand marshals; the procession was seven blocks long, although Williams had only "nickel insurance" (JR explains that a saucer was placed on the chest of the corpse to collect money to bury him); the Zulu Club was represented at the funeral. The second line was great, as Williams was from Perdido Street. Pictures were also made of the funeral of JR's brother [Henry "Kid" Rena (sic)]; the pictures were taken at the [family?] home, and also at St. Katherine's Catholic Church.

JR mentions [Sidney] Bechet.

When Joseph Rene and his brother were playing music, they spelled their name "Rena"; JR now spells it Rene, the original spelling. JR has been an ordained minister of Jehovah's Witnesses since 1939 (interview was recorded at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses [JR's church]). He retired from playing music in 1942, when he was working at the Budweiser Dance Hall ("hardest job in the world"); in the band: Kid Rena [trumpet]; "Sport" Young, saxophone; [perhaps] Austin Young, brother of Sport, bass (WR heard Austin at the place, in 1942); Sylvester Handy (brother of saxophone player John Handy), bass (for a while); "Duke" Ducongé, piano; Butler "Guyé" Rapp, guitar; JR, drums. Ducongé, who had a little shoe business on Rampart near Common, went out with pianist Herbert Richardson [to drum up business?] and was killed in an

automobile accident. He was replaced by pianist Walter Decou; shortly afterward, there was a "scrummage" [Decou stabbed Rapp to death--PRC]. JR thinks Johnny St. Cyr and a band may have taken over the job after the "scrummage." A drummer called "Papà" Foster went back there; he was no relation to drummer Earl Foster or drummer [Abbey] "Chinee" Foster. JR says Chinee Foster and Walter Decou hang out around Beauregard Square every night; RBA says Decou was living with Tom Albert, on Burgundy Street. WR says Albert is eighty-two or eighty-three years old now. JR says Albert was thirty-five or forty years old when JR was a young man. JR, now sixty-three years old, was born March 1, 1897, in the Treme section of New Orleans. His brother was younger. JR's father was a natural musician; he could play all the string instruments; he worked for Werlein's years ago; JR's mother played guitar. JR doesn't think his father could read music. His father became an alcoholic, and hung out at a bar at Dumaine and Villere; he was called "Bas" [spelling?]; "Slow Drag" [Pavageau] knows about him. JR's brother fell into his father's footsteps, hanging around bars. He [the father?] took "the horrors" and died; "in other words, he died from liquor; the police hit him." He chased JR for fifteen or twenty blocks, for about one-half hour. He called JR a devil, and called his brother an angel; JR says he himself turned out to be the soberest one.

JR comments on his prowess as a drummer when playing the song, "Caravan"; he describes his solo. JR talks about his drums; his bass drum was thirty-two inches high; when he played at the Bulls's Club, on Eighth and Danneel, his bass drum and his brother's trumpet could be heard at Canal and Claiborne]. JR says the drummers were noisy when he played, that the people liked the noise.

JR mentions trumpet player "Blind Gilbert"; he mentions his brother and Louis Armstrong [with "Blind Gilbert" or competing with "Blind Gilbert"?], who played together in a band to "draw the crowd" for some function.

More description of JR's drums and accessories, and about his technique. "Why [or while?] my brother could play so good, I was considered as a man [who] held time like a clock." JR says that [Worthia] "Showboy" [Thomas], trombonist, can confirm that JR was the only man who could play the drums while sleeping; he would change rhythm or tempo with the band, even though he might sleep for two or three hours. JR was fired for sleeping on the job. JR tunes his bass drum to the pitch of the bass's G string; he got the idea from hearing the tympany played at the Palace Theater, where a lot of musicians went during the evening [i.e., afternoon?]; the drummer, perhaps named Stein, was one of the best white drummers JR ever heard. Emile Tosso, still living, was the leader of the band at the Palace.

JR was never a flashy drummer; he says Chinee Foster would sometimes throw a band off, because he would begin playing flashy

stuff; JR always played to support the band, never to make a name for himself.

