

BOURGEAU, JOSEPH "FAN"
I [of 2]--Digest--Retyped
September 24, 1959

Also present: William Russell
Ralph Collins

Joseph "Fan" Bourgeau is called "Fan" from [Fan Tan?] because he looks like a Chinese. He began playing before 1929; at first, he played 5-string plectrum banjo [Compare below]; then he began playing piano. JB was born July 29, 1891, at 1933 Orleans Street, in New Orleans. Musicians he heard when he was a child: Paul Dominguez, violin; [A.J.] Piron, [violin]; Chris Kelly, [trumpet]; Kid Rena, [trumpet]; Frankie Duson, [trombone]; Freddy Washington, piano (WR says he is quite sick now, in California, where WR and Manuel "Fess" Manetta saw him last year); [Omer] Simeon, [clarinet] (who died last year, in New York, or somewhere "up the line"). JB worked with Simeon. [Where? In Chicago or New York? RBA]. J. B. played "a lot of times" with Kid Rena.

JB, [Alphonse] Picou [clarinet], Albert Francis [drums] and Pete Alexander [violin] had a 4-piece group together. They played for Frank Quintella, at Toulouse and Decatur, for about two years. JB, piano, and George Guesnon, tenor guitar, worked at the [Bali?] Club, with a ventriloquist drummer (JB can't remember his name). The same group played at Oaksus' [Spelling?] Place, in the 4900 block of Airline Highway. The band worked at the [Bali?] Club until it burned down.

JB played with Kid Thomas [Valentine], over the river. JB didn't play with George Lewis. JB played with cornetist Kid Howard. JB also worked with Ernest Milton, drummer. When JB was about nine years old, Johnny St. Cyr taught him how to play a guitar. Later, a man named Wallace gave him an old plectrum banjo, which he learned to play; he got himself another banjo later.

Then he began playing piano; he belonged to the Orleans Pleasure Club, which bought a piano for their quarters, and JB would practice on it. Jelly Roll Morton played for the club every Monday, at regular dinners sponsored by the club.

While in Chicago, JB met Richard M. ["Myknee"] Jones, [King] Oliver, Fredy Keppard and others; JB went to Chicago in 1922, where he remained 60 days; he was just on a pleasure trip, a vacation. JB then returned to New Orleans, to go back to work. He was a lottery vendor for about 36 years; he is now retired, and on a pension.

JB still plays an occasional music job; his last one was three Sundays ago, for a picnic. Sometimes Emile Riley sends him as his replacement on his job [a regular one at Luthjen's RBA]. JB played there [?] when "Big Eye Louis" [Nelson] played there; Walter Decou [was also on the job?]. Decou has lived with Tom Albert, on Burgundy Street, recently, but WR doesn't know where he is now.

Paul Anderson, (JB thinks this is his name) a songster, used to sing in "The Alley" with a cornet player who has gone away.

A band JB remembers from his childhood was the Maple Leaf Band. JB also heard Freddy Keppard; JB's aunt lived next door to Keppard, and JB heard him from there. Keppard first played violin. His brother, Louis [Keppard], was a guitar player.

JB and Freddy Lucien used to play 2-guitar jobs together; Lucien, who is still around, was also a good blues singer. Paul [Anderson] is a sentimental singer. Lucien is a bartender at St. Peter and Dorgenois [streets]. (JB tells of bringing a man to sell a bass violin to WR).

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JB has known Manuel Manetta a long time, since the time Manetta played in the District, when the musicians were making only \$1 per night. JB knew Manetta when Manetta worked at Lulu White's, at 335 [North Basin]; JB knew Lulu White very well; he even had her wig in his hands; she wore a blonde wig, and was a "great, big sort of a dark-brown skinned woman." Her girls were light. She wore the wig because she wanted good hair (i.e., not kinky?). JB's uncle lived right around the corner from Lulu White's; he made his living as a bottleman (i.e. picking up bottles and selling them) and preparing [bamboo for?] fishing poles; he also was a gambler. [Apparently all bottlemen sang?RBA].

