

[Zeno:] You don't understand?

[Russell:] No, I never did learn French. If you could tell us your name first, so we'll have that on the tape.

[Zeno:] Right now?

[Russell:] Yes.

[Zeno:] You want my name now?

[Russell:] Yes, yes.

[Zeno:] Well, in English, huh?

[Russell:] Yes.

[Zeno:] Well, my name is Alice--my maiden name you want or?--

[Russell:] Yes, that'd be good too--your maiden name and then your--

[Zeno:] Alice Willia--Alice Williams Zeno.

[Russell:] Uh-huh. And your married name was Zeno, then?

[Zeno:] Yeah, Zeno; Lewis Zeno. [Mrs.] Henry Lewis Zeno was my married name, and my maiden name was Alice Williams.

[Russell:] Can you tell us how old you are now?

[Zeno:] Well now, I'm, I'll be ninety-four years old in four months--five months from now.

[Lewis:] Ninety-five.

[Russell
and Zeno:] Huh?

[Lewis:] Ninety-five.

[Zeno:] Ninety-four, I'm ninety-four now.

[Russell:] You're ninety-four now?

[Zeno:] Yes.

[Russell:] Where were you born, right on, in the city or outside?

[Zeno:] I was born on St. Claude Street between Kerlerec and Columbus, right here in this city. Well, this is not the city[Algiers].

[Russell:] Yes.

[Zeno:] On the other side of the river.

ALICE ZENO
REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

[Russell:] Over there--I still think of it over there, too.

[Zeno:] On St. Claude Street, you know.

[Russell:] Your birthday?--

[Zeno:] Is the seventh of June.

[Russell:] June--yeah, I remembered that; I wanted to get it on here, too.

[Allen:] The seventh of June? What year was that?

[Zeno:] In 1864.

[Allen:] 1864. I see.

[Zeno:] Oui, in 1864.

[Allen:] I see.

[Lewis:] Make her ninety-five.

[Russell:] Was the, was the war [Civil War] on then? You wouldn't remember, of course.

Do you remember, Dick, when the war was over? [1865]

[Zeno:] The war was over--

[Russell:] About April, wasn't it?

[Zeno:] The war was over, you know; everything was all right, settled for the month of April, and I was born in the month of June.

[Russell:] Yes, that's what I thought.

[Zeno:] There's just about three months or four months difference, three months after everything was settled.

[Allen:] I see.

[Russell:] Can you remember your parents and your grandmother, too--you told me about your grandmother once.

[Zeno:] If I remember my grandmother? Oh, Lord, yes; yes--if I remember my grandmother! Seems like she's right in front of me now. And I miss her; I miss her. She was a hundred one year and fifteen days when she died.

[Russell:] Hundred and one!--well, you may make that, too.

[Zeno:] Oh, Mr. Russell!

[Russell:] I hope you do.

[Zeno:] No, no, I don't hope that 'cause--

REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

[Russell:] If you're well--unless you're well, there's no need to want to live.

[Zeno:] Yes, if I was well.

[Russell:] You look well.

[Allen:] When did your grandmother die?

[Zeno:] She died on the fifteenth day of January, and she was one hundred and one year on the first of January.

[Lewis:] 1910.

[Zeno:] She died a hundred and one year and fifteen days.

[Allen:] She died in 1910, then?

[Zeno:] Huh?

[Allen:] 1910, George says.

[Zeno:] Was it?

[Lewis:] 1910, yea.

[Russell:] Well, you remember her, then, real well?

[Lewis:] Oh, yes, I remember her well, Bill.

[Russell:] You told me once she taught you some Senegalese[Probably Wolof(spelling?)], the African language, a few words?

[Zeno:] Some words, yes, 'cause I used, you know, used to be right by her all the time; oh, I idolized my grandmother. And she spoke her, her mother's language, but my mother and my aunt and them, they didn't want to hear that.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] But me, I would be right there by her. And I tell her, "Gagan"--because I didn't call her grandmother, called her "Gagan"--I say, "Gagan, tell me, tell me." And she would tell me. And sometimes she say, "Abadra[spelling?]"--that means "good for nothing." That's Senegal.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] What was good morning? You told me that, I think, once.

[Zeno:] "Sal-le-come sayrum, ^{Sal-le} si-ye-come sayrum" is "Good morning, everybody."

[Russell:] Uh-huh. And another thing I was wondering about--these folks that you worked for once up at Newcomb College came down to get a recipe of that pudding that you made.

REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

[Zeno:] Oh, yes; but the poor man died fifteen days after I had seen him--

[Russell:] Oh.

[Zeno:] And he never come back to get any more.

[Russell:] What kind of pudding was that? That doesn't have anything to do with our music, but I was just interested, I wondered though, just--

[Zeno:] The pudding?

[Russell:] What was it made of?

[Zeno:] The pudding, that kind of pudding was painpatat [French, potato bread]. Potato--not potato pudding, though; it was just like potato pudding, but it's grated, you know, and you got to put black pepper in there, a good deal of black pepper-- painpatat, they called it.

[Russell:] Anything else much? Something to make it?--

[Zeno:] Oh, yes, uh-huh.

[Russell:] Sugar to make it sweet?

[Zeno:] Sugar and egg and butter--no--

[Lewis:] Milk.

[Zeno:] Milk.

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Milk.

[Zeno:] Yeah; milk and pas de beurre--no butter.

[Russell:] Do you bake it in an oven or put it on top of the stove?

[Zeno:] Bake it in oven; slow, you know.

[Russell:] Is this just ordinary potato--white potato, not sweet potato?

[Lewis:] Sweet potatoes.

[Zeno:] Sweet potatoes.

[Russell:] Oh, sweet potatoes.

[Zeno:] Oh, yes, sweet potatoes.

[Russell:] Oh, I didn't get that.

[Zeno:] Sweet potatoes, not Irish potatoes.

[Russell:] Yeah, sweet potatoes.

ALICE ZENO:
REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

-5-

[Zeno:] Sweet potatoes. It was called painpatat.

[Russell:] And they had that in Africa, then, too?

[Zeno:] Oh, yes; that's they[their] food. Yes, oh yes.

[Allen:] How much potato do you use?

[Zeno:] Well, it depend on the size, on the quantity you want to make, you know.

[Russell:] Oh, George can make it, then, too?

[Lewis:] Yeah, I can make it; I used to make it.

[Zeno:] Yeah, George--

[Russell:] Someday when I come back--

[Zeno:] Yeah, George ought to know how, 'cause I used to--you know me, I like to cook.

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] That's why I fuss with George all the time; George don't want me to cook--
he don't want me to do nothing. I'm ninety-four, but I'm not crippled. Do I look
like crippled?

[Russell:] Nope; you look well.

[Allen:] Healthy.

[Zeno:] I just can't get about fast like I used to be, what you call so fast and
everything. But now, course I have to take my time; I, I balance like this.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] But I can do--make me so mad.

[Russell:] Were any of your family musicians--that is, your grandfather or father: did
they play anything or sing music?

[Zeno:] Oh, not that I know of; no, my father was, my father was a, a cigar maker.

[Lewis:] Cigar maker.

[Zeno:] And my grandfather, I never knew him.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Zeno:] I don't remember [him], but I remember my grandmother good--just like I
was looking at you. Oh, I wish she was here.

[Allen:] What did she sing, your grandmother?

[Russell:] Did she sing around the house like you do? Any little song?

[Zeno:] Oh, sometimes she'd sing, but I don't remember it. She was too busy; she had so many grandchildren, you know.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Zeno:] And she took such interest in her children; she, oh, she took interest in explaining you things and showing you things, and telling you about the weather--when it was gonna, the weather was gonna change; she was just like a good astronomer, she could tell you. You know, we all wash--my parents, my mother and aunts and them-- and she'd come and look up, and she say, "You all can make your starch today." "But the--what did--Mama, but, but look, the weather." "Make your starch." Then she look up, she say, "'Bout such an hour, we'll have an 'enbaillee[spelling?]." "Enbaillee" means, you know, the weather changing.

[Russell:] I was interested to know how you learned all the different languages you speak; where you went to school first; and then, how you learned your French and German and all.

