

Was there a difference between uptown and downtown styles? "No, I don't think so, because we had some musicians from downtown play with uptown musicians, uptown and vice versa. I just think it was one part was called the Creole part of town--on the northern side of Canal Street, and then there was the south side of Canal Street. (ie uptown.) But I played with fellows from uptown like Bud Roussel, he was an uptowner and the music didn't sound a bit different. And many others. Papa John Joseph's nephew, Irving Joseph, and so many other people I played with. Like the other night there was a young man who was at the hall (Preservation), colored man, and he mentioned 'bout his uncle. I had forgot his uncle. His uncle was one of Sam Morgan's bass players at one time. His name was--we used to call him Ti' Boy. His name was Gilmore. The last time I saw him was the latter part of the 'thirties, in Bunkie, when I was with Billie and Dede. But it didn't make much difference because the Creole people, they say they were different, but I...no difference. (meaning here is: "but I didn't see any difference.") I don't see there was a bit of difference because there were a lot of good musicians uptown; seem like to me there were more musicians uptown than downtown. You take for instance like Rena's band; or rather, he had a very good clarinet player, his name was Ezeb, (Zeb Lenares). Zeb played with him before I played with him. He had Maurice French--Papa French's (family?), played banjo, his uncle. He also had the other uncle that played bass horn. (inaudible) everybody was getting bass violins and selling (instead of the) bass horns. You take like ^(Zardis) Chester, Jim Little, that died, and many others, Eddie Jackson. They were uptown musicians, to me they didn't sound any different."

Did the "Creole" musicians, like Picou and Big Eye, tend to play in one area of town? "Well I don't think so. I think like the Creole people in New Orleans was like this way: below Esplanade Street, from St Bernard, going back to Broad; I'd say from Claiborne, Columbus, right in there, well they were a

~~thought they~~

different class of people because they were more important than the (boys?) with the hair like I have, you see. So many times they would not hire the darker musicians. They would hire the leader of a band, and he'd have to be light-skinned, and the other musicians who played with him; you see. But to say they'd hire me personally, they wouldn't do it."

I say that George lived in that Creole section himself. "I did but not as far back as that. I lived at St Claude, between Esplanade and Kerlerec, which was a bishop, a Catholic bishop, Bishop (inaudible), he was Bishop (inaudible), they lived in this big house, these Catholic nuns on that corner. Well I satyed in that neighborhood when I was a man and had children. The furthest I've ever lived out towards the Creole section is Villere. The furthest back on New Orleans I've ever lived is Prieur St, and we only stayed there a short time. My mother moved, after her mother died, moved to St Claude Street. And I stayed there until I was a man. And the furthest front, from that time on, I've ever lived, was St Philkip, 827 St Philip. And I've lived-ed one block from the old Globe's Hall."

Would you agree that there were different styles, but not necessarily indiginous to different areas of the city? "No. I don't, I don't (like?) the style, maybe I didn't pay attention, but I don't think there was any different style. I do think that the Creole musicians those times, everybody went, the majority of 'em went to old man Tlo, you know, for lessons and learning to read. There was another old man, Mr Challigny. He was a mail carrier. All the men he brought out, they were good readers but they never could get no place excepting one ~~(?)~~, that ~~and~~ I knew ~~(?)~~, went anywhere (?) was Joe Snaier, he was a straight trumpet player. He died some years ago but he was a half cousin to my mother and his(?) family. Older (?) people. And he left from there, went up north. I last saw him just before I went to Europe for the first time."

I ask George if he ever considered going north to Chicago, etc., like so many other musicians. "No. I never did. I felt like I wanted to go to Chicago, but only to visit, you know what I mean, which I had promised my wife wha died I would

take her. But to play, you see I didn't read any music and I ^{know} knew I had to read. I didn't ^{it}, wasn't making any money on music, and I was doing work around here playing a little, saloons ~~(?)~~, and working; but I felt I was more better secure in New Orleans than I would be if I had went away. And I never went because of that. I would go on short trips like ^{to} Alabama one or two days. I just travelled up and down the IC (Illinois Central) with this guy they called Shaw, and this old man was was a porter on the train, with IC, IC Railroad, ^{Ruffins} ~~Welkins~~ (?) very dark fellow. He would take bands going out ^{and bring 'em out} as far as Lake Charles. He would book 'em. Now my dad knew who he was (?) after I got acquainted with Evan. But, for a week or two weeks, you know, five days, but you say to go away ^{& plans}, I never wanted to."

