

LOUIS KEPPARD
Reel I [only]--Digest--Retype
August 4, 1957

1

Also present: William Russell, Charlie DeVore.

Louis Keppard says that mandolin was his brother's, Freddy Keppard's first instrument; and that he not only played cornet and mandolin, but also accordeon.

LK was born in New Orleans on February 2, 1888; other than himself and his brother, none of the others of his family played music. Freddy was born June 15, 1889. LK's first instrument was guitar; he says that he was about 13 years old when he was [began] playing that; Freddy was playing mandolin then, but changed to violin, studying with Mr. [Beaubois*], and then playing ["under", with?] Adolphe "Taton" Alexander [Sr.], who is the father of Adolphe ["Tats"] Alexander [Jr.]. (The Alexanders used to live on Derbigny and New Orleans [Streets]). Telling his parents he could not be heard on the violin, Freddy persuaded his parents to buy him a cornet; he studied cornet with Alexander, Sr. He [who?] worked with Volteau [sp?], the violinist. Freddy worked [during the day] at Michel's Jewelry Store, Royal at Bienville; when he quit to play his first job on cornet in the District with Joe Petit, valve trombonist (at [Hammond's, Hannon's?]) corner of Marais and Iberville), LK took his jewelry store job. His first job on cornet was at Lucien Pavillion, on the lakefront; he [soon] gave up violin to play cornet exclusively. [The above is confusing.] Freddy, also playing accordeon at one time, was a close friend of Manuel Manetta's, who still talks about Freddy's accordeon playing. Herb Morand bought Freddy's cornet from Freddy's

* Babad, Chas. H., prin. Babad's Academy (Socors' 1825) ?

LOUIS KEPPARD
Reel I [only]--Digest--Retype
August 4, 1957

2

widow. LK says he himself was "fooling around" with cornet then, taking some lessons from Manuel Perez and some from Hypolite Charles, but he says that at the time students learned solfege before they even got an instrument. After about 2 years at the jewelry store, LK began taking lessons on guitar from Bud Scott, guitarist and violinist, and composer of ["Wild Cat Done the Bombashay"?] [i.e., The Animula Ball?]. When LK first started playing [professionally], he worked at the Economy Hall and then at the Cooperators Hall; "that was when I started playing; I had the Magnolia Band." Some of the members of the Magnolia Band were Dave DePass; clarinet; Maurice Durand, cornet; Arnold DePass (brother of Dave), drums and Sidney Desvigne [probably Vigne], clarinet. When the Magnolia Band broke up, the Cherry Blossom Band was formed, with LK a member; when the Cherry Blossom broke up, LK got Joe Oliver, then a butler and yard-worker at a house at 3rd and Magazine [also reported, elsewhere, as 2nd and Maga²²gine], [check Stella Oliver reel?], to play cornet in a band. Oliver was just beginning to play cornet then, and LK lays claim for starting Oliver in a band; LK says they made up the Magnolia Band then [[either LK's chronology is confused, or this was the second Magnolia Band then]. Honore Dutrey played trombone in the band, Sam Dutrey [Sr.] played clarinet and "Red Happy" [Bolton] played drums; LK, the guitarist, was made manager of the band. Money.

LOUIS KEPPARD

3

Reel I [only]--Digest--Retype

August 4, 1957

collected from the various members was given to Oliver to buy uniforms at Sears, Roebuck and Company; weeks passed, no uniforms; Oliver had spent the money playing pool; Oliver got enough money again, bought the uniforms--dark green with black stripes, and dark green caps-- Oliver was made leader, but LK was the manager. The band began playing around the city, the lakefront, etc. Freddy Keppard had the Olympia Band then, and used to "buck" with Sharkey [Bonano] and LK also bucked with Sharkey; LK says Sharkey played good cornet at that time. LK thinks Manuel Perez taught Sharkey how to play. LK says Freddy said he didn't know whether he was more afraid of Bunk [Johnson] (who had such a sweet tone and could play "Maple Leaf Rag" so well) or of Sharkey. LK quit the jewelry store and went to work playing at P. 512 Hunt's [and Nagel's] [cf. p.1, this interview]; at that time, George Jones, bass and Cornelius [Tillman], drums were playing at Tom Anderson's, corner of Basin and Customhouse (now Iberville); LK thinks [A.J.] Piron was playing at [Maestri's?] which was "on the other side of Rampart street" [from where? RBA]. LK played at many halls and other places around town, and with many musicians--Manuel Perez, Kid Ory, and others. Jack Carey played at a place at 3rd and Willow, (i.e., National Park) with Punch [Miller] (who is back in town and still playing); Punch was a strong man on the cornet. Punch played in a brass band with LK, who was playing alto [horn] then; others in