[Zeno:] Well, the French--I learned the French, you see, with the people my mother--when I was born, my mother was working, and as soon as she could go back on the job she took me. And the Miss Mazerat--they had me in the house like a child, white child; they didn't want my mother to have anything to do with me. And they spoke nothing but French to me; I was--

[Allen:] Their name was Dureau?

[Zeno:] Mazerat.

[Allen:] Mazerat.

[Zeno:] Mazerat. And I was fully four, five years that I spoke nothing but French; I didn't know nothing, no Creole, no other language but French. And that's how I got it so good. And I kept on with the Frenchman, kept on, 'cause I like French.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Then, I worked with the Gascons, too.

[Allen:] Oh.

[Russell:] When did you learn German? You said you learned German and Spanish, too, didn't you?

ALICE ZENO
REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

-7-

[Zeno:] Well, that was from Mrs. W. W. King; you know--yes.

[Russell:] That was Grace King's folks?

[Zeno:] Grace King, Grace King, Grace Elizabeth King.

[Russell:] Where did she live when you worked for her?

[Zeno:] Well, when I went there, they lived on Rampart between Common and Canal.

[Lewis:] Canal.

[Russell
and

Allen:] Canal, yeah.

[Russell:] About where Elks Place is, along?--

[Zeno:] Oh, yes; they had Mrs. T. J. Semmes across the street; Mrs. McCall, Mrs. Morris--but all them people moved, you know, uptown, because the neighborhood had gotten to be so bad.

[Russell:] Well, what kind of work did you do when you worked for them; did you cook for them or?--

[Zeno:] No, no, I was housegirl and maid for Miss Nina King.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Zeno:] Nina's the youngest one; I don't know if she's alive; I know Miss Annie died. But Miss Nina was a debutante then, and I was her maid, and did the upstairs work.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Allen:] We'll have to play this for Dick King; he's related to them.

[Russell:] Oh, yeah?

[Allen:] And ask him about it; he'll enjoy it. I know a relative of Mrs. King's.

[Zeno:] Of Mrs. who?

[Allen:] Mrs. King.

[Zeno:] A relative of Mrs. King?

[Allen:] Yes; we'll have to play this for him; he'll enjoy hearing about the family. You probably know things nobody else can remember.

[Zeno:] Well, Mrs. King was a Miss Miller--Tom Miller--she had two brothers--

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

[Zeno:] Henry and Tom Miller.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] And Mr. Tom had three children: Miss Grace and Tom and Annie. And they were called Grace Miller, Grace King Miller, and the other one was Branch, [Branch?] [Blanche?] King Miller.

[Russell:] Oh, yes, I've heard that name before. I'm wondering--

[Zeno:] The judge, the judge, then--Fred--

[Russell:] You told me about the people, this lady you worked for at Tulane, or at Newcomb College--that one time she found you reading some books she didn't like?

[Zeno:] That was Mrs. King.

[Russell:] Oh, is that who it was? I didn't know; I thought it was the other people.

[Zeno:] No, no, that was Mrs. King.

[Russell:] Oh.

[Zeno:] Sarah Miller was her name.

[Allen:] And you, you read how many languages?

[Zeno:] Un peu, comme si, comme ca. I understand pretty good.

[Allen:] In French?

[Zeno:] French. Well, you see, when I was working at Mrs. King's, they had--it wasn't a school; it was just like you and I is conversing here.

[Russell:] Yea.

[Zeno:] They had Mrs. Chaffroaix[spelling?]-you must have heard of that name, Chaffroaix?

[Russell:] I'm not sure, maybe.

[Zeno:] And then they had Mrs. Ledoux, and Mrs. T. J. Semmes, you know; and they'd speak--when that day, that day, that day was there just like conver, conversing. It was--if it was French, they had an old lady they called Madame Girard--she was French--and Charles Gayarré.

[Allen:] Oh, yes, yes; he's a famous man, a historian.

[Zeno:] Charles Gayarré?

[Allen:] Very famous man.

[Zeno:] You knew?--

[Allen:] I've read his books.

[Zeno:] Charles. Well, it was nothing but French. And then the next day, it was maybe the Spanish class. Well, That was Capitan "Escheviser"[spelling?]. Nothing but Spanish, nothing--they speak to me in Spanish, I--the language of the class that was going on. And Herman Gerstner--Herman Gerstner teaches--it must be his grandson that is teaching at Tulane.

[Russell:] Yes, I've heard that name.

[Zeno:] Yes, Herman Gerstner. Well then, [with] him, it was Spanish--German.

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] And nothing but German, nothing but German. They'd call me and they'd speak to me in German and ask me things in German--no other language but that lan--the language of that day.

[Russell:] So you had to learn all of those languages, too?

[Zeno:] When I--you know, young--I was, I was young and foolish; I'd laugh. And one day ^{Mrs.} Grace told me, "Ha!, 'tite fille! You have an opportunity of learning things that you will never be able to pay for, and you're there giggling and giggling." And after a while I, I say, "Well, I thing ^{Miss} Grace is right. Let me stop giggling and pay attention to what, to the opportunity that I have." So there's where I begin to catch on--a little German, a little Spanish--oh, well, I knew French well.

[Allen:] When did you learn English? When did you learn English?

[Zeno:] Well, with everybody.

[Russell:] Did your folks speak English--your mother and--to you?

[Zeno:] Oooh, no, no; oh, my grandmother didn't speak English at all.

[Lewis:] Talking about your mother.

[Zeno:] Eh?

[Lewis:] Talking about your mother.

[Russell:] Did your mother learn to--did she speak English, too?

[Zeno:] Oh, my mother spoke a little English, you know, but her real language was Creole and French.

ALICE ZENO
REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

-10-

c. 13 mins in.

[Russell:] Would you rather speak French, even now? Would you, today?

[Zeno:] Oh, now?

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Oh, yes.

[Russell:] Somebody--either George or you or somebody--told me once that you think in French; I don't know how that works exactly, because I only know English. But do you--when you think of things, does the French go through your head?

[Zeno:] French, French--well, sometime, some things I can't bring out in English.

[Russell
and
Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] And when I get to fussing with him, when he make me mad, I take my French. And he just looks at me and laughs. He ought to speak French, because I spoke French to him all his babyhood. My--Sidney, my nephew that I raised from the age of ten ^{days} ~~old~~, and all, all, I spoke French to--Creole. But they took that English.

[Russell:] Yes. Well, everybody around now has to have the English, so--

[Zeno:] But when they make me mad I take, I take my language. [Mrs Z. speaks French.]

[Allen:] So you spoke English when you were five years old?

[Zeno:] No, I spoke nothing but French.

[Allen:] Uh-huh. Well, when did you start English?

[Zeno:] Nothing but French. Well, after I grew, you know--

[Allen:] After you got grown.

[Zeno:] ^{Playing} ~~Being~~ with other childrens; but most of the time--I was a good size--I spoke, I'd speak French to them. They'd speak Creole to me; I understood it, but I didn't speak it. It was just after I grew older and older, and [had] childrens, that I begin to. But I always did prefer French.

[Russell:] Did you know any little songs, French songs, or folk songs when you were young; do you remember any of those songs you heard?

[Zeno:] Well, I was just telling George; I say, "George, as many as I knew, I just can't remember nothing." Now, I can remember, but that's not French; it's "Comme Jamaïque"--Jamaica.

ALICE ZENO
REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

-11-

[Lewis:] Jamaica.

[Zeno:] And "Jamaique."

[Lewis:] That's Jam--

[Russell:] You told me--

[Zeno:] Hai[^] from Haiti.

[Lewis:] From Haiti.

[Zeno:] Haiti, Haiti.

[Lewis:] Well, that's a Creole, that's Creole.

[Zeno:] What?

[Lewis:] Haiti.

[Zeno:] Haiti is Creole?

[Lewis:] Yes.

[Allen:] Yes, they have a Creole [dialect] down there.

[Zeno:] Haiti?

