

[Manetta:] Play more easier with the amplifier on.

[BreauX:] Yet, but you don't get the true tone that--

[Manetta:] Oh, I see.

[BreauX:] You know what I mean? Just like--

[Russell:] So you don't like the electric amplifier on a bass, then?

[BreauX:] No, I don't.

[Allen:] What about these Fender basses?

[BreauX:] I don't like them either. I like the old style bass violin; you get a truer tone.

[Manetta:] BreauX, you don't know of anyone having a full size bass, then, huh?

[BreauX:] No, the last one that had a full-size bass, I don't know what happened to it; the old man that died--

[Manetta:] Albert Glenney?

[BreauX:] Yeah. They tell me his wife had it, but when I went to see her it was gone; I don't know who got hold of it.

[Allen:] They sold it to this woman on St. Peter Street, and she sold it to some guy up north.

[BreauX:] I didn't see it, but I understand it was a full-size bass.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Manetta:] Buddy Burns' been worrying about a full-size bass; if I could get in touch with one--

[Russell:] You never found out about Eddie Jackson's bass, huh?

[Manetta:] No, I never did hear; Andrew Morgan was to let me know about it, but I never did hear.

[Allen:] Did you ever hear--

[BreauX:] Eddie Jackson had a tuba, huh?

[Manetta:] He had a tuba, but he used to play bass too, you know.

[BreauX:] I never did hear him play it; I knew he played a lot of tuba.

[Manetta:] No, he had put his tuba up and he played bass with the Nola Band.

[Breau:] Oh, yeah?

[Manetta:] With Peter Locaze.

[Breau:] How do you like that! I didn't know [anything ?].

[Manetta:] Oh, yeah, I played jobs with him.

[Breau:] I know he played a lot of tuba all right.

[Manetta:] Yeah, I played a lot of jobs with Eddie with his bass violin. He used to read pretty nice.

[Allen:] What kind of tuba would he play?

[Breau:] I don't know if it was a E flat or a double B flat, but I know he used to make it ring out.

[Allen:] Would it come up over your?--

[Breau:] A sousaphone.

[Allen:] Sousaphone.

[Breau:] Sousaphone.

[Manetta:] Yeah, but Eddie used to have an upright.

[Breau:] I don't remember the upright.

[Manetta:] Tuba.

[Breau:] Every time I saw him he had a sousaphone.

[Manetta:] No; remember how he used to make all that noise when he'd blow them pickets out them fences; there man, he'd pass by old Featherhead's there, and blow there and knock the fence down.

[Allen:] Pass by who?

[Manetta:] Old Featherhead. Them old fences, you know--

[Allen:] Oh, no.

[Breau:] Picket fence--you know, the vibrations would knock it loose.

[Manetta:] Knocked a whole plank out of the fence.

[Breux:] I believe he got more tone out of a bass tuba than just about anybody in this section; he had a tone.

[Manetta:] He was skinny as anything, but he had a wind.

[Breux:] Yeah. I don't care how big the brass band, you wouldn't have to wonder who was playing tuba; you knew.

[Russell:] You could really hear him, huh?

[Breux:] Yeah, man, for blocks away.

[Russell:] Anybody around who plays as well as he does now on tuba, do you think?

[Breux:] Plays as well?

[Russell:] Yeah. Or anything like him.

[Manetta:] Around town now--no.

[Breux:] No.

[Manetta:] During that time around his prime, I knew a fellow [unintelligible].

[Breux:] Mr.--John Porter was a good bass tuba player.

[Manetta:] That's right; Frank Robinson too.

[Breux:] I didn't know him too well, but I know Mr. John Porter used to play.

[Manetta:] Yeah. Had a bump on his forehead.

[Breux:] This other old man, used to be with the Tonic Triad, used to play a nice bass tuba, too. That's the same one you're talking about, used to [always be along with Mr. Pritchett [Pritchard ?] and them ?]?

[Manetta:] Yeah, I think so.

[Breux:] I disremember his name--little dark fellow.

[Allen:] I'll ask Red Clark. Was that when Red Clark was playing trombone with them? He was with that band.

[Manetta:] I think Frank was around with that old, during that time

that you're speaking of.

[Breaux:] Maybe that's the same fellow I'm talking about; I know he played a nice bass and he used to read well, because--

[Manetta:] Oh, he was a nice reader.

[Breaux:] I used to rehearsal with him a couple of times. You know, I started playing right there on St. Peter Street where the Tonic Triads used to rehearsal.

[Manetta:] Because Eddie taken some lessons, bass lessons, from him.

[Allen:] On St. Peter?

[Manetta:] He was a cook.

[Breaux:] That's right, St. Peter between Liberty and Marais [Streets]. They started a school there--Mister Jones over at the Jones home. They started a school there and--oh, that's a long time ago; I was a kid then; I was in school--and he had a set-up there; you'd take music lessons, carpentry work, printing, and--oh, he had about four or five different crafts you could take. And you could take a couple of them if you wanted. Well, that's where I started learning, right there, under Professor Middleton.

[Manetta:] Oh, yeah, Middleton, yeah.

[Breaux:] Do you remember him?

[Manetta:] Oh, yeah.

[Allen:] What was his name? Do you know his first name?

[Breaux:] Middleton? I never did know other than the--

[Manetta:] What become of him?

[Breaux:] He died; he lost his mind and he died.

[Manetta:] Yeah? I used to know him; I remember him.

[Breaux:] He was a pretty nice old teacher, he was. In fact, there wasn't but two teachers I had: there was him and Old Man [Paul] Chaligny.

[Manetta:] Chaligny, yeah.

[BreauX:] I got a few pointers from Professor Touro, too--Pinchback Touro.

[Manetta:] Yeah, Pinchback--violin player. Lived uptown.

[BreauX:] No, when I was going around him he was living here on Galvez and St. Bernard.

[Manetta:] Oh, yeah?

[BreauX:] Uh-huh.

[Manetta:] But when he died, he died uptown.

[BreauX:] I lost track of him; I didn't know when he died.

[Manetta:] Pinchback--he was tall, used to drink his whiskey, playing that--

[BreauX:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] Did you play with the WPA band under him?

[BreauX:] No; he tried his best to get me in there, but I wasn't for it. That was during depression, but I was doing pretty good work, other than, you know, playing music.

[Allen:] Well, you must have quite a few trades, or something, huh?

[BreauX:] Yeah, yeah; I reckon I've tried a little of everything.

[Allen:] You owned the Hollywood; I remember going out there a couple of times.

[BreauX:] Yeah, I had a joint; I stayed in barroom business until the first of this year. I sold out to my brother. And unless the music here haven't pick up soon, I'm trying to get back in for next year; I might open a place downtown. That give me an idea; you might could give me some idea. This afternoon, if you want to take a run, right down Claiborne Street, I want to show you this place I got a idea of opening.

[Manetta:] Claiborne where?

[Breau:] Claiborne near Ursuline, between Ursuline and St. Philip--
where the Bumble Inn was.

[Manetta:] Oh, yeah.

