

WILLIAM RUSSELL
Reel I--Digest--Retyped
September 4, 1962

Also present: William R. Hogan,
Paul R. Crawford

First Proofreading: Alma D. Williams

In preparing for Jazzmen, Russell interviewed many people who are now no longer available for interviews for the Jazz Archive. One was George Baquet, whom Russell interviewed in Philadelphia on December 15, 1940, when Russell was moving to Pittsburgh. Baquet was playing at Wilson's Cafe about 51st [street] and Walnut. In front of the restaurant was a sign advertising George Baquet's orchestra, spelled "Bakay" because, as George told him, people had such difficulty pronouncing the French or Creole spelling. Bunk Johnson's widow claims to be a member of the Baquet family but spells it entirely differently. His notes on Baquet were written later and are rather sketchy. [He'll send them later; ^{by B. Reid} to remind him.]

About 1943, Russell also obtained notes on Baquet from John Reid, who got them before 1941 in Philadelphia when Reid was connected with RCA. Reid was also a Jelly [Roll Morton] fan and got some of the unissued masters from Victor files, some of which were issued by New York "bootleggers" like Sam Meltzer or [Dante] Bolletino. These men were called "bootleggers" because they sort of pirated the records. They would issue them on all sorts of labels like "Biltmore" or "British Rhythm Society," one was even called the "Jolly Roger." Sometimes, Victor would even press them, not realizing they had indirectly stolen Victor rights, taken the records off and copied them, and were then issuing them on another label.

Reid and his wife, Mary Karoly Reid, were good friends of Sidney Bechet and arranged Sidney's recording dates for Victor. People called Reid Sidney's unofficial manager. On vacations, they would travel around to hear Sidney play. Some summers, he played at Camp Unity, which had the reputation of being a communist camp or at least a left-wing camp. Not that Sidney was a communist or even

cared about politics, but he would play there a month or two in the summer. John Reid recorded some of these sessions on the job and also recorded a Baquet-Bechet duet that Russell will send to the Archive. Russell thinks it was two clarinets or it might have been sax. ⁵ At the time Russell heard Baquet, he was playing tenor sax with a small four- or five-piece band, nothing exciting.

Bechet gave Baquet one of his old clarinets when he thought he couldn't play any more because his teeth were so bad. Sidney's brother, Dr. Leonard Bechet, later fixed them up for him, and he could play again. One of Bechet's clarinets has been given to the ^{Down} jazz museum.

When Russell saw Baquet, he looked like a dignified, retired businessman, very light, dignified, and healthy. Later, he saw him when Bunk [Johnson] went to Philadelphia, when Baquet was on the way out, and he had gotten thin and sick. About 1949, Baquet came back to New Orleans and died within a year or so. It was rumored that his sister had a restaurant or saloon on South Rampart, but Russell couldn't locate her when he looked for her last year. He did contact a distant cousin of Baquet's, George Henderson's wife, who gave him some information. [Fred] Ramsey had a good interview with Baquet, published in Down Beat in the early forties, which checked closely with Russell's information. Russell didn't contact Baquet before Jazzmen was published, but he had heard rumors that he was in Philadelphia. He had left the Creole Band before [Freddy] Keppard came and Big Eye [Louis Nelson Delisle] took his place. [Compare p. 6-7 below.] There are many stories about why he left. One is that there was a big disagreement, and some of the musicians were left standing at the railroad station and the others just walked off. Another story about Baquet's leaving, that has been repeated so often

it is probably true was that the band was traveling with a stage show called something like "Town Topics." Baquet was supposedly Trixie Friganza's boyfriend. (Russell has notes on her life too.) She locked Baquet in her room to keep him from leaving her, so that's when they sent for Big Eye.

George's brother, Achille Baquet, passed for white for years. As early as 1937 when Russell was in California, a friend of his named Campbell Holmes [?], who worked for Tempo magazine (a West Coast magazine which later sold out to Downbeat), tried to interview Achille Baquet for publication, but he wouldn't talk to him. Achille was a member of the white local, and played with Jimmy Durante in New York. He also recorded for Gennett [as Original New Orleans Jazz Band]. They had a colored local in California, too, that finally combined with the white local about ten years ago. [Manuel] Manetta met Achille on Canal Street one day, and Achille told him he just liked it better that way. Some Negroes, like Bunk Johnson, would be offended at this.

Barney Bigard, a clarinetist with Duke Ellington, also passed for white sometimes. He wasn't trying to deny his family or anything (like Bill Johnson might do), but he wanted to join the white local because they got better movie jobs. (Barney's brother, Alex Bigard, lives in New Orleans and was quite a bit darker than Barney.) Barney did get some movie jobs as a member of the colored local, but it was easier for a member of the white local. An article came out in Downbeat that Barney Bigard, when he was trying to join the white local, ^{had} said he wasn't Negro but French and had just played with Ellington because they had hired him. He did work with some white bands in San Francisco; Freddie Slack was one of them. Russell's friend, Bill Colburn, showed Bunk Johnson the story about Bigard and

asked if it were true Bigard wasn't a Negro. Bunk got mad and said, "No, he's not a Negro; he's a goddamned nigger!" Bunk was very black and quite proud of his color. He couldn't understand why anyone would want to pass for white. He'd say he's rather be as black as that stove than as white as that sink and he meant it.

There were several others that passed sometimes, like [Manuel] Manetta, who was quite light. One time Russell and Manetta went to the [New Orleans] Jazz Club at the Roosevelt Hotel, and nobody said anything.

Going back to Trixie Friganza, a note in the St. Louis paper reported her death in Pasadena, California, at the age of 78 on November 29, 1949. They called her an old "vaudeville trouper" and WR says she was approximately 11 years older than George Baquet.

Russell will have to send his Johnny Dodds notes from Missouri. In 1936, when Russell was looking for him in Chicago, all he knew about him was that he had been on some of the Jelly Roll [Morton] records and especially Louis [Armstrong]'s Hot Five. You couldn't miss Dodds's name when Louis called out all the names on the "Gut Bucket Blues." In 1936, Johnny Dodds was playing at the One Cent Club at Roger Park Elevated Station, the end of the line in the west part of Chicago. It was called the One Cent Club because it was during the depression and you could buy one drink at the regular price and the second drink for 1¢. The musicians were dressed in big blue silk blouses with long, full sleeves, sort of like clowns although they weren't trying to make them into clowns. The drummer was probably Tubby Hall, and the pianist was named Alexander, but not Charlie Alexander, who played some of the early records. When Russell told Johnny he had some of Johnny's old records, Johnny played "High Society" to see if Russell could recognize it. Russell says that's a

piece anybody ought to know, although they didn't play it then as much as they do now. Now, they play it as often as "When the Saints Go Marching In," which Bunk used to get so sick of playing in response to several requests a night when he was in New York.

