

Johnny DeDroit
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

Also present: Betty B. Rankin, |
Richard B. Allen
Digest: Keith V. Abramson
Check: Richard B. Allen

JD jokes about his age. His TV [set] hasn't been working right so he calls Burt Andrus, Dutch's brother, who's now in TV business and whose kids are growing up so he doesn't have time to devote to sax and clarinet. JD laments that BA was "entirely neglected" by [Al Rose & Edmond] Souchon in their book [N.O. Jazz: A Family. . .]. JD says it would take the whole book to tell his story. JD says he made a terrible mistake. JD respected ES and was his friend. JD played for ES's daughter's [Dolly Ann] supper dance when she was queen of Carnival. JD knew ES's wife, Marie Estoup, when she was a young girl. ES was publishing The Second Line and JD was a member of the [N.O.] Jazz Club. JD intends to rejoin the Jazz Club.

Steve Loyacano, a friend of JD, worked with him at the Saenger [Theater]. SL is an officer [in the N.O.J.C.]. JD went down [to N.O.J.C.] one night, "what a mob that was," [cf. the Second Line.] JD enjoyed the St. Augustine High School Band because they played in tune. JD explained, "That's the main thing with me." JD can enjoy a straight melody if it's in tune. His wife liked Benny Goodman when he played straight.

JD spells out his name. There is no middle name. He says he received his name because there were two wealthy uncles named John & Paul. Consequently the family's children were named John or Paul. RBA remarks, "That's what you call a coincidence."

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 2

JD calls it ignorance. "They" [his parents?] spoke French so JD couldn't understand.

A high school professor called JD a disgrace to the French race because his mother was a Sabatier [sp?], his father a DeDroit, and JD couldn't speak French. JD replied he was an American, not a Frenchman. But it didn't do any~~y~~good.

JD went to Boy's High School. When he attended, it had no name, it was just called Boy's High.

JD says his father was a musician and his brother [Paul] was "the greatest drummer that ever lived." PD was with Alfred Newman's band for many years in Hollywood. In Souchon's book [N.O. Jazz: A Family...] it's reported PD played in the pit at the Orpheum [Theater] and in his brother's [JD] band. PD was the greatest "woodpile" man, marimba player, on the Pacific coast. He was in charge of the drum section.

PD knew the business and retired wealthy. He started with Flip the Frog cartoons. PD became quite a sound effects man. PD played big time vaudeville at age 16 and was also a trombonist. He could read all the clefs and keys; "he was a musician."

JD says he played the violin well enough to double and "attempted" piano for the harmony [i.e., to learn harmony?].

JD's trumpet teacher, Paulin Fabian, was first trumpet of the Republican Guard Band [sic] of France. He was also first

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 3

trumpet in [New Orleans's] French Opera. JD said his father "believed in good instruction."

JD played his first professional engagement when he was 12. Standing on a Coca-Cola box at a political rally. He was paid \$8 and felt "a rich man that night."

PD was born Oct. 24, 1894; JD was born Dec. 4, 1892; 77 years to the day of this interview. JD mentions ties he received as birthday presents.

Restrict until 2019

JD's daughter persuaded him [to dress in up-to-date fashion?] and to move into the Georgian [apartment building] where most of his friends and customers--"the people who helped to made me" live. JD said he might have taken a [cheap] room on Camp St.

JD was born and raised in New Orleans, although he spent a lot of time elsewhere. He had his band in New York and toured

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 4

with Arnold Johnson under the name of Paul Whiteman's Orchestra. PW heard the band at Martin's Cassino in Atlantic City and must have decided to take them "under his wing" as they were too good. PW also took in the Red Caps.

JD was playing at the Cave in the Grunewald Hotel; at present the [Fairmont] Rossevelt. JD found a clipping with a picture of the Cave which had Irving Fazola on the back. IF played with JD a long time including 9 months on the Jung Roof.

JD used to get the summer job at The White House in Biloxi at the Buena Vista. Those were the jobs that made music--he got three shares of stock in the golf club, a cottage; room and board for JD wife and daughter--plus fishing. When JD heard of Biloxi being damaged [by a hurricane?] it really hurt him. But that wasn't the Biloxi JD knew. There was only one "gambling joint" nearby which was twelve miles out on what was called the "Isle of Caprice" [sic. ~~spelling?~~^{of}] which sunk. JD went there once without a [suit] jacket on and they wouldn't let him in the gambling area. The management supplied one, and JD lost money gambling.

JD says he had a full life. JD's father [George?] was bandmaster of First Texas Regiment of Volunteer Infantry during the Spanish American War. JD's father had three trades which he disliked because he wanted to be a musician. He later had a

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 5

slightly successful military band, but not enough to support the family so he opened a store. He retired in twelve years.

JD's father wanted JD to fulfill his dream of being a musician.

When JD was attending Boy's High School at the age of fourteen, Brooks Winter Garden stood on Baronne Street where the telephone company office stands today. JD had a program from the Winter Garden which he gave to his good friend [Leonard V.?] Huber along with other souvenirs.

JD doesn't remember dates as his father did. If asked when he played at the Greenmill Gardens in Chicago, JD would have to look up the "evidence," i.e., dated pictures, even though he can remember playing there. JD says at his age the only things he remembers are tunes, which he will never forget because he loves music.

JD's father gave him his first trumpet at age 10. After one afternoon he could play "America." Today JD says he can only play about eight notes, but he would still like to play well again. As JD says he has no time to go to the Shriners. He wants to play up to his own standards or not at all. The Shriners want him "to take the stick" [i.e., direct the band.]

JD went on vacation to Miami with his wife and relatives, and JD and his wife continued on to Havana, "which was a beautiful place then." On the way back to New Orleans, JD stopped off at

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 6

Baricev's in Biloxi because they had Abbie Brunies, Georg Brunis's brother. JD says Abbie was a great jazz man. Merritt Brunies played valve trombone "but good."

Henry "Henny" Brunies played the red light district. "He could play more with his feet than some people could with their hands." JD loved him.

JD was brought up as a "legit" musician and played in the New Orleans Symphony for egotistical reasons, "just to prove I could."

Success came to JD suddenly when he played at the Orpheum [Theatre]. "Suddenly I had money." JD said he was receiving a "good" salary of eighty-six dollars a week. He was married and "got along fine on that."

JD's brother [PD] was his biggest booster. JD was playing the week [news reel] with Emile Tosso's orchestra. ET was the greatest vaudeville leader [in New Orleans]. The [chord] changes lay natural for JD, so PD said to "get with it" and "let him have it." ET didn't expect it and "it almost hit him in the head." when JD put the mute in and started playing "nice and quiet." The band had two first violins, viola, cello and a bass that were "out of this world." JD got the full chords and the flute and clarinet didn't "intrude". The trombonist was JD's side-kick who didn't play at all so as not to cover JD. The tune they

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 7

played was called "China, We Owe a Lot to You." JD has never heard that tune since then. When the band finished playing, "the house came down in the darkness." JD said it was hard as a featured trumpet fifty-two week [a year], but write-ups made it worth it. One write-up said that with exception of JD's trumpet playing, there wasn't any show. Although JD was featured, there was no spotlight on him, just the news on the screen.

When JD was the leader at the Liberty Theater he had to choose music for the films with his first violinist. JD picked out weekly themes, a first and secondary theme. He always closed the curtains with his theme. He talked this over with the manager of the Liberty Theater who was a friend of JD's. The manager would tell JD to be featured for the first thirty minutes.

JD [musically] directed [his band] "Way Down East," "The Three Musketeers," and "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." These were [D.W.] Griffith^h road show pictures [or films directed by Griffith^h and others which were sent to various theaters?]. "They" sent a book [of music]. JD's only problem was finding musicians to play the music. A screen was erected in front of the musicians, so the audience couldn't see how many [or few] musicians were there. JD insisted upon and usually got the musicians he needed. "If I needed an oboe player, I got one," because "they" controlled the music. [The theatre?] was the

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 8

Saenger which afterwards became the Paramount-Richards, and JD was a member of the staff. JD played many times when he didn't want to, but he had a secure job. "A musician's life is not always a bed of roses." Sometimes there are weeks when they don't work. JD was out [of work] one day in eleven years.

JD didn't play in a variety of places. He spent four years at the Grunewald [Hotel] and seven years at Kolb's Tea Room, from 11 pm-1 am. JD would play three sets per night. Because of competition, Mr. Kolb brought acts to the Tea Room to increase business. JD said, "Mr. Kolb knew as much about running a nightclub as I do about flying an airplane."

Kolb's had a long bill of fare so JD advised Mr. Kolb to use a shorter one with sandwiches. "Find out what they're drinking." College-aged customers bought only one orangeade for ninety cents per evening. On Friday nights even the tablecloths had to be removed otherwise the young customers would take them. But a young crowd attracted older people. JD liked the older people because they spent money.

JD worked the first two weeks at Kolb's. The management of the Grunewald cut out the music. JD told Kolb (who wanted JD and other musicians) he [JD] was quitting [the Grunewald] on March nineteenth, during Lent. JD told Mr. Kolb to hire them and reopen the tea room, Mr. Kolb had tried several orchestras,

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 9

but JD had a local following. JD told Mr. Kolb not to "worry about the Catholics with the Lent," because "I'll bring you enough Masons and Jews to pack the place."