[Breau:] I have a chance to get possession of it for next year.

[Allen:] Is that where [Lemon] Nash is playing now?

[Breau:] No, there's nobody there now; the place is closed.

[Manetta:] Yeah, it's closed.

[Allen:] I thought old Lemon was [unintelligible].

[Manetta:] [Near Little Beck's place, wasn't it:]?]

[Breau:] Yeah, I like the neighborhood; I like the spot. It
should prove very profitable.

[Russell:] It's on Claiborne?

[Breau:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Little Beck's used to be along in there somewhere.

[Breau:] No, no, Little Beck is further down.

[Russell:] Further down?

[Breau:] Yeah.

[Russell:] I thought that was near Ursuline, and St. Philip.

[Breau:] No, Beck was in the same block as Steve--Little Beck, yes.

[Russell:] Oh, it's down; that's right; I remember now.

[Breau:] Down near Lapeyrouse [Street].

[Russell:] Way down, past Esplanade. When did you start in music?
We might ask you a few questions--even first, when you were born, your
[unintelligible]?

[Breau:] Oh, I started playing music in about 1928 or '29; I
disremember exactly what year it was.

[Russell:] When were you born?

[Breau:] I was born in 1916, August 11.

[Russell:] August 11?

[Breau:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] Did you start out on your own, or did you have a teacher at first?

[Breau:] Well, no, I started--the first, when I first started playing music was right there on St. Peter Street with Professor Middleton, and I started there playing drum. How I happened to get involved in this situation, I always was more or less musically inclined, but it was my misfortune being born during the depression, almost. I mean, rather, came up during the depression.

[Russell:] Were you born here in town?

[Breau:] That's right.

[Russell:] New Orleans.

[Breau:] Yeah, I was born in New Orleans.

[Russell:] Which neighborhood, downtown?

[Breau:] On Josephine and Willow [Streets].

[Russell:] Oh, uptown.

[Breau:] Mrs. Hebert Cole's house--she was very well noted during her days.

[Russell:] Right in that same house where they had the lawn parties?

[Breau:] That's right; I was born next door to it; I was born right next door.

[Manetta:] I used to play there.

[Breau:] We was renting from Mrs. Hebert Cole--my mother was.

[Manetta:] I'll bet I knowed you; you was a little bitty fellow then.

[Breau:] Well, no, not then, because, I mean, I was born in 1916 and we moved from there when I was, before I knew myself. You probably knew my daddy, because my daddy used to be bartender there.

[Manetta:] That's right. Correct.

[Breaux:] They used to call him Tom.

[Manetta:] Tom, that's it.

[Breaux:] His right name was Theophile, but everybody that knew him called him Tom Breaux. He used to work for the I. C. Railroad.

[Allen:] Theophile?

[Breaux:] Yeah. T-H-E-O-P-H-I-L-E.

[Allen:] Did he play music at all?

[Breaux:] No; I'm the onliest one in the family plays that I know of, other than Wellman [Braud], and I understand my grandfather used to play--the [K.O. ?] Breaux from out in St. James Parish--but I never did know him; that was my daddy's daddy. I understand he played violin years back. And then, well, I have some other relatives: Ruffin [spelling ?] Walker played for a while; that's a cousin of mine.

[Manetta:] Yeah, Ruffin Walker.

[Breaux:] Yeah, he was a trumpet player; he had his own band out there in St. James Parish, too. He didn't play too long; he went into the contracting business, brick masonry. And he did pretty well for himself, so he let music alone.

[Allen:] Who did they play with out there? Did they play with any other bands other than their own?

[Breaux:] Oh, yeah; that's where Claiborne Williams and all them fellows was from around that territory.

[Allen:] Freddy Landry, do you know him?

[Breaux:] I didn't know him.

[Manetta:] From Donaldsonville.

[Breaux:] Yeah; well, that's in St. James Parish. They played off and on with him until Ruffin organized his own band and then he had his band for a while. How long it lasted I don't know, because I

wasn't out there. All my people are from that territory.

[Allen:] How long did you stick with drums?

[Breaux:] Oh, not too very long. I started to tell you, I started going--the gang in the neighborhood started telling me about the school, so I got interested, and it was a good place to go in the evening after school, I mean to keep you out of mischief, so I started going around there. I started taking--I had a little printing under this teacher there--I can't think of his name--and then I was taking up carpentry, and then I started going listening to the band. Well, they had enough fellows--youngsters--there to organize a little band, using the Red Book and the E-Z Method. They had the E-Z Method and from them you go into the Red Book. I started playing drums with the intention of getting on the saxophone, but in the meantime the band was progressing so fast they didn't have anybody to play bass, so Professor Middleton chose me by [reason of] me being large--I was always large in size. And so he suggested that I play bass, because, you know, big instrument--big fellow, big instrument. So I started taking bass lessons, and finally found an E-flat upright tuba at Werlein's. He went by and got my mother interested, and she bought that for me. I think at that time she paid \$55.00 or \$65.00, or something like that for it, and I started playing the bass tuba. And, well, I stayed with the little group until I got into high school. When I got to high school with Albert Wicker, that's when we started our first orchestra--a bunch of fellows from down in the Tremé District, they call it, the seventh, I mean the fifth ward. And we started a little band. We called the Crescent City High-Hatters. That was Maurice and George Justin, and Harold Antoine, Andrew Alexis, James Ursin, oh--

[Allen:] What did they play, those different guys?

[Breux:] Maurice and George were first alto and tenor--George played tenor and Maurice played first alto. Clemiel [spelling ?] Phillips played third alto; James Ursin played trumpet; Andrew Alexis played trumpet; Lionel Woods played guitar and banjo. And we had another guy in there--Joe Snaer, he was a trumpet player--that's Albert Snaer's nephew. He was along in there with us. And Preston Guichard, he was on trombone--well, he's quit playing since; he played until he got married.

[Allen:] Is he related to Al?

[Breux:] That's his brother. Preston lives right there on St. Philip Street now. That's Skees' brother--we call him Skees, little Guichard. Alfred plays alto, Skees plays bass, You know the bass player? Guichard?

[Allen:] No, I don't know either one of them. I've just heard of Alfred. Bill might know him. Do you know him?

[Breux:] Well, Alfred plays saxophone, but Skees played bass. He's up around "Naptown," Indianapolis somewhere now. Fine little bass player, too, very nice. I went on with them, the Crescent City High Hatters, and I stayed with them until--oh, I guess we kept the band going until about two years or three years, maybe. Then I branched off and I got with Bill Phillips' Dixie Syncopators. And from then on I played with practically every local band in this territory; John Robichaux, Paul Barbarin, Henry Harding, Red Howard, Red Rena--

[Allen:] Who were in some of these different bands, like Joe Phillips and Joe Robichaux [and so on ?]?

[Breux:] Joe Phillips? I never did play with--

[Allen:] No, not Johnny--what did you say, what kind of Phillips?

[Breux:] Bill, Bill Phillips.

[Allen:] Oh, I'm getting confused, there are so many Phillips.

