

JOHN L. JONES
REEL I
June 5, 1972

Also Present: RBA, LIE

John Leon Jones, Sr. [JLJ worked at Tulane University before his illnesses], father was Leon Jones. J L's nickname was 'Sucky' [sic] pronounced Sukey when he was young. He was born in Donaldsonville, La. December 12, 1910. [See below on Smoke Bend]. He started on piano when he was 6 years old, was taught the rudiments from his mother. JL didn't like the piano and put it down and started on ukelele. In 1925 he came to N. O. and played uke around the shoe shine stands and the streets for years. He took banjo lessons from Eddie Morgan and Prof. Valmore Victor. The guitar got popular in mid '30's. He took [guitar] lessons from Rene Hall who recommended J L to Homer Eugene. J L and he were taking lessons from Rene Hall at the same time. R H left N. O. and J L took lessons from Johnny St. Cyr back on ^{Edinburgh} ~~Edenborough~~ St. Johnny St. Cyr was JLJ's last teacher. He joined Isaiah Morgan and went on the road. Thomas Jefferson, tp; Ernest Poree, as; Cleo, bass; Albert Jiles, d, Alton Purnell, p; were in the band. After Isaiah Morgan JLJ joined John Casimir at Claiborne and Tulane Ave. Wooden Joe on trumpet and "Junius [Wilson?] on drums. Junius was "half-blind" and sang. (JLJ phone call, June 12, 1972) Louis Dumaine replaced Wooden Joe. Matthew "Fats" Houston played drums at the time when JLJ left. This is the only band that JLJ knew MH to be in. John Casimir broke the band up and started playing with JLJ at the Rose Club at Mandeville

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and Chartres in the 40's. Dude Foster, tp [i.e. Dude Lewis, brother of Foster Lewis, RBA, June 12, 1972] [J C's] cousin Wilbert Tillman (sax), Junius and Alberta Hall (Vocalist) were in the band. In the late 40's Dude Foster was living in Shrewsbury.

RBA said he thought Dude was with "Bird" [Wilbert Tillman] and Joe Avery. Percy [Humphrey] replaced Dude in the Avery group c. 1946 according to RBA [Machine off].

Rose Club at Chartres and Mandeville, near where the New Luthjens' is. J.L.J. says the son, Jules [Luthjen] was burned to death. There were two brothers, one fat and one skinny. They used to come by the Fern [taxi dance hall]. RBA asks if they were boxing then but J.L.J. didn't know them as boxers. RBA said he had heard they were both "punchy". There was a prize-fighter called "Young Denny".

J.L.J. likes boxing. He remembers seeing Chester Jones box at the Coliseum. Chester Jones started playing music after he gave up boxing.

J.L.J.'s mother taught piano. She could play by ear and music. She was [a member of?] spiritual church?]. She was from Donaldsonville, La. J.L.J. started to play uke in Froggimore [sp?] with "BoBo" and Shay. Shay Levi started with a 'jazz horn' but in later years switched to drums with Ernest Himes, (as, tb) from

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Napoleonville. JLJ on a 'jazz horn': a horn with a piece of silk paper into the hole of the horn and screw it down. Make the music with the sound of your voice. Like a kazoo but smaller.

He heard Claiborne Williams when he was in Donaldsonville, one of the greatest bands in Louisiana - in the South then. In those days they didn't have arrangements so they played stocks. They played "12 Street Rag" by ear. They won a cup from Papa Celestin on the Pelican. Claiborne Williams had 12 - 13 pieces. Had 2 trombone players that sounded like Tommy Dorsey. He had Freddie Landry (tb) and Percy Gibson (tb) and Ernest Himes on alto sax.

Claiborne Williams band came to N. O. twice a year. The Pelican was popular then. The C W band was a society band and traveled Louisiana to all the fine hotels.

