

EDWARD "NOON" JOHNSON

I [only]-Digest

May 28, 1960

Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins

Recorded at 934 Bourbon St., New Orleans, La.

Edward Thomas ["Noon"] Johnson was born August 24, 1903, in New Orleans, La, in the 3rd Ward (on Iberville between Derbigny and Roman). No one else in his family played music. He first started playing on a ukelele, when he was about 14; he never had lessons. ^{He} a friend, Mentions/Daniel [Stearde ?], who is now in California [in connection with his learning to play ukelele?].

^{He} Remembers funerals with Manuel Perez and other "old musicians" when he was a student at Bienville school. EJ took up tuba around 1945. In 1924 he was living at 1809 Bienville; the people next door moved out, leaving behind a brass bed, which the neighborhood children took apart to sell for junk. EJ blew through part of the bedpost, which sounded like a bass; he put together two more pieces to make a slide, and put a "graphanola" horn (slightly smaller than the standard Victor horn; it was probably an Edison) on the end; by "moving up and down" he could "make chords." EJ, Walter Nelson [guitar], Joseph Pire [sp?], and Sameul "Bebe" Dominic used to go around town [playing?], and they called this instrument a "funnel-phone." Walter Coquille, "Mayor Pom Pom

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from Bayou Pom Pom, "who was staying on Bourbon and St. Peter, took this
Biloxi, Miss.,
group to the Edgewater Gulf Hotel, in 1924 for the [Shells ?] Convention.

There they met Bob Burns, who was with a hillbilly band; later,

who was with a hillbilly band; later,

in 1928 or 1929, he became known for playing the bazooka on radio shows with

Bing Crosby. EJ says this bazooka was developed from the "funnel-phone" that

BB saw EJ play in 1924; The instrument didn't have a mouthpiece, but had a
the brass
piece of brass on the end with a piece of leather over it to prevent a sore

mouth. It was played by blowing, not by singing into the horn.

EJ and the group played at the Edgewater on weekends and stayed in

in the dormitory. The instruments they used were

This group included 4 men; 2 guitars, the bazooka, and two kazoos which

were played by one of the men.

They were EJ played

bazooka and Walter Nelson played guitar; one of the two other men, either

Joseph Pire [sp?] or Samuel "Bebe" Dominic, played the two kazoos, and the

other played guitar]. This group played together for 8 or 9 years.

Walter Nelson taught EJ to play guitar around 1926 or '27, while

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they were playing together. The group also went to Nashville, Tenn., with Steve Duvernay [sp?], a salesman for the Tenn. Enamel Co., and played at the Bellmay [sp?] club. They played more for entertainment than for dances. They played for amateur shows at various palaces and theatres, including the Palace Theatre (which had shows til. around 1940), and the Lyric [Theatre]; [John] Robichaux and EJ's group "never did have a chance."

and EJ's group "never did have a chance." at the Lyric [because [John] Robichaux and other "regular" bands were playing there^{WR}]. EJ's group played for dances at the Colonial Country Club, The New Orleans Country Club, Metairie [Country Club ?], and Old Absinthe House.

After playing with this group EJ played with ~~some~~ other groups:

he played tenor banjo with George Lewis when [Lawrence] Marrero was sick; he played with George Lewis at Manny's [Tavern]. "Gossoon" Joseph/taught EJ to play banjo. who used to play wi Sam Morgan

The best ragtime and blues player "at that time" was Walter [Nelson];

EJ also liked Johnny St. Cyr.

EJ played banjo, although not regularly, with Kid Rena; ^{also} He/ played with

Chris Kelly (George Boyd) clarinet; Billy Moran

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Chris Kelly: this group included Georgie Boyd, Clarinet; Billy Moran (Marrero),
bass Arthur Ogle, drums;
who was Lawrence [Marrero]'s [father?] relative, EJ, banjo; and an unrecalled
trombone player. [Abby] "Chinee" [Foster] played drums with Kid Rena. EJ never
played with Kid Rena's brother, Joe Rena.

EJ never did any singing with these bands, but started singing when
Louis Armstrong came out with "Heebie Jeebies," which ^{WR says} ~~was~~ was in the
20s.

EJ shows his latest bazooka, ~~made~~ made of aluminum, which is
shorter and lighter but does not have as good or "deep" a tone as the old
brass bazooka; he still has the original bazooka.

Two days before carnival [1960 ?] a group including EJ, bazooka; "Slow
and
Drag" [Parageau], bass, Harrison Berrett, tenor banjo; Sam Rankin, guitar,
[moving]
"shot a picture" at Brennan's [restaurant].

EJ never played a jug but he did play harmonica at one time. ~~But~~ ^{WR says} ~~begin~~ ⁸

~~playing tuba around 1945 when Jim Little [Sidney Brown] was living on St. Peter
near Calvez [streets]. EJ began learned ~~the~~ EJ learned to play tuba~~

with some instruction from ^{and the use of JL's}
around 1945, ~~using~~ "Jim Little" [Sidney Brown] ~~the~~ instrument; JL lived back of St.

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Peter near Galvez [Streets]. EJ mentions tuba player Eddie Jackson (now dead) who sold him his first tuba; After EJ Jackson died, EJ bought Batiste Mosely's bass, which he used until it wore out. WR mentions BM's brother Edgar Mosely. His next tuba, and the one he still has, was a gift from a Loyola law student, [Alonzo ?] whom EJ met while playing at a fraternity party. [Louis] Keppard uses this horn at times, and has painted it "all kind of colours."

EJ played "on the street" regularly with Kid Howard, and periodically with Abby Williams. EJ remembers singers Sara Martin, whom WR says has joined church and will no longer sing, and Bessie Smith. He mentions comedians ~~#####~~ "Squirrel" and "Sweetie" Walker, who were not from New Orleans but traveled with shows. EJ mentions ~~#####~~ Jack Wiggins, and [Raphael ?] Brown, who were dancers in these traveling shows.

~~#####~~

EJ worked at Pat O'Brien's [St. Peter St.] and worked alone at The Old Absinthe House on Bienville St. playing guitar and singing. He also worked at Lafitte's Guest House with Dorothy Regal about 10 or 15 years ago; [it has since burned down?] He sometimes played guitar alone, and sometimes used

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Sam [?] EJ

guitar, bazooka/and banjo. EJ currently plays with "Slow Drag" [Pavageau], and

is getting quite a few jobs. He is a member of the Musician's Union as a guitar player.

group consisting of [Pavageau] on a homemade bass
EJ mentions a ~~home made bass~~ "Slow Drag" /?, made by a

[Gaton ?]

fellow named Tom; ~~he mentions~~ Lucien ~~Lucien~~, who ~~played~~ violin; Willie

Santiago, ~~who plays~~ mandolin, who is kin to "the St. Gabriel boy" who plays

piano; Freddy Gould, ~~guitar~~ plays violin

When EJ was a child they would stretch the wire from a broom across a row of nails in the fence and make music by beating on the wires with sticks. The first person EJ saw doing this was Edward Rose [nwald ?]. EJ also played the harmonica on the streets ~~with his brother~~ "for two bits apiece," despite the disapproval of his mother.

End of Reel I