Paul Dominguez played in dance halls in the District; Piron played in the District many times. [George?] Valteau also played violin in the District, working in about a 4-piece band (WR says he worked with Joe Oliver and others). JB says Valteau looked like an Indian, had straight, black hair, and played the violin. In those days, Valteau lived on St. Peter and Prieur. [Soard's... 1924 lists Valteau [,] Ferdinand [,] cooper[,] 1925 St. Peter. Compare Johnny St. Cyr, reel I or II or III or IV, August 27, 1958].

There were pianos in all the houses [in the District] then; JB played many times for Ida Jackson, who operated one of the houses; the piano player in the band was Herbert Bloom [spelling?], a good piano player, who now lives in California. If JB needed a clarinet player, he would get Albert Burbank, if he couldn't get Picou; sometimes JB would call George [i.e. Joseph] "Brother Cornbread" Thomas to play clarinet. Willie Jackson (WR says he was known as "New Orleans Willie Jackson") was singing at Tom Anderson's, Iberville at Rampart, then. JB says, "We used to go around and play just for fun:" they would play at the homes of

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various people.

JB figures he heard Jelly Roll Morton before JB went to the [World] War [I], "around 1920, something like that;" he didn't go to the War until he was 26 (and he was 26 when he came back). [Therefore before 1917. RBA]. Freddy Lucien's daddy was a good ball player, when there were leagues; he [the father?] picked him [Morton?] up at the [Big] 25, and Freddy brought Morton to their club [Orleans Pleasure Club], which was on Orleans at Prieur (the building is still there, on the downtown river corner).

JB never did "second line;" he avoided parades if he could. JB was in the P.W.A. [i.e., E.R.A.?] Band; he says there were over 75 banjo players, 40 clarinets--a huge band. He lost his photograph of the band. [Compare photograph in S. B. Charters Jazz, New Orleans, 1885-1963. A much smaller band ! ! !] JB was playing at the at the Pelican [club] when Fate Marable was playing on the steamer Capitol. When the lottery closed, JB had to get something else to do, so he was given the job at the Pelican; he got Alton Purnell, teaching him how to play piano [compare Alton Purnell reel]; he got Albert Francis [drums], and de la Houssaye [spelling?] on saxophone; JB played banjo. Salary was \$37 a month. Fate Marable "and them" used to come; Tab, Smith, saxophone player from St. Louis, came there, and would "buck" every night; Smith was working with ^aMarble. JB had Bernell [Santiago] playing piano [?] for him then; JB would ask Marable to play "High Society," and then have Bernell play it. (WR had

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heard Lester [Santiago] speak of him); "he was the baddest piano player they had in the city of New Orleans; he was one of the best, and couldn't read a note; fingers like Liberace; he could play just like Liberace." Bernell could imitate any piano player-- Earl Hines, Duke Ellington, Wayne King [The latter ever a pianist?]. JB says Bernell practiced piano at the music shop run by [Harold] Peterson, then on Claiborne between St. Peter and Lafitte; Peterson wishes he had been able to record Bernell's playing.

Tony Jackson was a good piano player, and a good singer, too; JB heard him. Other good piano players were: Calvin Jackson, [no doubt not the contemporary pianist] Ed Mercier [spelling?]; they were active long ago; they hung around the District. [Alvin [or Albert? RBA] Carroll was another piano player.

Tony St. Leger, cornet, was good; he is still around; he worked with Fats Pichon (now [1959] in Chicago, ever since the Absinthe House closed). JB knew clarinetist Jimmie Noone, who went to Chicago. JB was in Chicago in 1922, when Joe Oliver was playing at the Dreamland, which was on State between 34th and 35th [streets]. [See Walter C. Allen and Brian Rust, King Joe Oliver, pp. 5. JB mentions bassist Al Morgan, who left New Orleans to go to Chicago, and played with Cab Calloway. [Compare Al Morgan reel] [Oliver was ^{at} the Dream Land during 1⁹18-1920 ?]

JB learned piano from the banjo; he took some lessons on guitar from Johnny St. Cyr. JB learned chords from him, not how to read.

JB has a picture of [Herb] Morand, brother of Lizzie Miles; JB, Morand, George [Guesnon?] and Ernest Milton, drums, played

played together; Milton "was the last guy we played together, not so long, about three weeks ago." Morand, and Lizzie Miles had the same mother.

JB never learned to read; he learned to play by chord system. He practices chords, not melody; he would like to learn the melody on the banjo.