[Lewis and
Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Yes, I believe it is. Because I'll tell you--the French, the French song that I know is mostly mixed-up.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] [Sings]--" ; ta pa, ta pa"--well, that's Cr ole.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] [Sings]--" "--that's Creole.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] [Sings]--" "--that's Creole.

[Allen:] Uh-huh. Well, what is that song about?

[Zeno:] Well, it was when they had the revolution in Haiti, Haiti, as they call it.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] And they, they had the ^[French?] ^[vsi?] ~~the~~ Prince Jefferre, and he had to come to do for them--

you know, to help them out, because they were starving--starving, the mothers were starving. You notice they say ["La french, la french"?]--that means, "Hunger killed

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] Oh, uh-huh.

[Allen:] Do you know any other songs that you remember from way back?

[Zeno:] Ah, it's hard for me to bring them--

[Russell:] You told me last year that sometime you sing to yourself when you're working around the house to keep from being lonesome.

[Zeno:] When I was young, that's all I passed my time in. And work, hard, hard, hard. I did nothing but shirts for Mr. Villere and all them people--shirts only-- and I had the yard lined with shirts. All day the lady next door they, they sew, and they used to put their machines by the, by the window--

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Zeno:] To listen--to hear me sing.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] And all day long. And one day one of the ladies said, "When I leave, I always hear you say, 'Oh, I hungry.' I never hear you say 'I'm tired.'" I say, "Well, I'm never tired." Sing, sing, sing, sing, sing, sing all day.

[Russell:] That kept you from getting tired?

[Zeno:] Well I don't know; it was--. But I did love to sing then.

[Allen:] Did you sing songs about being hungry?

[Zeno:] No, no, I didn't.

[Allen:] I thought maybe[you did.]

[Zeno:] I sing just what would come to my mind, but I'd sing, work like a little hoss, like a machine.

[Allen:] Is "Eh La Bas" an old song or a new song?

[Zeno:] Sir?

[Russell:] Do you know that song, "Eh, La Bas", "A La Ba"?

[Allen:] Is that new or old?

[Zeno:] "Eh, La Bas"?

[Russell
and

Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] Some of the bands play it, even; George's band plays it, and Slow Drag

[Pavageau]--

[Allen:] Sing it to her, George; you're a better songster than any of us.

[Russell:] Slow Drag sings the music.

[Allen:] You don't know the words?

[Zeno:] "Eh Ta Bas" means, "Hey, over there."

[Russell
and

Allen:] Uh-huh, yeah.

[Zeno:] That's Creole.

[Allen:] So you know "Mo' [i] Pas Lemmé Ca"?

[Lewis:] Yes, sir; that's a Carnival song.

[Zeno:] "Mo' pas lemmé ca, mo' pas lemmé ca"--you see, I can't ge that together.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] [Sings]--" , mo' pas lemmé ca, [etc.]"

[Lewis:] Uh-huh; that's a, that's a Carnival song.

[Zeno:] Yeah, Carnival song.

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Allen:] Carnival, huh?

[Zeno:] Uh-huh.

[Lewis:] Yeah, sure.

[Zeno:] Oh, yes.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Carnival song.

[Russell:] Do you remember what the Carnival was like when you were a girl; did they have Carnival then?

[Zeno:] Oooh, different Carnival than now--oooh.

[Russell:] What was it like?

[Zeno:] Oh, it was really lively, worth following. Because I have a cousin just died--Tati ain't dead a year, eh?

[Lewis:] Just about a year.

REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

[Zeno:] Well, he was one of them. He had [a] band, about six or sometime twelve of them; and they'd go round and they'd dress as women and they'd, they'd sing "Fon, fon [etc.]"

[Lewis:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] And did Tati play music?

[Zeno:] No; he'd mask, oh, but he'd--

[Allen:] Mask?

[Lewis:] Yeah, mask.

[Zeno:] Lively, lively; whenever you'd hear that--

[Lewis:] [Unintelligible]

[Zeno:] People would say--people would run, you know; those old folks, even those that was busy, they'd run and say, "Here come Tati's band." He was very, very, very lively. Oh, he made a good, good Mardi Gras.

[Allen:] Do you know a song called "Quand Ma Ta Petit"?

[Zeno:] "Quand Ma Ta Petit"?

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Uh-uh, I don't remember that.

[Allen:] Well, what about "Les Oignons"?

[Zeno:] "Les Oignons"--"Les Oignons."

[Allen:] Oui.

[Zeno:] [Sings]

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Lewis:] [I] remember children use to use that in the "ring around."

[Zeno:] Eh?

[Lewis:] Play "Ring Around."

[Zeno:] "Ring Around."

[Allen:] Oh, that goes with "Ring Around the Rosie?"

[Zeno:] Yes, that was--we'd hold hands together, and all the children, you know, around the neighborhood--childrens wasn't studying about devilment like they do now-- they all play "Ring Around," "Les Oignons"--

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

[Zeno:] Eh?

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] [Unintelligible]--chanson "Ring Around"--

[Russell:] Are there any of the songs that you sing today, now-a-days, when you work?--

[Zeno:] I don't sing no more.

[Russell:] But do you sing now?

[Zeno:] Mr. Russell--

[Russell:] You don't sing now?

[Zeno:] I sometimes, sometimes when I--

[Lewis:] [Unintelligible]

lc [Zeno:] When I see George Look "down," you know, then if something come, then I begin to sing it to cheer him up.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] Could you sing a part of a little song like that, or even hum it right now to see what it's like?

[Zeno:] Sing all kind; anything that come to my mind then.

[Russell:] That'd come to you?

[Zeno:] Ah, yes, them was the good old days.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] We think we have it hard now--no, no, those were the better days.

[Allen:] Do you know a song--oh, I had it on the tip of my tongue--"Mam'selle Josephine," something "a la Rue Dauphine"--can't think.

[Zeno:] "Mam'selle Josephine"?

[Allen:] Uh-huh; it says that she lives on Dauphine Street--in French.

[Lewis:] Let me see, I think I heard that myself, but I, but I'm not sure. "A Rue Dauphine"--I can't remember the words. I've heard it, I've heard it; someone sang it. I--

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Lewis:] I don't know if it was [Kid] Ory, or what it was.

[Allen:] "Blanche Touquatoux" is one Ory sings.

ALICE ZENO
REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

-10- 22

[Lewis:] Yeah, "Blanche Touquatoux." And let me see--there was another one, wasn't it?

[Allen:] Yeah, he had one called--he sings "Eh La Bas", and one called "Creole BoBo", which is the same tune as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Remember that?

[Russell:] Oh, yeah, uh-huh.

[Allen:] Do you know "Twinkel, Twinkle, Little Star"? The song, in English, is "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little"--

[Zeno:] No.

[Allen:] Can you whistle that for her, George?

[Lewis:] Let me see. Yeah--"Twinkle, twinkle"--

[Zeno:] [Sings] "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, oh, how I wonder what you are."

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Is that it?

[Lewis:] "Up above the moon so high--up above the world so high."

[Allen:] "World so high"--

[Lewis:] "Like a diamond in the sky."

[Zeno:] "Like a diamond in the sky."

[Allen:] Well, there are Creole words to that that Orly used to sing--in Creole--but it was something different; he called it "Creole BoBo." I don't know what it is; I didn't understand it.

[Lewis:] I don't know no Creole songs; me myself, I don't know, and even so, if I did know them, I couldn't sing them. I'm not no singer, you know, but--

[Allen:] Did they ever sing at weddings, Creole songs at weddings?

[Zeno:] No.

[Russell:] I wonder what kind of music did they have? Did you ever go to any dances when you were young, a little girl, even--did you hear any of the dance music when you were even a child?

[Zeno:] Oh, yes; we used--

[Russell:] What was the music like? What kind of a orchestra did they have, or band?

George: "Like a diamond in the sky"

Zeno: like a diamond in the sky.

62

Allen: Well, there are Creole words to that, that Ory used to sing ~~in Creole~~ but it was something different; he called it "Creole **Bo Bo**". I don't know what it is, I didn't understand it.

and um so, if I did know

George: I don't know no Creole songs, me myself, I don't know ~~any~~, I ~~used to~~ ~~I couldn't~~ ~~sing 'em~~. *I'm not no singer* you know, but ah...