JR first started his brother playing high notes; he tells about grinding his brother's mouthpiece flat [i.e., grinding the cushion flat?], so that the lip would stay on it; he says Louis Armstrong copied his brother in playing high notes, and that Armstrong's nickname, "Dipper", came from the way his mouthpiece was reshaped. [Check reference books for another story.RBA] JR's brother gave away the secret of his high note mouthpiece, which had been ground shallow, to some writers who interviewed him in an attempt to gain that secret. WR says mouthpieces are now [also] made shallow; JR agrees, but says that was not the case when his brother's mouthpiece was made. JR, who once played around with a clarinet, says his brother would try to play his trumpet as high as JR played the clarinet, and that he would file away at his mouthpiece until he could play high notes.

Buddy Petit was the first man in New Orleans to use his derby as a mute (JR also mentions Freddy Keppard and Manuel Perez, saying he knew all of them); JR noted the "wow" effect Petit could get, so he told his brother about it; his brother began using a derby for the effect, too, but the derby was soon broken. JR had used the halves of cocoanut shells to imitate the sound of horses's hooves, so he had his brother try that, to replace the derby. It worked. A year or so later, "here come the wa-wa mute" [i.e., a manufactured one?]. Chris Kelly then began using a toilet flusher as a mute when playing the blues.

JR's brother played clean and had a good tone; JR played nice, straight drums, what he considers "a standard style." JR says the trumpet should play the melody, with a few little runs here and there--not too much, though.

JR says rock-and-roll will die out soon, but jazz will live on as "it is a nice style dancing music."

JR's brother played as high as F above the staff, and with a clear tone. Zeb Leneries, playing clarinet with them then, would find the pitches on his clarinet and announce the name of the pitch. (JR thinks Zeb was living on Toledano Street at the time; Zeb, who died before JR's brother, had been in a Tennessee Veterans Hospital; when he came to New Orleans he began drinking again, against medical advice, and he died. Zeb died sometime before 1942, as JR was still playing at the time.)

JR used the cocoanut shells to imitate horses's hooves at the Miro Show, a silent movie house operated by a little Creole man named Arnold; when the movies were over, the band would play for dancing. The movie house was on Miro Street, near Onzaga or D'Abadie Streets. JR had to imitate a lot of sounds to accompany the silent movies.

JR began using the sock cymbal (high hat) shortly after he began playing at the Budweiser, in 1935.

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JR's brother was at one time locked up in the Waifs's (Jones) Home; [he and?] Louis Armstrong had a little band; there was [also?] a man called Professor Dave, [i.e., Peter Davis?] still living; "they used to go back there and [lesson?]." JR was trying to play clarinet then; he and Jimmy Brown and a trumpet player (not long dead) [1949?RBA], "Shots" [Madison], also took lessons "back there" [in the Waif's Home].

When JR began playing advertising jobs (an early job was for a show on Annette Street); horse-drawn furniture wagons were used to carry the bands. Later, when he began working for "Beansy" [Fauria] and Rickerfor [spelling?], at the Astoria-- "what they called the Tic Toc"--they used trucks. Talk of positions of the various instruments on the truck.

JR had no teacher on clarinet; he took some drum lessons from Floyd Casey, of St. Louis (RBA says he played with Dewey Jackson), who was playing then with Fate Marable; Casey was a wonderful drummer; he had a four-octave marimba. JR says he also took lessons on clarinet. JR discusses clarinet lessons. He had a good tone, as he always got an idea [about tone?] from Bechet and others.

Bechet played fife; JR's brother played paper-covered comb; JR made a drum of a cheesebox and the skin off the [beef] round; they rehearsed in a coffin shop owned by the father of Johnny, a friend of theirs. Bechet's first clarinet was given to him as a Christman present.