Was there any characteristic belonging to a person who did want to leave? "No, I don't think so. I really don't think so." Perhaps no family ties? "Well, you'll find that everywhere, regardless of whether he's a musician or not. You got a guy, like a wanderer, you know, he won't stay, he's restless, 'cause he'll come here, go there, go there. I do say that those who left here, like Natty Dominique and a lot of other fellows that was born and raised in New Orleans, they went because salaries were better, er, 'Shicago' you say, I say 'Chicago', er, Speakeasies, you know, more work and better pay. Well I can see them men, (?) that made it, they got used to the place, used to the city, and they brought their families if they wanted to travel. But I don't think it was according to their styles. Because the style that they're playing now, which is not the style of... a lot of time I tell people and I mean it, the reason why I'm saying that is ~~because~~ I was born with this music. I heard the music way before a lot of people think. I was born on St. Claude between Governor Nicholls and Barracks, by the church. At five years old my mother moved to 1226 St Philip—you'd go in the house like this, and the Hopes Hall came like that. And I had heard many many bands. And we would dance out in the rear yard there, until she would call us in; in my yard. And I don't think they were () bands, at the (?) people,

say er, Manuel Perez was playing there. Everybody would say, "Manuel's playing." We kids come to know by the hall—they had organisations. The members of the organisations had big, they used to call them rolls, they were big Armours (?), that they kept the pavilions and the flags and the sashes, the arm (?) stick (?) for the pall bearers. And a lot of other things, the ballot boxes, you know, to vote, for members. But I know of the style, I heard a lot of good musicians, that I doubt if they could have fake at all. I swear."

Some people say that some of the best musicians went to Chicago. Would you say this was true? "It could have been, it could have beenx an organised band, all right, you take, I know when I was ~~xxx~~ playing with Rena, there would be signs hanging up from one side of Dumaine St to the opposite side, for the dances at different clubs. The Jolly Uncles, the Square De al boys, the Vegetable Packers, so it meant they made a pereferece. The public, general public, thought they would be the best band, the best band to draw the crowd for the people, you see. So, they would use him, but that doesn't mean he was the best. Beacuse, he might have ~~played~~ better on the trumpet, but the clarinet player might have been weak, the bass, the drum might. Rena had a very good band, but people didn't care much about his brother's drumming, you see. But they were brothers so they stuck together."

Men like Dodds, Louis Armstrong, I say... "Well, people guaged (gazed?) them more than others. People saw more ^{of} them, you understand? And so if, well just like, who is this young... I don't know him—he might be the best piänist, but he didn't get the opportunity to get out. That's what it was." Did you hear Johnny Dodds? "Yes I heard Johhny Dodds, sure. I heard Johnny Dodds, I heard Johnny, I heard that clarinet there—Jimmie Noone, Charlie McCurtis, and he was one of the best; I heard old man George Baquet, he was one of the best. I heardx Tio hissself, ^{I heard his brother} not his daddy; the first funeral I played with Eddie Jackson, it was on this side of the river (Algiers side,) I was working with Eddie Jackson at a plave they call

(Music ?) Hall, Carondelet and Canal, for Jitney dances."

Was Johnny Dodds considered to be especially good before he left? "I don't know, I hate to say but I don't know. Because they had men that had never been recorded. Didn't get the opportunity. But the people had heard him (thought he?) was the best. Maybe his style at that time might have been the best. But, when they went away their style was changing because they had musicians over there who could not read (those people,) but might bring it into, might say, bring it into another (state?), where they considered ^{you} it the best, you understand. Well he's the best because this man (follows the instrument?) but that don't mean it. If that man can outplay (this other) he is the best, regardless if he play like you, he is playing better than you, so why not give him the credit? There's a lot of good clarinet players would have left from here, ^{they didn't leave} from New Orleans, they came out the the country, you know the surroundings.