JD would stand near Katz and Besthoff [drug store] on Canal Street where friends would approach him and ask where he had been. After explaining, JD's friends would ask him to get them a reservation at Kolb's. This continued to the point where Kolb's couldn't seat all the reservations, and the headwaiter began making all the money. Because JD's friends were not being seated after JD reserved them tables, JD asked Mr. Kolb to replace the headwaiter.

JD claims that "I practically ran the joint" because Mr. Kolb wasn't controlling the business. JD explained, "All he did was sit there, chain-smoking cigars." Nevertheless, JD considered Mr. Kolb a "fine man," and even worked seven years for him without a contract. This was to JD's advantage. Every-time JD received a better offer from New York, Chicago or Birmingham he would show it to Mr. Kolb. Kolb would say he couldn't meet the offer. In reply JD would ask what he could afford.

Asked by RBA if he had ever heard of an Italian trumpet player, Frank Guarente, JD replied he was great and was his "contemporary," although JD might have been slightly ahead of him.

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 10

FG lived near Exposition Boulevard and Magazine Streets, and JD lived close by on Camp Street between Henry Clay and Webster Streets. JD and FG played duets together. FG had an Italian trumpet with the "side action." The instrument had rotary valves like a French horn. JD said FG had a big and beautiful tone and played fine. FG played in Kolb's for the dinner session. JD said he "owned the place" [Kolb's] because he played the lunch, dinner, and night sessions. JD worked hard, and that his wife thought he wasn't at home enough. JD replied, "those sixty-five dollar dresses look nice, don't they." Music was JD's life, along with his wife. JD's wife had to have some amusement in Biloxi.

Restrict 50 yrs. - till [unclear]

she was fourteen and her mother would [unclear] date after some time and then only if Mrs. JD's sister came along. JD said people would ask him which girl he was courting because they were "equally beautiful."

JD met her when
date after

JD's wife was one half English and the other German. She was a natural blonde, and although her hair later became darker she never did "blue it or anything." JD claimed his wife looked better at fifty than many women at thirty in spite of six operations. Donovan Brown [M.D.] is given credit by JD for keeping her alive till she was 74.

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 11

JD is proud of his daughter. He described her as "good-looking, on the ball, up to date. . ." JD identified pictures hanging on the wall as his granddaughter and great-granddaughter and explained that he hid and subsequently lost, pictures of his wife. JD didn't want his wife's pictures on the wall because "they made him too blue-- especially sitting in this room by myself." JD's daughter has many pictures of his wife though.

JD was proud of his wife. When in Biloxi, JD said he had to "beat those jellybeans [young men] off." JD permitted his wife to dance while he worked as leader of the band, but only with men he approved of. JD instructed his wife to tell anyone who asked her to dance to get his permission. Although many asked her, some had nerve to ask JD. JD said he knew all the "nice boys." "I thought I did anyhow." JD wanted his wife to have some fun. He explained she would be all "dressed up, nowhere to go..." But that was for only three hours [during which JD worked.] The rest of the time, JD said, she "lived like a queen and did not wash dishes...etc. JD said he "catered to her one hundred per cent." JD's wife used to buy her clothes in the Harold Shop which was in the Roosevelt Hotel. JD described the owner of the dress shop as a "smart boy." He would send JD's wife a box of dresses which he knew she would keep. The owner said if he ever needed a model, she would be it. JD said she wouldn't.

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 12

JD said "things are a little dreary now, but they will pick up."

JD said he hasn't any sons [to follow his footsteps] although his daughter is a fine pianist, and so was his wife.

JD remembers Armistice Day 1918, that Mr. Grunewald [of the Grunewald Hotel] asked him to get the band together in the middle of the day so they could have a celebration [in present Fairmont-Roosevelt Hotel, Jan. 1975]. Mr. Grunewald said the armistice was signed at 11 p.m., and he wanted the band ready by noon. JD said he worked fast and rounded up all the musicians except for the pianist. JD asked his wife to fill in. She was "sitting up there at the piano in a powder blue dress with a big powder blue hat" of the then current fashion, while girls kept putting their arms around JD's neck in Celebration of the Armistice Day.

Soon JD's regular piano player, Tom Zimmermann arrived. JD said he couldn't describe how great a musician TZ was, even though he couldn't read a note "as big as the Custom House." JD said he was as good as two Frankie Carles. Frankie Carle was JD's idea of a "clean" rhythm piano player. JD said FC "had a touch."

JD said Louis Armstrong and he were contemporaries. JD says he helped LA when he "had patches in his pants." JD said he helped many colored men. JD recalled helping Clarence Williams, the man who published "It Don't Mean a Thing, If You Ain't Got That Swing."

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 13

[Check this.] JD said he played the first arrangement of that number.

When JD went to New York to play at Healy's Balconades in 1951 it was the day CW called JD and said he had new tunes that "just fit" JD, and if JD didn't mind, CW would come over to rehearsal. CW said he didn't want to teach JD, but rather show what he had in mind about the tunes. CW brought over "It Don't Mean a Thing, If It Ain't Got That Swing." JD said his band was the featured band, although there was another band "who thought they were good" and filled in while JD's band rested. The secondary band had a fiddle, trumpet and saxophone. The [saxophone] was the loudest JD had ever heard. The band also had a toothless drummer. JD said they didn't make a good appearance. JD says he was always for the stiff shirt, tuxedo and wing tie. JD said his band was impeccable and if he brought out the pictures, "you'd see some nice looking fellows, but they could play."

JD listed the members of his band. Meyer Weinberg, who now calls himself Gene Meyer, played saxophone. JD said he should go down in posterity. The recently deceased Erasmus Loyacano, who called himself Joe because he didn't like his first name, played alto saxophone. JD said he was the greatest. JL had only one leg and JD has a picture of him. JD said he had Eddie Powers [tenor sax] who "was always at the top." JD repeats, "I had a fine band." JD had Tony

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 14

Almerico as his hot [trumpet] man, Red Bolman as his first trumpet player and Wyatt Sharp who is now known as Jerry Laine [sp?]. WS now has a band in Jackson, Mississippi. For further identification, JD spells WS's name and said he played with JD at Suburban Gardens. JD described WS as a "very bright man." JD said that WS "by hook or crook" by leaving his clothes in his locker at the Suburban Gardens he slept two nights in the Roosevelt [Hotel] and paid only for one. He was on the Dawn Busters [radio program on WWL in Roosevelt Hotel] with Pinky [Vidacovich] and would be awakened at six o'clock [a.m.] and would move out because most of his clothes were in the locker at the night club. JD said he didn't know how WS "did it," but he always lived at the Roosevelt. WS stayed thirty days and only paid for fifteen. JD says "that's how smart he was." JD says WS went to Jackson, Mississippi, organized his own band, and adopted the name Jerry Laine.

JD said the time he heard WS's band, unfortunately, for JD, they were playing at the same place. JD had a six piece Dixieland combination, because he took all kinds of jobs for money. JD doesn't think he sounded too good because "you can't carry a whole band on your shoulders." That was why JD said he kept a good man when he found one. JD's father told him never to break up a winning combination. Even if he wanted to change he wouldn't if they were doing good.

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 15

JD said he always tried to be nice, do a good job and played a lot of music, and always wanted "them" to know the tune he was playing. Louis [Armstrong] always remarked that he liked to hear the tune he was playing.

JD said he had a lot of good arrangements, but the way music would come out he wouldn't have time [to write arrangements] so he used to "trick-up" the stocks. Other band leaders used to think JD was playing specials [special arrangements]. When JD was playing on the [Steamer] President he said it was one series of arguments between Captain Roy Streckfus and himself, although JD says he honored and respected RS. JD proposed to RS to let JD run the boat, and RS direct the band.

RS would hand JD programs from St. Louis, but JD would tell him that he was playing in New Orleans and not St. Louis. JD told RS he would change his style for a month long job on the President.

Restrict 50 yrs. - till 2017

of Louis Armstrong [78] records. JD appraises his collection as priceless and states he almost died when his granddaughter knocked them off the table and broke them.

JD states (DA) was giving advice to RS in order to "strengthen

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 16

himself," JD told RS "You run the band, I'll run the boat and we'll both wind up on the rocks."

JD said RS wouldn't let him play a Viennese Waltz. JD told RS he catered to different people than RS had. JD said he wasn't a snob, but he played for the richest people at Carnival Balls, supper dances and conventions. JD rhetorically asked RS why he (JD) was the number one band for M.C.A. here [Musicic Corporation of America--bookers] for years. JD said he didn't have to bid for jobs. When MCA asked JD if he was available and his price, JD said they told him they [MCA] can't make any money because he didn't charge enough. "People like to get robbed."