JOE RENE
II [of 4]--Digest--Retyped
April 7, 1960

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Sidney Bechet's first clarinet was a Christmas present; JR doesn't think Bechet ever took a lesson, as he couldn't read, but he could really play. (JR mentions Pete Lala's [movie] show, on Claiborne between Conti and St. Louis.) Bechet would walk from St. Bernard Avenue to Rexach's Bar at Saratoga and Gravier, to play his clarinet (he had a "C" clarinet at the time) for a ten-cent can of beer. [Compare Sidney Bechet, Treat It Gentle. Hill and Wang, New York 1960.] Rexach's was Bob Lyon's headquarters until later years, when he got a shoe shine stand on Rampart; Frankie Duson also hung out around Rexach's. Manuel Manetta had mentioned Lyons to WR. Manetta also played with [Kid Rena and?] JR; JR mentions Manetta's trick of playing two trumpets at once, saying he made a lot of money doing it; WR says Manetta also plays trumpet and trombone together. Manetta played piano with JR. When he left that band, "he would come there with his accordian; he hadpicked up accordian." JR took clarinet lessons from Manetta. JR's brother [Henry "Kid" Rena] never studied cornet, but he instructed [Tony] Almerico; Sharkey [Bonano], Kid's "ace buddy", who could read, would be able to tell if Kid studied with anyone. Kid's band played any jobs Sharkey's band couldn't handle; Sharkey's regular job was at the Tonti Social Club, Tonti between Dumaine and St. Ann; anytime Sharkey played away from it, Kid's band would play the Tonti. Kid would go to Sharkey's house to show him his style; JR says he thinks Sharkey is about the only one who plays like Kid now.

JR talks about his brother's alcoholism. JR would sometimes have to pay out money to musicians in the band, as Kid had a penchant for spending the deposit money he would get for jobs.

JR tells how Kid Rena won a cup in a music contest [against?] the Maple Leaf Band; Kid Rena climbed up a pole, got high up in the building, played "Taps", then began playing "Bugle Call Rag" and waving a tiny American flag; the contest was at the Gypsy Tea Room. JR tells of Kid Rena's band when they won a contest from [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin's Tuxedo Band as the Celestin band was reading and Kid Rena's band was "gutting"; although the crowd liked Celestin's drummer, [Abbey] "Chinee" [Foster] better than they liked JR (Chinee was flashier, but JR was pushing his band harder), Kid Rena's band won. JR says Zeb [Leneries, with Rena] was not much of a clarinet player, but their trombonist, Morris [French] was outstanding; Morris played a lot of glissandos. Rena's band also beat Kid Punch [Miller], [Kid] Ory and Jack Carey in contests.

Kid Rena had never had a trumpet until he began playing in Jones [Waifs's] Home; he began there as a bugle player, the same as Louis Armstrong. When two trumpet players were needed in the band at Jones Home, Rena and Armstrong were chosen. Kid Rena was one year younger than JR; he would be sixty-two years old now. He was about nine years old when he was put in Jones's Home; he had struck an Italian boy in an argument about a piece of watermelon;

the boy returned with his mother and other relatives, who beat JR, who was dressed like his brother, by mistake; JR's life was saved by two policemen who happened along. The band Kid Rena played in before he got his own [later] band was called Turkey and George; George was clarinetist Georgie Boyd, who lived at Gravier and Bolivar (his widow, Daisy, is probably still living near there), behind St. Joseph's Church, around where Willie Cornish lived. Personnel of the band: Boyd, clarinet; JR, drums; perhaps "Little" Chester [Zardis], bass; Sonny Thomas, guitar (later playing banjo with the Rena band); a trombone player; Kid Rena (known as Turkey or Turk), trumpet. The band played every Saturday night in a yard on Tonti, between Gravier and Perdido, for a Mr. Young; the time was during Prohibition, in 1918.

JR and his brother both worked for street peddlers when they were young; JR talks about peddlers cries, shouts, etc.

Paul Barnes was playing [saxophone?] in the band which worked at Young's; the song, "Eh, La Bas" was composed because Barnes would call Kid Rena with that phrase, and Kid Rena would answer in the same way, making up words as he came along to Barnes. [Compare Paul Barnes?].

JR mentions Buddy Petit, trumpet player, who would put piano sheet music on his music stand until he had learned the piece. Petit could read; he could play a lot of Scott Joplin's music [rags]. JR says Joplin music wouldn't be played on a "cheap" job [i.e., with a small band], that the music required eight or nine pieces, and that they [the band leaders] would have to hire people like [clarinetist Alphonse] Picou, who could play "all that stuff."

JR played with Sidney Bechet's brother, trombonist Dr. Leonard Bechet, but he didn't stay long in the band, as they wanted to play only while reading music; JR says nobody would hire a band like that, because they needed more "pep." [Apparently something a reading band couldn't provide--PRC].

RBA says Manuel Manetta, with whom he studied, says he taught Kid Rena; JR agrees; WR says Kid Rena had to learn to read wome so he could play for floor shows at one place he worked; JR agrees, says he recalls that. JR says Sharkey and Manetta helped Kid Rena a lot.