(Russell wanted to get Johnny Wiggs talking about different styles they used to play pieces in and dances when he talked to him a year or so ago.) Russell says that one characteristic of New Orleans bands was that they played almost everything twice. Fifteen years ago when Bunk or George Lewis played at dances, if people would clap at all, they would play the piece over again, usually a little shorter the second time. They still do it, even at Preservation Hall.

In New York, Louis [Armstrong] had made a record of "Saints" about 1937 or 1938; however, it started getting popular when Bunk recorded it and was playing it maybe six or seven times a night, so the other bands started recording it too. Dr. Hogan says that he has heard "Saints" was a white religious piece, too, but Russell has not heard that before. The oldest recording of it Russell heard was a sacred quartet, not very jazzy, on the Paramount label.

To Russell, Johnny Dodds was a famous musician. At that time Benny Goodman was enjoying his first big wave of popularity, and "swing" was just coming on. Goodman had made his big hit at the Palladium in California, he was starting to make records for Victor, and that summer had become known as the "world's greatest clarinetist." Maybe Johnny Dodds got the idea from that because the hand-printed sign in front of where he was working advertised Johnny Dodds as the "world's greatest clarinetist." This particular job wasn't a union job; it was a \$3 a night job. He might have belonged to the union because he made some records in 1938, but all the time Russell knew

him in New York [WR means Chicago. RBA] he wasn't playing union jobs. During the depression, they would play for anything they could get, even a bag of food.

Russell was an avid record collector, and took a big stack of records to Dodds' house including some [King] Oliver Columbia records, which he had picked up in Buffalo, New York, and which definitely had Jimmie Noone on them, according to later information. He played them for Johnny, and they talked about who else was in the band. On some of the Oliver records, the bass player has never been established, whether it was Bill Johnson on bass or a bass sax played by someone named [Charlie "Hooks"] Jackson. The bass below middle C didn't record well in those days, and Bill Johnson sometimes played banjo.

When they got to the Columbia records, with songs like "Camp Meeting Blues" and "New Orleans Stomp," Johnny Dodds said it wasn't him on clarinet, but wouldn't confirm if it was Jimmie Noone or somebody else. About the same time, around 1937 or 1938, Russell also saw Jimmie Noone. He was always fat and not very tall, weighed about 250 and always "starving." He had a piano and three or four players but never a really organized group except one time Russell heard him in Chicago when he had an eight to ten-piece orchestra playing floor shows. Later, Noone played with [Kid] Ory and made some radio appearances for Orson Welles in Los Angeles in the only real New Orleans type band he played with for many years. It included Mutt Carey and Zutty Singleton, drummer.

Norwood ["Gigi"] Williams had been guitar player with the Original Creole Band. They left New Orleans around 1914, but according to some books, including Jazzmen, they left in 1912. Dink

and Bill Johnson had a little trio first in Los Angeles, but pictures of the entire band including [Freddy] Keppard were probably taken around 1914. If someone in Los Angeles would check the newspapers, we could find out for certain because they played for prize fights there. The band also included George Baquet. Russell says they were probably playing the same style of music then as they did in the twenties because styles didn't change very rapidly. We don't have any of their records; the Original Dixieland [Jazz] Band was the first to record. They [the old New Orleans musicians] always called their music "ragtime." In [H. O.] Brunn's book, Nick LaRocca emphasized the fact that they [The Original Dixieland Jazz Band] were the first to use the word "jazz." Russell says this doesn't mean the colored people were necessarily the first to play jazz because Papa Laine and others played the same tunes like "Tiger Rag."

Achille Baquet, who played with Papa Laine in New Orleans (Papa Laine had two or three so-called colored musicians who were very light), started passing for white here. He also played with Happy Schilling, the trombone player, with whom we have a good interview arranged by Johnny Wiggs. Happy used to laugh about his "black and white" orchestra. Both Schilling and Laine implied that [Achille] Baquet was a good arranger and composer and might have written some of the tunes. That might have been their first experience with "Tiger Rag." Neither band bothered much with music, but Achille could read music. Both Papa and Mama Laine laughed at the idea of Nick LaRocca writing any of those tunes, as they had been playing them quite a while. Papa Laine said he might take LaRocca on a job and pay him the same as the others, implying they paid him even though he didn't play very well. They didn't mean to

downgrade him, but there was no love lost between them when LaRocca started claiming credit for starting jazz and some of the tunes. This especially made Mama Laine mad.

So both white and colored bands must have been playing at least as "jazzy" as the Original Dixieland [Jazz] Band. Russell says Nick LaRocca's only point is that they first used the word "jazz" on the records and before that the bands were called ragtime bands. Therefore, LaRocca claims he originated jazz, but Russell doubts that, and there is no evidence on records to prove it. They did play ragtime music on sheet music, and there were a few blues published before the Original Dixieland Band. [W. C.] Handy had published a few blues that weren't original with him either. You might say Handy "stole" more blues than LaRocca did, but somebody had to publish them or they would have been lost,

In 1939 Russell learned from Bud Scott ^{that} "GiGi" Williams was living in Watts, California, a big Negro settlement with several [musicians?] from New Orleans. Zue Robertson lived nearby, and Jelly [Roll Morton] had worked there at Leake's Lake, as mentioned previously. Jelly's godmother, who was supposed to be mixed up in voodoo, also lived there, but Russell never talked to her. Williams was working at a filling station at that time. He had a picture of the Original Creole Band that was in better condition than the one from Bill Johnson published in Jazzmen. There was no date on Williams's picture. Bill's was dated 1912, but as Russell said, this is the date he thinks Dink and Bill Johnson had their string trio in California and then sent for [George] Baquet later. Williams was enthusiastic about Buddy Bolden, remembered his "Take It Away" [i.e., "Buddy Bolden's Blues."]. Russell played Jelly Roll Morton's rendition of it, which he called "Buddy Bolden's

Blues" for him. Williams had been a member of the Bolden Troubadours, whom he implied had traveled, maybe as part of a show, but we have no other information on that. Williams said Bolden had started playing in 1890 and played in Audubon Park. Along with Ory, Bud Scott, and Mutt, the group that were out there, he confirmed the story that Bolden got his jazz from hearing spirituals at church. He said it was the Baptist Church where the "Shouts" were performed. The Shouts were sometimes called "Ring Shouts," where they would even dance around in rings, not necessarily here [in New Orleans], even over in the Carolinas and Georgia and all through the South. It was rather a lively type, not the slow type of spiritual, like "Go Down Moses," but the jumping type that Mahalia [Jackson] calls gospel music today. It was at the Baptist Church where the "Shouts" were performed so energetically the church became nicknamed the "Gymnasium."

This reminds Mr. Russell that in the years around 1940, when he was out there, there was a church in Los Angeles in which they used to dance so much, they knocked it off its foundation. One of the musicians told Mr. Russell this, and another friend, Adrian Tucker, confirmed the story.

We have never been able to locate or identify the church where Bolden went, the one known as the "Gymnasium" here.