[Breau:] Bill Phillips. Bill Phillips plays drum himself--and oh, I don't know, who all was in that band now? I played with so many different little outfits. I think Lionel Woods was along in there on guitar too; he came along with Bill Phillips. Joe Snaer was in there. Practically the whold Crescent City High Hatters changed over to Billy Phillips. I think that's the way it was: the Crescent City High Hatters disbanded and Bill Phillips took over, with practically the same musicians, with the exception of he played drums himself--we changed drummers. Before, we had a little fellow called Harold Antoine playing drums with us.

[Allen:] Who was with Joe Robichaux?

[Breau:] Joe Robichaux? Oh, let's see: who all was in that band? He had a big band, too: Maurice, Justin; Alfred Guichard was in that at one time.

[Allen:] These are the saxes?

[Breau:] Uh-huh. Gene Ware--

[Allen:] What did he play?

[Manetta:] Gene Porter.

[Breau:] Gene Ware? Played a trumpet.

[Manetta:] Gene Porter, saxophone.

[Breau:] Gene Porter played saxophone.

[Manetta:] And Eugene, Homer Eugene played guitar.

[Breau:] That's right, Homer Eugene on guitar. And naturally, Robichaux himself on piano.

[Allen:] Did you name a drummer?

[Manetta:] Freddy Kohlman played drum with them.

[Breau:] Freddy came in afterward before, they had "Bucket" on drums. I never did know "Bucket's" right name--little pigeon-toed fellow. He was even more pigeon-toed than Joe Robichaux. His

toes used to laugh at one another. Yeah. You remember little "Bucket?"

[Manetta:] Yeah.

[Breaux:] He never would sit down and play; he'd always lean against a stool; he was just that short.

[Allen:] Did you play here in the city with that band, or did you travel?

[Breaux:] No, I played, not as a regular, but I used to play them so often, you know, a substitute. At that time Joe Robichaux had the Rhythm Club wide open--it wasn't the Rhythm Club; it was before the Rhythm Club it was the Silver Slipper, or something like that.

[Allen:] Where is it?

[Breaux:] Back [at] Jackson and Derbigny [Streets]. That was-- "Tootie" Mancuso's set up back there at Jackson and Derbigny.

[Manetta:] [Where they ?] had the Long Paradise.

[Breaux:] Oh, yeah, that was on Rampart Street. Well, I didn't work on Rampart, when he had the little band.

[Manetta:] That's when he had Gene Ware and all them people.

[Breaux:] That's right, it was the little band. When he got back to the Rhythm Club he had the big band: he had Baby Briscoe--

[Manetta:] And he had that bass player from Natchez.

[Breaux:] Baby Briscoe--and what's this other gal was entertaining with him? He had two girls entertaining, Baby Briscoe and [Joan ?]
[John ?]
Lunceford--John Lunceford, that's right.

[Manetta:] What was the little bass player's name, from Natchez? Little bright fellow, little scrawny fellow.

[Breaux:] From Natchez?

[Manetta:] That was his bass player. I can't think of his name. I know him well, too, but it just passed out of my mind, his name.

[Breaux:] Ransom.

[Manetta:] Ransom.

[Breaux:] Ransom.

[Manetta:] That's right, Ransom.

[Allen:] Ransom Knowling?

[Breaux:] Yeah, he's in Chicago now.

[Allen:] Ransom Knowling is that the one, Ransom Knowling?

[Breaux:] I don't know if that's his full [name]; all I know is Ransom.
He's in Chicago now.

[Allen:] Played good tuba, too?

[Breaux:] Tuba and bass violin, yeah.

[Allen:] Did he work on the boat any?

[Breaux:] That's--yeah, he did.

[Manetta:] Yeah, Ransom.

[Allen:] Who'd he work with on the boat? I'm trying to see if it's
the same guy.

[Breaux:] Who was he with on that boat? I mean, I really don't know.
But I do know he played on the boat, but I mean--

[Manetta:] I saw him on the boat with Fate there once.

[Breaux:] I think it was Fate Marable.

[Manetta:] I think Henry ["Red"] Allen was on ther⁻² with 'em along at
that time.

[Breaux:] You get affiliated with so many different fellows, you lose
track of just what position he was in, you know, from time to time.

[Allen:] When did you first play with Paul Barbarin?

[Breaux:] Oh, Paul--I played, the first time I played with Paul was
around 1930--around '38 or '39, something like that.

[Allen:] What kind of band was it? Big band, small band?

[Breaux:] At that time Paul had a, I think it was a ten or eleven
piece outfit. Yeah, because he had "Bat Man" playing saxophone with

him; he had Tom Johnson for a while with him--and what's this other fellow used to play so much nice tenor, used to play with Fats Pichon? He moved to Chicago, too. It's a couple of brothers; one plays tenor and one plays guitar.

[Allen:] Bill Casimir.

[Breux:] Casimir, that's right.

[Manetta:] Oh, yeah.

[Allen:] Sam and--

[Breux:] And Bill.

[Allen:] Sam plays guitar.

[Breux:] Recently--I say recently--I also played for a while with the Johnson Brothers. That's a band I don't know if you ever heard of them; they were around here; they were a real nice little combo.

[Manetta:] They had a nice trio.

[Breux:] No, they had a combo when I was with them; they had a nice combo.

[Manetta:] What become of them?

[Breux:] Well, Raymond Johnson and Plas Johnson, they both was inducted and went in service, and when they came out they moved to California, I think--either California or New York, because--their mother's gone out there, too; their mother used to play piano on Bourbon Street, there--

[Allen:] What was her name? Mrs. Johnson.

[Breux:] Well, naturally, Mrs. Johnson. I'm trying to think--that's not the name she used, though. She used to play right there on Toulouse and Bourbon, across from Dan Levy's; she worked there--

[Allen:] French Opera House?

[Breux:] No, no, no the other--

[Allen:] The river, uptown corner?

[Breaux:] Right. She worked there for a long time, because for a while, while she was working there, I was working over at Dan Levy's International Bar with Cato's trio. We had a trio then; Cato played piano, Curtis Trevigne on guitar, and myself on bass. We worked there along with Earl Williams for about a year or so.

[Russell:] Excuse me for interrupting, but years ago somebody came down from up north and told me they'd heard a good woman pianist; they called her Stormy Weather then, or maybe just Stormy. It wasn't the strip teaser, but some colored woman that played piano real well, on Bourbon Street. It wouldn't be--she wouldn't have used that name?

[Breaux:] No. She used her first name.

[Allen:] She's out in California, you say, now? [Possibly "Gracie" See John Joseph]

[Breaux:] I'm pretty sure she's in California; she's in Los Angeles--yes, it's in California.

[Allen:] What did Raymond and the other Johnson boy play?

[Breaux:] Let's see, I don't want to get it wrong: I think Raymond played the piano; and Plas played saxophone. That's old man Plas Johnson's son--you know Plas Johnson?

[Manetta:] Oh, yeah.

[Breaux:] Well, he was the saxophonist.