Years ago JD explained he bid for the contract for a Coca-Cola convention at the Edgewater [Gulf Hotel, near Biloxi, Miss.]. JD has a letter of praise from a man at the hotel. JD said he praised him as if he were the man's son. JD bid three hundred and fifty dollars. MCA called JD on the telephone and asked if he could play for the Coca-Cola convention. JD told MCA he had already placed a bid and the amount. MCA told him to put in another bid for nine hundred dollars. JD wired Coca-Cola saying he was available and quoted the new price. JD was hired for nine hundred dollars. JD says the man didn't remember him, and probably threw away his first bid. RBA interjects perhaps they figured the band was no good if they would work for three hundred and fifty dollars. JD says MCA,

JOHNNY DEDROIT
REEL I
Dec. 4, 1969

p. 17

like all the rest, would give an offer of Tommy Dorsey and you would end up with an unknown. But at the Edgewater, Mr. Schumacher, who had been a bell-boy when JD played at the White House [in Biloxi], loved and liked JD, knew JD played good music and knew he could trust JD. JD says it was just as Seymour Weiss [of the Roosevelt Hotel] told JD, "when you're on that bandstand, you represent me."

JD recalled the head waiter [at the Roosevelt] "got smart" because JD didn't ask him if the band could play overtime. JD said he would play overtime for anyone who paid, especially for a friend. JD said the National Cottonseed Compress Association wouldn't think of any band but JD's and spend twenty to fifth thousand dollars in the Roosevelt [for a convention]. JD [felt?] the maitre d' [sp?] "could take a walk" and take his waiters with him. JD said the band was upset that JD should have to take any abuse, because JD never did from anybody. After JD had enough, he threatened to hit the man. The band said JD won and wanted him to hold his hand up like a victorious boxer. JD said to omit the above statement because the man is now retired. JD admitted he has had some bad moments, but that time JD let the man "talk his head off."

[End of Reel]

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Reel II
December 4, 1969

also present: Richard B. Allen
digest: Keith Abramson, Ralph Adams
check: RBA

JD said he used to play golf with Charlie Luckow's father. CL's father talked about CL so much JD gave him an audition. JD said the audition "floored me".

CL's father is described as a fine man, the head of a finance company who died early in life. JD said he spoke with CL "the other day".

JD said he was a father to many musicians. His first saxophone player, [i.e., player of the first saxophone part?] Bob Young was taken by JD into the [musician's] Union when he was only sixteen years old. They have nobody [left but ?] JD. JD said he sent BY to Dr. Brown because he's not too well. JD was worried about BY. JD said he hopes Dr. Brown finds what is wrong with BY because BY's sister died of cancer at age 23.

12:20

Pat Cooper played bass fiddle at the Grand Hotel. PC plays with an accordianist who also played with JD at various times. JD says in the forty year span of his career as a [band] leader he had a lot of musicians, but he hopes he always had the best. Some musicians weren't considered the best by other leaders whom JD terms "ignorant". They didn't know JD needed a man who could play a floor show.

JD said he played for Dick Shawn [an entertainer?] whom he didn't know "from Adam". DS would "throw JD the books" for an hour and a half long show. JD would rehearse for forty-five minutes. JD said

it would take Ed Sullivan "all week".

When JD played DS's show, DS recognized JD after the spotlight man said JD used to be the featured 1st trumpet at the Orpheum
12:43 [theater]. JD told DS he was "going back to the prehistoric days."
DS said it showed that JD has experience. JD played DS's act after which DS hugged JD, and JD thanked him. JD says he didn't ask for a testimonial because he didn't need a thing. JD said he knew DS.

It was the same way when JD played the Four Freedom Show selling [war] bonds [during World War II] with The Saturday Evening Post [editor? manager? publisher? or its sponsorship?]. "They" brought down the handsome ladies' man, good looking actor of years gone by. JD states his memory is going bad. [See below on the show.]

JD says he knows show business and played everything from the monkeys to grand opera. One show JD had to "lay off" he sent Russ Papalia [and his band] because RP was JD's protege. RP used to play trombone in JD's band. When JD hired RP, RP "almost fainted". JD told him that he played "a good, solid trombone" and that he "played the spots" [i.e., played what was indicated by notation.] JD said since he was vain [in choosing RP] because he didn't want "any trombone player covering him up." JD states that he [JD] was the leader. JD says he came back.

[Speaking of the Four Freedoms Show,] JD remembers Billy De Wolf [sp?] as being in the show. JD doesn't remember another actor's name, described as a handsome ladies' man. [See above] JD says

JD says BDW looked down into the [orchestra] pit and complimented JD. JD says he "felt like a million." BDW said "it's certainly a pleasure to see JD back in the pit." JD says BDW missed JD because BDW's motions and actions were "strictly vaudeville". He was an old timer and JD says they call him "Mr. Billy DeWolf" now.

1:18 JD says "all that makes you feel good." JD could still recite a review written about him and does. "It was mighty nice to see Johnny back in the pit with his triumphant trumpet." JD likes the adjective "triumphant." The review continued, "and with that exception there was nothing of merit in the show," JD comments it was a show that cost thousands of dollars. Mel Washburne [sp?], "a theatrical writer," whom JD says you would think that JD was his son." JD says MW was now dead.

1:28 K.T. Kay [sp?] [was "a theatrical writer?"] who JD describes as having had "acid on his tongue." JD said "they were all afraid of him." Some performers couldn't do their act when they realized KTK was in the front. JD didn't think the New Orleans reviews were too important because shows would move [to another city] after a week. JD said KTK "never had an acid tongue for him." KTK said "someday they are going to realize they got something [JD]."

RBA asks JD about his records and RP's playing. JD said RP played trombone on his records [i.e., on some? cf. discographies.] JD admits freely that there is nothing of distinction attached to his records." JD said he made a terrible mistake. (JD confuses a

few names). Mr. [Ralph?] Peer, the President of Okeh Record Company, and JD said he played a fair game of golf, but "he thought he played a better one." JD let Mr. P. win the second nine [holes of golf]. Mr. P's secretary kidded JD because he lost the second nine holes to Mr. P. JD confided to her that he could beat Mr. P. with one club. To play golf in New York then, JD had to cross the [Hudson?] River, go under the [Holland?] Tunnel, take the trolley car and steam train to reach golf course.

JD said the records made at Junius Hart [Piano House Limited] in New Orleans were produced under the worst possible conditions. JD says it was so cold [on March 15 and 16, 1924] that they had to place the clarinet on the radiator to warm it so that it would stay intune. Henry Raymond [of JD's band] couldn't play saxophone and clarinet as same time, and if he picked up the clarinet [when it was that cold] it would play flat.

The man they [Okeh records] sent down here found out that New Orleans was a "joy town", so he was "loaded [drunk] all the time." JD said "we had to blow into a big aluminum horn "that made the record "about that thick", but there was never any playback. JD said he would have condemned half of them. Even when JD went to New York [his band] was recorded after Red Nichols'. "It was same old thing."

2:08

JD realized his mistake in signing [a recording contract] with Okeh because right after that he was offered a Victor contract.

victor didn't want JD [recording] under any other name but JD. Because in New York there was a practice of some bands recording under various names.

JD said he did make "a lot of [royalty?] money", he "made plenty." JD made a record called "The Swing" which was the "Washington and Lee Swing," but was known in New Orleans as "The Tulane Swing," because
2:17 Tulane didn't have any "fight song". (JD scats the melody). JD said it [the "Swing"] was far from being a Dixieland record but JD had written a variation, which JD admits he doesn't know if he could play today. JD hums the music and explains it contains what musicians call "noodles". JD says his first royalty check was ten thousand dollars, and he almost passed out.

2:21 JD said his friends bought the record "by the dozens" and in Biloxi every boat was playing "The Swing". JD said Tulane had a lot of students and many of them bought it. It was the first record of "The Swing". JD didn't call it "Washington and Lee" or "Tulane Swing". They were sued by the composers of "Washington and Lee Swing". They settled for fifty dollars and JD said he was "glad to get out for fifty dollars.

JD said he had "a couple of breaks." He had a number that was put on the back of "How Come You Do Me Like You Do Do Do." JD asks RBA if he has heard of it. RBA says the [William Ransom Hogan Archive of New Orleans Jazz] at Tulane has copies of JD's records and RBA just played them before this interview. JD says, "Well, then

you know they are lousy" and you should destroy them. Although JD admits his recordings might be collector's items, he wondered who would want to hear him play.

RBA tells JD that the recordings aren't collector's items because some of them are still on the market today. RBA says "New Orleans Blues" and "Number Two Blues" are still on the market. JD says "Number Two" is "Tiger Rag" played slowly. JD says "New Orleans Blues" was his own. It was an improvisation. JD said he had great men in his band like Tony Parenti. RBA says he knows TP and JD asks how he is doing. RBA says TP has his own spot on Fifty-second Street [New York City]. JD says he is glad and mentions that TP was a great clarinetist. JD said "they all" said that TP couldn't play "Dixieland", but they didn't know what they were talking about. JD said he played 2:45 "Dixieland plus". JD claims that most of most of the Dixieland men had no technique, although they kept "good rhythmic beat," but it is easier to keep time with few notes than it is with a lot of notes. JD said all musicians will run the moment they start to improvise; they'll play too fast.