JB, Lemon [Nash] and Johnny Green (a white boy), played at Isidore's [a nearby bar?] Green, a good musician, sells guitars and amplifiers; he is from Indianapolis. He has a system whereby a person can play and lead number in four frets.

End of Reel I

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"Racehorse" music is no good; it is too fast; music should be slow enough to have a swing to it. Lemon [Nash], ukelele, was leader of the group [see Reel I] ^{Sept 24, 1959} in which JB was playing, and he wanted the music fast; JB objected, saying people didn't want that kind of music. In the old days, the majority of the music was swingy, so that people could dance to it; the beat was like the beat Louis Armstrong uses.

JB played a lot of jobs with Willie Pajaud. He played with Earl Wiggins; JB says, "Earl Wiggins's my piano player." JB mentions Harold Dejan. WR mentions Mike Delay, cornet, who is in California, and with whom JB played. Thomas Jefferson, cornet, used to play with JB, not for pay, but just to sit in. TJ had a write-up in the [news] paper 3 or 4 months ago. Wiggins now has the band at Luthjen's; JB got him the job; when JB had the band there, he couldn't get a guitar player, so he hired Wiggins to play piano, and he himself played banjo [see Dennis Stock, Jazz Street, photograph number 10 showing Lawrence "Tocca" Martin and an unknown drummer]. The tips on the Luthjen's job were better than the salary; "it wasn't much, but then, it was better than sittin' down."

JB played at Oaksus' [spelling?] Place, with Johnny St. Cyr (St. Cyr had an old truck named "Caledonia," and lived on Edinburgh Street). [Compare reel I, p. 1]

WR mentions guitarist Richard Payne, [grandfather (?) of bassist Richard Payne, working in N.O. as late as late as 1966-- PRC. No, RBA]. JB mentions [Ernest?] "Son" Penn [brother of Sammy?] Payne, according to WR, worked with the Superior Band,

led by Billy Marrero, father of Lawrence, John [Simon and Eddie] Marrero. Banjo player John Marrero got disqualified by the union in New York. Jimmy Brown, bass player, had guitarist Willie [or Rene?] Batiste working with him. JB knew a lot of the old timers because they lived near where he lived, around St. Ann and Derbigny; JB says white and colored got along easily in the earlier times, and that they had drinks together, cut each other's hair, etc. JB's aunt lived across the street from a barber shop where all of them, including Freddy [Keppard?], got their hair cut, and JB would see them from his aunt's. JB recalls the snow on Carnival Day [in the 1890's?].

The Royal Garden, on Gravier between Rampart and Dryades, was where "Kid" Oliver worked before he went to Chicago. WR says [Manuel] "Fess" [Manetta] played there, with Ory. Violinist Emile Bigard, uncle of drummer Alex Bigard, also worked at the Royal Garden. Emile Bigard was also a druggist, working for Guichard, at Claiborne and Dumaine. Violin player Joe Elliott is around New York now; he has been gone from New Orleans a long time. "Big Joe" Elliott, to whom Lizzie Miles is married, is no relation of the other Elliott; Big Joe and JB worked together on the crap table; they have been gambling all their lives. Big Joe Elliott has worked at the Big 25. JB's brother, foreman on the [crap] game, put Big Joe to work. JB has written lottery, played music, and "fooled around, you know what I mean." When Paul Dominguez was playing with them, they had plenty of jobs; they played at a place at Washington and Derbigny; WR says Emile

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Barnes also played there [as did JB in the same band.] When they played in the country, they had to take Domínguez, as the people there demanded him. JB played with "Wooden Joe" Nicholas; "he cut his own hair, all his life--shaved it." Nicholas played cornet; WR says he also played clarinet. JB played with Melvin Frank, who played clarinet and sang; JB tells of a job Frank got which paid only 50¢ per man. JB says they had a good band when [Alphonse] Picou played clarinet with them^m; Albert Francis, drums, was also in the band. (Francis played with Louis Armstrong at Tom Anderson's.) Francis's wife ~~Edna~~^{Edna} Francis played piano; JB played banjo; Pete Alexander (now of 1801 Duels), who played violin with them had played violin with Sam Morgan. He no longer plays. Alexander was a jazz violinist. JB has some jobs with Albert Francis coming up; they have a job to be played at the Jeunes Amis Hall, which is on Columbus^{and} Derbigny, right behind the musicians' headquarters [i.e., union office]. (JB mentions sentimental singer Bill Major.)