[Allen:] Say, who inspired you on bass? I was wondering about that, that's another thing.

[Breaux:] Professor Middleton. You see, I mean, I didn't have my mind on bass when I first started taking music lessons. I started playing drums with the idea of going on to saxophone. And by this little--well, you might call it a little military band, because [in] the average school band you start playing marches; I call it military band--by not having anybody that was playing bass voluntarily, through

their own intuition, he suggested that I play bass because I was the largest student.

[Allen:] Did he play bass himself?

[Breaux:] Professor Middleton?

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Breaux:] Oh, he was very versatile with all instruments; he played bass, and trumpet--he was a brass man: trombone, trumpet, bass tuba, I never did hear him do any too much work with a reed instrument. Whether he played them or not I don't know, but--

[Allen:] Well, for jazz, who do you like on bass? Who inspired you when you were young as to playing jazz? Was ther anybody you listened to?

[Breaux:] Well, I mean, it may sound like a joke, but I carried a lot of respect for Wellman, my cousin. I mean, I used to listen to a few of his records at that time that they had out, when he was with Duke Ellington, and I liked it very much. And then when he got that writeup, the Ripley writeup with the tremendous speed he had on the bass, well, I just went on and stuck at the bass.

[Russell:] Oh, had you explained just how it was--I wasn't--I was watching the machine there--did you explain how you're related to Wellman? If his father and your father were brothers or cousins, or how were they related?

[Breaux:] Let me see if I can gather it up; I never did take time to do this before. Wellman's--I think it work out [that] Wellman's daddy and my daddy's daddy was brothers--I think that's the way it is; I'm not sure. It's a couple or few generations before me, so--

[Allen:] He told me he'd never met you, but had known your daddy. I showed him a picture of you, and he recognized it.

[Breaux:] Yeah, he and my daddy was youngsters together.

[Allen:] I was wondering about some of the different kinds of places you played in, some of the different kind of jobs that you've played, say, during the depression. What kind of job would you take in music?

[Breaux:] Music? Well, I mean, during that time, I mean, well, we played dances. I played for years on the Tip Top with Clyde Kerr's orchestra. That was a big band; that was one of the very popular bands around New Orleans: Clyde Kerr, Sidney Desvigne, and Herbert Leary. Well, Leary is still in business; Sidney, he left and went to California, and Clyde is now teaching with the New Orleans Public School system. But just before World War II he had one of the best aggregations in the city. We had every Sunday afternoon on the Tip Top, and the majority of the night dances, except when they had out-of-town attractions. But every matinee we had it on the Tip Top. Oh, he had a big band. Dave Bartholomew was one of his trumpet players. Clyde Kerr himself, Dave Bartholomew, and his younger brother who has deceased since; was killed in Chicago--and I think he had three trombones up there too; he had about six brass, and about five or six reeds, and full rhythem at all times: piano, bass, guitar, and drum.

[Manetta:] He was there at Booker during that time.

[Breaux:] Who?

[Manetta:] He was teaching at Booker T. Washington during that time when he had his band--Clyde Kerr.

[Breaux:] No, I don't think he was teaching at the time I'm talking about; the time I'm talking about Clyde was still in college; he was still going to Xavier, he was still in school. In fact, we all was in school, then.

[Allen:] Where were you in school then?

[Breaux:] Huh?

[Allen:] Where were you in school then, yourself?

[Breaux:] Well, at that time I must have been over at Wicker--either there or Craig--that's the only two schools I went to down in this neighborhood--I mean, since I've been affiliated with music.

[Russell:] Aside from Wellman, who were some of the other good bass players you heard when you were young, even as a little kid, before you wanted to take up music? Do you remember?

[Breaux:] Well, I liked that--Albert Morgan was real nice; he suited my taste well. Wellman, Albert Morgan--and there was another youngster that started out, but he died young; he got in Duke's band after Wellman left.

[Russell:] Jimmy Blanton, I guess.

[Breaux:] Blanton, Blanton, that's his name; he was a very fine bassist.

[Russell:] I meant down here, though. Any of the old timers [unintelligible] especially.

[Breaux:] Oh, around New Orleans? I remember one fellow I liked very much. They tell me he couldn't read, but I never did have a chance to prove it, and I never did know his right name. He used to live over on your side of the river, Fess. Used to call him "Twat." [Joseph Butler]

[Manetta:] Oh, Twat.

[Allen:] Kid Twat.

[Manetta:] They know Kid Twat.

[Breaux:] He was playing with Clyde Kerr's orchestra before I got in there.

[Russell:] Do you know his real name. Fess?

[Manetta:] Not his real name, no. Never did know his real name, but I've known him for years--Twat.

[Breaux:] Then we had another fine young bass player around--

[Manetta:] How you like little Chester during that time.

[Breaux:] Chester was splendid--Chester Zardis; he played a real nice bass, he and Cleo. Do you remember Cleo?

[Manetta:] Yes--Cleo.

[Breaux:] Cleo got killed [unintelligible]--

[Manetta:] Simon was around that time, eh?

[Breaux:] I don't ever remember hearing him.

[Manetta:] Simon Marrero?

[Breaux:] I heard of him, and Mr. Glenney--well, I always did respect his playing.

[Manetta:] Alec Riley.

[Breaux:] I don't know any of them. There was another youngster, Herman Mitchell--I don't know if you remember him or not. He's in California too, now. He and I start music at about the same time.

[Manetta:] Herman Mitchell? Yeah, I knew Herman.

[Breaux:] Little Herman--he used to play the violin, too.

[Manetta:] Yeah, I knowed Herman.

[Breaux:] In the concert band over at school there, he played melophone, he played a nice melophone. He turned out to be a wonderful little bass player; I used to love to hear him play. And Guichard, too, young Guichard, he was a fine bass player.

[Russell:] In those days did they pick most of the time, or did some of them use the bow? How did they do, when you were a kid?

[Breaux:] Well, when I came along they was just about breaking ice with the bow--I mean, everybody was going to picking; it's was very little bowing I've seen. Chester did a nice job on bowing, and Mr.

Glenny did. And old man Mitchells, Herman Mitchells' daddy, he'd bow pretty well. But the majority of the fellows, Cleo and myself, we never did bother with a bow; I did very, very little bowing.

[Manetta:] You knew fellows during the time of Glenny's time-- well, later than Glenny--old bass players?

[Breaux:] Well, not personally; I might have seen them, but not to know them.

[Manetta:] You knowed Billy Marrero?

[Breaux:] Billy Maré?

[Manetta:] Billy Marrero.

[Breaux:] Billy Marrero. No, I've heard of him; I never did meet him. Old man Mitchells and Mr. Glenny, I used to see them quite often.

[Russell:] [Do you] remember Mr. Kimball? Did you hear him?

[Manetta:] Old Henry Kimball?

[Breaux:] You mean Kimball's Daddy? No, I don't remember him. I remember Kimball; Kimball was another fine bass player.

[Russell:] The old man.

[Breaux:] He was converted from guitar to bass. He did a fine job; still plays nice bass. (Traffic noise)

[Manetta:] Jimmy Brown?