2:50 JD says he had Melvin Berry playing trombone who was a disciple of Eddie Edwards, the original trombonist of the "Original Dixieland [Jazz] Band. In addition to being a fine trombonist, JD said he [Berry] was highly educated and as eccentric as they make them, for a young fellow. JD said his brother was playing the drums and Tom

Zimmerman on piano. JD was the oldest man in the band at age twenty-two to twenty-four and TP was only sixteen. JD said the band was "dressed to the nines." The band wore silk [ponjee] suits and six-dollar knitted ties. JD said "that bunch of young guys [the band] had all the young girls sitting on the bandstand, "all society." JD said he was afraid he was going to have [erruption?] sometime.

3:01 RBA asks if Tony Parenti "liked young ladies". JD said no, (RBA laughs.). JD gives TP credit because he is still married to the same woman, and they are still together. Her name was Schellange, and her brother was Augie Schellange, the drummer.

Restricted until year 2019

JD said when he went into the Roosevelt Hotel to play the tea dance in the afternoon, first he was forced to employ a guitarist he didn't want and a saxophonist. JD said he told [Seymour] Weiss that if he wanted JD to do a good job and give him a fair chance to do any business, give him [JD] his own musicians - don't "pull politics" on him. JD said "you know Huey Long owned the place." JD said Huey Long put Castro Carzarro [where?] who was JD's leader at the Saenger when JD was the assistant stage band leader. In case the master of ceremonies got sick, JD had to learn

the show each week and keep his tuxedo in shape. JD had to learn to talk and at times sounded better [than Master of Ceremonies]. For the band number [when filling in?] JD said he would naturally feature himself, and because he had a lot of friends in the audience he would "tear the house down."

3:24

"They" [who?] wanted to send JD to Syracuse. JD asked who would go to Syracuse for two hundred dollars a week, when they were being paid three hundred and fifty in New Orleans. JD said he left New York because he couldn't play golf with the deep snow and the possibility that [at the public golf courses he would be grouped or] teed with a "Chinaman, Indian and Nigger."

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Reel II (last 20 mins.)
Dec. 4, 1969

also present: Betty B. Rankin
Richard B. Allen
digest: Marie L. Spencer
check: Richard B. Allen

0018 JD tells about one time that he and Henry Raymond were paired with two beautiful girls on the [New York] public links where the rule was, foursomes only could play. JD told the girls, "We play much better than you, and we hit a longer ball." After the second ball, JD and HR got away from them. The girls were relieved as they were strangers. JD says that [Van Courtland Park?] was the only place one could go to play golf, and that "he missed New Orleans so much."

0072 JD talks about his playing at the Greenville Gardens in Chicago with Arnold Johnson's band. AJ was the composer of "Sweetheart" and "Just For You" and several other numbers. JD says AJ made a lot of money and "he was a great piano player. Just the moment you thought that you were taking over the band then he'd play a piano solo, and you'd just fade into oblivion. That's the kind of piano player he was!" AJ had a piano in every hotel room he occupied. They were billed as "The Paul Whiteman Orchestra under the direction of Arnold Johnson." JD remembers that he left the employ of the Grunewald Hotel to go "on the road with [Arnold] Johnson", getting \$200 a week, and no expense money.

0120 JD found out later that Mr. St. John, who owned St. John's Casino in Coral Gables, was the one who wanted JD. JD relates that at this time also he learns that AJ had a contract for sixteen weeks with Mr. St. John, but AJ hasn't told him about it! He tells of his

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Reel II (last 20 mins.)
Dec.4, 1969

page 2 (10)

uncomfortable stay in Philadelphia, playing there in the early winter, JD and his daughter couldn't find a decent place to live, hating the cold weather and its discomforts. He becomes thoroughly discontented. The band had to stay in the early winter in Philadelphia and around Christmas move to Coral Gables to St. John's Casino. JD thought that it was strange that Johnson was sending him so much
0156 money to come up there, JD figures that it was just left over from AJ's money, but later finds out it is Mr. St. John's money.

0162 He went back to Kolb's in New Orleans and found it disappointing so he went to the Little Club. Mr. St. John came into the Little Club to see JD and asks JD why he hadn't come to his Casino in Coral Gables, as he was paying AJ to bring JD up there, saying, "I helped to subsidize your pay," as he was getting two hundred a week. JD relates that he wasn't interested in that. Playing the trumpet and doing the best job he could do was what interested him. JD remembers that, outside the Little Club, a stranger came up to him and complemented him on his trumpet playing. It was a New York producer, Mr. Busoni, who "ran a ballroom with two bands." Mr. Busoni later wired JD to come to N.Y. to work for him. JD adds that he didn't work a month there, that he went to see Al Jolson mostly. At the Forest [sp?] Grill [Grunewald Hotel, New Orleans], one evening on the bandstand JD receives a note from Mr. Cumolli [sp?], owner of the Greenville Gardens in Chicago. Mr. Cumolli had come to New Orleans to hear

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Reel II (last 20 mins.)
Dec. 4, 1969

page 3 (11)

JD play and wanted to hire him for his Greenville Gardens. JD says that he "was going to have to tell Mr. Grunewald another lie and sneak off to try out this -- because I was trying -- I wanted to get into the bigtime - you know, New York, Chicago." JD talks of the "throat-cutting in New York", how "everybody wanted to be your manager, wanted to buy a piece ~~a piece~~ of you." JD also talks of all the scouts, out looking for bands. JD talks of the many pieces he submitted for rewriting to Jack Mills, and to others as Watterson, Berlin and Snyder. JD says that if he had given Addy Britt "half of some of the tune^s" he had written he would be drawing a check now from ASCAP. JD talks of Addy Britt and Dave Frank [later of Werlein's], [as both being good friends of his]. Dave Frank was a song plugger, who would get up on a bandstand, with permission of the leader, and would have his own music and would sing his own songs thru a megaphone. JD and DF became good friends. JD mentions that Addy Britt, Vice President of Watterson, Berlin and Snyder comes to New Orleans at this time. The Oriental [nightclub] opened down the street from the Little Club, with Max Finck's orchestra, a good band in JD's opinion. JD used to dedicate whole Sunday programs to Max Finck

until year 2019 MF had a big tone on the violin. JD tells how careless MF was of his violin, when he borrowed it, not placing it in case, leaving it out and "the rats eat the strings". JD says MF's father had a pawn shop, so naturally he had a lot of violins. MF puzzled JD.

0308

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0361 Mr. Cumolli wanted JD to play at the Greenville Gardens in Chicago, but JD's wife discouraged him from going, seeing the move as needless. JD was doing fine, playing at the Cave [of the Grunwald Hotel] where "the tips were ^{worth} ~~with~~ more than the job." People there gave JD ten dollars to play "Ja Da", "even gave us War Bonds." JD mentions a leading jockey, [Ensor?], who offered him a bet on the horses, JD made this only one bet, the first and only bet in his life, and won sixty dollars, then quit! The jockey wanted JD to play "The Regretful Blues" which insured the jockey winning the race the next day. JD was interested in the tip the jockey had for him; he admits, he was interested in money.

0412 JD reminisces that back in the days of working at the Grunewald [Hotel] he made only twenty-five dollars a week, playing for two hours. His side ^{men} ~~never~~ made twenty dollars ^{a week, getting two dollars} above union scale.

When he started working at Kolb's, he brought his men with him. He had to work two weeks at Kolbs' for no pay, as a trial period. At this time he had to pay his men, feeling that one has to pay his men to get good men, regardless of who you are. JD tells of getting a decorator for Mr. Kolb from Holmes [Department Store] to "dress this place [Kolbs] up." The decorator made Kolbs' into a Mexican "joint", hats, ponchos and all! JD remarks "for no reason at all because I didn't play Mexican music."

0456 In those days there was no air-conditioning. JD remembers the

0475 cooling system of fans. Now if you go in Kolbs', the old fans are there, "its only for show, not for blow". JD talks of the large fan, "the typhoon fan", in the back of Kolbs' + "when it went on", it would either blow you out of the place or you wouldn't hear the music [sic]." He made Mr. Kolb happy on opening night, by corralling eighteen parties. JD mentions Abe Shushaa, Ansel Kottwitz, Gilbert Potter, all big spenders, were there that night. Mr. Kolb was pleased with this new image JD gave to Kolbs. So they talked, agreed on business particulars and short^{ok} hands. "And that was the contract for seven years."

0506 JD talks of Royal Wolfe Kohn, son of a millionaire, who backed the Opera in New York, Roger Wolfe Kahn "loved musicians and had a band for his own amusement" and wanted to hire JD, even offering him a new Buick! JD held out for himself.

JD tells of an incident when Mort Singer, president of the Orpheum Circuit, introduced JD to Al Jolson. JD admits "his face was familiar" [Al Jolson's]. JD was bad at recognizing people.

0545 One man [a trombonist?], who sat next to JD in the Orpheum, told JD that he was the only man^{he} ever saw who played a trumpet that says, "Listen to me". JD said that he played "Listen To Me", meaning it, and would continue to do so. It brought him some success "and for New Orleans I had great success."

0559 Sharkey says that JD is the pioneer. JD played trumpet before

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Reel II (last 20 mins.)
Dec. 4, 1969

page 6 (14)

Sharkey. JD is friendly with Sharkey, always admiring Sharkey's playing and sitting in the front row of Sharkey's concerts. JD encouraged Sharkey to play his own style, not to change.