They talk of the "Logical Point Waltz". JLJ says he's heard it over and over. Claiborne Williams' son, George, told JLJ that his uncle George that played with W.C. Handy wrote that waltz. Young George [Williams] in California in the same area as Earl Bostic. [Cf Earl Bostic obit] JLJ used to play with Earl Fouche in the Henry Hardin Band. Earl Fouche hasn't been in N.O. for 12 or 15 years. JLJ says Earl Fouche a wonderful clarinet player, also on a s. He's a creole type fellow, slim and with Pickett's color [John "Pickey" Brunious], around Paul Barnes'

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age. Lived at 4th and Danneel.

JLJ's father didn't play music. Mother's name was ~~Eurline~~ ^{Aurèleane} [sp?] Jones. Only other musician in the family was Richard M. Jones who played piano and was told, the French horn. JLJ met him when he come from Chicago. He hadn't been gone long when JLJ came to N.O., 1925. His wife still lived near by. She was a singer, probably classical. Back in the early thirties he formed a band in N.O. DeDe [Pierce] was with him. JLJ saw him at the Bulls which is the Elks now. Before he died in Chicago, he sent JLJ some music, "Little Red Wagon". On suit against composer. [Cf. RMJ folder].

Richard M. Jones was called "My knee". JLJ's father told him RMJ had been eating sardines and drinking. He got ptomaine poisoning and died. RMJ's son, Lionel, a drummer, lives in N.O. and was in the union. RMJ had a stiff leg. He sang. JLJ had some of his music. It is misplaced.

RBA asks about "Jazzin' Baby Blues", "Mushmouth Blues", "Troubled Mind", "Riverside Blues" and "I Ain't Gonna Tell Nobody". RBA says he [RMJ] wrote a lot of good tunes.

RBA asks if JLJ knows a piano player called 'Fishin' Braid', right name Richard Barrett of Donaldsonville. JLJ mentions Cy Cal's [sp?] son Tony [apparently a pianist??] of Donaldsonville. ^(confirmed by JLJ, Aug 7, 1972)
Only piano players in Donaldsonville JLJ knew were "My Knee" Jones and Claiborne Williams' daughter, Bella Williams. "My Knee's" mother was Mary Hall.

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The red light district in Donaldsonville was on St. Patrick Street which ran by a cemetery.

RESTRICTION

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RESTRICT JLJ says they called it "Tenderline" Street.

Richard M. Jones still has lots of relatives in Donaldsonville. His son, Lionel, probably has pictures of RMJ.

In Donaldsonville "Bowlegs" real name Andrew Barnett from St James, La. was in JLJ's opinion one of the greatest drummers in the South. Joe Walker, another drummer, was from up there; he was a "rudiment" drummer.

Buddy Kyeri [sp?] played with Claiborne Williams, but JLJ thought it was before his time. In Claiborne Williams' brass section was Lawrence Hall, tp, from Napoleonville; Willie Daley, tp, who died in N.O. JLJ doesn't recall Sullivan Spruell [sp?]

JLJ said C W had both an orchestra and a brass band and that "My Knee" played in the brass band.

Cy Cal [sp?] played tp. Tony, the son, "got great".
[See above] He was poisoned "or something".

When RMJ left here, he was in the publishing business with someone.

Jules "Gil" Williams (Claiborne's brother) played string bass.

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Claiborne Williams was the only violinist JLJ ever heard in the band. Allen Le Blanc played banjo; when he retired his son, Martinel, took over on the banjo. Another son, Alton LeBlanc, played tenor sax in the band, too. *[Willie Daily (sp?) was CW's first. Lawrence Hall played second. JLJ, Aug. 4, 1972.]* On clarinet was Marlo Gibson, brother of Percy Gibson who played trombone. Freddie Landry played trombone. [Cf Paul Edward Miller, Esquire's 1945 Jazz Book, A.S. Barnes, N.Y., 1945, p. 8]

Band was 12 or 13 pieces. Marlo G. also played ts, but before Alton LeBlanc came in, M G died. On alto was Ernest Himes. George ~~and~~ Claiborne Williams' son, was too small then [to play lead on as?] They had him along on the 'C' Melody [as it was a less important part?]

Billy Kersands was before JL's time.