[Breaux:] Who?

[Manetta:] Jimmy Brown.

[Breaux:] Jimmy Brown? Brown uptown? Still playing?

[Manetta:] Brown from downtown. He was the best down there then. Jimmy Brown, he used to read a lot. He played with the Imperial and all them bands.

[Breaux:] I don't remember him.

[Manetta:] [He played with all them fellows ?] at that time.

[Breaux:] This fellow we spoke about, used to play with Robichaux.

Ransom, he's a wonderful bass player.

[Manetta:] Yeah, little Ransom--

[Breau:] Yeah, I knew him. [He was a youngster. He was fine ?].

[Manetta:]

[Allen:] How much did you get paid, say, with Clyde Kerr's band?

[Breau:] (laughs)

[Allen:] Practically nothing?

[Breau:] Why you want to bring that up?

[Allen:] I think it's something some people ought to know about:
the depression.

[Breau:] Well, for the matinée, I think the matinée at that time
was paying six bits, sometimes a dollar, and night dances, a dollar
and a quarter. Unless now and then there'd be a special dance, some
club and all that--well, then you could squeeze out maybe a dollar
and a half, maybe two dollars.

[Allen:] How much were music jobs paying, generally, during the
depression?

[Breau:] During the depression, generally?

[Allen:] Yeah.

[Breau:] Dollar and a quarter was top price, most places. I mean,
now and then you'd get a special that paid up to two dollars a
night.

[Manetta:] I know you know Sam Nickerson.

[Breau:] Oh, yeah.

[Manetta:] Sam and his brother, guitar player, Philip.

[Breau:] Those Nicholsons, I knew them, not too very well--are they
related to Albert Nicholas?

[Manetta:] Oh, no.

[Breau:] 'Cause Albert Nicholas was--

[Manetta:] That was Nickerson.

[Breaux:] Oh, Nickerson.

[Manetta:] Sam Nickerson, and his brother, the guitar player--just called his name. That was Nickerson.

[Breaux:] No, I don't believe, I didn't know them too well.

[Manetta:] Know Jimmy Johnson?

[Breaux:] No, I remember McNeal, [who] had the "Sunny South"--McNeal's "Sunny South." He was a fine trumpet man; he had a nice band, too. I used to hear them mostly out at the San Jacinto club.

[Manetta:] Know Bob Lyons?

[Breaux:] No, I didn't know him too well.

[Manetta:] Well, [I'll swear ?]--Old Boy Lyons.

[Allen:] What was the bottom price during the depression?

[Russell:] Here, let me turn this reel around.

[Breaux:] Bottom price? Lot of times, nothing. I mean, it was just one of them things, when you'd probably wind up with--

END OF REEL I

[Russell:] OK, it's going again. You say sometimes just nothing at all?

[Breaux:] That's right. I mean, you'd go play for a dance--I mean, the guy would come get you, say we got a dance [at] such and such a place; well, you'd go ahead on [and] the people, the customers don't show up as they was expected--

[Manetta:] Call it a "ham."

[Breaux:] Yeah, that's right, you "cut a ham." I went all the way to Bogalusa and cut a ham, with Isaiah Morgan. But that wasn't no ham; it was a mistake on Isaiah's part; we was a week ahead of time. That's true; we left here to go to Bogalusa with Isaiah, and got over to the place, and started unpacking our instruments, and a man came outside and said, "Where you all going?" So Ike said, "We're playing here tonight." Said, "Tonight? Who you playing for?" So Ike told him the man's name. He said, "That's me; there ain't no dance tonight." "Yes, sir," and he went in his pocket to get the letter, you know, and he read it; he was a week ahead of time, the dance was the following Saturday. That was a big fat ham, but that was just a misunderstanding on Isaiah's part.

[Allen:] Why did you call it "Cut a ham"?

[Breaux:] Cut a ham? Well, I mean, I imagine you could have called it something else, but I mean--

[Manetta:] You didn't do no business.

[Breaux:] You just didn't do any business; you cut a ham.

[Manetta:] You see for yourself.

[Breaux:] Yeah, the boss would come tell you, "Well, you see for yourself there's no customers. [You] boys think you want a drink?"

[Manetta:] If they had beer down there, you all could go down to the bar and--

[Breaux:] Take anything you want. And if it be too far, like if we had to go way up to Carrollton, or maybe down to St. Bernard [Parish], he'd say, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll give you all carfare." Well, at that time taxis wasn't as plentiful as they are now; I mean, you'd go to a job, bass drum and all, on a street car. Until just before they stopped having so many street cars, you had to go to Public Service and get a special permit to bring a set of drums or a bass

violin on the streetcar, because--yeah, I mean, oh, they claim that if somebody hurt themselves, or something or another. Then sometimes they used to make you pay extra carfare for it, carfare for you and carfare for your bass. Same thing with drums. But a lot of times --I was living down on Dumaine Street, and I'd get a job at the Rhythm Club, on Jackson [Avenue] and Derbigny [Street], we'd just walk there; we'd put the bass under our arm and walk there; because there wasn't no direct street car connections. And sometimes we just didn't have the seven cents [carfare], so we walked to work.

[Allen:] Did you ever work with [Walter] Fats Pichon?

[Breau:] I can't ever recall actually working with him; I know Fats very well. In fact, I cut a couple of records with Fats; I don't think they sold, though. It was a trio deal: Fats Pichon, Paul Barbarin and myself, over at Cosimo's [Recording Studio]--it was a good while ago. But actually working with Fats, I don't recall ever working with Fats on his engagement or anybody else's. I've been around him a lot.

[Russell:] Did you ever work on the boat, any of the excursion boats?

[Breau:] No. I worked on the boat lately, with the outfit I had of my own, [a] made-up outfit, for a party for--Dr. Edmond Souchon was affiliated, 'cause he was the one that recommended me to the club--the Christophers was the name of the club; they had a party for the benefit of under-privileged Jewish children, I think, or something like that. I was engaged to play on the [Steamer] President for that occasion. And I played on the boat a couple of times with Paul Barbarin, but I never did make those excursions that you're referring to; I never did make those. I mean, I just never did get around to it.

[Allen:] Did you ever work with Paul Barbarin when he had a small New Orleans-style jazz band?

[Breau:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] Except lately, of course, I mean the last, couple of years ago you were with him.

[Breau:] Yeah, I was with him a couple of years ago on Bourbon Street; we worked the Dream Room, and over at the Pier 600. We worked the Mardi Gras with him, and I worked the Paddock [Lounge] with him on the regular band's off-night. I don't think Paul ever worked at the Paddock regular.

[Allen:] Who would be in the band then?

[Breau:] Oh, in Paul's band?

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Breau:] We had "Pickey" on trumpet--John Brunious, we called him "Pickey"--and trombone, same trombone he's got now--

[Russell:] Tervalon.

[Breau:] Clement Tervalon. And Willie Humphrey on clarinet. The exact, the same set-up he's got now.

[Allen:] Just a different bass.