Williams mentioned the tune, "I'm Going When Jesus Calls Me," as one that inspired Bolden. Mr. Russell does not remember ever hearing this tune.

Williams told Mr. Russell what a powerful and expressive cornet Bolden was, and how jazzy he was. Compared to Louis [Armstrong], who might be regarded as a great novelty player, Bolden really played jazz. A lot of the old-timers think that Louis played a lot of

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END OF REEL I

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A lot of the Negroes down here are crazy about Louis [Armstrong], try to imitate him, yet some of the old-timers will say he really plays novelty music, it's not really good jazz. All the young record collectors, especially the ones from England, won't listen to a Louis record. You can't even get them to go to hear Louis. They say he's just a showman, a movie actor. Mr. Russell disagrees, thinks that Louis has some wonderful stuff yet, including his lip. Johnny Wiggs will say that [that he has some wonderful stuff yet. RBA] on some of the tapes we have. Usually the young trumpet players here idolize him too much; he has probably ruined them more than he has helped them. Aside from that, certain of the old-timers think he has gone off on a tangent, is playing too many notes, although he plays some things so simply he sounds like Bunk [Johnson], just picks out three or four notes out of a tune and hits away on those. He really simplifies the tune. This is what Russell's teacher, Arnold Schönberg, used to call reducing a tune, reduction rather than elaboration of the melody. Louis still does this.

When Mr. Russell was interviewing Norwood "GiGi" Williams at a little filling station, Williams' wife was present too. She didn't have much to say but did confirm things and get excited about the old-time musicians and old times too when they talked. Mr. Russell thinks she must have come from here.

Williams told a little of the history of the Original Creole Band. Williams, the guitar player, and the Johnsons--Bill Johnson, the bass player, and Dink Johnson, who played piano--played in some of the houses [of prostitution? R.B.A.] around in different places, maybe not so much in New Orleans as in Biloxi [Mississippi]. He [Dink] also

took up drums, and later on, clarinet. They had a string band in Los Angeles.

String band means dance band, as opposed to brass band. Percy Humphrey uses the term this way too. Someone was talking with Percy Humphrey about a job last summer, and Percy asked, "Do you want the brass band or the string band?" By string band he meant his dance band, in which he himself plays trumpet, and he uses Sweet Emma, Jim Robinson, his brother Willie on clarinet. Anything that uses a banjo, guitar, or string bass is a string band. Manetta speaks of a string band as opposed to a brass band, meaning the regular six- or seven-piece lineup of a dance band.

However, in this case, Russell thinks Williams meant a string trio, with the Johnsons and Norwood Williams. A trio like this would have been used at Tom Anderson's. They also used mandolin quite a bit in those days. Williams's trio played at prize fights. Pantages, who had a vaudeville circuit, heard them, and had them enlarge their trio (or band) by sending for [Freddy] Keppard and [Eddie] Vinson, trombone, from New Orleans. Harry Webber booked them--Webber must have been the booking agent. They went on to New York to appear with Trixie Friganza in J. J. Schubert's Town Topics at the Winter Garden. Williams mentioned something about Baquet's scandal with Trixie. (This is one of the fellows Mr. Russell was telling about.) But when he saw Mr. Russell taking notes, he quickly said, "Of course, you can't print that," and sort of shut up on the subject. It wasn't any special scandal, just that business of locking him in the room.

The Creole band also played on 125th Street at the Montmartre Café. This would have been in the 1912-1920 period, probably before 1918. Some of the band wasn't so reliable. Norwood was about the only one who didn't drink a lot, had more common sense, they implied,

took care of his money, ^{and} attended to be sort of business manager of the band, although Bill Johnson was listed as manager on a business card that was printed for the band, [see Jazzmen]. Williams claims he finally got sick of the job of trying to keep them all in line. Keppard would probably have been quite a problem. One time when Keppard and most of the others, or some of the others, failed to show up once in Boston, possibly at a railroad station, he got disgusted and came on back to Los Angeles and opened a filling station. Later they did send for Big Eye [Louis Nelson] and kept going. He [Williams] had saved a lot of his money and used that to open a filling station. At that time, perhaps for the last year, Big Eye Louis had replaced Baquet already by that time.

When Mr. Russell mentioned to the Williamses that Big Eye was quite hard up at present, they said that there was no reason for it, that he had made plenty of money with the Creole Band. The last time they had seen Big Eye, he had had \$1,000. Of course, at that time-- it was in the Depression yet--\$1,000 was a lot of money.

Among the tunes the Creole Band played, Gigi Williams mentioned that they used to jazz up "On, Wisconsin," a college song. Williams still had his old guitar from the Creole [Band] days and brought it out to show WR.

A couple of years later, remembering this interview, Mr. Russell wrote down some more notes:

Norwood Williams had to take care of all the business for the Creole Band while the others spent all their money every time they would hit New York or the larger cities. Sometimes they would have a "split week," though, like Peoria, Illinois. He [Williams] said they [rest of the Creole Band] would spend it [their money] for diamonds, women, and drank a lot of course.

Keppard was the greatest trumpet player Williams ever heard, although he talked a lot about [Buddy] Bolden, too, but at this particular time he thought that Keppard--such as Jelly [Roll Morton] said too, that Keppard was greater than Armstrong. Of course that could be a question of opinion. Even the little that you can hear of Keppard on the records, he must have been terrific.

When they were kids in New Orleans, GiGi Williams played with King Oliver and some drummer he mentioned, whom WR could not remember. Williams also played a musical bow. [Cf. Jimmy Driftwood, Victor 12" LP, LPM-1635.] WR is not sure what this is, but this was ^{when} they were little kids; it was probably something like an Indian bow and arrow, in which they would stretch the bow out and pluck on it, something like Dick Allen's tub-a-phone, such as used in the skiffle bands. (Digression on RBA's ability to play tub-a-phone ^{and} trombone.) Joe Oliver played a conch horn. WR has one that Harry Souchon brought back from the West Indies. WR has been wondering whether to give it to the [New Orleans] Jazz Museum. They cut off the little point on one end, make a mouthpiece. You can blow on it, maybe make a bugle call. You get a powerful tone. These conch horns are used in the West Indies, even with the music in Haiti. They may be able to hit only one or two notes on it, but they get rhythmic effects out of it. Joe would blow that, and Williams would play the musical bow. WR says he should have questioned Williams further about these "skiffle" instruments. These things have been used in other parts of the world, in primitive countries. This is not to say that New Orleans music was primitive--it was pretty highly developed; the rest of the country had to copy it. The bow was not a violin bow played on a saw; WR believes it was some kind of plucking instrument.

GiGi Williams said Bolden played before the Spanish-American War. He said the name of the church discussed above was the First Baptist Church. WR thinks it was in the uptown, Jackson Avenue area near where he lived. Bolden always lived around First Street. It was just simple swing. ^[Williams said] Bolden was the actual father of Louis Armstrong, although there are also rumors that Bunk [Johnson] was his actual father; but Russell would doubt all those stories. In Louis Armstrong's book, Louis talks about his father as being a turpentine maker.