0589 JD's band was high class compared to the ordinary New Orleans
Dixieland band. JD had [Mel] Berry, "a fine musician". "Tony Parenti
was tops." JD himself, "wasn't bad". His brother was "the best
drummer ever born, in my opinion". The drum manufacturers showered
0604 drums on Paul DeDroit, just to take his picture! PBD was with Alfred
Newman for many years. JD's mother went to Houston to see PBD, play-
ing with Alfred Newman's band there during a World War II Bond Drive.
Paul used to come to New Orleans to spend a month with his mother.
JD's mother lived with a Mrs. Wilson, who was Jimmy Boyle's sister.
Jimmy Boyle was a drummer in Loew's State [in New Orleans] for years,
and played with JD at the Liberty [N.O. Theater] during silent picture
years.

JD also explains that his wife was ill with Paget's disease.

0638 RBA asks JD about the Tin Roof. JD says The Tin Roof was an
"immense prize-fight arena, covered with tin", at Washington Avenue
and Jefferson Davis Parkway [the Toy Center's present location].
For dances, the prize-fight ring was pushed to one side and the ring
was used as a bandstand. The padding of the "rug" cut down on the
band's sound. JD only played there once or twice.

0668 JD talks about the musicians' union. At this time the "fiddlers
weren't getting enough work, so they passed a law that every five men

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Reel II (last 20 mins.)
Dec. 4, 1969

page 7 (15)

you had to have a fiddler, some kind of string." In those days, JD says they didn't use bass fiddlers, "which is strange because I wouldn't have any kind of a combination today without a bass fiddler." Then, even when in New York, JD used George Potter on the banjo as people wanted banjo.

People wanted him to talk like a "coon". JD says he talks like a Brooklynite. He has been all over the country. JD used to say banquette which means sidewalk [in New Orleans] using the meaning he knew, but in other parts of the country it caused arguments, "so he soon forgot to talk like New Orleans, you know." A banquette is anything that is raised.

0702 JD states that he is " a dyed - in - the - wool union man because for one reason: You know how long you're going to play and how much you are going to get. Before the union was organized, musicians had to wait ~~thirty~~th to sixty days before they got their money. JD's father organized the union, getting a charter from the American Federation of Musicians after each [member] gave him a dollar. JD has been president of the Union four times. He shows the watch that the Union gave him. JD mentions Wickboldt, tb, at Orpheum Theater, [prob.R.H. Wickboldt. See index to Prelude in card catalog.]

^{who}
said JD was the "fastest reader that he had ever met," and described JD's trumpet style as "Listen to Me." Wickboldt was a great trombonist and later became leader of the LSU Band, but gave it up, JD thinks, because he wanted to play music,

not figure out band formations on the football field. JD

0133 "civilized" Bourbon Street, for those musicians never knew
when they were going to get paid, never knew how many shows
they were going to play a night. He introduced a resolution
that two weeks salary had to be held in escrow before musicians
could be hired. At this time, the Bourbon Street "joints" were
0745 operating without capital. JD spoke to several "big shots", e.g.
Capt. Streckfus [of the riverboat family], Seymour Weiss [at the
Roosevelt], and asked them to say that they put two weeks salary
in escrow. JD told the employers on Bourbon Street that these
men had put up this money. Business was so bad on Bourbon Street
0768 that the show started whenever a customer walked in.

JD says that he had his finest band at the Suburban Gardens
[New Orleans]. It was better than the name band at the Club Forest.
When a car drove up to the Suburban Gardens, the musicians would
jump on the bandstand!

0778 JD says that when the Saenger [Theatre] cut out the music,
JD was happy to find that a trumpet player at Club Forest must
have sent himself a wire to come home. This tp player was
Barney Rapp, brother of Barry Woods, producer of "The[Bell]
Telephone Hour".

BW, who changed his name from Lou Rappolet, played nice
baritone sax and flute. He was an intelligent gentleman. JD says

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Reel II (last 20 mins.)
Dec. 4, 1969

page 9 (17)

BW liked him after he found out he could play. BW made up the program on the air [radio] broadcast from Club Forest. Ray Trotter, first tp, tells BW that Johnny [DeDroit] didn't need easy tunes the first night he played, "that he does better at sight, than we do at rehearsal". [sic] [Were BW & BR in the
0803 band together?] JD tells Mr. Carlo, the owner of Club Forest, which was a gambling "joint", wanted to feature JD as "The Big
0809 Man From The South (With a Cigar in My Mouth)". JD says "he never did that number in all his life, I never did stand up with a cigar in my mouth". He stood up to play tunes as "Day is
0814 Done" on Saenger [Theatre] stage. He was featured, JD says "the house come down-- a local boy. I guess it sounded good, it was a name band."

End of Reel II

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Dec. 4, 1969
Reel III

also present: Richard B. ALB
Betty B. Rankin
notes: RBA
digest: Ralph Adamo

Restricted until 2019 A.D.

JD says this by way of preface

to the remark that ES "was the finest gentleman you ever met, his whole heart was in music, and he liked me and I turned him on." JD says he turned on ES only in the sense that "when he asked me for an interview, I said, 'What's the matter, you ran out of Negroes?'" JD was expressing his resentment over the Second Line [magazine]'s emphasis on Negro musicians. From then on, ES disliked JD.

0051 But when JD's brother [Paul DeDroit] died, ES came to JD's house to interview him about PD's life. JD has copies of the obituary and offers to let RBA read it. It is "the finest obituary of my brother.... beauti^{fully}~~fully~~ written, and praised my brother to the highest."

0065 JD thinks that the biography of PD in ES's book [with Al Rose] New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album was inadequate. In the book, ES says that PD played in the Orpheum pit and in his brother [JD]'s band. But PD, according to JD, played with the finest orchestras in the world - Johnny Green's and Alfred ^{New Orleans}~~Newton's~~.

0084 "So," JD says, "I didn't get to love 'Doc' [ES] much anymore. But I was wrong, I was wrong. - if Doc was alive I would tell him I was wrong, and I told him I was wrong when he was alive. But I must have hurt him, and I'm sorry."

0102 RBA suggests that it [i.e. the inadequate biography of Paul D.] may not have been ES's fault, that it may have been the result of ~~the~~ pressure from the publishers.

0110 JD says that Durel Black [past president of the New Orleans Jazz Club and Chairman of the 1968 Jazz Fest Committee] sent JD a testimonial that he was "a jazz immortal". JD's daughter has it framed. He says, " I guess they sent out a million of them."

JD's wife was sick and JD didn't leave the house at night.

0139 JD wonders why they waited so long to declare him a jazz immortal. "Why didn't they make me a 'jazz immortal' when I was in the business? I'm great now. Everybody knows the great Johnny DeDroit [claps hand once]. But when I was in the business I had to hustle like the rest of them."

0148 RBA notes that every musician has his ups and downs. JD says, "I didn't have any downs. I always prepared for the rainy day 'cause I never gambled, and I bought property. When the depression came I was land-poor..."

0168 While his wife was sick, JD didn't buy any clothes. But he says he bought two complete suits, a sportscoat, trousers and [everything?] yesterday. His daughter told him he didn't have to dress like that anymore. But, JD says, "I [look?] clean, ^{I'm} ~~I~~ always clean, and my band was always impeccable." It was even hard for JD to let his musicians wear soft shirts with their tuxedos. When JD worked at the Green Mill Garden, he was the only one in the band

with a stiff shirt. [Arnold Johnson's band].

0196 JD played with Charlie McNeill, "world's' greatest banjoist at the time - he's the first man to write the chord systems." CM was a piano repairman for the Ba^batan and Katy^z Theaters. He and a trombone player, worked together. They had a racket - CM would condemn the pianos and the trombone player would repair them.

0224 CM whispered in JD's ear one night that Isham Jones wanted to see him. I.J. was playing at the Rainbow Gardens down the street from Green Mill, where JD was playing. IJ wanted JD for his band.

0241 JD was imported to Chicago. If the union had known, they would have thrown him out. JD tells how he made his entrance into the Green Mill Garden. He went in, left his trumpet at the bar, sat at a table and listened to the band. Then he walked up to [Arnold] Johnson] - "He knows all about it; he's in cahoots with the boss." JD said, "I see you don't have a trumpet," and told them he was a trumpet player. They asked him where he was from and he told them New Orleans. "When you say New Orleans, brother, it's made [claps hands once], it's made, and you better be hot." JD asked to sitⁱn and they agreed. JD played a few Dixieland standards. [The band] not having any trumpet, I sounded like ten trumpets". JD says he played well. "I had the job in the pocket."

0285 JD says that the boss loaned him his car and chauffer to find ~~him~~ an apartment. He also gave JD beer "at cost". JD says after driving through half of Chicago, he found an apartment around the

corner from his job. The building's owner was an organist in one of the big theaters. This man had a daughter who became friends with JD's daughter. JD says his daughter was well-behaved, but the other little girl was "a wildcat".

0319 JD mentions Paul Biese (RBA doesn't remember much about him), who was a very fat man. He was operated on - "they took sixty pounds off his stomach, and he died. When he sat at a table for two... he needed a table for two." PB listened to [Arnold Johnson's?] band with JD.