JR talks about Son Thomas, banjo player.

JR says some musicians, including himself and his brother's band, would get firemen to give them their old caps and uniforms; the bands would use them for uniforms, although they were quite heavy and hot. JR mentions a photograph of a band in firemen's uniforms: George Washington, trombone, Buddy Petit, trumpet, Johnny St. Cyr [guitar?], and Johnny Prudent (bass--not much of a player; never would learn to read). Dave Bailey (brother of "Duck Ernest" [Johnson]) was playing drums for the band in the photo. Bailey was always smiling; he is still the same to this day. Duck Ernest was a slicker; he would pay a man less that the job actually paid. RBA says he heard Bailey as the only drummer in a street band; he played bass drum; JR says Bailey doesn't need any more, that he doesn't need even a trumpet, that he's happy all the time anyway; Bailey can really make a person play, too.

"Black Benny" Williams was another good drummer (RBA says William's grave is near the grave of Danny Barker's grandfather, and that he found out Williams's last name from Barker). Black Benny was a terrible man for a while; he would hit anybody, fight anybody; he began being a gentleman when he was playing trap drums in the Black and Tan, next to the Lyric Theater. Black Benny even fought in Battle Royals [prize fighting] because he just liked to fight; a man called "Dirty Dog" and Black Benny would work together in the Battle Royals.

JR played with George Lewis; he tried to get him to learn to read; Lewis, however, could just naturally play. Lewis began playing on a fife; JR says that all the good clarinetists began playing on fifes, and that all the bad ones began on the clarinet. Sidney Bechet began playing on a fife; nobody would challenge him after he began playing; JR learned some fingerings and tricks for playing the fife by watching Bechet; JR thinks Bechet still uses some of his sliding fife fingerings on clarinet. JR says musicians of the older times were selfish, that they would try to hide their personal tricks from others, so that they would remain special; JR says musicians today will show their tricks, that they are more "hospitality."

JR tells how the band he worked in would get new tunes from records; there would be several brought to a rehearsal; they would be played through for the melody first; then the other instruments would figure out their parts.

JR says the tune that earned the most money was "Yes! We Have No Bananas."

Talk about Milneburg. The reason persons carrying bass drums or bass instruments had to have permits to ride the streetcars was this: Jimmy Brown, bass player with Manuel Perez, fell off a car and sued the company. The permits remove the possibility of suit from that source.

Johnny Brown, clarinetist, carried his lunch in a bucket, because "he wouldn't eat from nobody." Brown played with JR one time; JR tells about his bringing his food in a bucket, and of carrying food away in a sack he carried for the purpose. RBA thinks Brown is dead, having been burned to death in the country; Willie Parker told RBA about it. [Compare WP, reel ?]

End of Reel II

JOE RENE
III [of 4] --Digest--Retyped
April 7, 1960

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[Kid] Rena's Brass Band was not a "standard" band; they, like other bands, would get men together when they got a job. The standard bands were the Eureka Brass Band, [Henry] Allen [Sr.]'s, and [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin's, which was named the Tuxedo Brass Band, and in which Eddie Jackson, tuba player of great volume, played. Another bass player, [Edw?] Verrett, who lived on Calliope Street, played in the Eureka Brass Band. [Compare Soard's 1924.] Rena's band comprised: JR, snare drum; "Black Benny" [Williams], bass drum; Kid Rena, trumpet, and sometimes "Shots" [Madison on trumpet]; sometimes Jack Carey, trombone. They used anyone they could get. There was an old "Jewmaker" [i.e., Jamaican] who played alto horn; his name was Flowers.

JR played a couple of jobs with Celestin, substituting for [Abbey] :Chinee" [Foster] who was fired for drinking; JR worked with Celestin at the Gypsy Tea Room and at Audubon Park, places Rena's band had worked before. Celestin and Sidney Desvigne were the only ones around New Orleans who had big bands then.

JR remembers Johnson and Lincoln Parks; he mentions Buddy Bottley [spelling?], who made ascents in balloons from those places; some trumpet player played there; [John] Robichaux and his band played there; JR wasn't allowed to go, as Creoles didn't want their children in such places, but he would go outside the parks.