Reel I [only]--Digest--Retype
August 4, 1957

the band were Black Benny [Williams], bass drum; Henry Martin, kettle [snare] drum; Zeb [Lenoir], clarinet. Punch would sometimes be the only trumpet player in the band, and he could play the entire job. LK believes Punch had a better lip than Freddy Keppard, who was almost like Arnold Metoyer, "but Arnold Metoyer was a sweet trumpet player," but Freddy had a pretty strong lip. Frankie Duson had some fellow (whose brother played guitar) in his band, and Bob Lyons used to play [bass] with Duson, as did "Dandy" Lewis [later] and Chester Zardis [later]. Bud Scott & Willie Santiago helped LK on the guitar [Cf. p. 1].

In later years LK worked with Wooden Joe Nicholas, playing at Graffinigno's [sp?], at Tulane and Claiborne; John Casimir worked there with Kid Rena, before LK. About 30 or 35 years ago, Kid Howard was playing drums; Howard made himself up a little band from musicians' headquarters, at Villere and St. Ann. Howard later began playing cornet, which he still plays. LK says nobody plays quadrilles, waltzes, etc., anymore, that nobody knows how anymore; Lk says the quadrille has about 9 parts, and he tells about some of them. LK says [Albert] Glenny knows about the old dances, because he worked with Joe Petit. [Harry Gauche (sp?) was first cornet player in the Cherry Blossoms?], but he went to Chicago where he is a teacher. LK mentions Fewclothes' place; he says "Stale Bread" [Lacoume] played at

LOUIS KEPPARD

5

Reel I [only]--Digest--Retype
August 4, 1957

Lulu White's; two white men and a colored man played together at Lulu White's, two playing guitar and one playing mandolin. Freddy Keppard played at [Hammond's, Hannon's ?] (which was across the street from Hunt's and Nagel's, where LK played with Joe Oliver, and with Eddie Dawson as collector) with Johnny Lindsay, bass, Herbert Lindsay, violin and the father Lindsay, guitar. Dawson also worked in a band uptown. Willie Foster [sometimes] played violin with LK and Oliver, and George [Pop] Foster played bass with them at Hunt's and Nagel's; George Foster was in the band that LK got Joe Oliver to join when he was still a butler [the Magnolia, as LK said previously]. Old Man [Willie] Humphrey [the elder] played at Fewclothes [Cabaret] on Franklin (now Crozat), with Tig Chambers on trumpet and Lawrence Duhé on clarinet (which Humphrey also played). Willie Jackson was working nearby. LK tells about the killing of Billy Phillips by Gyp the Blood, at the Tuxedo Dance Hall. Manny Gabriel's (sax) father played cornet at 28 Franklin; another Gabriel brother was a guitar and banjo player. Willie Jackson was singing at [28 Franklin?] when the Gyp-Phillips "humbug" occurred, and the District was closed temporarily [not the closing of 1917]. Charley Parker had the 101 Ranch. Pete Lala had a place at Marais and Iberville, and [later?] one at 25 Franklin [confused here, John T. Lala had the Big 25 at 25 Franklin]; his place was taken over by an old colored fellow when

LOUIS KEPPARD

6

Reel I [only]--Digest--Retype
August 4, 1957

he died. LK and Joe Oliver played at Pete Lala's Marais street place, and had Emma Barrett on piano (Barrett now [1957] with Celestin's band [?]). Manuel Perez was playing at Rice's [dance hall] on Marais, *find 2 here* near Pete Lala's. "Big Eye" Louis [Nelson] was in there somewhere; [probably Rice's]; there were bands on each corner [at Marais and Iberville]. Piron was at Maestri's, on Rampart Street. The bands then played Scott Joplin music, the "Red Back Book" [of rags]; LK names some tunes [not in this book] such as "Panama," "³[Egyptian] Rag," "Black Smoke." LK says he sometimes hears Sharkey playing some of the old ones on the radio. Louis Dumaine played some of them, too.

End of Reel I

LOUIS KEPPARD
REEL I [Track 2]
August 4, 1957

ALSO PRESENT: William Russel,
Charlie DeVore
NOTES: Richard B. Allen
CHECK: Richard B. Allen
DIGEST: Ralph Adamo

LK begins [continuing a point from an earlier reel?] by talking about keys and chords.