0334 JD mentions [Maurie? Maury?] Sherman, the violinist [with AJ's band?], [afterwards?], leader at the Sherman House. "We had a conglomerate mess, we didn't have any band. We had one instrument of each- piano, violin, tenor saxophone, trombone, trumpet, and drums." The drummer was Victor Berton [sp?] who ~~also~~ wrote "The Sobbin' Blues." RBA knows of VB from his records with [Red] Nichols and the Wolverines. JD says his name is Vic Cohen, "if you want to know his name." RBA knows his little brother. JD says that "Berton" was his grandfather's name, "but New York and Chicago at the time, they just didn't seem to like Jews, so he had his name changed to Victor Berton."

0361 JD adds that Victor Berton got a job with Alfred Newman as second drummer under Paul DeDroit. When VB found out that PD was JD's brother, "well they were buddy-buddies, I mean, his job was secure."

0369 JD says that the first week he was in Los Angeles, "he must have had dinner at a hundred musicians' houses... You know, get acquainted - it's a clique. And it's good to be in the clique."

JD says even if they don't know you, they say they do. For example, Frank Siegrist, tp, didn't know JD, but they knew one another's reputations. When JD went out to the Chinese Theater, where his brother [Paul DeDroit] was playing the presentation for "Footlight Parade" [starring Jimmy Cagney], FS greeted him like an old friend. JD asked PD who this guy was and when PD told him it was FS, JD said he was honored.

0404 JD continues: even now in the building where he lives people know who he is even though "the people don't -- might not know me, and I don't know them." JD finds out their names by asking their apartment numbers and then checking for the name. These people tell JD they danced to his music when they were young, "and they're mostly widows too." JD calls himself a "semi-celebrity, a has-been... It's better to be a has-been than a never-was." [JD spoke to all we saw in the building. RBA]

0433 JD says he never blew a note on Bourbonⁿ Street in his life. RBA says, "Congratulations." JD: "You betcha-- I congratulate myself too." JD goes on to say that there's a fine band at Your Father's Mustache [436 Bourbon Street].

0443 JD isn't sure who they are - "this old-timer that played the clarinet with everybody and his brother, can't read much." RBA

suggests Raymond Burke. JD says that's him - *Restrict until*
death of Raymond Burke | There's also a colored trumpet
player "who gets my vote". RBA tells JD that that's Alvin Alcorn
[leader]. JD says that RBA can tell AA that he likes his trumpet
playing. "And you tell the trombone player that he's got plenty
of power, which is a little too much-- he knocks me out of the win-
dow. But , he plays, Fellow, he plays." RBA identifies ^{ies} him as
Jimmy Haislip, he thinks.

0464 JD says he doesn't visit "those places". "But, I'm a lonely -
I'm a lonely man, see." JD says he's been eating at [D.H.] Holmes'
cafeteria because he can park there for an hour free. Otherwise
"I have to go all over the district for a place to park and when
I get my car somebody [will] hit me on the head and rob me." [cf. Louis
Keppard interviews about the fear of mugging.] JD says he doesn't
find the food at Holmes bad, "I can eat it." JD also eats at the
Pontchartrain [Hotel], "but when they charge you a dollar eighty
cents for an omlet, that's time to stop." People there observe
and talk about what people do.

0490 JD says he walks down Bourbon Street " because it's amusing.
It's nothing but a Coney Island now. It's- it's not New Orleans.
It's changed, but let's have it that way.

Restricted until 2019 A.D.

All the bellboys there know JD. JD eats breakfast in the "Green
Garden Room" there and takes his daughter with him sometimes.

0511 JD says Miami Beach has "more fine restaurants than any place in the world, and don't they feed you -- you can gain ten pounds." BBR mentions the stone-crabs you can get there.

0523 JD tells about going to see friends in Miami Beach and how each of them urged him to go to one restaurant or another. JD finally "walked about fifteen blocks down [to Rufus?], and they have a line for singles, doubles, quartets - that's the kind of business they do." JD describes ordering breakfast - bacon, eggs, juice and toast. "She [the waitress] says, 'Toast! Toast!' as if it was poison. 'Wait'll you see what I'm going to bring you.'" She brought JD "a basket of every kind of bread that was ever -- you could make a meal on the bread, the bread was better than the other food."

0556 The place JD liked was Junius, because its space was well-arranged, "you could go there, converse."

0566 RBA asks JD if he knows anything about the Tango Belt [near the red-light district in New Orleans]. JD never played in that area.

0578 JD brings up Charlie Rittner [or Rittiner cf. Prelude index]. CR "was the first white man in this town to slap a bass." JD also mentions Wilbur Dinkel, "who was known as the Al Bernard of the South." (JD explains that AB was considered the leading jazz piano player "in our day".) [cf. discographies on Al Bernard and Mike

Bernard.] With CR, WD, and PD, who played drums, JD visited "all the joints in the district; we played with the Negro bands." JD says he was always welcome; they liked the way he played and he listened to them. "They didn't play my way, but nobody threw us out." JD and the others had a good time.

It was playing this way that JD met "Professor [John] Robichaux." JD tells RBA that Robichaux was a left-handed violinist. RBA tells
0609 JD that we [The William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive] have Robichaux's orchestrations. JR lent JD the music to "Panama", which JD recorded. It was written as a Spanish tune, but JD played it as a swing piece. [JD scats a few bars of each version.] JR told JD he'd lend it to him but no one else. [cf. "Panama" sheet music. (a tango?)]

0620 JD mentions A.J. Piron who "had the orchestra at Tranchina's, which was competitors of mine and also the Halfway House." The "Brunies boys" played at the Halfway House. Kolbs was the other competitor, according to JD. He says, "We got all the business." [JD doubtless that his band was at Kolb's in this period.]

0630 JD says there are a lot of traditional musicians "here in New Orleans" that he never heard play. JD even offered a reward to anyone who could find someone who had heard "a certain trumpet player", but couldn't find him - "but still he's supposed to be 'great'. Where did he play? [?] Not that I -- I didn't care. I played my way." RBA suggests that "some of those trumpet players" went to Chicago when they were young.

0654 JD says that Johnny Bayersdorffer died recently. JB was JD's idea of a Dixieland trumpet player - "clean as a pin, every note, and a fine style." JD thinks that of all the recordings done in New Orleans by Okeh Records, JB made the best record. RBA says he liked JB and his music very much. JD calls JB a very modest man and says he never got his due. RBA prompts JD, saying that Bayersdorffer worked for the Commodity Credit [Corporation]. RBA says, "Well, that record [by Bayersdorffer] is known the world over, whether people here recognize it or not, now...." JD liked JB's playing and liked him personally. "We used to get together and chat-- well, because we speak the same language." RBA says JB was a regular guy. JD responds that "musicians as a rule are regular," and talks about pictures of his band "laughing and they jollyng and they all love one another, and they love their leader in spite of what people think."

0674 JD says his band would put him on because he'd "take anything to make money and to keep them busy." Once, JD's ^bboss player (~~I~~ had a great bass player named Dan LeBlanc - he died prematurely.") [sic. compare DL obituary.] told him that they played with JD because he got the work. JD said, "Isn't there any sentiment attached to you guys? Don't you feel that I'm a good guy, that you can depend on me to get you out of jail...?" (RBA laughs). JD says he had "the greatest musicians in the world" in his band.

JD's guitarist was Arthur Pons. JD asks RBA if he ever heard

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Reel III
Dec. 4, 1969

page 10

AP play. RBA had.

Restricted until death of
Arthur Pons



0725

JD says he loved AP's guitar playing. And when JD played a banquet or something that didn't require loud music, "and people could hear it," he would ask AP to play a couple of his arrangements. One was "The World Is Ready For The Sunrise." JD says he's never heard such chords in his life. "I personally was thrilled by that man's playing." JD says AP is still good. AP's father died a few weeks ago.

Restricted until death of
Arthur Pons



0748

JD mentions Bob Young, who is a builder. JD had gotten him into the Union when BY was sixteen years old. BY still plays ("I

believe he'd play for nothing.") JD fishes with BY.

Restrict until death of Bob Young

| "But just a splendid gentleman, such a nice wife, nice family."

0763 JD goes on: "I love my boys." Periodically, JD and his band would go to Masera's on Bienville Street, and take some of the performers that they liked with them. They'd get the upstairs room and eat ^a spaghetti and meatball supper and drink "d^ago red" [Chianti?]. It came to about forty cents a head, JD says.

0775 [Tony] Parenti would eat a lot. TP was a great guy with a lot of rotten habits. He played with JD at the Liberty [Theater] ("anytime I could get him I'd take him.") JD was taking Max Finck's place at the Liberty (he'd got in some scandal.)

0786 JD says he was sure of a job [at the Liberty?]. He would drink with the orchestra at the St. Charles [Hotel] "when they had dramatic stock. All I did was play between the acts." JD says all he had to do was take out the dance books and play what he'd played last night. He knew what to play that would be appropriate. (Scats [" ?]).

0799 TP had a bad betting habit. He'd make a two dollar bet every intermission, so he'd be broke by the end of the week. JD told him: "Two bucks four times a day is eight dollars a day. You're making forty-four dollars a week." But it didn't effect TP's clarinet playing and saxophone playing, so JD tried to mind his own

business.