Russell played some records for GiGi Williams. Williams thought the tempo of Jelly [Roll Morton]'s Bluebird record of [Buddy] Bolden's "I thought I Heard Buddy Bolden Play" was too slow, which Russell thinks is surprising. Williams also mentioned Bolden might have had another theme song. It might have been "Don't Go 'Way, Nobody," although Williams didn't say, or at least it's not in Russell's notes. The Bluebird records were orchestra records that Jelly made in his last session for Victor. He had about an eight-piece band, including Albert Nicholas [clarinet only] and Sidney Bechet, both soprano sax [and clarinet. RBA.]; Zutty [Singleton] ^{was} on drums. Steve Smith had arranged that with Victor at the time Jazzmen came out, probably to get publicity. Zutty was a particular friend of Steve Smith's. Smith wanted Zutty to be leader, but Zutty didn't want to be leader with Jelly there, which is understandable when you know Jelly, his reputation as well as his ability.

Drummers don't make ideal leaders anyway. As Baby Dodds said, how is a drummer going to lead a band if something goes wrong and get things moving on if someone doesn't know the tune or something?

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They think of the trumpet as being the leader although they'll admit that the trombone, clarinet, or even piano can lead a band. But the old-timers here don't like having a member of the rhythm section lead. Dr. Hogan mentions that on a record Russell made where Baby Dodds talks about the funeral parades, he gives the drummer high credit for leading in that case. Russell says Dodds thought the drummer shouldn't lead the band, but he could run the band, make them play loud or soft, fast or slow. Those old-time drummers would hold their tempo, too, rather than speed it up like half of them do now. He was proud of the fact that a drummer could wreck the band, especially in a brass band where the rest stop playing and the snare drummer plays for the parade a lot.

Getting back to Norwood Williams, he said the Creole Band used no drum or piano. There was a drum at least part of the time when Dink Johnson played with them. Russell refers to the picture [in Jazzman] which has a drum in it and was probably taken in Los Angeles. Russell has about fifty pages of notes on Dink Johnson but no taped interviews with him, as tape recorders were just getting started in those days around 1947. Dink is in the picture but he probably didn't travel with the band to the east or hardly at all. The average historian or jazz fan thinks Dink was all over the country with them, but Russell doesn't think he followed the circuit with them.

Williams said [Freddy] Keppard read a little, but only [George] Baquet and [Jimmy] Palao "Spriggs," the violinist, really read. Keppard often used a mute, usually a derby hat. The band called Williams "GiGi." He left the band in Portland, Maine, or Boston, early in 1917.

Palao was originally from Algiers. Manetta gave us some more information on him. He had been raised by an aunt named Spriggs, so many called him Jimmy "Spriggs," but his real name was Palao. It's spelled out on the Creole Band's business card.

Russell interviewed C. Alvin "Zue" Robertson in California when Russell was going to the University of California [in Los Angeles?] on February 7, 1940, at his [Robertson's] sister's home. She was one of the McNeil's of the vaudeville team of McNeil and McNeil, Rhodier McNeil and John McNeil. They lived on Alabama Street in Watts, California, and Zue lived near there. He always came to his sister's when Russell talked to him. WR saw him two or three times. At that time in 1940, Russell's notes show Zue was 42 years old, but he told Russell another time he was born March 7, 1891, in New Orleans, which would have made him 48 in 1940. He started piano when he was five and was taught by his brother, Philip [Robertson], and a lady, possibly named Mary or Frances. He took up trombone when he was 13 or 14 and was taught by a cousin, Baptiste Delisle, whom he said deserved credit for making him. Louis Dumaine told Russell that Baptiste Delisle was committed to an insane asylum by some of his folks although he probably wasn't really insane. He finally got out. According to the old timers, he must have been an exceptional musician and a very good trombonist.

Zue Robertson was Bunk [Johnson]'s favorite trombonist, not only just in playing trombone, but he was a fine musician too, a good reader. He had all sorts of technique. He could play brass bands. ^{Disc} He recorded a special solo with Conway's band (Russell says check Bunk's letters), a number called "Slidus Trombonus." [Cf. discographies.] He told Dave Stuart, or maybe his sister told Russell, that he had made

several records with some of the big white brass bands. This number featured him. Russell found the record, a 1916 or 1917 period record.

It's not exactly jazz; it has a whole set of trombone solos, smears, ^{includes} "Rastus Trombone." Mr. Crawford says [Henry] Fillmore wrote some.

Russell played it for Bunk Johnson, who was sure it was Zue Robertson. It sounded exactly like him. Dave Stuart found a record of it and Gene Williams found one or two of them in New York. Russell traded for one. His had a bump on it. He thinks it's in Missouri now, and he'll copy it for the Archive.

The first band Zue Robertson played with as sort of a semi-professional was called the Cherry Blossom Band with Paul Wilson, clarinet; Jimmy Strode, cornet; Bunk told Russell about a Strode that played clarinet but it turned out to be a George Stuart that played with one of the Magnolia [or Camellia? R.B.A.] Bands. There's a picture of him we got from George Henderson, a drummer, whose wife is related to George Baquet -- and Alphonse on violin; C[ornelius?] Tillman as drummer. Bunk also mentioned Tillman, who might have played with Bolden. There was also a guitar in the band. Since New Orleans [bands] didn't use pianists at that time, Russell was impressed by the fact they had a guitar. It was usually a seven-piece band.

We have a picture of the Kit Carson Wild West Show taken around 1910 which Dave Stuart got after Zue died around 1941. The Archive had already copied this. Zue claimed he was in the band when Pete Lala's Cabaret first opened, about 1912 or 1913. At that time, the band had Laurence Duhe, with whom we have an interview; Jean Vigne on drums; Zue; and Joe Oliver and (Ernest?) Valtau ^{no doubt Ferdinand Valtau}, one of the better violinists Johnny St. Cyr and Manetta mention in their interviews. The pianist was Pete [Berdelr?]. It could have been a famous

pianist called Black Pete who worked in the district and was mentioned by Big Eye Louis. Later, Buddy Christian was the pianist. Russell has an interview with him for Jazzmen which is being photostatted by Archive. [Xerox copy made.] After playing with this band for about six months, Zue went on the road. He wanted to see the world and was famous for traveling with all sorts of shows and theaters. He later played organ in theaters. (he also played piano well). In the Chicago Defender notes, which are being photostatted [copied by Xerox], there was a note from Zue and his wife Jessie from North Carolina or South Carolina where they were playing organ in a theater. cap

Later, Zue played with [John] Robichaux and the Olympia Band with Freddy Keppard. In 1917 and 1919 he was at the Deluxe Cafe in Chicago, 35th and State Street, with Keppard, Walter Brundy, Lawrence Duhé. Gilbert "Bab" Frank played piccolo. There were two Frank brothers; the other played violin, but little is known about them. Benny Turner was on piano. ^[Compare Benny Turner interview.] Turner is still in Algiers and made records last year with Peter Bocage on Riverside. (WR says we should get interview.) Zue also played with Jelly Roll Morton around 1922, 1923, and part of 1924. Zue said he made records with Jelly at that time. It turned out to be the Okeh record ["Someday Sweetheart" & "London Blues." ~~OK 8105~~], two sides with Natty Dominique on trumpet. [OK 8105, Jelly Roll Morton Stomp Kings, "London Blues"; "Someday Sweetheart" copied on taped interview, Frank Goudie (June 2, 1960), IV.]

