

EDGAR JOSEPH

I [of 3] ---digest---retyped

August 7, 1961

(Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins.)

(Interview recorded at his home, 1625 St. Philip, New Orleans)

Edgar "Sam" [or "Sambo"] Joseph was born in 1907, in the same section of New Orleans where he lives at present. [Trombonist] Eddie Morris lives across the street from him; other musicians who live or have lived in the near neighborhood are Kid Howard, Jim Robinson and George Lewis. EJ's cousin, Wilfred Pratt, banjo, played with Chris Kelly, with [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin and with Kid Rena. (Mrs. Joseph? says her son played music.) Pratt also played with [John] Robichaux. Pratt learned banjo from [Butler] "Guyè" [Rapp]. Pratt played with Kelly in the Twenties. EJ speaks of Kelly's funeral, saying it was larger than Celestin's. Pratt "came up" [i.e., began playing] with John Marrero, banjo player. When just starting to play, EJ worked with Kid Rena, and in parades, and with Lee Collins at La V<sup>i</sup>da; he [worked with?] George McCullum, also, who was a half-brother of Alvin and <sup>Oliver</sup> ~~Aliver~~ Alcorn. [cf. Alvin Alcorn interview.] Old man [George] McCullum [Sr.] also was a trumpet player. George McCullum, Jr. has a son and a daughter who play music now. EJ began his study of music with [Paul] Chaligny; EJ tells of the lessons. Chaligny taught before the pupils were allowed to play white and Negro. He taught solfeggio. The first tune EJ played their instruments. during his study was "Nearer My God to Thee;" the second tune he learned was "When the Saints go Marching in." Gilbert Young was also studying with Chaligny then. Other teachers in town when were [Lionel?] Ferbos and [Manuel] Manetta. EJ

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wanted to play more than he was getting from his lessons, so he began hanging around the older musicians, especially [Louis] "Shots" [Madison], who was second only to Louis [Armstrong]; "Shots" asked EJ to play a Jolly Boys parade with him; EJ did, and did very well. EJ talks about an old cornet he patched (he was a tinsmith); he says [George] "Sheik" Colar had another old cornet which EJ patched for him; "Sheik" loaned the horn to Kid Howard, but wanted it back just before a job Kid Howard had; EJ loaned Howard his patched cornet. EJ talks of playing a long Carnival parade with [Alcide] Landry (once of the Eureka Brass Band) for the Eleonora Club. Sometime later, EJ began playing with Georgie Parker at the Happy Landing. EJ talks of some affair the [musicians] union had at the Gypsy Tea Room, with 12 bands; some others in Parker's band, one of those at the affair, were Mike Delay and Reuben McClennan [sp?]. Dave Bartholomew's band was also playing at the affair. "Big Foot Bill" Philips, drums] was with Parker's band, too. Delay wouldn't play against Bartholomew, but EJ did. EJ tells of playing at another place against the bands of Russ Papalia and Tony Almerico. Some men with EJ on that job: Cleo, bass player, who was drowned; Theodore Purnell, also [sax]; his brother [Alton Purnell] on piano; Paul Antoine; Herman Antoine [drums]. EJ tells of other engagements. EJ's present band comprises: "Big Foot Bill"; Charlie Hamilton, piano; Homer Eugene, electric guitar and trombone; Clement [Tervalon], bass, when he's not working at the Paddock [Lounge]. He

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discusses styles of<sup>n</sup> young and old musicians. EJ tells of other jobs he has played and does play. EJ mentions that he had Dorsey [ie, Eddie Dawson] on bass at one job, EJ mentions that he had ["Big Head"] Eddie Johnson [also sax] (who worked at Werlein's) on a job with him. EJ talks about having a Catholic priest as grand marshall of an impromptu parade held at a private party for which EJ played; the tune played was "When the Saints Go Marching in." EJ speaks of playing advertising jobs on trucks for the [Hawks?] at the San Jacinto [Hall]; the job[s?] were about three months ago. Discussion of music as a business.

End of Reel I

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EJ mentions Paul Barbarin, with whom he has traveled all around the country. EJ mentions ["Big Head"] Eddie Johnson, a good saxophone player who knows many tunes and can make a band play well. EJ says most of his jobs now are for private parties, and for small bands of 3 or 4 pieces; he comments on big bands, saying that less than the total number of musicians on the job are doing the bulk of the playing. EJ mentions playing at Esplanade and Dauphine for Mrs. Claiborne Williams, [not the wife of the Donaldsonville band leader] who is "in City Hall; she's good friends with the people I work for." Emma "The Bell Girl" [Barrett] played that job with him. Now he hires ~~Charlie~~ Charlie Hamilton to play piano when he can get him. EJ mentions his cousin, John Handy, a saxophone player who is now out-of-the country; Oscar Rouzan replaced Handy on a steady week-end job EJ had. Most of EJ's jobs have been and are for white people. EJ says most of the colored people don't like the old-style music. EJ says rock-and-roll music is old, that it came from music like "Charleston." EJ says colored people like rock-and-roll now. EJ says bands should play what the people want, not what the musicians want to play. He says people like to dance to waltzes. EJ likes them; bands can play waltzes and then play them as fox-trots, so that the dancing is a little faster. EJ played for a picnic across the lake, at Good Citizens Ranch, and the band played more waltzes than anything else; in the band: Eddie Johnson; Manuel Sayles, ~~enguitar~~ guitar; "Big Foot Bill" [Philips], and EJ. The people didn't go for fast music; they also wanted a lot of Fats Domino numbers, such as "My Blue Heaven," at the