Allen: Did they ever sing at weddings, Creole songs at weddings?

Zeno: No.

Russell: I wonder what kind of music they did have? did you ever go to any dances when you were young, a little girl, even, did you hear any of the dance music when you were even a child?

Zeno: Oh, yes, we *used*...

Russell: What was the music like, what kind of a orchestra did they have, or band?

Zeno: *More so* Mostly string band.

Lewis: String bands.

Zeno: *Viol-* You ~~know~~ like violins, cornets...

Allen: uh-huh

Zeno: But mostly *more so like* -ah -

George: *Accordian*

Zeno: ...*accordian*... *accordian*...

Russell: uh-huh

Zeno: ...*And* bass.

George: Bass violin; *yeah* she means.

Allen: Did they have any drums or triangles or anything like that?

Zeno: I don't remember they had the drums when I was ~~little~~...

George: ~~Drum heads~~ *They don't have drums in those days*

Zeno: ...~~growing up~~ *going out*.

Russell: Anything like George's clarinet or a flute or anything like that?

Zeno: Well dey have flutes, yes, and dey have violins, and they'd have bass...

ALICE ZENO
REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

-17-

[Zeno:] More so string band.

[Lewis:] String bands.

[Zeno:] Viol--like violins, cornet--

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] But more so like--

[Lewis:] Accordion.

[Zeno:] Accordion, accordion--

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] And bass.

[Lewis:] Bass violins, yeah.

[Allen:] Did they have any drums or triangles, or anything like that?

[Zeno:] I don't remember they had the drums when I was--

[Lewis:] They don't have drums in those days.

[Zeno:] Going out.

[Russell:] Anything like George's clarinet, or a flute or anything like that?

[Zeno:] Well, they'd have flutes, yes and they'd have violins, and they'd have
bass--

[Lewis:] Piccolos, I think.

[Zeno:] And horn--well, they'd have cornet--

[Allen:] Would they have slide trombones in those days or valve trombones?

[Zeno:] I never noticed that, but I know they'd have cornets--cornet.

[Russell:] Do you remember anything about the bands in the Mardi Gras parades? Did
they have a brass band, or what?

[Zeno:] Well, in the Mardi Gras parades it was more so brass band, you know.

[Russell:] Even when you were a child? Do you remember that?

[Zeno:] Oh, well, yes.

[Russell:] {Unintelligible}

[Zeno:] That was--then it was they didn't have violin in the--

[Russell:] No.

[Zeno:] Parades, no.

[Russell:] I wondered what kind of a band that was way back. But when you were a child, they did have the brass band to march with the?--

[Zeno:] Yes, they did; it was brass band marching.

[Allen:] And what would they play, what instruments?

[Zeno:] Well, cornets and flute--

[Lewis:] She couldn't remember. I'm sure they had trombone.

[Zeno:] Eh?

[Russell:] Probably about the same as now.

[Lewis:] Oh, about the same as now, I'm most sho.

[Allen:] Would they have drums?

[Zeno:] Oh, yes, they would have drums.

[Allen:] And the cymbals?

[Zeno:] Ah, yes.

[Allen:] Would they have cymbals like this?

[Zeno:] Yes.

[Allen:] Or would they, would they hit?--

[Zeno:] Big drum .

[Lewis:] I think they were--

[Zeno:] They, and this was--

[Allen:] Hand cymbals.

[Zeno:] Yes.

[Allen:] Hand cymbals.

[Zeno:] Yes.

[Allen:] Now, you know today they put the cymbals on the bass drum--

[Zeno:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] And he hits the bass drum with one hand. Did they do that then, or do you remember?

[Zeno:] No--well, yes, it, it begin to come, you know, as I grew.

[Allen:] Yes.

[Zeno:] But at first was, they--just like this.

[Russell:] Just with two, one in each hand, huh?

[Zeno:] Yes, one in each hand.

[Allen:] I see.

[Russell:] I was wondering, the--before George. even was born, what kind of dance music they played. Do you remember any dances you went to way back, what the music was like? Did they waltzes or?--

[Zeno:] Waltzes and quadrilles.

[Russell:] Quadrilles.

[Zeno:] Quadrilles--oh, it's so long since they don't have quadrilles. Quadrille was pretty, too. Oh, yes.

[Allen:] I've seen one.

[Zeno:] Yes?

[Allen:] They revived it.

[Zeno:] Quadrille was pretty; it was--

[Lewis:] You saw a part of one; you didn't see a real one.

[Allen:] It wasn't a real one; it was special for television.

[Lewis:] Oh.

[Zeno:] Quadrille: it was, let's see--three, [or] four men, two men and four ladies.

[Lewis:] It all depends upon the audience; at public dnaces they, they have as many people as they want.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] Yeah, I guess so.

[Lewis:] And they had as many--because I've, I've played quadrille, myself, with [Kid] Rena and Albert Glenny.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Oh, yeah; in Albert Glenny's time it was--

[Lewis:] And they had as many people wa wanted to get on the floor.

[Allen:] Uh-huh. And what kind of music would go with the quadrille?

[Lewis:] Well, it varied in different tempos--

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

REEL I

NOVEMBER 14, 1958

[Lewis:] Waltzes and valeses and--

[Zeno:] Polkas.

[Lewis:] Marches. And they'd play so many chorused and then they'd stop and then they'd bow--

[Zeno:] Yes, bow.

[Lewis:] And change and you know, go around.

[Zeno:] And a man would take the girl and waltz her to you--

[Lewis:] It was almost something like, kind of similar to the--

[Zeno:] And you'd have one on each side. And then he would dance alone in the middle of the floor--

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] And then dance, and dance and dance till he get--then take one and he'd waltz back and the other one would do the same--waltz to him. 'Twas pretty.

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] Would they dance the mazurka?

[Lewis:] Yeah, all that went in there, all that went in there.

[Zeno:] Polka, polka.

[Lewis:] Polka, all that went in there.

[Allen:] Schottische?

[Lewis:] Schottische, yes; all that went in there.

[Allen:] Well--

[Zeno:] They don't dance polka now.

[Russell:] No, I guess not.

[Zeno:] I don't know if that's what you called schottische.

[Lewis:] No schottische is different.

[Zeno:] But long time they ~~dance~~ polka and mazurka.

[Lewis:] Schottische is slow.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Lewis:] Schottische is slower than a waltz.

[Zeno:] And waltz plenty.

ALICE ZENO
REEL I
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

-21-

[Zeno:] Because, before the quadrille time, you know--they'd give about two, three quadrille a night--but before the quadrille come, they play a waltz; you'd have to waltz all around the hall.

[Allen:] What about lancers and varieties; what were they like?

[Zeno:] Well, that's in quadrille.

[Allen:] That's part of the quadrille?

[Zeno:] Balance--balance, that's in quadrille.

[Allen:] Varieties? What is that like, varieties? Have you ever seen it?

[Zeno:] Uh--

[Allen:] Glenny used to tell me about it; that's how I knew.

[Lewis:] I never knew the name of all them numbers, but I played it with him. I played quadrille for banquets, for French ladies' society, you know. And they'd stop awhile, and then, then the guy would call out something in Creole, a figure, like, and then they'd start again. The music was--well, what he called, what he called a variety--beat different tempos, I think.

[Russell:] Maybe that was--

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Allen:] Well, we'll ask Madame ^{Synifa!} ~~Senegal~~.

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Allen:] Maybe sometime we'll get her. She called it--remember on the boat?--she called it. We'll bet her.

[Lewis:] Yes. Well, that's what I think it is; each time she called something, they'd, it, it, it was something different, and--you know, in the title of the music. It, it would be slow or fast, or bow, or something like that.

[Zeno:] That's in the quadrille.

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Russell:] I was wondering about the first kind of music, something like George--you've heard George's band, I guess; you don't get around to hear it very much, but you've heard his records, that type of music.

[Zeno:] I never, I never have the chance of going where George is playing with the

[Lewis:] She's just heard the records.

[Russell:] I'm wondering when--

[Zeno:] Yes, I hear the records; that's all I hear.