JLJ doesn't remember George [Pops] Foster or his brother, Willie, up there. He knew Willie Foster in N. O. Their sister was a friend of JLJ's mother. She played guitar in church. They were from McCall, La. McCall is a mile from JLJ's [property?] JLJ says he owns property up there. JLJ says the Fosters had started as a family band.

JLJ did not speak French.

The Black Devil Band from Plaquemine had Leo Songy, banjo.

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Trumpet was Clarence Smothers. Never in the class with Claiborne Williams. They were more "barrelhouse".

Discuss pictures of his mother, grandmother and great grandmother. RBA comments that she looks Indian. She was a Ware which is a family that is scattered all over La.

His mother lived with older brother here in N. O. until she finished grade school, when she returned to Donaldsonville. She went to Thomy Lafon School at Sixth and Freret Sts. Her brother had a German teacher to teach her music.

Wallace Davenport had music lessons from a German professor in the thirties.

When JLJ first came to N.O. in 1925 he lived at 1st and Danneel until about 1932 when his mother died. He moved into her place, two blocks away at 2217 First St. and has been there ever since.

They look up the address of Richard L. Jones, (Lionel, the son of RMJ) [See above]

St. Francis de Salle Church and School are near by. JLJ says they used to be all white when he first lived here.

RBA asks if he knows Harry Shields, cl, who went to that church. JL met him with Sharkey [Bonano].

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LIE says Lionel is not listed in the telephone book. RBA tells J.L. he'll get in touch with Lionel and let him know JL is sick.

JLJ knew George Lewis in the old days. JL worked at the Silver Streak with [Kid] Sheik [Colar] as leader, George Lewis on clarinet, Manny Gabriel on sax, an unremembered drummer, and J.L. on guitar. The Silver Streak was down in Arabi.

J.L. started with banjo but switched in the thirties when guitar became popular.

JLJ worked with drummer [whose last] name is Antoine several places; his brother (or cousin) was Herman, drummer. Another brother played banjo.

Martin Gabriel, cornet, is Manny Gabriel's son. Another son, August, plays trumpet. Both played in father's band. [Cf. Manny Gabriel interview]

Rene Parker started taking JLJ and Walter Nelson, two guitar players, on jobs into Plaquemines Parish to Empire, and Triumph when George (Parker's guitar player) died. Rene Parker was from down there. He died in his seventies about 13 or 15 years ago. Parker used to sing Creole numbers. Walter Nelson mostly sang because he wasn't an expert player. They played numbers like "High Society" and "Milneburg Joys", etc. [The musical style] is called "Dixieland" now, but is old jazz.

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JLJ says when they went down there with Rene Parker they stopped at every store gallery on the way so, people would know they were coming. It was a means of communication. They used megahones for talking and singing.

JLJ worked down in Buras and Boothville with Frank Crump, alto sax player [and leader?]; John Porter [truba (confirmed by JLJ, Aug. 4, 1972)]. The fourth player would sometimes be Lionel Torregano or Albert Jiles [d].

JLJ had a group called "The Rinky Dinks". There was another group by this name downtown. He took the name out of the funny papers.

JLJ was with Isaiah Morgan for 5 years. In the band was Cleo [?] [b]; Albert Jiles, or Lionel Torregano or Nolan "Shine" Williams who died 4 years ago, d. NSW and AJ were two of I M's main drummers. Albert Jiles is dead too. N S W came from Thibodaux, La. His sister lives uptown. A J was from Johnson Ridge, 3 miles below Thibodaux. JLJ's wife's people are from there, too.

RBA says Joe Gabriel was from Thibodaux, too. JLJ played with Gabriel (nickname 'Papee' [sp?]) after he retired. RBA had gone to see him with a message from Punch [Miller] but 'Papee' was too sick and fainted.

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JLJ said he used to sit in the house back of the grocery store Gabriel had and drink wine and play old numbers. JG could not play many numbers by ear.

With Isiah Morgan band they went to Hattisburg, [Miss.], Bogalouza, [La.], Columbus, Miss. Isaaah Morganknever played in N.O. He was well known in Missiissippi by "white and colored". They travelled by car. I M nver had more than five pieces. They went to Biloxi and Moss Point. The places they played were mostly halls. They played the Heidenberg [sic] Hotel, Hattiesburg, Miss., more than once. They played for white and colored. They did play as far assLaurel, Miss.