[Breau:] Yeah.

[Allen:] Santiago.

[Breau:] That's right, Burnell--I mean, not Burnell--"Black"--Lester, that's his right name, Lester Santiago.

[Allen:] Did you ever work with Burnell?

[Breau:] Oh, little bar room jobs, I mean--

[Allen:] Could he play?

[Breau:] Could he play!! Good gracious alive!!!

[Manetta:] Boogie woogie.

[Breau:] Yeah, he played a lot of piano. I mean, he was, I'd say, just naturally gifted, because he couldn't read, but he could improvise so well; and then, Burnell had such a keen ear, he could work in anybody's band, and I don't care what kind of modulations you're making, he'll change key along with you just the same as if he was reading. As a matter of fact, I recall one time, I think it was on the Pelican, when the Pelican [Club] was open, that Earl Hines came down, and he and Burnell got tied up there in a piano contest, and he gave him a draw. He really was great.

[Allen:] Would you call him barrel house, tunk style, or would you say that he

played like anybody in particular, or what?

[Breau:] Well, he had--he was another individualist; he had a style of his own. He was more or less on a boogie woogie style, but he also played some nice blues, and occasionally he'd play a pretty nice ballad. But he was really a boogie woogie piano player; I'd call him that, a boogie woogie man.

[Manetta:] He had a good left hand.

[Breau:] Yeah; he had a good two hands.

[Russell:] I never got to hear him.

[Allen:] When did you first lead your own band?

[Breau:] Oh, that wasn't too long ago; it must have been around [19]54 or [19]55 I had a Dixieland outfit.

[Allen:] Who'd you have with you?

[Breau:] Clement Tervalon, Wallace Davenport, "Si-E"--what's "Si-E"'s right name?-- [Josiah] Frazier, Frazier on drums. A couple of times I had Emma Barrett on piano with me.

[Allen:] Clarinet, who would you use?

[Breau:] Oh, clarinets was hard to keep up with, by me not having a regular band. I had one time this fellow that died not--Kid Ernest.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Manetta:] Ernest Molliere.

[Breau:] Ernest Molliere--yeah, he worked with me a while. Harold Dejan worked with me several times.

[Allen:] On what instrument was Dejan?

[Breau:] Saxophone. And Mr. Fatty, Louis Cottrell[Jr.], he played a couple of times with me. That's our president, local president [of the musicians' union].

[Allen:] You ever use Kid Howard or Paul Barnes?

[Breau:] Yeah, the Kid played a couple of times with me, too; he played a couple of jobs I had at Jackson Barracks and a couple of other spots I had, you know, booked on my own.

[Allen:] What about Noon [Johnson]?

[Breau:] Well, Noon and Sam and I were, we clowned around for quite a while in between band work, and I mean, Noon and Sam and I played trio work down at the Lafitte Hotel[Guest House] for quite a while.

[Allen:] Who'd you use on trumpet down there? You had some trumpets down there, didn't you?

[Breau:] Why, no, we worked just the three of us; we'd play and sing like that, with Sam on the guitar and Noon with the bazooka and me with the bass violin.

[Allen:] Ever have Kid Clayton and Sam Lee outside with you? [RBA remembers this.]

[Breau:] Well, yeah, Clayton has worked with me, too, but not together with Noon and Sam. As a matter of fact, Clayton will be working with me Mardi Gras day--I have my own job Mardi Gras day, right here on Royal Street at the American Legion, [at] Conti and Royal. I got Kid Clayton with me on that job--Kid Clayton, Harold Dejan, "Si-E," Eddie Summers on trombone, Smitty on piano.

[Allen:] Smitty?

[Breau:] Yeah.

[Allen:] Sounds familiar; I can't place him, though.

[Breau:] Smitty works--most of the time when he works, he works with Harold Dejan.

[Russell:] You say Harold Dejan is now with Lawrence Marrero's band?

[Breau:] Well, no; he's working Saturday on this job, because Paul [Barnes] is out of town, but he's not an official member, as yet.

[Russell:] Yeah, I understand. Do you expect Paul back soon? I heard he [unintelligible].

[Breau:] Paul's supposed to be back for Christmas; I'm positive he'll be back for Carnival, because he's only supposed to be on a business trip, more or less.

[Russell:] Which band have you enjoyed working with more? I'm not trying to put you on the spot, but do you like big bands or little bands--which have been your most -enjoyable jobs?

[Breau:] Oh, I don't know; I mean, I really like big band work, but the financial difference you get in big bands make you change your mind, so mine's changed for the sake of the green backs, I mean, so I like little band work. As a matter of fact, I'd like something I haven't ever done before: I'd like to get with

a string ensemble if I can, but I haven't as yet taken the time to try to find the proper musicians to make up a string ensemble. But I like Dixieland.

[Russell:] What do you mean, string ensemble? Guitar and bass?--

[Breaux:] Guitar, bass, violin, and piano, naturally, but no blowing instruments at all--just string ensemble.

[Allen:] Maybe we can do something about that.

[Breaux:] The only thing, I mean, in New Orleans, it's so hard to keep a band unless you can find work, and right now I don't know what avenue to start looking for work for a string ensemble. I mean, nobody in particular is buying any. Right now, rock and roll got things sewed up so badly, so that it's kind of hard. That's one kind of music--I mean, I'll play it because they pay me, but I prefer Dixieland for actual personal enjoyment, you might say. Well, I mean, I like ballads thrown along in there, but actually, for what you call stomp-down jumping, a good Dixieland band, you just can't around it, because you always have that absolute beat, and that's very essential with that type of music.

[Russell:] In regard to your bass: do you notice if the New Orleans players on bass play different than other styles of music? Is there any certain style that you'd say makes Dixieland, rather than ordinary big band bass? Like say, with Ellington--of course, your cousin played in Ellington, too--but I mean, ordinarily, is there any difference?

[Breaux:] Well, I mean, the average Dixieland bass player, as I notice, as I gather, he's always playing the root of the chord; I mean, he has to make it right. If you take a big band, after a band get to be around twelve pieces or more: well, whoever's arranging can take the bass off the basic note of the chord and place him somewhere else, according to how he's voicing, how he's voicing his instrumentation, and sometime you'll hear a bass playing completely almost off the chord, unless you just actually know the arrangement and know how it's built. But Dixieland, the bass, we always call it, I mean I do call it the bottom; he always stays in the cellar; he's always bringing the basic note of the particular chord that's supposed to be played.

[Russell:] When you think of your job in a band, in a small Dixieland band, do you think of it more to keep the beat going, or is it to fill in the harmony of the chords, or what do you think of yourself, more like the [other instruments?]?

[Breaux:] Well, I like to keep the beat going, but I like to keep the right chords going, too, because that's very effective. A lot of people don't realize it; probably people, unless they're musicians, wouldn't know the difference, but I mean, it's a big difference. If you're playing just a simple number, say something in C, and you got a bass man up there that probably [is] not paying attention to what he's doing, or maybe he don't know what he's doing--i'll put it that way, too--and you're playing something in C, he's reaching down there and playing a D flat, a big D flat against a C major chord; well, that doesn't work out at all, no kind of way. It's very important for the bass, especially in Dixieland, to keep the basic note of the chord going, at all times, regardless, because if the public didn't know it, the musicians he's playing with sure would let him know, maybe after they get through the number; they'll let him know in not such a sweet tone.