WR asks about a band that LK has a picture of, and names Roy Palmer, Lawrence Duhe, and Sugar Johnny [Smith,co.]. LK explains that Mr. [Lacaze?] "from over the river, in Algiers" wanted to get a band, had heard about LK and went to see him. LK wanted to get Joe Oliver to go with him, but Joe wasn't "fer it at that time."

Mr. [Lacaze?] owned the Photo Theater across the river. LK and Mr. L. signed "two or three contracts," two made by lawyers here and another by a lawyer in Chicago. There were bookings from New Orleans up to Chicago.

LK rounded up a band: Roy Palmer, Lawrence Duhe, Johnny "Sugar Johnny" Smith. (LK tells why JS was willing to go: he had bought some furniture and then sold it before he had paid for it, "so he was glad to go.") LK also got Herb Lindsay to go. And finally, LK got "Little" Happy [Bolton], d. HB wasn't playing at the Lyric Theater at that time, "he was just fooling around." The contract was for one year.

LK distributed a deposit from Mr. L. to the band of fifteen dollars apiece. Then Mr. L. sent LK a telegram saying he didn't need a drummer because there was one ready in Chicago.

LOUIS KEPPARD
REEL I [Track 2]
August 4, 1957

P. 2

HB got to keep the deposit.

LK's band played their first show without a drummer. They got a Chicagoan temporarily, but mostly they continued to play without drums. LK and WR note that there's no drummer in the photograph. WR says that Ed Garland was the bassist.

WR asks if LK remembers the singer's name. LK says she was the dancer, Mamie [ck. sp.] Laine [ck. sp.]. She was "all blackened up" [i.e., in black-face]; her husband was the manager of the show. LK says she was a good dancer. WR is surprised to hear she was a white woman.

LK was sorry when their ^[i.e., Pentafes] [Plantation?] time [i.e., Vaude- ville circuit?] was up because everybody worked so well together. They played three matinees and a "little piece of show at night," and got paid twenty-five dollars per man per week on the third night as they had worked the equivalent of a week. [???See the term "split week" in dictionaries]. Their transportation was paid; board and lodging were not paid. They had plenty of time for sight-seeing.

During that year they only played two or three nights everywhere they went. LK names St. Louis and Cedar Rapids, Iowa as two of the cities they played consecutively.

At the end of the year, Mr. [Lacaze] asked LK, who was the manager of the band, to find out who wanted a ticket to New Orleans, since the contract called for transportation back

LOUIS KEPPARD
REEL I [Track 2]
August 4, 1957

p. 3

home. However, the band wanted the ticket money and stayed there [in Chicago]. LK: "I said 'ticket for me,' and I'm here."

The next year, Mr. L. sent LK a telegram about a job in New York. LK declined, and told Mr. L. to get in touch with the men up there. "Cause Keppard is home and Keppard ain't going nowhere but where he's at, Keppard is home, now, and I'm on New Orleans streets, and I'm on New Orleans land, and I'm too old--I can't travel like I used to be. . . Well, you know how that is: when you get old you get cold, huh." WR and CD agree that being on the road is a hard life.

LK is sixty-nine now [i.e., about thirty-nine years later].

WR asks where a photograph [on the wall] was taken. It was made in Dreamland [Theater] on 35th and State Street [Chicago] in 1917. This was the first job in Chicago. LK points out a piece of drop-scenery, with what appears to be cotton on it, that "imitates a boat--but it's not no boat."

WR asks how long that band stayed together. They stayed together until LK came home. [Cf. Lawrence Duhe, Roy Palmer, and Ed Garland interviews.] LK doesn't know ^{how} Mr. L. did trying to get a band when he refused to go to New York. But "Poppa" George Foster [i.e., Pops Foster] was with [Kid] Ory the rest of "and them", "so he couldn't have went with 'em neither."

LOUIS KEPPARD
REEL I [Track 2]
August 4, 1957

p.4

WR asks how far they traveled. LK says the farthest they went [from New Orleans] was Chicago, where they were "stationary." They went from the Northside to the Eastside, playing for the colored and then for the white. Later they got orders to go to St. Louis where they stayed about three weeks. Then they went to Cedar Rapids. They were supposed to go to California on the next trip, but by then, "the [Plantation?] time was over." LK says they were late getting on the [Plantation?] time.