"Some good musicians never did go away. They never did get out the city. Buddy Petit, to my knowledge, only left here one time. Went to California, and he grieved, ^{I heard} Grieved, he want to come back. Because Buddy was a trumpet player. Now, the reason I say this, people go to the dances, they had balls, they had banquets, they had what they call soirees, you know for private weddings, when they put up the canopy, carnival balls, you know, they'd hire different bands. They'd hire bands that could play quadrilles. I never read a note in my life, but I could play quadrilles because I played (in front of the room). Rena played quadrilles, Buddy played quadrilles, played for waltzes, played schottische; which is more complicated than a waltz. That was (in between?) the dances. The schottische, Foxtrot. Played for different organisations, clubs, they would give prizes, for the best dancer. ^{during the} Waltzes and different mens' would walk around with the () to watch to see that you're dancing on your toes and not your heels, ^{how} you out of that contest. Bands played, had to know how to play waltzes, you had to have a drummer who knew how to beat

the waltz. Paul Barbarin could play it, and Luis, his brother. I don't say Paul could do it now, because Paul, you know what I mean, changed around. But not many other mens could play it. Red... he had a barber shop, him -- (indicates it's not Red Happy,) and this other boy, his brother played guitar and then he get on banjo, and he played drum, Henry Martin."

When was this. "In the '20s. You see, peace was declared in 1918, I believe., ^(Nov '18) Armistice. They were playing 'em then. ^(Jan '19) Prohibition came along during that time, also. Well that threw a lot of people out of work. Breweries were closed; distilleries where they made alcohol, too; and, things started getting worser and worser and worser. Well, organisations started dissolving. And there's only a few that I know from the old times that are still up (in existence.) And they aren't active: Tulane, and the St. Tammany, that's the onliest two that I know of. But how many clubs (there used to be,) you could (try and) play four or five nights a week. If you...fellows just thought (talked?) you played good— I've done more playing with 'off' bands than I done those I consider myself as a regular member. There's nothing that I say going to do me any good now, I drank, and I went . I drank because I tried to be sociable, but I got sick every time. But I would find myself in places where I wouldn't go today. I wouldn'ta went them times if I'd been sober. I'd check my ^{horn} ^{with 'em}. I'd go out at night, my wife would have the children, and if I wasn't working during the day, I'd mind them babies till she thought I was gone."

Were waltzes and schottisches for 'Creole' people? "Not necessarily, no, everybody dance to the same thing. Foxtrot, waltz, they even had a class of dance called the Slow Drag, that's why 'Slow Drag' got that name. It was very slow music, to dance." Would this music have scunded like jazz? "You'd know it was a jazz band playing it, yes. that particular tune because he couldn't jazz up any one of them slow tunes, one of those, say,

a favorite
 well, things like, a Schottische was Greole Blatherries; it was a very favorite of Buddy Petit's. (George Lewis hums tune and demonstrates the beat.)
 A little faster than a...little slower than a waltz. A waltz is (nothing but a waltz?) hums waltz... which is now played a little (faster) than a waltz. I'd say that we played it valse style. But when I first recorded it I recorded it a waltz. Speaking of (rushing?) waltz to a foxtrot. But I got the idea (inaudible sentence.)

Ever play Scott Joplin type music? "Yeah! When I was playing with Rena, Rena used to play a lot of Scott Joplin numbers. Ole Miss (sings it,) that's a Scott Joplin, Ole Miss; Sally Trambone, Slide Trambone, that other one Frog and them made there, Lassus Trambone, Maple Leaf Rag, all them, they played all those tunes. I played that with Leonard Parker, I played it with Rena, Chris Kelly played it some. But there was a lot of stock music coming out then. What they call a stock like...oh, a tune which say would have an introduction and then the verse and then the chorus, and then the special chorus, and then a ^{coda} ~~(chordal)~~ ending, you see.

"Louis Armstrong sent Rena a whole trunk of music, with the tune(?) of, ^{once} oh, one of them was... can't think of the work, but anyway, a whole trunk of ~~that~~ music, which ^{just} got burnt up, ^{fore up over nothing} a woman, you see because Joe Rene had that music, and ^{I'm his girl friend got in a Fuss} when he ~~got in~~ with his girl friend; I don't know, whether she tore up that music by spite, jealousy; but a lot of bands, they, the mens couldn't read. You take the majority of 'em, they were learning by Jones. Shots, Kid Shots Madison, he learned by Jones; at one time he didn't know a note. So it wasn't the music that make (you), if the fellows thought you could play, they'd give you the work. Let's see, I was working with the two brothers, Foster Lewis, he was called Forstair, and I thought he was about the best blues trombone player I ever heard, him and his brother, 'Dude', played trumpet. And Dude played, but Dude wouldn't know what key he was playing in, and if you'd

play a little tune in a simple key, you'd turn right around, and in fifteen minutes nobody in the hall would be able to play it but him. (What does this mean?) Because he didn't know, just had to scuffle (?). I played a lot with him.