[Russell:] When you were young, did you ever hear any music something like that, that type of music?

[Zeno:] No.

[Russell:] Like George plays now.

[Zeno:] No, it was [that] they'd play with music, you see, the note.

[Russell:] They used--they read it off the music?

[Zeno:] Yes, but now they play by routine.

[Russell
and
Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] That's what they call jazz, eh?

[Russell:] Yes.

[Lewis:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] Well, did they ever use the word ragtime?

[Zeno:] In my days, no; they didn't know what that was.

[Allen:] Well, when did that word come in?

[Zeno:] I don't know when that come in, but in my days, they didn't have that.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Ragtime.

[Allen:] I see.

[Lewis:] Probably after, maybe at the change of the century, around the beginning of it.

[Russell:] Uh-huh. Do you remember the first time you heard any of the--

Retyped

[Lewis:] ...with the, playing the harps, and accordians.

[Allen:] Oh, really?

[Lewis:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] You remember all of that, then?

[Lewis:] No, I don't remem--just heard--

[Russell:] Oh, you've heard her talk about it?

[Lewis:] Yeah, I heard her talk about it.

[Allen:] And what did you call that?

[Lewis:] [Unintelligible] harps, piano harps--

[Zeno:] [Unintelligible]

[Allen:] But what kind of music?

[Lewis:] I call it salon music.

[Allen:] Oh, salon.

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Allen:] Well, that's right; I just wanted to hear your word.

[Russell:] Pardon me, but do you feel like talking a little bit more, after awhile?

[Zeno:] No, I thought him, he was talking.

[Allen:] We were just talking to George.

[Russell:] George was telling something.

[Allen:] If you want to stop and rest anytime, just let us know, and we'll be happy--
if you get tired of talking.

[Zeno:] Oh, no, that's all right.

[Allen:] Oh, you like to talk, huh?

[Zeno:] That's all right. I thought he was talking, like the other day when the
other man had that box, you know; he could repeat everything that I had said.

[Russell:] Oh, really?

[Allen:] Who was that?

[Russell:] Somebody from California, a couple of kids. Weren't they over here?

[Lewis:] Yeah, those kids was over here--couple of little punks.

[Allen:] Oh, yeah.

REEL II
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

[Russell:] Well, anyway, we were wondering about the kind of dance music they had-- well, about the time George was born, say around 1900. Do you remember hearing any, like the jazz or ragtime bands, or?--

[Zeno:] No, they didn't have that yet.

[Allen:] They had it before George was born or after?

[Zeno:] Well, me, I heard it after George was born, birthéd, because, you know, after I had children I never went nowheres; stayed right there with my children.

[Allen:] When did you have your first child? How old were you?

[Zeno:] I had my first child, I believe, in--I don't remember the date--ninety, eighteen--

[Lewis:] How old she'd be?

[Zeno:] Australia would be sixty-three years old.

[Allen:] Well, we can figure it out.

[Russell:] Yes, we can figure that out--sixty-three, that would be--

[Allen:] Yeah.

[Russell:] In about five years, 1895 or--

[Lewis:] 1895, yeah.

[Russell:] Something like that.

[Allen:] And before 18--

[Zeno:] She was born before that.

[Russell:] Before that.

[Zeno:] 1895, 1894, I believe she was born.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] I started to ask if you ever heard any blues songs--you know, like what they call the blues today.

[Zeno:] Well, you know, if I did, I didn't pay attention to, you know.

[Allen:] What kind of church music did you hear?

[Zeno:] Church music?

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Oh, Lord--[Sancto Mare Go?], [unintelligible], the Kyrie Eleison,

ALICE ZENO
REEL II
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

-25-

the Gloria, the Credo.

[Russell:] All the masses, then?

[Lewis:] All the masses, yes.

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] All the masses.

[Russell:] Well, I was going to ask which church did you belong to or go to in New Orleans. Did you go to St. Louis Cathedral, I think you told me once?

[Zeno:] No, no, St. Augustine.

[Russell:] Oh.

[Zeno:] St. Augustine, everything was St. Augustine church--St. Claude and--

[Russell:] Where is it?

[Lewis
and
Zeno:] St. Claude and Gov. Nichols.

[Allen:] Near where Blandin's funeral home is?

[Lewis:] Where Blandin's funeral home is.

[Russell:] Yeah, right there.

[Zeno:] The same block as Blandin's.

[Russell:] Oh, yeah, sure, I know.

[Zeno:] The church at the corner.

[Russell:] Yeah, I just looked at it last week; we were in front of it.

[Zeno:] There [is] where we were all christened, married--no, I wasn't married there; I was married in the new St. Joseph, St. Joseph there--St. Joseph, they was just putting up St. Joseph.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] On--

[Lewis:] Tulane Street.

[Zeno:] On Tulane Street, yeah.

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Allen:] Tulane near where?

[Lewis:] By the Hotel Dieu, close by the Hotel Dieu.

[Allen:] Oh, yeah.

[Zeno:] But my mother and--grandmother--my grandmother was christened in St. Charles Parish.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Because her master was Charles Perrette, in St. Charles Parish. But all her children, after she, they came here, they were all raised at St. Augustine--first communion, marriage, and everything--St. Augustine.

[Allen:] Did she ever tell you anything about St. Charles Parish?

[Zeno:] Who, my grandmother?

[Allen:] Yes.

[Zeno:] Oh, Lord, yes.

[Allen:] What was her life like over there? Did she, did she sing over there? Or did she go to dances?

[Zeno:] Oh, no, she was a slave, she was a slave, you know.

[Allen:] Yes.

[Zeno:] And she used to have to sell for her mistress; they didn't ever have stores like they have now.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] It was on the head. Made bundles--

[Russell:] Yeah, big bundles.

[Zeno:] And go. [Lots of times?] she'd be gone sometimes a whole month. She was selling on the what she called the [Unintelligible] [de Cote?], along the coast. They didn't have stores.

[Russell:] Uh-huh. I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about George's earliest life, even bef--he was born 1900, we know that.

[Zeno:] Yes, he was born then.

[Russell:] And, but, where did you live then when he was born?

[Zeno:] When he was born? He was born on, on--

[Lewis:] St. Claude.

[Zeno:] On St. Claude between--

ALICE ZENO
REEL II
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

[Lewis:] Gov. Nichols and Barracks.

[Zeno:] Gov. Nichols and Barracks.

[Russell:] On St. Claude?

[Zeno:] Yes.

[Russell:] Same old neighborhood up there, then.

[Zeno:] I wonder if them old houses are there yet, George? I wish I could walk and go take a look at them places.

[Russell:] Someday maybe we can get someone with a car and go over there, and ride around that neighborhood--even take a picture or two.

[Lewis:] [They tore it down?].

[Russell:] If anything is left.

[Zeno:] It was back in the yard, you see.

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] Uh-huh. By the way--

[Zeno:] Manuel Agardare[spelling?] was the landlord--Agardare, yes.

[Allen:] I was wondering about--at Mardi Gras, you know, they have trucks behind the parades, now?

[Zeno:] They used to--

[Allen:] And--

[Zeno:] Don't they have trucks no more?

[Allen:] Yes, they do.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Zeno:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] What did they have before they had trucks?

[Zeno:] Well, they was on foot.

[Allen:] They was on foot, everybody was?--

[Zeno:] Oh--

[Allen:] No wagons at Mardi Gras?

[Zeno:] I don't remember no wagons; everybody was on foot. And they had Mardi Gras; they ain't got Mardi Gras now.

[Lewis:] He's talking about the parades.

[Zeno:] Oh, the parades.

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Zeno:] Well, they had a--

[Lewis:] Floats.

[Zeno:] Float from Dennis Sheen, you see, that they decorate. And they had mules, and Dennis Sheen's men would lead the mules. But now, they tell me, it's not that no more.

[Russell:] No, they have tractors now.

[Allen:] Well, they're bringing back some of the horses, I believe; one, one crew wants to have it the old way--I forget which one it is.

[Russell:] This year?

[Allen:] I saw that a year or two ago, and--

[Zeno:] And then they had mens then carrying flambeaus.