The band only worked week-ends. Friday, Saturday, Sunday and sometimes Monday. JL had a regular job during the week [de-livering?] on a bike for a market. This was during the depression. Isaiiah was working for the 'door' either on a 50-50% or a 60-40% with the band getting the 60%.

I M used to take Thomas Jefferson to play trumpet, Ike would work the door. It was a common way of doing business, they called it P. C. (percentage). Papa Celestin's "great" band did that. When JLJ was with him there was Allen Cato [sp?], Paul Barbarin [d], Lawrence Trotter [d !!] on the band, and things were bad. On the percentage basis they would be lucky to come back

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with \$10 or \$12. Expenses (gas, tires) were taken out first. Ike Morgan would come with the money in his hand and say "Well, fellows, you can see for yourself". Sometimes, it would be \$.50. Sometimes they had to buy a tire or get gas on credit on the way to the job so they would have to stop on the way back and pay. I M had good credit.

JLJ played guitar back in the mid thirties with Clarence "Little Dad", banjo player, and Octave [Crosby probably] at the Dryades Street Carnival Club on Clio and Howard Ave. [Cf OC and CV interviews] Clarence Vincent is the real name of "Little Dad" [banjo player, and Octave [Crosby probably] at the Dryades Street Carnival Club on Clio and Howard Ave. [Cf O C and C V interviews] Clarence Vincent is the real name of "Little Dad".] He was a little midget. JLJ took his job when he left.

Only mandelin player JL knew was Willie Francis from Donaldsonville. He, Claiborne's brother, Gil, banjo, and drummer named Milton played together. Milton was then young and was about JLJ's age.

LIE asked about guitar players that just walked around the street playing. J L said he started with "Bobo" who used to do that. Never knew real name. Bobo used thumb picks.

JLJ was a porter at Tulane University for 7 years then went into the mailroom. He worked for Radford in Housing. His new job was under Mr. Moore. Both fine men.

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J L first played the uke around Sam's, a beer garden on Erato and Rampart [Sam's Bar and Restaurant, 1239 S. Rampart St?] that is still there. The Creole Serenaders used to play there. J L got a lot of experience at Delpit's [sp?] where he met Albert Delone, trumpet player called 'Bama and pianist Papa Tuts [Isidore '(Red) Tuts' 'Papa Yellow' Washington]. Also Junius, d with John [Casimir]. 'Bama played blues. [Kid] Clayton used to play blues. He was about the last to play blues. [Alvin Walters ["Fernandez*"] was a good trumpet player.

J L shined shoes on Rampart and played uke with Vernel [sp] Joseph who was the last drummer with Claiborne Williams. Two other Joseph brothers, one Alton, uke and another drummer, can't remember the brother that died, had played with Buddy Petit. They didn't get money, just played for fun. Some great uke players came around like Wesley and Black Freddy.

J L J saw a 10 string tippie with the Jesters when they played at the Famous Door. The Jesters started in New Orleans at Steve Loyacano's Chez Paree and wound up at the Famous Door.

Lemon [Nash] played guitar and banjo. J L J met him at a race. He was gambling for a living. He's now dead 5 years. J L never knew Lemon to have a job. Made good tips with uke, carried amplifier. JLJ saw L N with his bj [N would play his banjo over the phone.]

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J L played at George Hefflers' on Tchoupitoulas; Napoleon and Magazine with George Williams, the drummer that died, for a long time. Also J L J played at Thalia and Magazine. RBA said Lemon had told him of a place around there that "Monkey" Joe had played there and perhaps the Boswell Sisters.

J L worked with Kid Rene at the Cadalac on St. Claude near the Industrial Canal. Drummer, Bradey Smith and piano player was Walter Daniels, now an airmail clerk. Also worked with Kid Rene off and on at La Vida with Joe Rene, drum; Paul, sax or Alexis, sax. Kid Rene went to Fern on Budweiser with Sport [William Young], also called "Smokey".

End of Reel I