"Old Man Gus Metcalfe, with Louis Dumaine, that band was a really good band, they had a good drummer, he died, can't think—but anyhow, I played with them. I played with this boy that died—Son Fewclothes, Robert Lewis, his step-father, Jessie Jackson. Buddy Luck, who played bass with George Stewart which you mentioned awhile ago. (Before the interview.) Buddy Luck, he came in the uniform, on the stand, like they use in parades. Buddy couldn't play them, he was way up by Protection Levee. And you see he was sick; he'd have that coat on, and his cap. That's how much he cared for his... he loved his music, you see. He was a bass player. And John Smith was a pimp, had a lot of woman. Dressed very good; he was in the next block from the Zulu Club there. He was a banjo (player.)

"Wooden Joe, trumpet, sometimes he would be (over a place?) by the name like Omah, Emer, but he lived-ed at Dumaine, just in the same block as the—how you call'em—the Jazz Museum. And his sign stayed over there a long time. Omar, O.M.A.R.E. He was a good reader, dark, looked kinda hunched he used to hold his head down like that, but he could play, because he was as strong as a.....
END OF SIDE ONE.

SIDE TWO: (George Lewis V)

"Wooden Joe? I never played with Wooden Joe's band as a steady. I've played bandquets with Israel Gorman. He was a regular with Wooden Joe. Arthur Ogle, the snare drummer with the Eureka, ^{he} was the drummer; Buddy Luck, ^{the man} the one that I mentioned. Oh, and an old man—them others players that they used to have, all of 'em hang out, all those ^{Fellow's blood to my} colored musicians (^{their corner} was?) Marais and Orleans, beginning of the old Treme Market. And right across from there was the old 28 ^{[Toni are?] [Kato no?]} Winery, where you get the bottle of wine out of the barrel; and they all hung out there. Johnny Predonce, ^{Produce?} (Prados?), that was his name. Er, Long Charlie. They would sit there, they had moving wagons ^{that different people} that you would hire to move furniture. (^{Just them old fellows, sitting up there}) drink that wine. Get a big bucket of wine for a dime, you see. That's true. Then my godfather used to be out there with them. He didn't play any music, but they considered him as (^{the same as any other one of the musicians???}).

What
What was Wooden Joe like as a tpt player? "Wooden Joe was always strong ever since I knew him. Now I'm going to tell you, I don't remember Joe playing clarinet. But I heard that Joe, and I believe that he could play clarinet. Although his hand was getting stiff, because he had been cut across the hand, cut his fingers. (Can?) say he was supposed to have started Albert Nicholas, that was his nephew, or a relation to him. But I think Albert Nicholas worried with him too much, , because Albert was a very proud fellow, and Joe was a black man, although Albert Nicholas was black, not black but he was...Indian, looked like an Indian. He was small, he was a very good looking boy in those days, and er, he don't work (?) much because the majority—I want to be straight—the majority of the black skinned musicians stayed together. They stayed together. Because I can tell you about an incident that happened to me when I was playing with—and I'm sorry some of those boys, they're

all gone—Arnold DePass, Blackie Santiago, Benny Benoit, which is Cie's wife's brother, and Talbert. They hired me to play, and we worked down Villere Street, two blocks on the other side of Elysian Fields. And when I walked in, Picou had been playing with them. And when I walked in there, well whether the lady says she's Creole or, -- well I'd understand Creole good. 'Cause I've done talked it; I'd understand French, too. Not as perfect as I understand Creole.

She say, "Where is Mr Picou?" In that dialect of Creole. And Arnold says, "He don't play with me no more."

And she say, "Why ^{ere} did you get—" she didn't say him, she say, "Why ^{ere} did you get that?"

So he say, "Oh, you'll be satisfied."