[Allen:] Oh, uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Only it was--they said it was dangerous because sometimes that oil would drop, you know.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] And they told me, because it's so many years since I've been to see a parade. And they say that's why they condemned that.

[Allen:] Uh-huh. Well, the--those fellows, did they dance when they carried the flambeau?

[Zeno:] No, they couldn't; they had to just walk, with that big thing about this wide, and had lights, you know, on their shoulder. They had black pants and red shirts, with black belts to hold them[the flambeaux?].

[Allen:] Uh-huh. And did they have any dance music at the houses during Mardi Gras?

[Zeno:] On the floats, the mens would dance.

[Lewis:] No, he means on Mardi Gras day did they have dancing in the halls and?--

[Zeno:] Oh.

[Lewis:] Like they have now.

[Zeno:] Now they don't have no dancing in--

[Lewis:] No, I know, but I mean, like they have years ago?

[Zeno:] It--dancing in halls?

[Lewis:] Halls, and--

[Zeno:] Yes, but they didn't stay no time, you know; they'd just go and make a round and come out and go in another hall, but they was mostly on the street. Singing, all kind of old-time songs, and dancing, and some of them would--after awhile they begin to come out dressed in ballet, but I--it wasn't as nice as when they were dressed like before.

[Allen:] How did they dress?

[Zeno:] Old-time, you know.

[Lewis:] Women put on men clothes, women clothes, and women with men's over(h)alls and things like that, I imagine.

[Russell:] Yeah, all sorts of [that] kind of stuff.

[Lewis:] What she mean, they didn't have no pretty Mardi Gras like they have now, you know, with all the--you know.

[Russell:] Ballet.

[Lewis:] Ballet skirts and all.

[Allen:] Did they have Indians then?

[Zeno:] Indians? Oh, yeah, and real--they'd dress like real Indians.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] The woman had guinea blue dress with, what they call it, stripes of things like that, red and green, and, and then the little short, short waist. And they'd have the, the bead--I believe it was beads--and they'd dance, and they'd dance in the street, and they'd dance; they was dressed like real Indians. And at twelve o'clock everybody would fall down on the floor and they'd eat out of the "gamellet" [spelling?]. what they had, that food that they had.

[Lewis:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] 'Twas really nice.

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] Did they sing Indian songs?

[Zeno:] Oh, yes; oh, yes, they sing Indian songs, the best they could.

[Allen:] Did you know any of those Indians?

[Zeno:] No. They'd sing. The people run, would run and run and after them Indians.

But now, the Indians, they, they not, they don't dress like Indians.

[Russell:] Well, let's see, maybe we can get back to George's life, now, again. Do you remember any music that George--did you ever sing to George when you, when he was a baby, or do you remember what might have been the first music he heard? Even before he'd remember?

[Zeno:] No, I don't know where George got the music from.

[Russell:] I wondered just how he got that music in him.

[Zeno:] He got that music from that little ten-cent flute--little ten-cent--you know. I used to wash bars and spreads, and only shirts, and things like that, and I'd have to send him to bring the little here and there. And one day I sent him to the Grimas'--you must have heard of that name, Grima. [Like?] they had the [Menthe?] house on St. Louis, heh? St. Louis between Dauphine and, and, and Bourbon. And I used to wash Mr. Edgar shirts, and I sent him to bring a bundle of his shirts and, because they didn't have no laundry--collars, that's done by the laundry.

[Russell:] Oh, yeah.

[Zeno:] And he--I had just sent him around the corner to bring a little basket of clothes, and I don't remember if I give him a nickel or a dime. But anyhow, when I said, "Now bring Mr. Grima's, Mr. Edgar's shirts." He say, "Ma, can I get a, a, a flute?" I say, "Well, little boy, everytime I send you to bring a basket of clothes, I got to pay you." He say, "It's only"--it was Kirby's then, which is now Woolworth, hey?

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Zeno:] 'Twas Kirby's. He say, "It's only"--. I said, "Go ahead and get it."

And that's when he started with that little ten cents flute--ten cents--that's all I ever spent for his music; I never paid a nickel to nobody. And he play and play and played that little flute; sometime he drive me crazy. And the storm, the year of the storm I told him, I say, "George, we're going to have a terrible storm today; you'd

better prepare yourself." And he put his head at the foot of the bed and put his foot at the head of the bed and there he was.

[Allen:] Playing away, huh?

[Zeno:] Oh, my soul! But about six o'clock when they said if it had last five minutes [more?] it would have swept [away] the city, he run then; he run to me and fell and call me. I say, "Give your soul to God." And [he] stayed like that until the terrible hour pass. Half and hour it didn't last; I don't believe a half an hour.

[Zeno:] 19--

[Lewis:] 19--

[Zeno:] [19]15, eh?

[Lewis:] [19]15 storm that was, yeah.

[Zeno:] Yes, it must have been in 1915.

[Allen:] How was that flute built, George?

[Lewis:] Oh--

[Allen:] Was it built like this?

[Russell:] Was it out straight, or like a real flute?

[Lewis:] [Unintelligible]

[Allen:] You got it?

[Zeno:] He's keeping it as a souvenir because--

[Allen:] Oh, ah [unintelligible].

[Lewis:] [Unintelligible]

[Zeno:] Oooh.

[Allen:] What instrument did you want him to take up?

[Zeno:] I wanted him to play because he wanted to be a musicianer.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] I say, "Well, George, I, I, Mama will give you a violin." "I don't want no violin, I want a clarinet." I say, "What you know about clarinet, and blowing like that?" I say, "I don't believe it's good; I'll give you a violin, but I won't give you no clarinet." So that's how, you see, he bluffed me, by getting that little flute; and he got it, he said he'd keep it as long as he live--souvenir.

[Allen:] Was he a big, healthy boy?

[Zeno:] Huh?

[Allen:] Was he a big, healthy boy?

[Zeno:] Never was bigger; George never was big.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Small bones, slender ^[Senegal?] build; he take after me, you see.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Look how old I'm living.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] I never was much bigger than I am now, and my grandmother, neither.

[Russell:] She was small like you?

[Zeno:] She was tall, but just like that, but strong as a lion; you know, she come from Senegal. Her gran--her mother came directly from Senegal; she was eight years old when they stole her and brought her, I don't know where. And Charles Perrette was the first one that "marster"--

[Lewis:] That's the--

[Russell:] That's the kind, then?

[Zeno:] That's the little fife, that's that, that terrible little thing.

[Allen:] Can I try it out, George?

[Lewis:] Yes, sure.

[Allen:] Let's see--now you hold it--

[Lewis:] I got the other one and that's the one Bill [give?] me. I got the other one what the kids had mashed all up.

[Russell:] Yes, but it was that type.

[Lewis:] Yes.

[Russell:] It wasn't a straight one there.

[Allen:] This is the original one?

[Lewis:] No, the original one is in my suitcase, up in the locker.

[Allen:] And you blow it like this?

[Lewis:] That's right. [Allen blows fife.]

ALICE ZENO
REEL II
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

-33-

[Zeno:] It make good music, though.

[Lewis:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] It wasn't a straight one--some of the kids--did some of the kids have a straight one, though?

[Lewis:] Some had a straight one, yeah.

[Zeno:] But him, it was just like--

[Russell:] Like that.

[Zeno:] Just that.

[Allen:] And you finger it like this, three fingers from each hand on it?

[Lewis:] Yes, uh-huh.

[Allen:] Show me how you hold it.

[Zeno:] And play, he used to play good.

[Russell:] Well, I heard him play it pretty good, too. (Lewis plays fife.)

[Lewis:] You see. This one is the first tune I learned, if I can think of it.

[Russell:] Well, that'd be nice; get that on it.

14 missing
[Lewis:] 'Cause she had hum[med] it to me. (Lewis plays, Mrs. Zeno sings with him.)

I can't go no further.

[Zeno:] That's the first I showed--I--

[Russell:] That's the first tune he learned?

[Zeno:] No, no, but I--

[Lewis:] The first tune I ever learned on this.

