

EARL HUMPHREY
I [only]
November 30, 1968

Also present: Tom Bethell

~~RESTRICTED~~ No Longer exists

C.1926, EH played with Buddy Petit in Mandeville every other Saturday night at the Hotel; Buddy was stationed in Mandeville with another band, but seemed to be getting tired and lonesome, because he was just working on weekends, so he came home to N.O. to play in Lee Collins and EH's band. BP slipped on the train with EH's band and worked with the band for 2 months, then BP went back to Mandeville. The band did pretty well during the time BP was in the band. In the band was: George Lewis; Alex Scott, bass; Little Dad Vincent, tenor banjo; Roy Evans, drums; EH, tb; Lee Collins, tp; BP, tp; a 7 piece orchestra.

12/30 TB talks about a story he heard that EH played with BP, got into a fight with him, fired him, and then got Lee Collins after BP left. But EH doesn't remember that story. EH remembered that he would play in BP's band when the trombone player was sick. Before BP went to Mandeville, he had a popular orchestra. But BP wanted to go to Mandeville to be with his wife who was working over there.

EH only played with BP when the trombone player was sick and during the 2 month trip the EH's band took. "Original BP Band" was the most popular jazz band at the time. Morris French, trombone; "Face-o" [Eddie Woods' and others, drummer; Buddy Manaday, banjo; Zabe Leneries, clarinet; Simon Marrero, bass vl; 6 piece band, occasionally used Xavier "Tink" Baptiste.

EH thought BP was a good tp player. Har to describe his style, one had to listen. Played between Louis Armstrong and some all time great. Style of his own. Played some phrases like Bunk Johnson, some like LA, a lot like himself.

TB asks about home recordings BP was supposed to have made in Thibodaux but EH doesn't know anything about it. Bands would play in La., Ala., Miss, within a radius of 200 miles on weekends, as they do now.

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When BP was playing in EH's band, they played every Sunday night at Besant Parle, just over the 17th Street canal before Jefferson parish. It was a baseball park with a pavillion and had baseball games on Sunday, then a dance afterward. They were called the Park Band, like a house band. EH was manager and Lee Collins was the leader. It was called EH's band. The band played "ragtime", a few "populars", no special numbers.

133 GL has improved but was good then. This was around 1926 or '27. Maybe '24 TB adds. TB mentions the Charlottesville interview, talking about the date March 31, 1931, when EH left N.O. BP was alive when EH left. BP was around for a good while and EH didn't know he had died until he had returned in 1941. TB says BP was supposed to have died 4 July 1931. Louis Armstrong supposedly came down to play in N.O. but EH didn't know.

200 At dances, lowdown slow music caused fights. It was not the music itself but the time they played it. Everyone would drink and get drunk and it didn't take much to start a fight, usually about 12 or 1 am., and the band was supposed to play until 2 am. The band would play a song, "Dirty M.F.". One man would grab another's girl. This would start a fight. Police would break it up, stopping the dance. (EH hums trumpet part of the song.) TB mentions that this sounded like Chris Kelly. EH was playing in Chris Kelly's band at htis time. CK never made any records. In 1943, Kid Howard made a recording which sounded somewhat like CK. [See "Careless Love Blues" by George Lewis."] CK was a good tp; He had a style of his own, a wonderful tone, just played on his own style. He didn't overdo anything. CK's band played all over La. For fraternity dances, dance halls, in what they now call ghettos. Negros have dances mainly at this time of year. The band played 2 or 3 times a week at places like copperative Hall, Economy Hall, the New Hall.

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Played a few outdoor lawn parties; in Irish Channel; at the University, and country clubs. The members of Ck's band were: Zabe Leneries, clarinet; "Mealy" Barnes played in Johnny Brown's band with EH. Johnny Brown played cl. and vl. Emile Barnes better cl., so Emile Barnes would play cl. in Johnny Brown's band. (Johnny Brown would play vl.). Regular tb. [Mister] Harrison Barnes lives in Algiers. [EH Confused, RBA.]

Outstanding clarinet players in 20's in New Orleans were: Picou, Lorenzo Too, Charlie McCurtis, EH's brother Willie Humphrey; George Lewis, always recognized, always played well from his start.

255 EH left the city to 1) get away from his wife and 2) to get away from hard work at LaVide Dance Hall; He would make more money on the road. EH left but he didn't mean to stay away as long as he did; The depression came, there was no work in New Orleans, so he stayed in Georgia where he could make a living around Macon, in Winter of 1931-1932. Things tight in New Orleans before EH left. He worked with Florida Blossom Minstrel Show playing one-nighters. He stayed with the group for 3 years. They had about a 12 piece band. Group had about 35-40 people. It was like a circus, they only stayed 2 days in a town, working in a tent. EH just played music, he didn't have to work at anything else. EH stopped playing tb in about 1945. He played bass vl in Charlottesville, Va. just before this time. In the group had a piano, 2 saxs, d., about 10 people. He played in Richmond, Petersburg, Va. at private schools. The war broke band up to a small group of about 5.