The first good dance bands JR remembers were those of Freddy Keppard, Manuel Perez and Buddy Petit; the Rena band came right behind [i.e., chronologically?] those bands--in fact, right behind Petit's band, because JR started playing music with Petit. Sam Morgan and Chris Kelly came behind Rena. Kid Rena was spotting with many bands when JR proposed that they make up a band of their own; at that time, bass players and drummers, and no one else, were band managers; because of Kid Rena's popularity, JR suggested they use his name for the band. JR says that after using the "Kid" part of the name, "here comes a gang of kids"--Kid Ory, Kid Punch [Miller], others. Jack Carey began calling himself "Kid."

Kid Rena had a lot of enemies, because he could outplay them; they would get him drunk so that they could beat him playing, especially at contests. There would be contests at the Pythian Temple; there were also Battle Royals, in which four bands would compete. All the aces--Rena, Sam Morgan, Chris Kelly--and their bands would be there. The Battle Royals were held just to draw a crowd--three and four thousand--, but there was never a decision made about the best band.

JR hasn't seen Kid Punch in about two years; Punch was sick for a while, but is well, and is playing again, says RBA.

Kid Rena would get anyone he could to make up his brass band; they used ten pieces, including saxophones. Kid Rena even had a banjo playing in a brass band one time. JR says Kid Rena would

JOE RENE
III [of 4]--Digest--Retyped
April 7, 1960

sometimes sell the services of a seven-piece band, but would show up with only six; when queried, he would say the snare drum was one and the bass drum was one, making two pieces. JR talks about sizes of brass bands; he says size doesn't matter much, as all the people want is plenty of rhythm. JR mentions the Bulls's Club and the Hobgoblins, saying they used to have parades, but not now. [Both are out of existence].

JR says the [metrical] length of a funeral determined the price of funeral bands in the older times; he believes that similar practices are in effect today, although prices are higher.

JR says he was instrumental in forming a musicians's union in New Orleans; he was distressed that "Black Benny" had to have a collection taken so that he could be buried, so he, "Big Eye Louis" Nelson and two others decided to organize a [beneficial] club for musicians. They invited interested persons to a meeting held next to the Black and Tan nightclub (owned by "Beansy" [Fauria]); they formed "that quorum" at the meeting; Celestin was the first president. The group held its first banquet at St. Katherine's Church hall. Although JR organized the group, and put money into it, he never held a position in it; he says he likes to stand back and watch the functioning of things he starts. JR's idea in forming the union was that when a musician died, the union members would furnish music and the funds to bury him, if he had no money, as he thought it a disgrace that someone had to be buried by the public. He comments on the size of

Black Benny's funeral, which was paid for by collection; funeral was seven blocks long; several lodges marched in it; motion pictures were taken of it. Benny was liked; the only thing JR and the other musicians didn't like about him was that when a fight started, he would jump out of the [band in the] parade and get into the fight; he would hit the fighters with a billy; he had a gun, too, and would use it if the fighters were too vicious. He would return to the parade when the fighters had been rendered peaceable. JR was really the grand marshall of Benny's funeral, but ["Red] Happy" [Bolton] heard about it, and wanted to get in it, too, so they marched along together, each carrying his own banner [or wearing his own sash?RBA]; the marshalls and band stopped at Galvez and Iberville, and the body was taken on to Hopes Graveyard for burial. The last song a band would play when it was coming back from a funeral was "Oh,] Didn't He Ramble?". Talk about the stabbing of Benny by the woman.

JR played for the funeral of Miss [Betsy] Coles, proprietor of lawn parties; he says he thinks it was the only funeral for a woman that had a band. He doesn't know why bands usually play funerals only for men; it is just the custom.

JR speaks of a dance hall that was on Liberty Street, near JR's church; JR was in the last band [Kid Rena's?] to ever play at the place. Steve Lewis, piano, played at the place once a week, although his regular job was playing with [A.J.] Piron, at

JOE RENE
III [of 4]--Digest--Retyped
April 7, 1960

17

Tranchina's [Restaurant]. Providence Hall, now a church, was at Liberty and Philip. A guitarist named Holmes had a place in the middle of the block [on Jackson, same block as JR's church?]; Holmes died some time ago; a woman playing guitar in JR;s church now has Holmes's guitar.