Understand now that right round the corner there was a fellow they called Black Johnny, that was running the ^a Speakeasy. That didn't worry me about -- "Where did you get that?" And we played, and then they passed home brew, ^{made out} of malt and (inaudible). ^{make your own beer} Everyone got a glass, but I got a tumbler—you know, one of those jelly ~~baby~~ glass ~~(?)~~ I know people giving parties, they might not have sufficient chairs or, you know (inaudible,) but I know this, when they pick up the glass the old lady said, "You keep your glass," you see. She told me to keep my glass. ^{And I got mad.} Because if she could pick up their glass(es), they was Negroes just like I was; she could have picked up mine, but I had to keep mine, so nobody else would use mine—because they were light skinned-ed people, you see.. And I told Arnold, I say, "I'll be back..." which they took to mean (?) I was going to find Johnny. And I got drunk. "Now if you want to ~~call~~ me a nigger, I'm going to show you what a nigger is like." Because, I was considered nothing, you see. They were all right. They were light skinned-ed. And they dranked in a fancy glass, and their glass was washed, I said why did I pick up mine? And Arnold said, "I believe you," he said I was right. He didn't fire me. I just, come (?) and didn't play nothin', you see because I was a bit contrary at that time and I didn't play nothin'. Because I was hurted you see, and I know they

were colored people. And they call 'em 'Free Jacks' (?), they come from down the bayous down (from) New Orleans, what's it called (?)—around Buras, around Sunrise, and all them places like that.

And so, then they had another hall, down on Robertson Street, (Jeunes Amis), that no dark musicians felt that they could cross that door. And yet they was charging admission, which they wouldn't take that money. (ie from blacks.)

Subject changed to Japanese tours, and time GL went into coffee house where they had Lewis records on the record player. "Yeah, that was the first year, in '63, I remember that. But they weren't only George Lewis records. They were all New Orleans musicians, the records. But, I guess because there was a very large picture of me, a large picture of Bunk; a picture of Louis Armstrong—they put on different records. They knew I was due in the city, but they didn't know I was going to this place that day. The reason why I went was because—what's the name of the piano player? Bob Greene^{passed}—and he knew of it, and he saw the sign, and he brought us there. The night that I was there I guess that in my honor they played most of, you know, my records. But they had a lot of other places that were the same way, coffee shops they call 'em; and they don't serve nothing but coffee."

How did you like Japan in general? "I liked it because they are people who appreciate what (you're doing?) Not that they didn't know, or I guess they know. They know jazz. If they didn't know it they would listen to it. They knew jazz and they had some good musicians there I mean, and large bands. When I first went there they were playing the older tunes, you know like Maria Elena, and so on, but they were playing it. Their music was written different, I guess, from ours—you know the music which you have to ()? But you have to give 'em credit, you had to give the larger bands—and the larger bands were not like these musicians in the States here. They appreciated what the smaller group was doing. They know—I'm sure they knew that we could produce the same

sounds and get the same effects that they were getting with 14 or 15 pieces—three or four trombones. But they were (very easy?) to see 7 mens doing, you know, what 15 mens was doing. We wouldn't take no special chorus like they had. Some of the bands, the leader conducted the band. I heard drummers there that—I'd sit down at listen at the drummer, two days before I left there in '65, my last year—'cause I was sick as I could be, played 45 minutes by hisself."

The countryside, etc? "Oh, I liked the countryside, and I'm going to tell you, it's the most beautiful place I've ever been at; because there's so much to see, that you may stay, live in the city, and yet you don't see nothing. I mean, every time you go out you discover something that you fancy, you know. Attractive at night. The Japanese people can give a big , but, how they do they gives parties, they goes to nightclubs, and they have some of the finest clubs you ever set your eyes on. They wear good clothes, they eat well. There's a lot of them of course; probably a few that's don't want to eat, won't eat Western food. Because they're not used to it. A lot of 'em wouldn't even use a Western toilet bowl. I'll tell you one thing, they're very sensitive, because their feelings would get hurted right now. if one comes to visit you, he's going to bring you something, you see, some kind of Japanese cookies or candies, or something, because he's going to bring you something."