Zue toured with King Oliver in 1924 at the time Louis Armstrong was in the band. There's an old picture in Jazz Information showing Zue was in the band at that time. He also toured with [W. C.] Handy, the songwriter, around 1924, in Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Then he was with Dave Peyton a short time at the Grand Theater in

Chicago. He went to the east with Drake and Walker's show. In either the New York Times or Brooklyn Eagle there is an article on Zue.

Before Mr. Russell went to talk to Zue, people told him he wouldn't get any information from him, that he was really crazy. But Russell found his memory very good and ^{his} quite rational. He was bitter and disgusted with the music business. His trombone sat against the wall, and he said he'd never play it again. All the younger musicians were playing something corresponding to rock and roll, very bad music. He seemed bitter about life in general. Dr. Hogan says maybe it was jitterbugging and PRC suggests swing, but Russell says it was something worse than that, not that that was bad. He lived around Los Angeles where there was a lot of Mexican music. His wife was running around with a Mexican, and he knew it and couldn't do anything about it, so he was probably in a bad mental state, although not crazy. He undoubtedly was depressed; he wasn't working, probably living on relief of some kind, maybe WPA. You couldn't expect him to be very happy about the music scene or life in general.

Zue had composed "Flossy Trombone," sold it to Joe Oiver and said Ory recorded it. Russell wonders if that could be part of "Ory's Creole Trombone," not to knock Ory as not having composed that. Ory's wife was his manager and was mad because Ory wasn't collecting royalties on all those old tunes, such as "Do What Ory Say," which [A. J.] Piron and Johnny St. Cyr had published under another title, "Mama's Baby Boy." (Johnny St. Cyr said the guitar player who played with Duson, Bolden, Manetta, Oliver, and all of them, who was famous for all the dirty songs he wrote, really wrote that. Russell can't remember his name [Lorenzo Staulz no doubt. RBA]; he lived off St. Charles, back of where the New Orleans University used to be.) When Bunk [Johnson]

first went to Los Angeles and up to San Francisco in 1943 and played at all those concerts and lived at Bill Colburn's house, one night Bill played "Ory's Creole Trombone" for him. That was when Bunk was playing his first concert at the museum. Rudi Blesh was running it and trying to find the old-time tunes. He dug up tunes like "Plantation Echoes" which had been mentioned in Jazzmen. Some hadn't been played in 50 years or so and the titles were all wrong.

END OF REEL II

WILLIAM RUSSELL
Reel III [of 4]--Digest--Retyped
September 4, 1962

Also present:
William R. Hogan
Paul R. Crawford

First Proofreading: Alma D. Williams

Mr. Russell discusses different kinds of tapes. For the interviews, the Archive should use one roll of good tape [Scotch No. 138] to preserve the voice and after that, record on the other tape [Scotch No. 111]. The other tape lasts pretty long with air conditioning although it used to last only five to eight years. John Steiner told him a couple of years ago in Chicago that now it will last almost indefinitely.

When Bunk [Johnson] heard Bill Colburn playing "Ory's Creole Trombone," Bunk said it was really "Carbarlick Acid Rag." At first, Russell thought he was mispronouncing it, but he found the music, and it was spelled out that way. Crawford thinks the Archive has it. Russell says if not, photostat one of his two copies, one the original edition; the other, a little later. It was published in Quincy, Illinois, a few miles from Russell's home town, where they bought their piano when he was a kid. [Archive copy is published by Giles Brothers, Quincy, Illinois, copyright 1904. Title on cover: "Carbarlick Acid Two Step." Title inside: "'Car-Barlick-Acid.' Two-Step-Cake Walk."] There are some places where you could have a trombone smear in it, a little run in the bass which is probably what Ory smears. It may not be exactly like it, but it is that "rag" type. Ory might have just heard it once when he was a kid. Russell's piece of the music needs to be mended. Russell's notes say that Ory recorded that "Flossy Trombone" which Zue [Robertson] really composed, so evidently Zue had played some of the sliding, smear style; some people call it "tailgate." Zue must have been a very polished, educated musician from every account, but he probably did some of that rough "freak" stuff too, as Baby Dodds called it.

Zue's records were four sides with Jelly Roll [Morton], only two of which were released for Okeh around December 1923. He mentioned "Wolverine Blues," "Jelly Roll Blues," "London Blues," and "Someday Sweetheart," the latter two being the ones which were issued. "London Blues" is the same as "Shoeshiners Drag." Jelly Roll or maybe Victor later changed the name. The cornet was Natty Dominique and clarinet, Horace Eubanks, who was maybe from Martinique or someplace in the West Indies. [I believe Paul Barbarin told me he was from East St. Louis. RBA] Horace played what Russell thought was a corny style but like some certain pieces they play in Martinique. It's like the meringue in Haiti, ^{It's} some national dance, but Russell can't remember the name of it. You'll find clarinetists on record today that play that sort of sliding style, almost like Ted Lewis at times.

Zue Robertson played with [John] Robichaux and the P. G. Loray ^{Lowary} Brass Band, with which Bunk [Johnson] worked later. Zue played euphonium with them and has a picture of them. Russell doesn't know if we have the picture, but there was one in Jazzmen that might have been P. G. Loray's ^{Lowary} band. Russell thinks Loray was a ^{white} band leader, but might have had a colored band too. It was more a straight brass band than a jazz band. Glover Compton's wife played with them too, a horn he thinks. Compton is a pianist and songwriter in Chicago. Russell interviewed her, but she wasn't a good talker. Zue said he played with both Robichaux's brass band and his orchestra at Lincoln Park. The bass player was "Sanze" Oliver; Jimmy Williams, trumpet; and later the bass player was Henry Kimball, the father of Narvin Kimball, who still plays here and whom we interviewed.

The Original Creole Band wanted Zue to go out to California with them, but for some reason he didn't go. They had Eddie Vinson instead. Zue claims it was about 1911. Those who went were the

usual line-up as in the picture: Freddy Keppard, Vinson, [Jimmy] Palao, Bill Johnson, Dink [Johnson], and George Baquet. Zue said Baquet on clarinet was a wonderful legitimate player. Zue's probably the one who told Russell Norwood Williams was in Watts and described where he was on 116th Street at a filling station near the Long Beach tracks.