JR, out of the music business [for years], wants to set up a nice, Christian group, sort of a symphonic orchestra; already in the group are eight clarinets, three snare drummers, [and others?]. JR wants a bass bow; WR sold one to "Slow Drag" [Pavageau]. JR is also teaching a chorus; he has a good arranger for them; his name is Alexis Rouchon [spelling?], who plays saxophone. Rouchon played with [Kid Rena?] some, but he usually worked with bands less well-known; he was a good saxophone player, and a good arranger.

RBA mentions Leon and Otis Rene (one or both from across the lake), who wrote "[When It's] Sleepy Time Down South", among other numbers. JR doesn't know that he is related to them. JR mentions some relatives, some still in Mandeville [Louisiana], but most of whom have moved to California; their name is DeSalle; one is Denis [spelling?] DeSalle, a fine trumpet player who works with a big band; Denis comes to New Orleans occasionally, but JR hasn't seen him; Denis is a fine arranger, too. [Restrict
~~and [unclear]~~

RBA mentions [Clarence] "Little Dad" [Vincent, banjo and guitar], who is quite sick. JR is reminded of the first band he

played with, the Liberty Bell; personnel; Little Dad, banjo; Joseph Joseph, bass; JR, drums; Blunt [spelling?], violin. [Compare Clanence Vincent reel ?] JR is reminded by RBA that "Freddy Boo Boo" [Miller] was the trombone player with that band. JR tells of making a sign to advertise the band. He speaks of bass player Jake; another man, clarinetist Georgie Stewart [spelling?], who smoked Bull Durham tobacco (and worked with "Wooden Joe" [Nicholas] at one time and also with Johnny Prudent, is mentioned. "Freddy Boo Boo" was quick-tempered. JR says he himself was supposed to study to be an FBI man one time; there was a school at the Pythian Temple; pay was three dollars per day; Blunt was already working there; "they" wanted JR, because he was friendly and got along well with people. JR says he doesn't want enemies; he always wants friends; that is why he has nothing today.

JR got started playing drums in "tunks", where he worked with a piano player called "Bama", a "dopehead." Louis [Armstrong] used to play in "tunks", too. The boss of the place where JR' worked was named Jake; Jake bought drums for JR's use; JR paid Jake back at the rate of one dollar per week. JR tells of being talked talked into leaving Jake's, which was at Saratoga and Perdido.

End of Reel III

JOE RENE
IV [of 4]--Digest--Retyped
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Also present: William Russell,
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Paul R. Crawford

JR played in the "tunks", as did Louis Armstrong, who got his start playing in them, when he was living on Perdido and Liberty. Udell [Wilson?], pianist who worked in the tunks, is mentioned. In 1920, JR went to Alexandria [Louisiana] with "Dude Robertson" [actually, Frank Amacker], piano player; others in the band: Wesley Dimes [trumpet]--(mentioned often by (Clarence) "Dad" (Vincent) to RBA); August Roussell, trombone. There was no jazz in Alexandria in 1920; the band was a hit; JR speaks of a photo of himself which was displayed in that town; he was clowning, something he often did. JR had a lot of bells the--cowbells, etc.; he mentions the tune, "Ring Dem Bells."

JR has always loved music, even as a child. He thought he was going to be a violin player, but hearing others play other instruments changed his mind. JR liked concert music when he was growing up; he liked any music which had plenty of harmony--not any funny noises. He likes to hear the melody. JR's favorite band was Guy Lombardo, closely followed by Ted Lewis. JR played gut-bucket because that was what sold, but he preferred pretty music. JR says "Big Eye Louis" Nelson would not allow a lot of noise in the bands he played with.

JR's brother [Kid Rena] wouldn't play his good stuff when he recorded [about 1940] because he didn't want anybody learning his style and making money off it. JR complains of the deal they got from Heywood Broun [Jr.], promotor of the recording session.

JOE RENE
IV [of 4]--Digest--Retyped
April 7, 1960

Big Eye Louis Nelson and [Alphonse] Picou were the two clarinetists on the session. JR didn't like the style of the bass player, Albert Glenny. "Jim Crow" [Robinson], trombone, really played hard on the session in his own original style; JR says Robinson plays hard, no matter if there are hardly any people to hear. JR had a tendency to be lazy when playing for small crowds. Kid Rena liked to walk around on slow nights. A set for the band then comprised a fox trot, a slow drag and a waltz, then was repeated.