[Allen:] When you play--well, say, all New Orleans bass players, take them for example--do you notice that they tend to play in first position, second position, along in there, or do they play down below the seventh position, or whatever it is on a bass?

[Breaux:] Oh, well, that all depends on the bass player himself. The majority of New Orleans bass players tend to play, say, the first or the third position most of the time, but some times a number gets loose, and you feel like showing off, you run on there--because, I mean, I do it a lot of times myself--just like this Dixieland's supposed to be, you play it according to how you feel. If you feel like running down to catch some of them high notes, it's effective, it's very nice, too.

[Russell:] What about solos on the bass? In the old days, did they ever take many bass solos? They do occasionally now. Do you think it's a good idea?

[Breaux:] Well, I [couldn't boast?] that it's a good idea--then, it probably is a good idea, because I like bass solos myself at times, but I'm not a bass soloist--

I mean, I'm very clumsy when it comes to playing a bass solo, because if you give me a solo, the only thing I will do with it is to keep up the beat and maintain the chord progressions for the particular number that's being played. But as far as picking a melody or something through the number, I never--probably it's just my lack of practice of doing it that way, but I never could make it fit in, and so, for that reason I never did promote myself as a bass soloist; I never was.

[Allen:] Who was the star at doing that when you were a kid?

[Breau:] Bass soloist?

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Breau:] Well, this fellow I told you about before, that got killed at sea--Cleo; Cleo had a wonderful slap--well, at that time it was a novelty to play slap bass, very much novelty--because he used to play it with a triplet effect.

[Allen:] I've seen you do that.

[Breau:] Yeah, I can do it, but I've gotten out of practice, because slap bass is just about out of style now; you very seldom hear anybody playing slap bass, not even when you picking; if your strings, if your bass is strung so that the strings will slap back on you--some fellows got such a heavy pull they have to raise their strings higher than others; that's to avoid the slap-back that the string will give. But there's very--fact, you'll hardly ever hear any bass player playing slap bass any more; it's just--

[Russell:] In the slap bass: do you actually take your hand and hit the string against the finger board, or do you mean it snaps back against it?

[Breau:] Yeah, you can do it both ways; you slap your hand on the bass first, then you pull the string out very hard and let it slap back, then you come right back with a slap, that makes the three licks. It has to be done real fast (scats)--you see, that give you a triplet effect. And Cleo was exceptionally great on that. And it was nice during that time, because it was just something new, and people liked it. Same as any other novelty that comes out, and it's good when it first starts; well, after a while it dies out, just like anything else.

[Russell:] Not the German method.

[Breaux:] I learned that from this old German professor that was teaching at Grunewald's--Fink; he died.

[Russell:] Violin player, was he?

[Breaux:] Professor Fink. Yeah, he was teaching bass over there, and I took a few lessons with him to develop my bowing. I learned quite a bit, but I never did practice it, because I didn't have no use for it--I mean, the kind of music I play, you don't ever have no call for no bowing.

[Allen:] Were you in the service? Did you get the GI bill for doing that?

[Breaux:] I was in the Navy for three and a half years. I was in the same band with Bill Humphrey and Clyde Kerr, Manuel Crusto[spelling?]-we all was in the same Navy band together.

[Russell:] I was going to ask while I think of it--you mentioned these red books: was that the "Red-Back Book of Rags" or?--

[Breaux:] No, military march books. Those were--

[Russell:] Marches--I didn't know--

[Breaux:] The school kids gets them a lot of times, now; I think you get hold of a Red Book when you get in about the second or third grade of music.

[Russell:] That's what I wanted to make clear on that.

[Breaux:] Mostly military marches.

[Russell:] There have been some old rag-time books that "Fess" and all of them talked about--called them the "Red Book"--

[Breaux:] Oh, no, I wasn't referring to that; I was talking about the school book--

[Russell:] I imagine it was--

[Breaux:] The school book. I mean, the musical school, the second grade of music, you run into Red Books.

[Russell:] You also mentioned wanting a tuba. Did you ever play tuba much?

[Breaux:] Oh, yeah; I mean, that was my first instrument; I played a lot of orchestra work with the tuba.

[Russell:] I was going to ask about brass bands, out on the streets: did you ever

[Allen:] Would he take two bars, or twelve bars, or sixteen bars, or thirty-two, or what?

[Breau:] Who was that?

[Allen:] Cleo.

[Breau:] Oh, Cleo?

[Russell:] Take a whole chorus, that is, or?--

[Breau:] Oh, he'd take the whole chorus; he'd play all night long if they'd just let him; the band just have to come on in and take him out, because if it gets good to him, he just works with it.

[Allen:] About what year was that? Or how long?--

[Breau:] Cleo was popular from, I'd say, as far as I can remember, from around [19]29 or [19]30 up until the war started. He got killed on a merchant ship, because he went in the merchant marine, and the ship he was on was bombed somewhere out at sea. But he was very popular around New Orleans as a bass player--very nice bass player. I used to like his playing; I used to like his solo work, because I just liked that slap effect he had. I can slap a little, but I never could perfect it as well as Cleo; he was real good. I think Chester [Zardis] can do a little of that kind of work, too--Chester Zardis. But Chester is so good at straight picking, and he's wonderful on the bow. And he's got a way of picking with the end of his bow; he turns his bow backwards and picks with it, like a stick, you know.

[Russell:] Oh, yeah, the little frog down at the screw there.

[Breau:] That's right.

[Russell:] What kind of a bow do you use, what they call the French style, like a violin, or the German where you put your hand in?

[Breau:] No, I used the French style, I did, the little while I did play.

[Russell:] That is, sort of like that. [Demonstrates.]

[Breau:] That's right.

[Russell:] Not this way.

[Breau:] Uh-uh.

play any tubas there?

[Breau:] Oh, yeah, I played with old man [Henry] Allen [Sr.] across the river before he died--Red Allen's daddy--and I played a street parade with George Williams' band; the Tuxedos, I played a couple of times with them. And there was another--old man Parker, I played with him a couple of times--old drummer--he's out of the music, he's out of all games now; he's about too old to get around now--old man Parker, lived down on St. Philip Street.

[Allen:] Willie Parker, you mean.

[Breau:] Willie Parker, that's his name. I think the last parade I played was with Willie Parker. The last Carnival parade, [I] played for the Elmira Club; I think it [was] the last parade they had before the war. After I came out of service I don't think I fooled with it. Well, after I came out of service in [19]45, I played with Mr. Allen--old man Allen, across the river--a couple of funerals, [and a] few parades with George Williams' outfit.

[Allen:] Did you ever make any records?

[Breau:] With brass band?

[Allen:] Any kind of records.

[Russell:] You mentioned Pichon.