Zue told about hearing [Buddy] Bolden; and his sister, Mrs. McNeil remembered him too. She said one of his big numbers was "**Ride on, King**" which might have been a spiritual. They indicated he played as early as 1895. Zue said Bolden would blow so hard ^{that} he'd actually blow the tuning slide out of the cornet and ^{that} it would land 20 feet away. Bolden lived at the corner of Franklin and Jackson, which is fairly close to where those First Street houses are. From Soard's Directory we know he lived a couple different places on First Street, a block or two up from Jackson between Howard and Livingston. Howard is now LaSalle Street and Livingston must have been next to it. Zue or his sister confirmed the fact that Bolden was a barber but didn't think he ran "The Cricket," the scandal sheet, although he might have sold it.

At that time, Zue Robertson's address in Watts, California, was 10617 Kalmia Street on the corner of 117th Street. He mentioned that he had also played the calliope on the S. S. Ben Hur and others of the Streckfus line [not Streckfus according to Verne Streckfus, was out of Ohio River and was here about three weeks in 1912 approx. PRC]. Zue played in the Charles Booker Band in New York about 1925. He also played in the Lafayette and Lincoln theaters in New York. In 1930 he gave up all brass playing. He gave his [C.G.] Conn gold-plated trombone to his wife, Jessie, and she later sold it for \$25. He actually quit playing trombone about 1925 (he played euphonium and almost any other brass instrument, as well as the piano and organ),

when saxophones became more important, but Russell doesn't know if he took up the saxophone or not. Even when Zue wasn't working, James P. Johnson said why wouldn't he give up trombone when he could play the piano so well. That evening he took a house-party job playing piano at \$10 and was engaged for the next week. He's been in California since 1932 or 1933. Joe Oliver offered him a job on trombone in 1935, but he needed some bridgework done on his teeth. At the time of the interview, Zue didn't know that Joe Oliver had died in 1938. Russell doesn't know the exact date of Zue's death, but when Dave Stuart came to New Orleans in 1942 to record Bunk [Johnson] for the first time, he had all of Zue's pictures and said he had died recently. [The interview was in 1940.]

Continuing with Zue's interview, Zue said the trumpet player Frank Keelin was really a tough guy and came from a bad family. Zue thought Frank had once stabbed Bunk. (Russell says this sounds like Sam Charters' Red Book.) No one liked to hire Frank because he would cuss everybody out. Once Manuel Perez's Onward Brass Band with Zue and Buddy Johnson on trombone needed another cornet and stopped in front of Frank's house to ask him to play with them. He cussed them out but finally did play with them. The old timers talk about Frank. He must have been a rough, earthy cornetist.

Zue taught [Kid] Ory almost from the beginning and said Ory gives him credit for it. He also taught [Honore] Dutrey and helped Miff Mole, probably in Chicago. This doesn't mean necessarily that he gave them lessons, but that he showed them things. Russell doesn't remember Ory's mentioning that Zue taught him. Ory's book is coming along and is up to 1935 now. Zue went to Chicago as early as 1912 with a five-piece band. The places they played were called dance halls before they were called cabarets. Zue mentioned playing Scott

Joplin's music and that he came before Jelly [Roll Morton]. Nobody knows who wrote High Society and tunes like the Buque Blues. He used to play as many as five funerals a week sometimes. Some musicians made their livings playing funerals and nothing else, not even parades.

Zue said Frankie Duson, the trombonist, played as late as 1928, but Russell has found he played even later. Zue mentioned playing excursions on the railroad and across the lake. One of Duson's hit numbers was "Put 'Em in the Alley." Zue didn't know the words but evidently the audience would yell "Put 'em in the alley" back at the musicians during a break or something, like in "Dippermouth Blues" when during a recording session, someone forgot to come in on the break, and probably Bill Johnson [?] yelled, "Oh, play that thing." Russell says it's too bad nobody ever recorded "Put 'Em in the Alley" so we could know what it sounded like.

Zue mentioned some of the old-time "coon shouters" and may have played with some of them, Edna ^{Landry (cf. Oliver's letter to Bunk)} Landreau [check spelling. Lizzie Miles's sister.] Benbow and Stella Boyd.

Another famous old-time trombonist is Roy Palmer who ^{is} still living in Chicago. Russell saw him two years ago, but he was really bitter and didn't want to be interviewed for the Archive. He said he had had so many tunes stolen from him, he didn't want to talk about anything. For several years he has been working in iron foundries. Jelly told Russell, Palmer was a good machinist and sometimes wouldn't have time to change his dirty clothes before he played a job. They'd hide him behind a screen. He was Jelly's favorite trombonist. The Archive has several pictures of him, one of the counterweight he built for his trombone. Russell did get an interview from him in December, 1955, which has already been copied. The photographs were made on January 16, 1956. He got out his [C.G.] Conn

trombone which he'll probably never play again. The bell measured approximately 8 1/16" in diameter. It was dented but straightened out and probably gold-plated, then lacquered. It was quite worn. He had an iron ball put on the brace for the counterweight. PRC says that is a large bell for a tenor trombone. Roy thought the small bell would carry farther out into the dance hall whereas the large bell could be heard better in the band. PRC says a small bell might project the sound better, but the throat and the bore makes more difference than the size of the bell. Palmer no longer had a mute, so Russell couldn't get a picture of him with one. He said he didn't care for mutes much but did use his hand and sometimes a half gallon bucket. [Joe] Oliver used to use a sugar can about the size of a big coffee can on his cornet. Palmer said that at one time they all used mutes in New Orleans, but then they stopped. He gave his mute to Honore Dutrey, who was Oliver's trombone player and a good one. Russell mentioned [Papa] Celestin and some who were still in New Orleans, and Palmer said in the old days Bunk [Johnson] was the man; he always thought he was great.

Russell first found Palmer working in a hand laundry about 4200 State Street around 1942. A man named Dixon, who used to play sax with Earl Hines, told Russell where to find Roy. Roy Palmer was doing a little teaching at that time. He had a cornet or trombone pupil or two. He got out his trombone but said he couldn't play it; it wasn't even oiled up. Russell bought a few old records from him, but they weren't collectors' items, things like jug bands. Palmer said he had some of the test pressings of some of his recording dates. That was the first time Russell saw him. Every time he went to Chicago, he went by to see if there was any chance of him wanting to record again or come back on trombone, but he has no hopes now

that he'll ever do anything again with music. Palmer left the laundry and Russell finally found him again on South Wells Street. His wife possibly didn't want him to play again. Don Ewell would call him to try to get him on recording dates, and Mrs. Palmer would say he wasn't here, although she could be heard talking to Roy and covering up the phone. She probably half starved in the music days and was glad to have him back on a regular payroll.

