

BUDDY BURNS
I [only]--Digest--Retyped
August 14, 1958

Also present: |
William Russell

[cf. Buddy Burns' interview, Sept. 23, 1968.]

Nelson Buddy Burns was born August 28, 1900. [Where? R.B.A.]
His first instrument was piano; there was one at his home, although
his parents weren't musical. The first Dixieland band BB heard (not
[or Olympia? RBA] [i.e. Liberty]
the Olympic Band) had Lib/Newton on bass (he started BB on bass, in
1910); Nini was on drums; Tig Chambers played trumpet; Yank [Johnson]
played trombone; Emmett played guitar; Freddy Keppard played cornet;
Ishman [spelling?] Tureaud played alto horn. It was a dance band. The
reason BB started playing music was that the band rehearsed at his
house once a week; Lib Newton was the boy friend of BB's oldest
sister.

BB was Methodist in his youth, but became Catholic, his wife's
religion, when he married. They came from around Seventh and
Howard [now LaSalle] and moved downtown when they married.

Bass players BB liked when he was young: Alec [Scott? R.B.A.]
(BB always wanted to play bass like him when he grew up); George "Pops"
Foster [same comment as for Alec applies]. Starting with Newton,
BB later "got hooked up" with Chester Zardis, who showed BB how to
swing. Richard McLean taught BB "the music" [i.e., to read?], and
Pinchback Tureaud also taught BB. Most of the bass players of that
time, including BB, played mostly with a bow; they did very little
picking. Lib Newton played mostly with the bow; Alec was a fine
picker. BB remembers Jimmy Johnson and Bob Lyons; BB was young when
he heard them, doesn't remember the bands they were with; BB would
hear them when he went around with Newton, who took him everywhere he

played, which led to BB's taking up bass. BB quit playing after a while and didn't resume until twelve or fifteen years later. The first band BB worked with was that of Kid Rena [trumpet]; others in this group: Rena's brother, Joe [René (sic)], drums; (clarinet player was not George Lewis, nor was it Georgie Boyd, who played with Rena at one time;) Jim Robinson (BB thinks), trombone. BB's first job with that band was at St. Elizabeth's Hall, which was at Camp and Valence [streets]; they worked Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights. BB also worked other places; he worked at Milneburg, and at the Happy Landing for four or five years, with George E. Parker; others in that band: Elmer Talbert, trumpet; "Father [Cally?]", [i.e., Father Al Lewis? RBA], guitar.

Brass bands are mentioned; BB remembers Eddie Jackson, tuba player; Jackson played string bass when BB was first trying to play bass; Jackson took up tuba years later [check this--RBA]; Jackson was from Algiers. Henry Kimball, bass, is mentioned; BB remembers seeing him play sith "Bebé" Ridgley; BB remembers Ridgley, too.

BB first left New Orleans for California in 1936; he returned to New Orleans, leaving again in 1941 for California, where he has lived ever since.

Brass bands, uptown, are mentioned; Bebe^h Ridgley had an organized band; so did Kid Ory; Lib Newton also had one; Jack Carey had one. BB has misunderstood the question and is speaking of advertising bands instead of brass bands. The brass bands had twelve to sixteen

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(excerpt)

Burns gives a confusing account. First he says that the drummer was on the tailgate; finally, he says that the trombone is on the tailgate. William Russell says the clarinet and cornet are in the front, and Burns agrees.

pieces in them; they wore full uniforms; instrumentation was usually two or three each, trumpets, trombones, and clarinets; sometimes they used alto sax [cf. other interviews]. BB played several times on advertising wagons. Talk of wagons, size, method of locomotion, seating arrangement. Talk of bucking contests: BB says Kid Ory and Jack Carey bucked all the time, especially against one another, both being trombonists. For these advertising and dance jobs paid \$1.00-\$1.25 each.

After he had left Kid Rena, BB played some with Papa Celestin, with Kid Howard, and with "most all of them." ^{cf.} [Buddy Burns interview, Sept 23, 1968]

BB preferred the bass playing of Chester Zardis, and patterned his style after Zardis's. ~~CO~~ was the hardest worker. Lib Newton, who started BB on bass, didn't believe much in swinging.

Of the trumpet players of today, BB likes ^[Mike?] ~~Mike~~ DeLay; of the older trumpet players, he liked Kid Rena and Kid Howard; BB also liked Elmer "Coo Coo" Talbert (although BB says he was sort of weak, because of a stroke). Rena had a wide range, big tone, strong lips.

BB's favorite drummer for jazz was Nini, who really could swing.

George Lewis was the man BB always liked on clarinet. WR mentions [Lorenzo] Tio, [Jr.,] [George] Baquet, and Johnny Dodds. BB knew of them, but didn't hear them. George Boyd was another good clarinetist. Zeb [Leneries] (another clarinetist) is mentioned.

BB remembers music being played at Miss [Betsy] Cole's, which was uptown; she held lawn parties at first, later opening a dance

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hall under her name; BB says the dance hall was built on the site of the lawn parties, on Willow Street between Jackson and Josephine. BB attended lawn parties there when he was just a kid; the lawn parties were held every weekend. There was also music at St. Elizabeth's Hall, Camp and Valence [streets]; there was also St. Dominique's Hall. Talk of Miss Coë's lawn parties: admission was 15¢; no hard liquor sold; various kinds of food were sold; ran from about 8 [p.m.] until 3 [a.m.].

BB got his day occupation, a builder, from his father, who was also a builder.

Richard McLean started BB in reading music; Pinchback Tureaud helped him further in reading; Wilcox helped him some more.

BB couldn't get in the W.P.A. Band; he says a person had "to pull some straws" to get in it.

BB married when he was sixteen; his wife was fifteen.

End of Reel I