Willie Santiago was a pretty good guitar player, in about the same style as Louis Keppard. Guitar players of today are better than those of old, because there are more chords used today. Good guitars were made in the old days; "F" hole guitars are not as good as round hole guitars (WR says Johnny St. Cyr and "Fess" [Manuel Manetta] agree with that). The old time rhythm sections didn't read; the trumpet, the clarinet and the trombone players might read. (Joe Petit, very loud trombone player, with no teeth, couldn't read). The old time parade musicians often danced while playing, something the present-day ones don't do. [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin's Tuxedo Brass Band walked straight [i.e., no dancing], but they played a lot of hard marches, as it was written. The second line hung around the other bands, those containing JR and Louis Armstrong, among other; the others were gutbucket bands. JR played bass drum in parades only once or twice; he preferred snare drum.

When they [Kid Rena's brass band?] played funerals, they played sacred songs (e.g., "What A Friend We Have In Jesus") by

ear on the way to the cemetery. Various songs the Rena band played for funerals are mentioned; JR says they played "When The Saints Go Marching In" slowly on the way to the cemetery, and ragged it on the way back. The Eureka [Brass] Band and Celestin's band played the real stuff, carried their marches with them.

JR never played for a Catholic funeral; he thinks the reason is that the priests didn't want to take the time usually required for a funeral with music. JR doesn't claim that there weren't Catholic funerals with music. Kid Rena had no music as he was a Catholic; all the Rene family were Catholic [although JR is not now--see Reel I].

JR mentions social and pleasure club parades; he mentions the Jolly Boys, (RBA mentions the Zulus) and the Merry-go-round [Club]). JR likes to play for whites--more money, better food, etc. Talk about food.

JR never worked with Albert Warner, trombone, who was "dicty"; he worked mostly with [A. J.] Piron; there were some fellows around New Orleans who like their music straight, as written, no jazz.

Joe Oliver had a band when Kid Rena had his. Oliver was a powerful trumpet player, and good. JR is reminded of Jack Johnson [the prizefighter] by Oliver, as Oliver was also a big man.

Frankie Duson played valve trombone. JR says the use of valve trombones is coming back; the instrument is used in some big bands now. JR says various instruments come back into use because changes are needed now and then; the reason jazz went out

is because it became monotonous; rock and roll replaced it. JR says rock and roll has "a tough little swing in it, too, you know that? You can't get away from it, podnuh."

The brother of Morris French is Johnny French, who played tuba. Morris is in Laplace [Louisiana] now, says JR; JR does missionary work around that area. Morris played nice trombone, but has given up playing. JR would like to have Morris in church, so he could play trombone in JR's church band, as JR has only one trombone now, a woman from Houma, Louisiana. Most of the members of JR's church band are women; there are only three men in the band, all drummers. One other man, a saxophone player, is coming in from Missouri. JR wants to use old instruments more, such as alto horns; he wants to talk to [Elton? Howard?] Voorhies, who used to work at Werléin's, about getting altos, etc. JR doesn't have time to do much about old instruments or old music, as he is too busy working on his church, renovating the building.

JR played with Harrison Brazley, trombone player, who is dead now; he was a fine musician, one who could read, but he couldn't make up his mind about what he wanted to do for a living. He could play ratty music; he could play anything. He played with a lot of different bands, reading and faking.

JR played at banquets held by various societies on Monday. JR liked to sit by Johnny Prudent [bass?], who didn't like chicken;

Prudent would give JR all his chicken, and JR would give Prudent all his ham. The banquets would begin around twelve noon or one o'clock, and last until six o'clock. Banquets of that nature are not held anymore. Excursions are not held anymore, either; JR mentions going to Orange Grove [?] on Monday, as excursions [ended? originated?] there.

JR played on an excursion boat one time; their [Kid Rena's] band was hired to play with the regular band, Ed Allen's, which had replaced the Fate Marable band. RBA also mentions Dewey Jackson. JR took lessons from drummer Floyd Casey, who was playing in Allen's band at the time. The Rena band was hired one Sunday to play the all-day affair.

The last quadrille was played at Economy Hall and at Artisan Hall. [tape ends] [Written on box of original interview tape:] "quadrille went out with Manuel Perez and them about 1907 or 1908."

End of Reel IV