[Breau:] Well, yeah, I cut a few with Fats Pichon, and I cut a--who else I cut records with?

[Russell:] Are you on any of the Paul Barbarin?

[Breau:] No, I didn't cut those labels with Paul. That was when Paul cut those labels in California; I didn't go on that trip.

[Allen:] Did you ever make any records for Southland?

[Breau:] Those records I told you about, that I made with Jeanette [Kimball], and Jim Robinson, George Lewis, Paul Barbarin--but I don't think those records was ever released; I don't know what happened to them; I mean, I know we made them. We went up there one day and we cut about six sides or something, four or either six sides. We made a couple of them that Jeanette sang. But if they was released or not I don't know, because I never did hear them anywhere. Of course, I made a

lot of records when I was in service, but they wasn't for the general public.

They had a deal went through for this service band; we was making records to send overseas to entertain the service men overseas, and every week we cut a bunch of records to send overseas, but they never was released to the general public.

[Allen:] Under whose name would that be?

[Breaux:] I don't know if it was Uncle Sam himself or if they used a private concern, but we used to cut them right here at the New Orleans Naval Air Station every Friday. We used to cut the whole show. We was doing a--every Friday we had a radio show we did; Bob Poole was master of ceremonies, and every Friday we did a show. For a while out there, we had Robert Taylor; he was a lieutenant then, I think, a lieutenant j.g., and he'd fill in a couple of times for master of ceremonies, when he was in service. We cut a lot of records for overseas, but like I say, they wasn't for sale; they were strictly Uncle Sam's business.

[Allen:] Remember any tunes you cut with Jeanette and them? Or at Joe Mares?

[Breaux:] The name of them? No, I done forgot the name of them.

[Allen:] I guess that's been a while back.

[Breaux:] Not too long ago--about, maybe three years, something like that.

[Russell:] I was going to ask a little bit about your bass again: you use three-quarter size, you said?

[Breaux:] That's right.

[Russell:] We didn't get all that on the tape, I don't believe. Oh, yes, "Fess" wants to get in. You say you don't like the electric bass?

[Breaux:] No, I don't like the electric bass. For some reason (bells ringing)--I tried it, but you don't get the true tone, to my ear, out of an amplified bass.

[Russell:] Did you ever try five-string bass? Those Kay five-string they use, with an extra-high string [unintelligible]?

[Breaux:] Yeah, I've tried that; I played on that, but I never did use it for my personal self. A lot of the fellows around here was taking off the E string, because the E string is so deep, and it's not too very effective, especially with

a big band, or a loud Dixieland band, so they eliminated the E and brought the A back a step, and put the C where the G was. I don't care much for that, either. I don't guess too many of them are doing it. Somewhere I played not too long ago a fellow had his bass strung like that.

[Russell:] Do you like a pretty big bass, then, at least three-quarter size?

[Breaux:] Yeah, I like a three-quarter. I'd like to get my hands on a full-size bass eventually.

[Russell:] Do you get a bigger tone? Do you have to work harder? Would it mean working easier on it, so you don't have to work so hard to get a big tone then, or what?

[Breaux:] I don't care, I naturally work hard; I mean, I always did play a heavy bass, I always did. I don't say I always played exactly right, but I always did play loud and real heavy.

[Russell:] Do you think most of the New Orleans fellows play pretty heavy, would you say?

[Breaux:] Well, no, we have quite a few of them that play soft bass. You take for instance [Richard] McLean; I think he's got a soft touch. He's a nice bass player, real nice bass, but he plays a soft bass. I think he's got a amplifier now. Amplifier would help him.

[Russell:] I don't believe he uses it at the Paddock.

[Breaux:] No? He's a fine bass man, but he's a very soft man. Ricard [Alexis] plays soft, too, most of the time; he carries an amplifier. But I just don't like the amplified bass. I don't care too much for the Fender. But if Dixieland music don't pick up for me soon, I'll go to rock-and-roll; I'll have to get a Fender, 'cause that's all they want now.

[Russell:]. What about the laminated wood? You mentioned that once. Do you think that--can you tell the difference between the old style construction carved out of one big thick piece of wood; they start the big thing four or five inches thick when they make them right--

[Breaux:] Oh, there's a difference in tonation there; that's the real tone itself,

that wood. Of course, that thing I got is a plywood bass--just my heavy playing, I guess, that brings out the tone the way it do, but, I mean--

[Russell:] It sounds good to me.

[Breau:] But those natural wood bass, they're nice. Same as a guitar: you get a guitar, one of them old guitars of natural wood, you got a beautiful instrument, a beautiful-sounding instrument. But you get these modern guitars, they're all plywood with all this mechanism in them.

[Manetta:] Old wash board.

[Breau:] Yeah, I mean, anything; they make them out of compressed paper, I guess, most of the time.

[Russell:] Yeah, [decayed wood?].

[Manetta:] [Unintelligible] washboard.

[Breau:] Well, that's just a block and a half from compressed paper.

[Allen:] Say, I was wondering--

[Russell:] Any other questions, Dick? I only have about a half minute left.

[Allen:] Yeah. Did you admire any drummers that caused you to start on drums, particular?

[Breau:] No, I don't know how I got tangled up with the drum. At that time I don't think I was any more than about eleven or twelve years old, and I just wanted to get in a band; I didn't care what I played, you know. I imagine that's the way I must have felt.

[Allen:] You didn't hang around the Big 25, or anything? At that time? You were a little young to go out--

[Breau:] No. Well, I do remember Joe Stein and myself, we lied about our age to The Entertainers Club a while there when it was open; we used to go over there. Well, Joe Robichaux was over there for a while, too. We used to go in there and admire--well, at that time, I was playing bass already. I was still in school; I wasn't of age yet, but I was playing the bass along with the Crescent City High Hatters, and Joe and I used to go to The Entertainers and watch Bucket play drum.

He was a wonderful drummer.

[Manetta:] Pigeon-toed.

[Breaux:] Yeah, he had a lot of novelty with him, you know--stick tricks and all that kind of stuff. Well, I used to like the way old Ransom played the bass; I always did like his playing; he was a fine bass man.

[Russell:] Well, I can't think of any other questions. Is there any thing you'd like to add, anything about your life, or that you think we might have forgotten? Otherwise, we're just about to end, I guess.

[Breaux:] No, that's just about all, other than I'm playing with Lawrence Marrero's Dixieland band now. All we need is some customers; we got the band.

[Russell:] That's right; it's a good band.

[Allen:] We'll try to line that up, we hope.

[Breaux:] You still playing? I mean, I'd like to get my hand on a bass tuba; I'd like to push some bass tuba through a Dixieland band a little bit. I imagine it should sound pretty good, huh, Fess?

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Manetta:] I like the bass violin.

[Breaux:] You do?

[Manetta:] Different volume--bass violin has the real volume.

[Russell:] I had a tuba here two weeks ago, or three weeks ago, maybe.

[Allen:] Was that an E flat?

[Russell:] Yeah, it was a big E flat, nice big.... [End of Reel II]