There is
no "East
side" of
Chicago

WR asks what band FK went with when he left New Orleans. He went with half of his own band, LK says: Jimmy Palao, vl.; George Baquet, cl.; Eddie Vinson, tb, "from over the river" (WR informs LK that EV died in Chicago). FK and his band went to join up with a bass player named [WR leading] Bill Johnson. BJ had sent for them to come to Chicago. FK got in the union there and started playing in a cabaret.

[to Cali-Sam & son? see B.L. JOHNSON NOTES]

LK says that FK's wife sent word to them, asking why FK was drinking. WR asks if FK was married to Jimmie Noone's sister, and LK answers that that was his girlfriend here.

But, LK says, FK started going to a dressmaker "over there" [Chicago], "good person, but he wasn't married to nobody, he never married."

LOUIS KEPPARD
REEL I [Track 2]
August 4, 1957

p. 5

LK continues: FK quit the band and took a cabaret job. The prizefighter Jack Johnson had a place on State Street where Freddy played. LK tells about a time the rest of the musicians were playing and waiting for the cornet player; "here come Freddy up in there falling on the floor full of liquor." They send word to LK to see what he could do about it. LK: "I'm in New Orleans, and he's in Chicago. . .I couldn't hit him from here. . .no, and I couldn't whip him from here." Anyway, LK goes on, "He ain't studying about it if I say anything and if I didn't say anything, he don't hear me." LK continues about the drinking, the union did fine him at some point, but, LK adds, everybody liked him, and he mixed with people very well.

LK recalls FK threatening to hit him over the head with his cornet when they were playing with the Olympia Band at Economy Hall. LK threatened to break the guitar on his head. Shortly after this, LK quit the Olympia band to go play with Manuel Perez. Willie Santiago replaced him.

WS used to play with the Superior Band, with Bunk [Johnson] and Billy Moran [i.e., Marrero]. "Course, all of em are dead. John Marrero--" [LK is interrupted at this point.]

LOUIS KEPPARD
REEL I [Track 2]
August 4, 1957

p. 6

WR asks when FK left New Orleans, whether it was before the First World War. FK left about seven years before WWI, and did not ever come back, not even to visit. When LK went to Chicago in 1917, FK had left for New York. The "onliest one" LK saw was George Fihle [sp.].

WR never met GF, though he tried to visit him; GF is dead now.

GF lived next door to 1813 St. Ann Street where FK, LK, and their mother and sister used to live. FK left New Orleans from there. LK says: "My mother grieved herself to death, 'cause he was younger than I was, and she was so attached to him. . . Sent him a telegram, but I guess he was too filled up [with liquor]. . . to know he'd been away so long, so my mother grieved over it." Their house was right across from the French Hospital.

WR brings up Bunk [Johnson] and the Superior Band. LK has known BJ since 1912 or 1913; he was famous then. Willie Santiago played guitar with BJ, and Buddy Johnson "from over the river" [i.e., from Algiers] played trombone. WR asks if that was his cousin, but Buddy was Yank's [Johnson] brother. (YJ was a barber and had his own shop.) Both are dead now. YJ had played with Sam Morgan. [?]

LOUIS KEPPARD
REEL I (Track 2)
August 4, 1957

p. 7

CD mentions that Buddy Johnson used to play with [Manuel] Manetta.

LK says that [bassist] Billy Marrero, John Marrero's son, played banjo ("a good banjo player") with the Superior Band. [LK confusing here. Bassist Billy "Moron" Marrero was the father of banjoist John Marrero. RBA, Jan. 11, 1975.] John Vigne played drums, and [John] McMurray [also] played drums with the Superior Band. JM was old, but he was tough [i.e., he was a good drummer.]

Bunk Johnson's style was not exactly like Arnold Metoyer's. BJ was "a little behind" Metoyer [i.e., he imitated Metoyer a little?] "it was a sweet tone he had in his cornet." (LK scats a fragment of "Maple Leaf Rag" to indicate how BJ's style was not as sweet as AM's.) AM had "that Striple" in his cornet. [That is, he employed trills?] (LK scats a flutter-tongue effect.) Bunk had a "nice tonation [i.e., timbre]. . ." BJ had nice fingering.