[Zeno:] Used to sing that all the time for him, you know, because they had a young man next door, he used to play the flute, and I used to come on the gallery and would hear him.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] And he played that so well; he kept the note and everything. So I taught him that. (Mrs. Zeno sings the tune.) I used to sing that all the time, till he got it.

[Allen:] Oh, I see. What was the young man's name next door, do you remember?

[Lewis:] Oh, that was before my--

[Allen:] Raoul Tomat.

[Zeno:] Tomat.

[Lewis:] I don't know him; that was before my time.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Zeno:] He's dead, though. Oh, he played that good. I love music; oh, I love music!

[Allen:] She said she had you cut out to be a violin player.

[Lewis:] Yeah, she had me cut out for a violin player. Violin used to--I used to hear violin, but violin used to have an effect on me; sometime it'd make my--yeah, it used to make my flesh creep.

[Russell:] Yeah; I never liked it, either, when I was a kid, but--

[Zeno:] I loved it.

[Lewis:] Maybe those I heard couldn't play it right.

[Zeno:] You like violin, don't you?

[Russell:] Not when I--I do now, but when I was a kid, I always said "Too squeaky." That squeaking would get on my nerves.

[Lewis:] It used to make my flesh creep.

[Zeno:] And another instrument I like very much is violoncello--ah, little violin.

[Lewis:] Viola.

[Zeno:] Played just like a little bass.

[Russell:] Like a cello; yeah, violoncello, I guess they call it.

[Zeno:] What they call it, in English?

[Russell:] Violoncello is the full name--or just cello, usually--yes.

[Zeno:] Oh, it's pretty.

[Allen:] Some people say sello.

[Zeno:] Sello, that's it.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Zeno:] Sello--sello is pretty.

[Russell:] So they sit down and hold it between their knees--

[Zeno:] Well, it's short; it's about this high.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] You know Alphonse Begette[spelling?] used to play the sello upstairs.

[Russell:] There was one other question we were going to ask you--in addition to the music, of course in your church that you heard, did you ever hear any of the Protestant church music? Did people sing spirituals? Any of the neighbors, or any of the other Protestants, like Baptist churches, when you'd walk by when you were a girl? Did they, what kind of--do know what kind of music they had in those churches?

[Zeno:] Well, I don't believe they had nothing; but some church had organ, but the congregation would sing--

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] Themselves.

[Russell:] Do you know what kind of songs they would sing? Would they be like they are today, the--

[Zeno:] Hymns.

[Russell:] The gospel songs, or--

[Zeno:] Oh, yes, it was all most of the gospel songs that they would sing.

[Allen:] Was it the same as the Catholics at all?

[Lewis:] No, no.

[Russell:] No, no, it wouldn't be that, would it?

[Zeno:] Not the same, but very--

[Lewis:] I'll tell you: to me, to me--I know when I was a kid that I used to follow a lot of the parades and the funerals and, and, the, the music in the church was different than, than--you know, when I was a kid--than it is now. Because now, you can almost dance by the music in the church.

[Zeno:] Oh, sure, they dance by the music in the church now.

[Lewis:] But that music was mostly Dr. Watts.

[Russell:] Dr. Watts' hymns.

[Lewis:] Dr. Watts--you hear a lot of long--

[Russell:] Chants and all.

[Lewis:] Yeah, a lot of long meters and things like that. But you don't hear that no more.

ALICE ZENO
REEL II
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

-36-

[Russell:] They didn't have all that hand clapping and foot--

[Lewis:] No, no, they didn't have all that, no.

[Zeno:] No, no, they didn't [unintelligible] hands [unintelligible] in the church and--not at all.

[Lewis:] You heard a lot of long meters, and there was a lot of--what they say--like scriptures, you know.

[Russell:] Like the Psalms, maybe, or things like that?

[Lewis:] What they call that?

[Allen:] Responsive reading--is that it?

[Lewis:] Something--no, something like we say "Head bone connected to the"--

[Russell:] Oh, yes.

[Lewis:] What do you call that? Scriptures, I think is what you call it. 'Cause Griffin used to be one of--Reverend Griffin was one of those good singers of that kind of, that type of music.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Lewis:] Before he became a preacher. But he didn't let that kind like they play now in the church.

[Allen:] Well, what tempo would a long meter thing be--long meter hymn?

[Lewis:] Well, it was real slow, like somebody say--

[Zeno:] [Sings] "Praise [God from whom all blessings flow"?. That's long meter.

[Sings again] "Praise God from heav--"

[Lewis:] No, it was just a little different than that--say like [Lewis hums]--then the chur, the congregation would answer.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] Yeah, I've heard those; they do those today some places.

[Lewis:] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Russell:] In Chicago I've heard more of it than here.

[Lewis:] Yeah, you don't hear it here. Course, I don't know about Chicago, you know, but--

[Russell:] They still do that up there, sometimes, for ten or fifteen minutes at the

start of the service.

[Lewis:] Yes.

[Russell:] Different members will get up and they will start off on one of those Dr. Watts hymns.

[Zeno:] [Unintelligible]

[Lewis:] Yeah. Dr. Watts' hymns go like--hymns like "Mary Wore a Golden Chain," and "When I'm Dead and Buried, Don't Cry."

[Zeno:] "Grieve After Me."

[Lewis:] [Commenting on noise from street] School children--gee.

[Russell:] Well, it's coming in this window, too; don't, don't worry about it. The microphone is pointed towards you all, so it doesn't pick that up; it doesn't--we hear it louder than it is on the microphone, so that's not going to disturb us too much.

[Zeno:] Them children is coming from school.

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Yeah; coming from school there's going to be a little noise, I guess. We don't want to bother you too long on this; any time that you get tired, why, Mrs. Zeno, don't worry about--if you'd rather go and lie down or sit down, or if you have any work to, go ahead any time.

[Zeno:] I have no work to do; I wish I did.

[Russell:] Because we don't want to deep you here sitting up this way, if it makes you tired. Let's see--we were talking about George's early life, then, too. When did you get your clarinet, then, George?

[Lewis:] I got my clarinet about 19, 1910 or something like that, Bill. The first clarinet I had was, like I always say, was a cheap one. And the next one, my father bought me and the next one my mother bought me; but I never spent no money for no teacher, or nothing like that.

[Zeno:] No, no, I never spent a dime.

[Lewis:] She never spent a dime on a teacher; I never had a lesson in my life.

[Zeno:] He passed one night with a band--he used to get all the boys from around the block, you know, and go play, parade all around.

[Lewis:] [I always did?]-I used to play, used to call it a field band. That's what we called field bands. We had so many flutes, these things here--

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Lewis:] And two drums--sometime we wouldn't have any drums, we'd have a tub. And we'd march the streets at night like that.

[Russell:] Just the kids.

[Lewis:] Yeah, just the kids.

[Russell:] Oh, tell me one thing--people used to tell me [that] sometimes at the regular parades (that) the kids would take flutes along like that, and play with the big band--did they ever do that, allow that?

[Lewis:] Well, the onliest bands I saw with flutes was Jones' Band--Jones from the Home[Waifs' Home]--Louie Armstrong.

[Russell:] But I mean, say--say if the Masons would have a parade or something, like today with the Eureka Band, would any of the little kids in the neighborhood take their instruments along and try to play with them or anything, in the "second line"?

[Lewis:] I don't remember seeing anything like that.

[Zeno:] No, nothing like that.

[Russell:] In the "second line," did they ever take any instruments?

[Lewis:] No, I didn't see any, I never saw any.

[Zeno:] No, they didn't allow that sort of--

[Russell:] Never saw--

[Lewis:] But I remember, I know the, the Jones' Band used to have them, because on-- what they call this?--the 30th of May--we used to call it--

[Russell:] Oh, yes.

[Lewis:] Used to call it Grand Armies Day down here. They'd have a big to-do down at the Chalmette [Cemetery]. What you call it, Memorial Day?

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Lewis:] Memorial Day.

[Russell:] Yeah, down at--

[Allen:] Yeah, Memorial Day.

ALICE ZENO
REEL II
NOVEMBER 14, 1958

-39-

[Lewis:] Memorial Day. Well, Jones' Band, they would have flutes, such as--the boys, some of the boys was too small to play clarinet, such as Joe Rena; he was one of those flute players; he was--Joe Rena was one of those flute players.