3.40 EH came back to New Orleans because wife died in 1958. EH came to straighten out family matters. His father was an invalid for 14 or 15 years, his aunt was sick, too. EH had a slight heart attack, was let off his job. He decided that he, EH, could go on social security. He could

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help his sister with his father, do hardly anything, just sit around, better off in New Orleans. Bill and Percy had a job in Washington at a Jazz Festival 117 miles away from where EH was in Va. EH went over to see them and they explained the situation in N.O. for him and he decided there wasn't anything to do except go home. [See notes on Eureka Brass Band, c. 1962.]

3:53 Back in N.O. after 30 years, a lot of change had taken place.

1) Growth of the city, 2) Integration- Noticably different in both attitudes of most people; salaries better, people living in better homes and more comfort. Change keeps on. Music has changed except for Dixieland. Rock'n'roll, modern jazz, has changed a lot. People like it more now than then.

4:15 EH plays Dixieland or "ragtime". In 20's and 30's, it was called jazz or ragtime. Large bands of 12 or so were here, playing orchestrations. The old musicians haven't changed. The young have changed, though, An example, the Morgan band played slightly different [from contemporary N.O.bands]. EH says it's because of newer recording equipment. Couldn't hear drums, bass vl, in old time records. Only thing one could hear was wood blocks, cymbals, and sometimes snare but no bass drum. So they used recording basses [tubas]. TB mentions the recording that EH did with Louis Dumaine band. EH says he hadn't played in about a month. EH was doing construction work. EH couldn't remember names of pieces played. Made a recording in 1926 Or'27. [Cf.discographies]. EH played with BP before then. He had played with the Black Eagle Band in Crowley, La., and had been "on the road". TB mentions that many jazz bands weren't recorded. A lot of bands had similar sounds but none sounded exactly alike.

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5:02 EH's early years, first jobs;

Dan [?], guitar; Had 4 piece band and played out on the lake, in camps for dancing. Before this EH played with his grandfather for concerts in churches, halls, in EH's own home. Played semi-classical music: hymns, light serenades, etc.

EH worked with Manuel Perez, at the [Pythian] Temple Roof Garden for 6 or 7 months. He was "a business trumpet player" but had his own style of jazz. He played more straight than jazz. King Oliver was before EH's time. EH did hear him, though. EH was born on 9 Sept. 1902. EH played and heard music in the district. Played at Pete Lala's, Cabaret. He played for Beansy [Fauria] for 5 or 6 months on Iberville between Rampart and Dauphine. There he worked with Charlie Love, [co.]; Joe Robichaux, [p]; a drummer from Shreveport called "Nose," Narvin Kimball [bj?], worked for a while, was just starting. NK was going to school at the time.

EH's preferred tb was Kid Ory. EH heard him all the time. EH feels that KO was the best, a smooth player with wonderful ideas about "faking" music. There were better [reading] musicians.

5:31 TB mentions singing trombone, which is straight trombone playing. This consists largely of stating the melody [with some variation?] and lip trills. "Tailgate" came advertising on Sundays for dances. Bassists and trombonists would sit in the back of the truck, with the tailgate down. Most tb players advertising played a vampino stule, not singing to give the band more support. They played bass parts.

5:51 EH again states that he had no real trouble with BP. He would tell EH when he borrowed money from the deposit on a job. It is said that he underpaid musicians. BP was unreliable even in his own band. He was always there with Eh even if he was drunk. BP drank a lot, but could still play usually. The people who hired him would get him drunk sometime. Bp

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was very popular. He was the most popular for a couple of years after Kid Ory left. BP and Sam Morgan were the most popular, even the best [Negro] bands. Played some jobs for whites, .at country clubs, yacht clubs, all up and down St. Charles, for rich people, in some hotels.

BP's band just had good members and were "together". Zeb LEneries, cl., BP, tp; FK had a good reputation. EH heard him on records. only.

Jazz scene in N.O. now good. Dies down but comes back. Older people play like "Dixieland"; younger ones like other things. (There is a discussion of the rise of solos. [In the old days there were no solos. The practice of soloing arose in [Taxi-dance] halls. Musicians needed to rest. There was continuous music from 8:00 [pm.] to 1 or 1:30 [am.]])

EH likes to play Preservation Hall. EH thinks there are too many solos now. But gives musician individual attention. Some want solos; He doesn't consider himself a soloist. He likes the rest though. In the old days they might have 1 or 2 solo men but not everyone. The rest of the band yould just play softer while one plays a solo. The band backed the solo player.

EH heard Jim Robinson play with Isiah Morgan's band. EH played with them. Jim gave him work with the band. Jim Robinson was then working on the riverfront so he couldn't travel. JR's style has not changed much. TB thinks JR has improved.

Now EH doesn't do much playing. Plays with Percy when Jim is out of town. EH plays mostly with the Eureka [Brass] Band and Andrew Morgan's [Young Tuxedo] Brass Band. EH can't play a long time like 6 or 7 hours.

In Mexico, [the Young Tuxedo] played in different parks in different sections, played in the auditorium. They played about 2 hours a day. Good crowds came to listen. They were in entertainment dept. so they didn't see the Olympic Games. (Blank from here.)