Touring in the '50s: "I left here and I went to Louisiana, Mississippi, some parts of Texas, California was the furthest that I went; California, New York. And I got along pretty well in New York—real well in New York. I made a lot of friends beside I made a lot of musician friends. I've done pretty well in California, going to play—it would have been my ~~nigh~~ eighth concert at Shrine Auditorium, the week Jeanette dropped dead. So I had to leave, but the band stayed, you see, because they were finishing

up, and they played the concert with Joe Darensburg. So, I made a television show with Burl Ives, got along pretty good. We had good crowds, I had good reviews, radio, not of our own radio (?). I made a lot of ~~British~~ friends, same with in New York I made alot of friends. Ohio, I played in Miami University at Oxford, Ohio; I played at the University of Cincinatti, I played at Blocmington."

The 'Jazz at Vespers' session? "The Reverend Kershaw liked music. He was supposed to be an authority on jazz, and in conversation, just talking, he said he would like for us to play for him on Easter Sunday morning. He say I know I (don't have no church?), the people wouldn't want it, but they accepted it, and that was the first time it had ever been done. They accepted in advance. Everybody accepted it, and some of the humns was played some of the fellows didn't even know. You take like the piano player, Alton Purnell, well, he was not used to playing hymns; even now Lawrence, banjo, Joe; Joe had never played a—only one funeral I know Joe had played in, because it was a get together band. But everybody done real well for the congregation of that church. And then I have went on my last—my mother had died and I changed my passport in Cincinatti, I met some nuns. We call them sisters, sisters in your country is the nurses; we call 'em sisters—two of them out of the Unitarian church. I played there with Placide, Jack and some of the fellows, and then I was going to go over to Europe, these two young people invited me to come to their church, and they would come and get me. So sure enough they came and get me, the next day; must have rode about an hour or so, way out in the country right in the woods, and there was this big church, they had a door about frcm here to, laying on the tressle, that they were building, they had built theirsself; but they were inlaying it, laying it with different pieces of wood; it was a beaut-

iful thing, like a mosaic, you know. And I met the priest and I met a lot of other little sisters, and then we had dinner. And then we went into the den (?) there (?) in back of the church, and there was six girls, six young muns, playing jazz. Playing jazz. And, as long as you don't take the last vow, you know, you can quit from there. About, say about a month, it was a little over a month I was in there at the Preservation, she come to me she say, "How are you, Mr Lewis." I said "I'm feeling pretty good." So she say, "You remember me?" I hated to say no, so I say, "You looks a little familiar," you know what I mean. She say "Because I had my habits on." She say "Don't you remember the young sisters, , she was dressed as a big , it was at the church. Just out of Cincinnati; but this, I met her at the Preservation Hall, and she made herself known to me.

"They were playing jazz. They had drums, piano, clarinet, trambone, bass, and the sister was playing an Albert system clarinet. She (the one GL met at Preservation) didn't say she play, you see two of 'em came and got us in a car, station wagon. Miss Tait was there, because she travelled with me. And I was surprised when she told me who she was, because it was '61, my mother had died, my mother died in '60. Because when I had come back Preservation Hall was operating."

Circumstances which led up to playing with the Evan Thomas Band: "Ruffins, (sp?), I remember mentioning this, this pullman porter, not a pullman, he was an ordinary porter, Ruffins. I don't know what his (first) name was, John (?), but every musician knew him. He would book dances at Lafayette and New Iberia and on up to Lake Charles. Well, I went up with Chris Kelly, and they had a battle, at Lafayette, Evan Thomas and Chris Kelly. Well Evan could outplay Chris in one sense because he was a better musician than the average man, than the average guy today, you see, if he would be livin'. Well I got acquainted

Ruffin,
Says Earl
Humphrey.
EH says he
worked for
Texas & Pacific.

with Evan then. What's his name was playing clarinet with him—Duhe, Evan's brother was on drums. And when they organised this last band, I don't know who brought him but he came to my house, he came to my house in an automobile in the morning, him and Chinee Foster and Walter Preston. He couldn't remember my last name, and so he called to me and I was glad to see him. And I said, "I just hate to travel," (I'll just take the job?), you know, and he offered us a price, but he didn't have the work then, because it was all booked. And so, every day they were running over, you know, practising, rehearsing; and the week that he got kilt, a few days before Thanksgiving, we were just starting the road, you know, hit the road, all the way out to Mexico, we were due to go into Mexico, Old Mexico. He got kilt and then I guess the people said, well, cancel everything, they cancelled the date(s). Without him there wouldn't have been a band. He was the drawing card for us. Because he could play higher than any man I ever heard today. You see the big bands that they have trumpet players, he sit there and frig around to hit a high note when he's supposed to, but Evan could play that way a whole tune. A whole tune. He wasn't really a jazzy man, he was a straight trumpet player."