[Zeno:] They mostly have the little, little--

[Lewis:] Too small, you know, too small to, for clarinet.

[Zeno:] [Unintelligible] mostly flutes like that. Because they used to pass on Rampart Street, you know--the old survivors.

[Russell:] Yes.

[Lewis:] Old soldiers, you know--they'd march down--

[Zeno:] The old soldiers, you know--some of them was, hardly could get about; all they could think about--nothing but flute.

[Allen:] Now--

[Russell:] Well, they still have a fife and drum corps sometimes today, like that.

[Zeno:] Well, they have the drum, yes, but they look like them drums was about this high.

[Allen:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Yeah; big field drums they call those today even, sometimes.

[Zeno:] Yes.

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Allen:] When did you first follow a parade or a funeral? Do you know what your age was, about?

[Lewis:] Oh, around about six years old. I followed parades--well, I used to run away and follow parades--jump the fence to follow parades. I have a cut right here from a "second line"--[unintelligible]. See right here.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Lewis:] It happened on Ursuline between Liberty and Marais. A brick was thrown out, nothin' but a kid, and struck me right here. And my mother and them were livin' in, ah, on Liberty between Ursuline and--where the sisters they have, the sisters live there now; them was a--my gran--my great grandmother's mistress was when we all were livin' there. And ah, that's when I got struck with this brick, one threwed a brick.

[Allen:] Well, that was just an accident, they wouldn't do that on purpose. [They want to hit someone else on purpose.]

[Lewis:] Oh, they wasn't doing it on purpose, but they were throwin'--fighting, and I caught that lick. Following, following the parades. I jumped a fence; I remember I had the scarlatina fever, and I was peeling like potatoes.

[Russell:] Yeah,

[Lewis:] And they used to send the police to see how I was comin' along so they would take the quarantine off.

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Lewis:] Used to plaster all the ceilings to fumigate the house, and as long as I was peeling, I wasn't supposed to go out, see? But I jump the fence and go follow the parade. We were livin' right back of the Hope's Hall then--it wasn't the Cooperator--it was the Hope's Hall, right there at 1226 St. Philip.

[Russell:] Yeah,

[Lewis:] And I--that's where I made my first communion there, in 1910.

[Russell:] Can you remember the music you hear there at Hope's Hall? I think you told me once you'd hear the band--I mean even when you were a kid, you didn't go in, you'd hear

[Lewis:] No, we didn't go in, we used to dance in the yards, back in the yard, because we could hear the music right from upstairs, uh-huh.

[Russell:] Yeah. Do you know who was playing then? Did you ever know who they were?

[Lewis:] Well, I heard, I heard Freddy Keppard there; I heard Manuel [Perez] there; I heard an old time bass player, Jimmy, Jimmy Brown, there; I heard MacMurray there, the old time drummer--and who else did I hear--I used to hear [Willie] Cornish there; I heard a lot of old timers, I heard, used to play right there.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Lewis:] Now on the front, they had a big porch, where the band used to come out on front and play.

[Russell:] Oh, yeah.

[Lewis:] Before they go in, you know, they play two tune, yeah.

[Russell:] To advertise!

[Lewis:] Uh-huh, yeah.

[Allen:] What did they call that when they'd go on the porch?

[Lewis:] Just to attract the people's attention, that's all.

[Allen:] Did they have a name for it?

[Lewis:] No, they didn't have no name for it. That stayed like that way up until they stop having dance hall. 'Cause that, when I started playing, that continued on until oh, in the '20s, when the halls started, you know, these dances started going down, down, down. What we used to do is stand in front of the Perseverance, also in front of the Economy Hall and all of those halls that didn't have porches. They was downstairs. The New Hall, and the France Amis Hall, all them halls--we stay on the sidewalk, play three, four numbers to get the people's attention, and then we'd go in.

[Allen:] What caused the dance halls to go down?

[Lewis:] Well, I think after the war, when the depression started coming on, ya know, and people just didn't have enough money; the society clubs start to fading out, ya know, they weren't giving anything, see. The organizations just couldn't keep up the halls, just, you know, off the funds of the organization, so it just went down.

[Allen:] Who did you hear when you were in the "Second Line"; do you remember any of the people?

[Lewis:] I heard the Excelsior, the Original Tuxedo, the Onward, the Superior.

[Allen:] The Superior was a marching band, then?

[Lewis:] It was a marching band--I believe it was two, there was the Superior dance band, and there was a Superior marching band too.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Lewis:] Also there was two Imperial bands; there was a marching band and then--and the Onward was only one; it was, was just a marching band.

[Allen:] I see. Well, would the same guys play in the orchestra and in the mar- ?

[Lewis:] No, no, not exactly. No.

[Allen:] They wouldn't be the same as the brass band?

[Lewis:] No, wouldn't always be the same, no. Well, I think in one, in one of the Imperial band, Manuel Perez was brass band man and dance band man.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Lewis:] But they had men like Adolph Alexander [Sr.], his father--well, he played a melophone, a baritone, he didn't play in it [dance band].

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Lewis:] And also--that man was raised with you there--Barbarin's father, he didn't, yeah.

[Russell:] Yes, Isidore.

[Lewis:] Yeah, Isidore. Lot of 'em didn't.

[Zeno:] Isidore.

[Russell:] Was he raised with you? Do you remember?

[Zeno:] Isidore?

[Lewis:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Isidore Barbarin?

[Zeno:] If I remember him! Grew in the yard with us children. Oh, he was, and all the children of the neighborhood, my grandmother would leave us, they had a big yard, and Isidore Barvarin, the old man, he grewed in the yard there with us.

[Allen:] He's gettin' a little deaf now.

[Zeno:] Oh, well, he's old, Isidore; he's old.

[Allen:] Is he as old as you?

[Zeno:] Huh?

[Allen:] Is he older than you?

[Zeno:] No, no, he's not as old as I am; I'm the oldest one. But he's Tati's age, around Tati and Alphonse.

[Lewis:] Up in the eighties.

[Zeno:] In the eighties. Good in about, Tati was about eighty-seven, eh?

[Russell:] I think he's close to ninety now. I forget, Paul told me the last birthday, I forget what he said.

[Lewis:] He's way up there, I know that.

[Zeno:] Tati will be eighty-eight.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Zeno:] And that's his--that's about Isidore's age.

[Russell:] Well, this changes the subject a little bit, but when did you go across the lake? You used to tell me about going over there.

[Lewis:] Oh, I used to go across the lake every year, practically, along when I was goin' to school, on vacation from a kid.

[Russell:] Did your mother go over there with you?

[Lewis:] No, my father and my mother, well, they was separated at that time.

[Russell:] Oh, I see.

[Lewis:] I used to go over there with my father, but I went over the lake in, in 19, around 1919, or something like that. No, it was a little later than that--in the beginning of the twenties, in '20. When my--Mildred taken sick; and she was

born in 1919. And she was taken very low sick.

[Zeno:] You was about twenty-one years old, huh?

[Lewis:] No, I was just twenty.

[Zeno:] Mildred was born in when?

[Lewis:] 1919!!!

[Zeno:] 1919.

[Lewis:] And I stay over there then until twenty, twenty-three I think. I stayed over there, you know, permanently. So they . . . and my father died around in that, that, time and I came back to New Orleans.

[Allen:] And did you hear any music over there, in . . . ?

[Lewis:] Well, I was playing, sure.

[Russell:] [Laughs]

[Allen:] You heard some, huh?

[Lewis:] Sure, I played, I played with Leonard Parker over there, I played with Buddy Petit's band over there, around over there.

[Allen:] What was the first band you played with over the lake?

[Lewis:] The first band I played over the lake with was, was the little Black Eagle.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Lewis:] Over the lake, there.

[Russell:] To interrupt again, since Dick asked you what music you heard--you used to tell me about hearing Isidore Fritz.

[Lewis:] I heard Isidore Fritz.

[Russell:] That's what I wanted to know about.

[Lewis:] Isidore Frütz and Bunk [Johnson]. . . .