0815 One of the things MF had been playing at the Liberty was "Poet and Peasant" (Overture). JD had to do a new overture every week. [Elmo ?] Ryan, the manager, asked JD what he was going to play. JD told him he was going to play "Poet and Peasant". The manager was doubtful about JD trying to play that on his trumpet. But JD played the entire overture and the "house come down - they never heard no trumpet player play overture on a trumpet. So, that's the way you put yourself over."

0834 JD claims to have made "the first decent broadcast in the city of New Orleans." When he was at the Liberty, JD was playing "The Four Horsemen From [sic] the Apocolypse." Madame Grippon, the leading soprano from the opera at that time, was at the Liberty to sing "The Marseillaise" for the overture, "and then we go into the picture - Rudolph Valentino."

0843 JD says he was asked to come up [where?] and broadcast, which was something he'd never done. He had thirteen men and they played "Raymond Overture." It went well (scats). They'd been playing the piece all week. "It was duck soup. I enjoyed myself." The band could be heard as far as Napoleon Avenue. [RBA and BBR begin to laugh.] RBA says, "I didn't know it was 'duck soup' though; I thought it was Von Suppe" [i.e., the composer of "The Raymond Overture."] JD says, "Wires kept coming coming in - 'You're coming in clear at Napoleon and St. Charles.'" JD still has the write-

ups.

0870 RBA mentions that JD's band sounded different in the New York recording from the New Orleans recording. JD explains that in the New York studios they had "good New York musicians" to dub anything that wasn't exactly right. "If you can't hit a high note, they'll have somebody hit it for you. If you can't sing a high note, they got somebody can sing it. They'll dub anything." For example, JD says, musicians never see a film that they've played the music for. "And they wouldn't go see it if you gave 'em a ticket." The recording studios have an arranger who co-ordinates the film's needs with the band. [I do not believe that dubbing was done during this period. RBA, July 12, 1975.]

0901 RBA points out that the New York recordings have a tuba on them. JD says he had a tuba player, Barny Aquilina [sp?], who was with the James boys. JD got him "afterwards in New York. And he was more-or-less my promoter. He got me in the middle of a dance-hall was up in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania."

0912 JD played at the 6-day bicycle race, as a benefit for poor children. (JD says, parenthetically, "I lived a long life, I mean a musical [long] life.") Vincent Lopey^z was there, "and god knows who" [i.e., celebrities]. They were offering a hundred dollars [to the winner of] a sprint [race]. There was no piano there. JD played "It Had To Be You." In the stop-time arrangement, JD took all the breaks. (JD scats an example from, "It Had To Be You."

Restricted until death of Al Hirt

Everybody wanted to know who JD was. When he was introduced, "every prizefighter and bum from New Orleans that was in New York was on my bandstand looking for a handout."

0940 The next morning, JD says, his phone rang incessantly. "Everybody wants to be my agent." JD signed with Vincent Lopey. VL appointed Mrs. Earl Fuller as JD's manager. Earl Fuller was dead. He had been a bandleader from the Pacific Coast. When EF had made his entry into New York, it was on a special train, JD says. RBA suggests that EF recorded for Victor [Records], and JD isn't sure. After EF died, his wife became an agent.

0954 Mrs. EF sent JD to Harrisburg, [Pennsylvania?]. JD's group, six men, got 1,750 dollars for six nights work, "which is pretty good...in those days." JD paid the hotel bills. The musicians were getting 75 dollars a week and 25 dollars for each recording. JD got 150 dollars and two per cent of the royalties.

0967 Vincent Lopey² "is the only one who sent me a wire when I opened in Suburban Gardens. I put it in my scrapbook. Wishing me success and a long engagement. You know, I mean, he's a man that does things..." VL is getting old now, but still is active, "still plays 'Nola' and all that." Last time JD saw him, VL didn't know he was in the place. "I didn't want to impose myself on him; they think they have to entertain you." JD and his wife had two weeks in New York at that time; they saw thirteen shows in eleven days.

0978 Ray Bolger is a friend of JD's. A long time ago, when he [RB] was featured, JD played golf with him.

0982 JD tells about going to the theatres (he names the shows "Oklahoma", "Carrousel") and talking to the man at the box-office "after everybody was seated." JD would present his card and introduce himself as "an orchestra leader from New Orleans on a busman's holiday." He'd say, "And if you've got two seats any day, any matinee, I'll take them.'" JD always got seats, without having to pay. He saw the original version of "Show Boat" with Charlie Winninger.

 JD says that he knew Charlie Winninger, "he was married to Blanche Ring." RBA has heard of her and thinks she was in silent movies. JD says that when he [JD] was a youngster "before I was married," Charlie [Winninger] played a little clarinet. CW gave his clarinet away to JD, and JD sold it for fifteen dollars.

0999 JD says that Jack Benny "always was down in the pit with us, I mean, down in the cellar." Jack Benny was going on following a dog-act at the time and said to JD, "Don't you think they ought to sweep the stage before I go on?" (JD laughs.) JD and JB got to be friends - "we didn't know that was to be the great--."

 Al Jolson asked JD if he could play for him the way he played with the orchestra. AJ wanted JD to fill up the holes, "what they call 'make the breaks.'" JD agreed. AJ told him, "When I sing, you play; don't play for anybody else." JD got a Victor [recording] contract out of this. [cf. discographies]

1018 When JD was at the Palace [theater], "the White House of vaudeville "in those days," Louchiha, better known as Friscoe-the-xylophonist," offered JD a chance to record the next day. But JD told him he was going home then. (RBA asks if Friscoe is the man who wrote "Shake It And Break It." He wasn't, JD says.) [cf. composer credits.] Friscoe recorded for Edison. JD: "Edison didn't last long, but it was a contract."

1031 JD recorded on Arnold Johnson records for Brunswick, but he says you'd never know he was on them. RBA has seen some of the AJ records and asks if JD solos or can hear himself. JD says no. There was another trumpet from the Russian Symphony; he played lead and JD played "hot trumpet." JD says he created more attention than the Russian. When JD took a chorus, "it was absolutely strange to their ears."

1042 The Orpheum Theater closed with an act called Adelaide Hughes and Jimmy Hughes. She was known as "la petit Adelaide," she danced on her toes." JD says they were two of the greatest dancers that ever lived. Jimmy Hughes was "an athletic sort of a dancer; he did an Indian dance that - I swear - he leaped clear across the stage." Their violinist was drafted, and they had no leader. But there was a spot in the show "where they had to have something happen" because their number was in two acts and they had to change clothes between. And, JD says, [Emile] Tosso, who was a good director, was a miserable violinist. So they asked JD to go on the six-weeks circuit.

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Reel III
Dec. 4, 1969

page 17

JD talked to his wife about it. She said, "Another one of those unnecessary jobs." But she knew JD was ambitious. So JD "grabbed ahold of two stock orchestrations." He took "The Sunshine of Your Smile" and hooked it on to "The Storybook Ball." JD didn't have the arrangements then. JD pasted them together and wrote in a modulation. He would stand up in the pit [and start to put them to sleep?]

END OF REEL

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Reel IV
Dec. 4, 1969

also present: Betty B. Rankin and
Richard B. Allen
digest: Mrs. Marie L. Spencer
check: Richard B. Allen

He "attached" the Chorus of "Some Of These Days" to "the Storybook Ball". [see Reel III]. JD discussed the practice of sending out the orchestrations with two pieces, just like a platter [a disc record] with a flip side. JD comments how he would give them the first three notes of "Some Of These Days" [JD sings this], then they would go into the piece and knock them [silly?!]. He discusses his ability to please audience; it maybe luck; it may be good judgement; it may be inborn experience. [sic.].

0052 Texas, JD remarks, hadn't heard any jazz. The Rice Roof was the center of night life in Houston. JD knew well the leader of the Band of the Rice Hotel Roof, named Finley. JD mentions the first man to ever [slap a bass, Charlie Rittiner, there in the band. JD said that he was asked one night to play on the Rice Roof; he related how the trumpet player went home, disgusted, maybe by the competition JD gave him, so he just had to "stick it out" and played the entire night. JD said Finley asked him to get [Tony] Parenti and the two of them to join his orchestra; JD added that he and Tony didn't want to do this. JD relates how the trumpet player who left that night returned and thanked him for filing out the
0100 night and gave him a can of metal polish!

JD had he had a brass trumpet then because he thought he could get a better tone out of it. Though a miserable looking horn, JD said "it was a great horn, I'm telling you." He felt insulted by

He was greatly surprised to have Mr. Kolb give him \$100 as a Christmas present. JD mentioned that Mr. Kolb did give also presents to the bus boys, who were all deaf mutes. JD admired Mr. Kolb's kindness and spoke of his beautiful farm on Old Gentilly Road next to [the present] Robert Hall [a clothing store]. Mrs. Kolb died and left a large inheritance to her family. Also, JD mentioned that he could have married one of Mr. Kolb's neices, but she had no appeal. The city home of the Kolbs was on Broadway and St. Charles [Avenue]. Mr. Kolb had a ratskeller with apiano and loud music. [In the restaurant], at the dinner session, JD always played some German music for all the German Captains and mates from the ships eating there.