Russell talked to Jelly [Roll Morton] in Washington at a little nightclub where he was working, not so much as a piano player as a waiter and manager for some lady. He had bought an interest in it. Russell has a handbill that should be photostated for the Archive. It was called the Music Box and before that the Jungle Inn. Last time he was in Washington he tried to get the exact address, but he wasn't sure he found the right block. It was upstairs and there were never more than two people probably there the whole time he was there. When Russell went there, he introduced himself to Jelly as a record collector and rattled off about twenty titles of records of Jelly's he had. Jelly surprisingly seemed excited about it and told Mrs. Lyle [sp?] that here was a man who had all his records. He seemed flattered at the attention which was surprising considering that at one time he was a big shot in the music world. He willingly played the piano for Russell. At that time Jelly was trying to get all the little pieces on juke box records on the General label like "We're the Elks" and "Sweet Substitute." ^[We Are Elks. Compare sheet music.] What Russell really wanted to hear were "King Porter," "Milenburg Joys," and "Jelly Roll Blues," which he finally played after the others that he hoped would be big hits but never were. Russell says he was wonderful on piano, the best he ever heard. Once, Charles E. Smith went with Russell and another time there was a young couple there, but that was all.

WILLIAM RUSSELL
Reel IV [of 4]--Digest-Retyped
September 4, 1962

Others present:
Dr. William R. Hogan
Paul R. Crawford

First Proofreading: Alma D. Williams

Continuing with his notes on Jelly Roll Morton, Russell says he had the letter copied that Jelly wrote to Downbeat and Afro-American [newspaper] in Baltimore when [W. C.] Handy wrote an article saying he had invented the blues. Jelly said he had heard more blues in New Orleans on the old junkman's horn than Handy would ever know. In Johnny Wiggs's interview, JW raved about the junkman who had a big long horn like a New Year's horn that he played the blues on. According to Johnny, the only one who rivaled the junkman was Joe Oliver, which was the highest praise Johnny could give.

Alan Lomax's book has a lot of wonderful material on Jelly. In answer to Dr. Hogan's question on Russell's opinion of Jelly's personality, Russell believes what most of the better musicians say. Occasionally, there are some awful reports about him; for example, when Bunk [Johnson] came to New Orleans in 1942, he asked Walter "Fats" Pichon to record with him but Walter refused because it was going to be a non-union date. Of course, the union meant nothing to Bunk, just music and then friendship. Bunk was a 100% man and a wonderful guy. If he was a friend he would do anything for you. He didn't care if you were in the union or even if he was put out of the union, if his friends were going to record that was it. He couldn't understand why Walter turned him down. At that time Walter ran Jelly down as just a gangster with a gun. Walter said he was the only one Jelly was afraid of because he had put Jelly in his place once. He must have known Jelly under some unpleasant circumstances in New York. Otherwise WR can't think of any musician whom WR would call a musician that ever knocked Jelly. Some musicians might have said Jelly was hard to get along with and bragged and talked too much, but practically everybody like [Omer] Simeon and Baby Dodds said no, he was very

businesslike and knew what he wanted. He may have made Johnny [Dodds] play in a low register or Baby play with brushes when they didn't want to, but they respected him and wouldn't talk back to him. As mentioned above, Zutty Singleton wouldn't be leader when Jelly was there. Jelly received Russell very amiably. There was a seniority business, too, and Zutty wouldn't have dared be leader since he was younger. [See above.] Once, Decca wanted Jelly to record with Louis Armstrong when they made their New Orleans album, (Steve Smith also organized that date). Zutty and Sidney Bechet were in it; they played the "2:19 Blues." They wanted to fire it up, you know; just like all of us make a lot of dumb mistakes and pick bands maybe with musicians that aren't necessarily suitable to play together. Jelly would have liked to play with Louis and Sidney Bechet, but he wouldn't do it unless he could be leader, since he was much older and felt he at least should have been paid the same. However, during the 1910 period Sidney amounted to more than Louis did. However, Decca had an exclusive contract with Louis and he was leader. Charles E. Smith said it was rather pitiful because Jelly was in one studio, probably the Nola Studio [NYC], wanting to play with the New Orleans band rehearsing in the next studio. They wouldn't pay him any more than scale and Jelly didn't have to take that kind of talk. Jelly was very proud, but none of the greatest musicians like Simeon, Dodds, and [George] Mitchell whom Russell talked to said he was hard to get along with. He rehearsed them and made them play the way he wanted but that was all.

Russell first went to see him probably in the winter of 1937 and certainly later in the spring of 1938. Jelly died in 1941. Roosevelt was in the White House and Russell was playing with the Red Gate Shadow Players. One time they were mad when Russell was late setting up the stage because he had been out looking for records or seeing Jelly. He

was more interested in that than the White House. The Music Box, 1211 U Street, where Jelly was working, was a rather large but narrow room, too brightly lit for a nightclub, high ceiling lamps with a small spinet and a jukebox. There were seven or eight tables. When Russell told him he had his old records like "The Pearls" and "Wolverine [Blues]," he was very pleased. Jelly said he's made so many records he couldn't remember them all, some under other names, possibly some of the Vocalion records. Jelly seemed disgusted that [Omer] Simeon had to work with a man like Earl Hines. Simeon was his favorite clarinetist. Jelly said he had recorded with [George] Baquet, which Russell wasn't aware of then. Jelly played a tune made with Baquet on the jukebox, "New Orleans Bump." There was some funny flutter tonguing on clarinet which they don't do anymore. Even George Lewis used to do it in New York around 1946 but not around New Orleans [rarely heard in forties by RBA at Manny's Tavern]. Jelly also said he had made records with Jimmie Noone, "Grandpa's Spells," but Russell couldn't find it. Jelly said the piano players today don't have a good left hand, which is true even with someone with a peculiar style like Joe Robichaux, who has a fairly good left hand, or others who just plan in the treble where they're heard more. Jelly was proud of his left hand. Dr. Hogan says he doesn't know of any other pianist who takes breaks like Jelly. WR agrees. Russell says it explains in the Library of Congress [recordings] that the piano is sort of a substitute for the whole orchestra. Jelly was filling in everything, playing all the parts. Jelly told a little about the records he made with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, which have been covered in magazine articles. He mentioned three great clarinetists in New Orleans: [Alphonse] Picou, Lorenzo Tio [Jr.], and George Baquet. He didn't think Big Eye Louis [Nelson Delisle] was first class although others

differ on this. [Johnny] Dodds was all right but not first class. Jelly said it was true that Muggsy [Spanier] had recorded with him. Russell felt like Jelly was telling the truth because he didn't have to "spread it on." It might have been that Natty Dominique thing ["Someday Sweetheart" and "London Blues" on Okeh]; he had a similar muted style [as Muggsy[✓]]. In talking about the Autograph record with Joe Oliver, Jelly seemed quite excited about Oliver; he said he had a terrific memory and would remember every note of a piano chorus Jelly would play just once. Jelly said you can't find a man like that today.