LK says FK "wasn't the fingerer that Bunk was. Of course, Freddie had that barrellhouse stuff. . ." (LK imitates FK's cornet style.) [] sometime FK would put his derby over the cornet. LK scats FK's "wa wa" mute style, saying it

LOUIS KEPPARD
REEL I (Track 2)
August 4, 1957

p. 8

was like a horse hollering. LK doesn't hear anyone doing this. FK didn't use his hand or a mute. FK even made his cornet sound like a police whistle. "It ain't cause it's my brother I'm saying that, but he used to do it." WR agrees that many people have said how wonderfully FK played. LK goes on: "Of course, I was ashamed to see that I couldn't do it myself, I guess like others. . .Everybody feels like they'd like to do the same things, but if it's not in you, it's not in you."

LK talks about making double-raps on his guitar. He tells about musicians including guitar players from other bands coming to listen and asking him how he does that. LK says there were only two drummers who could keep his time--Black Happy [Goldston] and [Red] Happy. [Bolton] WR says BHG, ~~and*CD*adds*tha~~ still plays, and CD adds that they have only heard him playing snare [drums] in parades lately. LK says that when BHG is playing, it makes you think rain is falling. (LK scats.) LK adds that others can't imitate his style with double raps.

FK is the one who helped Buddy Petit. LK says BP played like FK and that BP was called "Young Freddy." BP was crooked. He was short. [Cf. Punch Miller interviews with demonstrations.]

WR says he was told that FK used to put a handkerchief over his fingers so people would [^] see how he was fingering, ~~it~~ ~~wouldn't~~ ~~see~~. LK says this isn't true.

LOUIS KEPPARD
REEL I (Track 2)
August 4, 1957

P. 9

The only thing, LK says, is that people would try to get FK to make records and FK didn't care to. He did make one with [George] Baquet "up the line" [i.e., in the North]. LK says FK didn't have time to make records. LK guesses that FK was afraid he might miss something out in the streets--liquor. [Cf. discographies.]

CD asks if LK knows anything about FK and Joe Oliver "getting in any tangles," that is having a contest of cornets in a parade. LK says it was the Onward Brass Band; Freddy, Joe Oliver, and Manuel Perez were involved. Everyone said FK was the best.

LK says Joe Oliver had a very hard lip. Also, he was "too big" for the cornet; he used to blow cornet out of tune. LK says he should have been playing tuba.

"Wooden Joe" [Nicholes] was the same way. They called him "Wooden Joe" because of his powerful lip. [Cf. WJN file folder on his nickname. RBA, Jan. 16, 1975] "Punch" [Miller] was also powerful. CD says that Punch can still blow like that sometimes, and that PM is sixty-three or sixty-four. LK adds "more than that."

LK says that he believes next year he'll tell them he's sixty-two [Cf. above.] "Course, everybody getting young now,

LOUIS KEPPARD
REEL I (Track 2)
August 4, 1957

p. 00

you know. Nothing gets old but your clothes. . . You don't want to let them womenfolks know. . . 'cause they won't recognize you. But it's an honor when you live long, and you can explain different things to people, you know. . . It ain't for what you know, what you heard--it's for what you done seen, and when you done seen something. . . you can say you seen these things. . . Me and Freddy used to grub in the gutters, me and Freddy used to go and shine shoes--that's the first thing he started doing in that [red-light] district, him and I. . . we used to be shoe-shine boys." They saw everything in the red-light district. White and colored dug in the gutters for things the whores threw away. They were living on Villere Street. They gave their money to their mother. WR asks what their father did. LK says he was a "chef-cook" at [Ferd? Fred?] Bertrand's on Dauphin and Canal. "His name was [Ferd? Fred?] Bertrans--that's my daddy ; he was a skinny man like me or you. And he was a chef-cook there." [Does this mean that his father worked for Bertrand or was Bertrand? RBA, Jan. 16, 1975.] [Cf. Reel I, Jan. 19, 1961.] LK mentions a picture of his father that his sister has.

CD asks for a clarification of a story he's read concerning FK and Joe Oliver. [See Frederic Ramsey and Charles Edward

LOUIS KEPPARD
REEL I (Track 2)
August 4, 1957

p. 10

Smith, Jazzmen, . . .p. 62] According to the version CD has seen, JO and FK were playing in the [red-light] district and FK was top cornet at the time. JO "got disgusted or something" with everyone telling him how great FK was. So JO went out in the street and started blowing his cornet, and afterwards people started saying that Joe Oliver was the king now.

LK says he was there, and that he's the one who brought JO into the district. FK was across the street from where JO was playing with the Magnolia Band. LK says they were playing in the hallway; the bar was in front and the cabaret was in back. A lot of people, especially soldiers looking for "streetwalkers, would come in, and they would dance---"

[Reel Ends Abruptly]