The night Evan was killed "we were under rehearsal, but he was paying us. That night the band was giving that dance, you see. He called in, some of his friends in Rayne, it was only seven miles, (ie from Crowley.) distant. 'How about getting a dance?' We were there, we spoke and told him yes, we would get the hall for him, you know, and that, we were going to ballyhoo, just a small little town, and people go from city to city, town to town, you know hunting for pleasure in the off-tracks. We really had a good crowd. I know if this accident didn't happen—it wasn't no accident, it was a deliberate murder. Well, I can tells you, I know Evan's dead;

"The fellow that killed Evan, his name was John Guillory, I'll never get

that out of my head. He was bootlegging whiskey. And this little country hall was opposite the cemetery just like my house is opposite over across there, we stood up in a little shed there, little shed (drop shed?), and drank that whiskey. And it was bad, he gave us a (half a pint?) that was bad. Chinese, and the sax, alto player, I mean the tenor player, they were hogged (?), because everybody know Chinese was an alcoholic, they wanted more, but they didn't have no money, and before starting out they go over to this man's house. Al, the tenor player, he had been playing with—what's her name? she's a singer, her brother's band,—Nellie Lutchter,,with Nellie Lutchter's brother from Lake Charles.

"And they went there to this boy's house (John Guillory's.) Asked him to get, you know, whiskey on credit. He's told 'em no, he wouldn't give it. And then he said, 'Where are the rest of the fellows? What about Evan coming? He doesn't come like he used to come, you know, before.' He had just got out of the penitentiary; and then, who said it I don't know. I don't think Chinese said it because he didn't know us, (the name of this man?), but it was said, the lady say, who was sitting on her porch, with , and she say one fellow say, "I'm going to tell you, Evan was going with your wife while you was (in the penitentiary.)" And that burned him up. Someone come back and told Evan, you know, what was said. And then we started in a few minutes to nine, we started playing, when this fellow came right in the hall. He had on a suede jacket, and a big deerfoot (?) dirk right in here. Sitting in a sheath right in here.

"And Walter Preston say—he used to call me ~~Chinook~~ Carnique, he say "Carnique!", which means China in Creole, the say, "Look at that knife that man has—" we didn't know what was going to happen. And he walked to the front of the stage, stage was (up?) so, and he looked up at Evan, and he walked

to the step. He came round—the piano player was collecting. They didn't have no piano. Louis~~is~~ Rob^{ert}son, Big Eye Louis~~is~~ Robertson, he's dead—he was collecting. So that made they had drum, Bunk, Evan, me, Al, the tenor, Walter Preston, they didn't have no bass. So when he come on he got up on the stand, Evan knew what was coming up, I guess, Evan said:

"John, what's that tale you've heard?"

He said, "I don't want to hear that..." you know I don't want to say that "S...", and hauled up and slapped Evan. Evan was sitting down. Evan jumped up just when he was getting hold of the knife. (Trying to get hold of?) the knife. I jumped off the stand, and Evan jumped behind me, grabbed me right..... he was cutting at Evan, and about midway of the hall Evan said, "Oh My!" that's all he said, caught him somewheres in here. And he knew he'd hit him when he hollered, he turn to Evan and Evan turned loose and ran for the door. He was going so fast he go out the door, he go like this, just swing out (?), and he come down. And I just stood there frozen, my shirt all full of blood. And I told him (who?) I say look, that man have cut Evan bad, let's get out of here, try to-(?) get out of here. Chinees had been drunk, he had been drinking all day, , he took those drums, when he came back....."

END OF TAPE. (Last George Lewis interview.)

(George went on talking for about another ten minutes about the events immediately following the Evan Thomas murder—about how John Guillory came back and destroyed the instruments, and then went on, in a way that was not easy to follow, about Chinees and the sax player and the fact that they had been drinking. I got the impression that he was trying to tell me who "told" on Evan without being explicit about it. George went into the hospital about a week after this interview, and died two weeks later, on Dec 31, 1968.)

Tom Belhell
March 1970