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EJ says the number started at a little bar called "My Blue Heaven," at the corner of Villere and St Philip; Kid Howard was the first one to begin playing the tune; EJ would relieve Howard on the job sometimes

EJ tells how the balls held by societies were conducted; he talks about callout dances, how a march (e g., "Gettysburg ") would be played for the people to march around the hall, and how the band would then play it as a foxtrot, for dancing.

EJ has played many parades, and still does play some; he has played with John Casimir and with George Williams. The sun is too hot in the summer for EJ to play parades then. He discusses condition of streets. EJ talks of playing funerals. EJ talks of playing a parade for some white soldiers about a month ago; he says they had to play a bunch of hard marches, and that the soldiers almost marched right over them as they go too fast; Alvin Alcorn played on the job. EJ mentions [Andrew?] Morgan, who was also on the job.

EJ says the Jolly Boys can't get a permit for their parade this year because they block traffic.

End of Reel II

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EJ knew Buddy Petit; Petit "used to be a terrible man." His business practices were not sound, however, as he would book as many jobs for any one set of hours as he was offered, knowing that he couldn't possibly play at, or even appear at all of them. Petit was a good trumpet player. EJ bought Petit's first instrument, a C.G. Conn, from Petit's son, known as "Little Buddy;" EJ later sold the horn. EJ liked to hear Petit and Kid Rena play together [in a "Battle"?]. EJ liked to hear Chris Kelly play "Going Back to Jamaica [also called "West Indies Blues"]; EJ's cousin [Wilfred Pratt--see Reel I and below] was playing with Kelly at one time; the trombonist in the band was Earl Humphrey, brother of Percy and Willie [J.] Humphrey; Earl was a very good trombonist. Jim [Robinson] is mentioned. EJ learned a lot from following Arnold Metoyer; EJ would carry an umbrella to protect Metoyer from the elements; Metoyer was a very good trumpet player.

When EJ's cousin died, EJ was working at the Last Roundup, on St. Louis Street, between Daughine and Royal [2 blocks apart--PRC]. The band played from 8 to 3 for a dollar. [Albert] Burbank was playing [clarinet] in the band and working days also. EJ's cousin, [Wilfred] Pratt, died in 1947, at the age of 53, according to Robert [brother of Pratt?, who is in the room]. Wilfred Pratt worked with [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin, Chris Kelly and with [John] Robichaux at the Lyric Theater.

Manuel Perez was a powerful trumpet player; he could be heard from Canal and Rampart to Elysian Fields [over 20 blocks--PRC]. [Some of the men who played with Perez were] George Washington, trombone; Willie [E.] Humphrey, father of Willie [J.] Humphrey, sax [and clarinet?]; Peter Bocage [trumpet? violin?]. Eddie Jackson, bass horn, was a very strong player, although he was

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tall and skinny. Earl Humphrey was playing trombone with "them" [Perez's brass band?] at the time.

Chris Kelly is mentioned again; apparently his business practices were about the same as those of Buddy Petit. Willie Pajaud is mentioned [as a member of CK's band?]. EJ tells of the time Pratt and others in Kelly's band hid Kelly behind the piano at a job because he appeared badly dressed at a job on which the uniform was supposed to be tuxedos. EJ tells of a job on which both Kelly and Buddy Petit played in the same band. Manuel Perez was playing somewhere nearby; the places were at the lake; George Washington was with Kelly on the job, but was fired when he threw a brick at Kelly for not paying him all his wages. Kelly played at the Bulls' [Club] then.

Kid Rena "had one of the best tonation in the horn any man could get." He was killed by drinking. WR heard him when he played at the Cadillac, on St. Claude near the bridge. EJ says that you can not play music and drink.

EJ does not now play [stag shows?]

EJ says one must take his time learning to play the trumpet, and one must learn to run chromatic scales well. He also says a person can keep his lips in shape by practicing on the mouthpiece alone; he takes his with him to his work and blows into it off-and-on all day. EJ advocates using no pressure when playing, as use of pressure is harmful to the lip. Louis Armstrong and Red Allen are mentioned. Gilbert Young is another non-pressure player. [Kid] Clayton is mentioned. Valenti's [Paddock Lounge] is mentioned. [The following players are all mentioned in connection.] [Ernie] Cag[nolatti] is mentioned. [John] "Pickey" [Brunious] and

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Alvin[Alcorn] and Thomas [Jefferson] are mentioned. Clement  
[Tervalon] is mentioned. "[Black] Happy" [Goldston] is mentioned.  
George Williams is probably at the [Paddock.] Octave [Crosby]  
is mentioned. [Narvin] Kimball is playing the off-night at the  
[Paddock]. Louis Prima is mentioned. EJ says white bands will  
not work there. "Lucky," a pianist, is mentioned.

End of Reel III