JB says there were piano players in New Orleans who used boogie woogie bass fifty years ago. [Later?] there were speakeasies, where piano players would gather to "buck," or, in present-day terms, "have a jam session." JB mentions jam sessions at the Last Roundup, which was on Bienville between Dauphine and Bourbon. This lasted until 10 A.M. sometimes.

JB says banjo player Son Penn, now dead, was good; WR mentions drummer Sammy Penn, who played with Buddy Petit; JB says Son might have been Sammy's brother. JB knew Petit well, as JB was

not playing music when Petit was; Petit played "pretty good, but he couldn't read a note." Manuel Perez could read. "Big Eye Louis" [Nelson] couldn't read, but he was a good clarinet player. George Baquet, a good clarinetist, could read; Baquet was living next door to JB [and family?] on St. Ann Street. Jimmie Noone lived next door to JB's house on Roman Street. Manuel [Perez?] had a son who played cornet, but he drank so much wine that JB wouldn't work with him anymore; the son is still living, although not playing; he lives somewhere on Marais Street, and has about nineteen children. WR says Manuel Perez's sister still lives here. [A.J.] Piron's wife lives at the corner of Lapeyrouse and Prieur [of Galvez?RBA]; WR says she had sold all Piron's music when WR went to see her shortly after Piron's death. JB says Paul Dominguez had a lot of sheet music, but it was given away.

JB knew Sidney Bechet before Bechet began playing music; Bechet used to "second line" while playing a nickel [i.e. 5-cent?] flute. Bechet's brother, [Doctor] Leonard Bechet, was never able to play anything; he couldn't keep time; JB would go to his house and play chords for him to play by. Leonard had a beautiful trombone.

JB mentions Dr. Blanks [spelling?], a singer. JB mentions Paul Beaulieu [see Beaulieu interview], who writes all the quadrille arrangements [for the Creole Fiesta]. Willie Pajaud [and band] played the arrangements for the Creole Fiesta one year. JB is to play at the Autocrat Club [for the Creole Fiesta], but only [regular] dance music. JB, banjo; Lemon [Nash], [ukulele];

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Charlie Love, [cornet]; ^[Louis? --- BBR] Lewis James, [bass] and one other had had an unsuccessful job in Thibodaux one night; they went to the Autocrat Club, asked if they might play; they played quiet music, and were well-received. JB got five jobs there later; he wasn't able to get in touch with any of the men he had the night of the free job, so he got Pajaud, [trumpet]; Harold [Dejan?] [sax]; "Specks," [Robinson (Spelling?) guitar?]; a drummer. They lost the job when it was discovered that JB was not in the musicians' union, although [most of?] the others were; JB uses union musicians when he can get them; he has used [George] "Sheik" [Colar, trumpet], Lewis James, [Ernest?] Milton, and Manuel Paul [sax]; JB played piano that night; it was a 6-piece band.

Talk of pianos: JB says he quit playing the piano at Luthjen's because the ivories on the keys were sharp enough to cut a hand; he began playing banjo, after getting Earl [Wiggins] in on piano; Earl [Wiggins] has been there two years now.

Asked about a law prohibiting the use of blowing instruments in bands in the District, JB says clarinets and strings were used; there weren't any saxophones then. [Drums were used?RBA] There were plenty of violin players--e.g. Pete [Alexander?], Piron, Paul Dominguez, Valteau, Jimmy Palao, Peter Bocage. Violin played lead then; cornet was not needed; men like Piron played real jazz on the violin. [Compare his records. See discographies.]

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Talk of music and dancing in the District: there was dancing in Tom Anderson's the one on Iberville at Rampart; Willie Jackson sang in Anderson's saloon at Iberville and Basin; "Coonie" also [sang?] there; there were only piano players and singers there; there were piano players in the houses, such as Lulu [White's], Josie Arlington's, et al. JB tells about the push buttons, which every sporting house had; they signalled a saloon that beer was wanted; the beer would be delivered immediately. The [lake side] limit of the District once was Rampart, but it was moved to Robertson. [Compare documents. Is he referring to times before his memories?] Talk about the good old days, when money was money, etc.

End of Reel II