He thought [Buddy] Bolden was a good trumpet player, but [Freddy] Keppard was his favorite; he had a more jazzy style evidently. He thought Sidney Bechet was great and liked George Mitchell. Russell always wondered why Jelly used a musician who wasn't from New Orleans when he could have had his pick, but he thought Mitchell had learned a lot from Keppard and Oliver. Mitchell said in his interview that he tried to play like Joe Oliver but couldn't quite make it. Jelly thought Mitchell was a better cornetist than Louis Armstrong. Evidently, he didn't like Louis too well, but they did write a tune together, "Wild Man Blues." [Perhaps Melrose combined the strains. RBA]

The last time Russell saw Jelly was in the fall of 1940 after he had been to California a year or so. Herman Rosenberg, a friend and fabulous guy around New York, took Russell to see him. HR, now dead, was written ^{up} in the [news]papers. [What papers? RBA] They saw Sidney Bechet, who had just returned from Chicago where they had had a Victor recording session in memory of Johnny Dodds, "Blues for You, Johnny." (Russell thought it sounded rather sick.) Sidney gave Russell what was supposed to be the original manuscript of the tune. He also played some operatic stuff; Sidney was a wonderful

dramatic player. Then they went to the Rhythm Club, which was mostly a pool hall, where musicians would meet. Jelly was there and invited Russell to a rehearsal of a new band. Henry ["Red"] Allen and Paul Barbarin were there, too, [in the band]. Russell never got to the rehearsal, and Jelly left soon after. Jelly died June, 1941. At the time Russell saw him, he was talking about suing MCA or ASCAP for not paying royalties on his work. He was always having big ideas about that, although there is no doubt he didn't get his full royalties. Russell told him about some of his old friends he had seen in California: Paul Howard, a sax player; and some others. Jelly always had words of praise for everyone, including this Howard.

When Russell was in California, he tried to collect some material on Jelly because his beautiful General album (later on Commodore) had first come out, and Charles Smith knew at that time that the average reviewer would pan it. Surprisingly, Down Beat said one of his vocals, "Mamie's Blues," was outstanding. Charles arranged for Russell to review the album in Tempo magazine. Even then, Dave Stuart didn't want Russell to play the album in his shop because it might drive some of the customers away. A year later when Jelly came out there, Dave was crazy about him, went to his funeral [see Lomax, Mr. Jelly Roll], and started to take down dictation for a book by Jelly. He only got a few pages before Jelly got sick. Russell found a few pictures in California, [some from?] Sutherland [probably Harry Southern--RBA, George Murphy Foster, Pops Foster, RBA, Jan. 31, 1975], a trombonist who had played in the Black and Tan Band. Musicians out there didn't like Jelly because he was better than they were. [Manuel] Manetta said when Kid Ory's band went out there, they [the locals] would try to chase them [Ory's band] out of town, send prohibition agents and everything, [Cf. Alfred Williams, Reel ?]. Like in Chicago, they [the locals] couldn't play New Orleans style out there and

the New Orleans men were getting all the work. One person implied Jelly was a procurer and that's where he got all his diamonds and money. Russell says he might have been mixed up in prostitution, but he doesn't know of any evidence of it.

Going back to Paul Howard, Jelly said he couldn't play at first and then became a great tenor, "better than [Coleman] Hawkins." Dr. Hogan says maybe that's why he was a good band leader, he got enthusiastic about the people he liked. He thinks those Red Hot Peppers records are wonderful.

Bill Colburn used to go down to Los Angeles to see Jelly. Bill was a friend of musicians. He'd have Leadbelly live in his home so he could learn about the blues. He invited Bunk [Johnson] to live at his home on Columbus Avenue [Compare BC's letters]. Bill Colburn had that album Russell reviewed and would play it for everybody until it got to be one of the best sellers in San Francisco. At that time, Jelly was already sick and could hardly play. Bill would goad Jelly by saying he couldn't play like Teddy Wilson or Art Tatum. Jelly got so mad he went over to the piano and played "The Fingerbuster" which nobody knew he had recorded. He made a record on acetate of it. [Nesuhi] Ertegun had a copy, and it was later released. Willie "The Lion" Smith brought out a record on Commodore as if he had composed it called "Fingerbuster" which is a pretty bad record but was the same tune as Jelly's. He may have stolen it or gotten it from the same source. Russell thinks the Archive has a copy of Jelly's record from Don Perry's collection.

When Jelly first went out there, he tried to get a band together. Mutt Carey played in a little place called, WR thinks, the Silver Dollar, almost on Skid Row (it was almost during the Depression) and Jelly would sit in with them. The boss wanted Mutt to hire Jelly.

Nobody had heard of Jelly out there for thirty years or so, but he still had that good opinion of himself. Russell always thought Jelly was just as great as he thought he was. He had hoped to play when he was in California but wasn't able to for long. At that last rehearsal Russell missed in New York, Roy Carew, who knew him well, said he was quite sick even then.

Jelly always said Tony Jackson was the greatest pianist but he told Bill Colburn his left hand enabled him to beat Tony. [Frank Amacker said that Jelly was the best stomp player here. Jackson was a great entertainer but not a stomp player. RBA] Al Rose recorded an album of Tony Jackson's music having Knocky Parker play it, but most of those pieces weren't so hot. He had one big hit: "Pretty Baby." Bunk always said too that Tony was the greatest. Bunk had played with Jelly.

At the Music Box, Jelly tried everything he could to get some life into the place. They had contests, and he would M.C. and also serve as pianist and waiter. It was a colored place, but Charles Smith, Russell, and some others would go there too.

Dr. Hogan asks when Russell thinks the so-called Dixieland revival began. Some say it began in 1940 with the resurrection of Bunk Johnson; H.O. Brunn says that it began with Pee Wee Hunt, "Twelfth Street Rag," etc. Russell says everybody has a different date. There was the Lu Watters band recording in California before Bunk had made any records yet. When Dave Stuart was going to record Bunk, Gene Williams rushed down, even though he was sick, to talk about who should record Bunk because Dave had sold all the pressings he could make of Lu Watters within a few weeks. Lu had been playing that stuff ever since 1937 when Russell first went out to California. Russell thought the people in his band were record collectors until

he went out there and found out they were musicians: [Squire]
Girsback, Ellis Horne, Turk Murphy.

Russell never saw it die out. Johnny and Baby Dodds were playing all the time in Chicago and made all those records for Decca, Louis Armstrong had big bands but he was playing some New Orleans music all along. There were little bands at Nick's all during the depression. Sharkey [Bonano] went to New York in 1936 when Russell first heard [Georg] Brunis and they had a little Dixieland band. [Bill] Bourgeois played it too. You could always hear music like that somewhere although he doesn't remember much in New York before 1936, when they started the hot Jazz club. WR would not date the beginning of the revival as late as Bunk's--

END OF REEL IV