

February 2, 1961 Also present: William Russell, Richard B. Allen

Interview recorded in the office of the Dream Room, 400 block of Bourbon Street, New Orleans, Louisiana

Francis Joseph Julian "Muggsy" Spanier was born November 9, 1906 on the near-Northside of Chicago, Illinois. MS's father was a concert pianist. His mother, from Ireland, played accordion. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~  
~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ MS's father was of French [origin?] and descent. MS understands that the father's great uncle ~~XX~~ or grandfather was director of the Paris Conservatory [of Music]. Reneé Spanier, a woman who has written a book, is a distant relation of MS; she too has been nicknamed "Muggsy." MS got the name when he went on a training trip with the New York Giants baseball team; ("I was torn between three loves: baseball, music and medicine."); <sup>he was fourteen years old at the time;</sup> MS's temperament was like that of the manager, [John J.] "Muggsy" McGraw, ~~XXX~~ so MS was given the name too.

MS began his musical life as a drummer in grammar school; his mother gave him a set of drums for Christmas. Although he <sup>was</sup> ~~XXX~~ already fooling ~~XXXXXX~~ around with the cornet, he didn't decide to make it his instrument until he was about ~~XXXX~~ eleven years old, when a friend took him to the Pekin [sp?], at 26th and State, to hear Joe "King" Oliver and his band; <sup>[Ed. Holtz ... be (the ...)]</sup> MS wasn't allowed in the place, but he could hear the band as he sat on the curb outside. RBA suggests that perhaps Paul Barbarin [drums] and Jimmie Noone [clarinet] were in Oliver's band at the time;

MS says Louis Armstrong wasn't in it then.

WR mentions seeing a picture of MS playing cornet in a military band; MS says he played cornet and bass drum in the band of a military school which he attended; the school was located in Marysville, just outside ~~XX~~ Chicago.

MS prefers cornet to trumpet because he likes the cornet tone better. ~~MS says that cornet men get good tones from trumpets~~ MS says Billy Butterfield, Yank Lawson and others get good tones from trumpets, but he himself prefers cornet. MS says conductor Fritz Reiner, in New York to perform, would go to hear MS play; he invited MS to rehearse with the symphony orchestra; he admired MS's big tone on cornet.

Joe Oliver led the band in the bleachers when MS worked out with the Chicago White Sox baseball team; Oliver could be heard all over the stadium. MS was a pitcher. MS played baseball until 1949, when he injured his arm. He never played for the team from Nick's [night club in Greenwich Village, NYC], as they played softball. He pitched about six innings for bandleader Harry James' baseball team against the high school champions of New York City; the high schoolers won, but by a very close score.

Joe Oliver, says MS, stuck close to the melody of a tune; he played

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few notes, and with good rhythm; he was a "feeder," helping the others  
in the band; MS says he too is a "feeder." MS still uses a mute ~~XXXX~~<sup>nickol</sup>  
Oliver gave him. MS uses a large-bore cornet with a deep, large-bore  
mouthpiece.

MS was self-taught at first on cornet; he later studied to learn  
how to read music. He was holding down a job three months after he  
began trying to learn to play cornet. He never studied with Joe Oliver,  
except by listening to his playing. ~~THE~~ One of the first bands MS ever  
worked in included George Brunis [trombone], Elmer Schöpel [piano] and  
*Frank Snyder (St. Louis 4/1/75)*  
Ralph Schneider, drums; the job was at Blatz Palm Gardens on North  
Avenue; the time was prior to the engagement of the band [New Orleans  
Rhythm Kings?] at Friar's Inn. Brunis had ~~XXXX~~ not been in Chicago long  
at the time. The band later had Paul Mares on trumpet and Leon Roppolo  
on clarinet. It was a fine band; their recordings don't do them justice.  
MS recorded about the same time for the same company, Gennett, with his  
Bucktown Five; they were his first recordings. Others in the band: Volly  
DeFaut [clarinet?], Mel Stitzel [piano], Marvin Saxbe, guitar and banjo,  
and a trombonist.

MS liked both the New Orleans Rhythm Kings and Joe Oliver's band,  
but he preferred Oliver's band. Mares had a good tone and played *in a*



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MS says Johnny Dodds, Joe Oliver and himself were or are afraid of  
microphones. <sup>WR says "I don't either"</sup> WR says Rod Cless, clarinetist with MS on the Bluebird  
recordings, studied informally with Johnny Dodds <sup>(WR thinks)</sup> in Dodds' home. MS  
said many young musicians listened to the bands in Chicago at the  
time; there were many good bands then; Freddy Keppard and Jimmie Noone  
were playing; Zutty [Singleton] ~~X~~ "was in his prime; Sid Catlett was  
~~X~~ just coming up then." MS liked Keppard; Keppard had a style  
different from the ~~other New Orleansians~~ <sup>Oliver and Armstrong</sup>; he used a derby over his horn.  
MS ~~XXXXX~~ first heard Keppard in a place at 35th and Prairie; the ~~XXX~~  
others in the band were: Noone [clarinet]; Teddy Weatherford, piano;

(MS thinks) Tubby Hall, drums. That band began playing about 1 [A. M.]  
o'clock. <sup>MS refers to the lack of music now in New Orleans [1961].</sup>

3:14 Tommy Ladnier played ~~XX~~ in ~~M~~ a style similar to Joe Oliver; Ladnier  
replaced Armstrong with Oliver. WR says some ~~XXX~~ Paramount [recordings]  
ads called Ladnier "The Praying Trumpet;" MS says Ladnier got that  
style, including the use of a plunger mute, from Oliver. <sup>[see above on Oliver's mute]</sup> Ladnier had  
a good tone. <sup>but not so big as Oliver's</sup>

Trumpeter Natty Dominique also had a good tone.

Jimmie Noone "was a wonderful clarinet player;" he got a good tone  
and had good technique; "he could really swing."

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MS says recording directors weren't particularly concerned about how they recorded jazz bands, if at all, in the old days; he says the old bands sounded much better in person than on records. He says that if the Oliver band as he heard it could be recorded in stereo today, "it would be a sensation."

*Mokey doesn't remember Gussie Mueller*

MS worked with Arnold Loyocano in Sig Meyer's band, "one of the few swing bands of that era in Chicago." <sup>[Does he mean big band with hot soloists? BBA]</sup> Volly DeFaut was also in that band. <sup>sort of Roppolo style</sup>

[Irving] Fazola, <sup>[clarinet]</sup> who recorded with MS in the early 1940's, <sup>"very much with"</sup> compared favorably to Leon Roppolo; MS thinks Fazola had a better tone and was a better musician. <sup>He knew "his chords and everything"</sup>

MS studied with Eddie <sup>Llewellyn</sup> [L. ... ?] of the Chicago Symphony, with [Noah ?] Taratino, who played first trumpet with the [Chicago?] Opera, and with [Max?] Schlossberg in New York.

Georg Brunis never had to learn to read because he had such a good ear. He was easy to get along with. WR says Brunis said he learned all his trick trombone playing from Henry Brunies, who played for a short time <sup>at</sup> ~~with~~ the Friar's Inn, <sup>band</sup> <sup>MS doesn't remember Henry;</sup> <sup>[Ccf. discographies.]</sup> MS does remember Merritt Brunies from the same band; Merritt still plays in Biloxi [Mississippi], says WR.

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