JD told of Mr. Kolb offering him a chance to buy a subdivision Mr. Kolb owned in Gulfport for \$15,000, but JD didn't see the wisdom of investing, so he refused. He remarks that, "we are musicians nothing else", adds that they always struggle [to make an arrangement and improve on another person's who was better to start with?]
[unintelligible]

JD's idea is that the best jazz tune written was "South Rampart Street Parade," where every strain in the piece is a different idea. It was written by Bob Haggart, bassist, and Ray Bauduc, drummer, who couldn't read a note, but perhaps Raymond could whistle the piece. RB's playing at a cheap joint on [Bourbon?], subbed at Kolb's. During intermission, if Paul DeDroit, Johnny's brother, had a late show at Orpheum Paul would give RB a few dollars. JD, making so

much money at this time, working at the Orpheum [Theater] and also at Morrison's [Cafeteria] and other places, quit the Orpheum. RB juggled his sticks too much for JD's taste. Paul DeDroit had a "down-to-earth", Monk Hazel style. Monk Hazel, whom JD wanted to keep in his band, first drank too much, for JD had a respectable group. JD offers drinks and food. BBR and RBA take pepsi-colas. JD said he drinks some at night to get to sleep, instead of Somnex [a sleeping tablet]. JD remarked on his "keeping house", as his wife had died recently. Also, JD speaks of having dinner with a lady, not long ago, who is well educated, but she doesn't care [about him?]. JD chats about cooking his own breakfast, knowing nice people, really telling facts on this tape.

0482 JD mentions that musicians are "found to have strange experiences"; that he played in places he was afraid to go in, e.g., a man hired him to play at Charenton Beach [near] Patterson, La. [See Emile Barnes notes of Aug. 20, 1967 also.] On arriving there to play, JD found that place was unpainted, disreputable in outside appearance, yet was arranged that it all changed, when filled with a good crowd and band. It was as fine a place to play as the [Municipal] Auditorium or the Roosevelt [Hotel].

0505 JD remembered another place he played in, in Picayune [Miss.], where the window panes were broken out, the fuses needed replacing before starting, yet he was hired by the postmaster, a man of integrity.

0528 Also, once JD played at a place where the piano was so out of

0542 tune, he wouldn't allow his piano player to play. He just turned the piano around so people couldn't see if there was a piano player. On another engagement, he played for the Arabi High School, in a building used for a chicken roost. Frank Cuny, then with JD, was a good legit piano player, but he loved motors and boats. Thus his hands were always grimy. Finally he decided with FC that his nails had to be cut short and scrubbed, as people always looked at a piano player's hands, especially if he's good. FC was conscientious, always tuned the piano before a job. One time, at the Piano Royal, FC tuned the middle register, and played "a phantom bass", not really hitting any bass notes, as they had a bassist. FC remembered that they played at the Gulf Coast Military Academy and was well-liked, as he acted like a professor, not as a jazz musician. They played also at Gulf Park College, a girl's school nearby.

0605

The band played also at the Ursuline Convent [i.e., Ursuline Academy?] and was well liked. The Ursuline nuns would unlock the auditorium, turn on lights etc. There was no way of getting in there early to "set up". The nuns enjoyed the music. e.g. "I Believe," all sat in a row, reminded JD of a group of penguins. To convince them that JD was religious, the band played "I Believe".

Restricted - till death of Al Ballanco JD remembers fondly Al Ballanco, coming to JD's Lakeview home, selling lamps. He had heard AB and Arthur Pons at Suburban Gardens the night JD was "scouting" Pons at a jam session. The band was led JD thinks by

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Reel IV
Dec. 4, 1969

page 6

0683 Red Mackie, a natural musician, [Dick Mackie, Red's brother, led a band. RBA, Nov. 7, 1975] whose family had money. JD hired AB ^{tr.} instead of buying a lamp. AB had a Besson cornet. The following week he played at the Donaldsonville Fair, dressed up the band with brass band caps to give military touch. As Huey Long was in power then, they played as an overture [HL's song]; "Every Man A King". His M.C. was "Ha Ha Ha" Hickey. The acts were varied. JD remembers that he played "Under the Double Eagle" to please German entertainers, drawing from his large book of arrangements he always carried with him on jobs. JD gives vocal illustration of "Under The Double Eagle" in his style. He went into a Strauss waltz next. He describes his program further.

0732 When asked if he took any choruses with Arnold Johnson or AJ's records, JD replies "No, never, just ensemble." AJ featured himself being a "^{Piano} pious leader." JD mentions that when AJ left bandstand, as in Hamilton, Ontario, the first trumpet would go to the piano and JD would lead the band. The band couldn't play Dixieland tunes, but played pops; tunes like "Down Home In Sunny Tennessee." JD says he always found a spot where he could ad lib some. One night, JD remembers in Ontario the band left the stand and were packing up to leave, when Mr. Johnson was reminded that he hadn't played "God Save The Queen", a rigid custom there. They had to go back to the bandstand and play "God Save The Queen" to properly close the dancing! JD remembers at leaving the engagement the gift to the each of the band members

0768 a quart of whiskey - real Imperial Quarts - the big ones!

JD recalls [one morning?] he wanted an English breakfast in the hotel and while the others were sleeping, went to the Hotel dining room and asked for an English breakfast. He was served fish and was surprised, but ate it all, regardless of cost, as he was making \$200 a week! He says he remembers this experience as he reads a lot of British books, now he reads less of this type, and
0794 more of mystery books [i.e., mystery novels?] JD says that he's thinking of going to Europe. He had never gone to Europe with his wife when they had the chance. He recalls that when he was 45, he had thought of retiring as he was well fixed, but "the doctors took it all." So, if he does go to England, he wants, JD says, to meet all the jazz musicians, some he knows, some he doesn't.

0807 He wants to hear them play and maybe play with them." He speaks of French writers interviewing him. They always asked him to pose for a photograph, insisting on his wearing a sport shirt. JD states that he doesn't look good in a sport shirt, just isn't that type. He likes more formal dress and doesn't care for that type of "cheap publicity", saying "he's the same as the other guys and that's the way I am." When his daughter said his trousers were too wide, he went down and got -- [unintelligible]

0824 JD says that he doesn't have a hi-fi [phonograph], he just has the cabinet now - to make it into a liquor cabinet. He has books on one side of the cabinet. JD has given away most of his books.

0834 JD discusses local pronounciations. Once a librarian told
him how to pronounce his own name. He said he knew how to pronounce
his name, but would go along with New Orleanians and the Gulf Coast
people who mispronounce his name. He always had two listings in the
0852 phonebook, De Droit and Detroit. He always remembered that he didn't
want to lose that job - so made it easy for people to find him in the
phonebook. Although when his wife was ill, he had an unlisted number.
Later, JD recalls, that he told the Union to give his phone number to
Rudolph Levy, his ex-saxophone player. Now RL teaches bands, used
to travel for the [C.G.] Conn Company, demonstrating instruments.
RL was clever. He was the only man in his band, JD says that could
play a tune on the soprano sax for that is the hardest of instruments
to play a tune on.

0882 JD discusses his teacher, Paulin Fobier [sp?] who taught him from the
Arban method, the usual method taught a trumpet player. PF was a
graduate of and teacher at the Paris Conservatory of Music, being one
of the first prize pupils there. PF went back to France to help out
during World War I and died [unintelligible] of bronchitis. JD recalls
that he too had bronchitis due to night work, but now it is gone since
retirement.

0915 JD discusses his philosophy that one must pay his way for he
gave tips to all.

He hates to see things wasted, so he gives away things constantly,
particularly fish tackle, for he can never resist a fish tackle dis-

play, always buys too much. JD mentions his three vices : fishing, hunting and playing golf. Maybe that's why, he says, he doesn't look 77. JD's mother lived to be 94. JD hopes to live into his late eighties, thanking God for the long years and trying to live as a "good boy". He has been a good boy.

0059 JD remarks that his new friend is very pleasing to him, particularly in the fact that she reminds him of his mother. He was not a mother's boy, JD emphasizes. His mother was "a kindly and considerate person," loved ^{by} all, and "she enjoyed life to the hilt."

0100 JD discusses his paintings. When he was moving, he was asked to put a price on one painting. He tried to get \$250.00 for it, he thinks it cost \$6.00, but didn't sell it. JD points out his favorite picture which he bought for \$3.44! It is a scene of a canal of Venice, painted by Chanel. JD admires its colors and high lights even though it is a copy. His daughter swears she was there. She and [her husband ?] have just returned from an enjoyable tour of Europe. JD points out the picture of himself and his brother, Paul. He admits that he once weighed 180 pounds, now he weighs about 149 [pounds]. JD says besides feeling better, the tailor's happy now. He has no great alteration problems! Now its much easier to buy suits. "In his hey day "he wore only [Steinrock?], only Dobbs hats and still wears that brand. He has to please his granddaughter, who helps her own father keep up-to-date in style, censoring the style of shirt he wore. JD likes Arrow or Manhattan brand shirts, and is content

Interview with Johnny DeDroit
Reel IV
Dec. 4, 1969

page 10

with the old styles, not form fitting - just comfortable. JD re-
quests that the machine be turned off.

[END OF REEL IV]