

LEMON NASH

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I [only]

October 3, 1959

Also present: William Russell, Richard
B. Allen, Harry Oster.

Lemon Nash was born April 22, 1898 in Lakeland, Louisiana; he was brought to New Orleans when he was about two months old. RBA asks for the spelling of his name [as RBA saw it spelled Lemoine on a document, probably a Birth or baptismal certificate. RBA Sept. 22, 1967.] He lived in New Orleans until he was about twenty; then he went to Chicago and to Detroit; he traveled with medicine shows, worked in theaters, in side shows with circuses. He was with John Robinson Circus, Downey Brothers, Sells-Floto, and with the Big Chief Indian [and Western Cowboy] medicine show. [See below, Reel III, Sept. 28, 1960.]

The first blues LN ever heard was "St. Louis Blues." Other songs he heard at an early age were: "Who Stole the Lock off the Henhouse Door," "Big Rock Candy Mountain," "Casey Jones," "Steamboat Hill," "Winter Night, [or Nights?]" "Junk Man's Rag," "Shots and Shells Are Ringing on the Battlefield," and "Sailing, Sailing." LN says he was about eight years old when he heard "St. Louis Blues."

LN had uncles who played musical instruments or sang; they were Ferdinand Callender, who played mandolin; Fred Callender, guitar; Joseph Callender, bass; Willie Callender, singer. They lived in New Orleans, but were in part reared in Plaquemine, Louisiana. They played as a unit, not with other bands. LN says ^{was} he/told his father played accordion, but LN was a baby when the father died. The uncles played tunes such as LN has already named [leading by RBA. RBA]. Others they played were "That Ought to Get It," "I Had a Dream," [i. e., "You Tell Me Your Dream"] and

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"Over There." LN says all the uncles were in World War I.

(LN scats "Junk Man's Rag," [which is the same as "Too Much Mustard"--PRC.] [Cf. sheet music and recordings--RBA.] LN thinks Steve Lewis [pianist] recorded "That Ought to Get It." (LN scats the tune.) LN says Steve Lewis played piano at Victor's Bar, corner of Chartres and Toulouse [streets].

One group LN heard when he was young were the New Orleans Dixie Stompers [LN is not certain of the name), consisting of saxophone [! RBA], bass violin, mandolin and guitar; he heard them around 1908. LN says the other old bands he remembers were led by [Oscar "Papa"] Celestiné Louis Armstrong, Sam Morgan, Chris Kelly, Buddy Petit, and Kid Rena. [Note the diverse ages. RBA.] LN also heard serenading bands. He himself serenaded, playing mandolin. "Barrelhouse," still living uptown, was one of the leading serenaders; he picked his guitar with his fingers only at fish fries, making his living in that manner. LN explains that "Battle Ax" repairs television sets, and plays music on Bourbon Street, by [i.e., at] the Court of Two Sisters. "Barrelhouse" sang a song beginning "I Wish I had a nickel, I wish I had a dime."

LN began serenading around 1922. He had some music lessons, learning by hanging around musicians, and from Professor [Manuel] Manetta. LN was with [i.e., worked with?] Frank Wagner, one of the best guitarists in town; Wagner hung himself when he

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decided he couldn't support his mother well enough. Wagner lived on Sixth [Street] between Howard [now LaSalle] and Liberty. Wagner worked with groups no larger than a trio. LN played with him around 1921 or 1922.

LN's first instrument was guitar; he quit playing guitar to play mandolin; he never quit playing ukelele. LN was about thirteen years old when he took up guitar, continuing until he was about seventeen. When ukelele became very popular, he began playing that instrument; he sold ukeleles at Morris Music Shop [on South Rampart Street]. LN played the mandolin only a short time, switching to ukelele when it became so popular. He has also played banjo, around 1925, the year he got married.

LN made a living playing guitar; he worked with four-and five-piece bands; one of the bands was led by Peter Williams, an old-time Dixie-land musician [i. e., drummer] who lived on Gravier between White and Dupree [streets], just one block from Jane Alley. Richard "Rabbit" Brown was from the same neighborhood; LN says he played with "Rabbit" a couple of times, but "Rabbit" played so badly LN had to let him go; he says "Rabbit" would just hit the guitar and yell. "He was what you call a clown man." When he worked at Mama Lou's [at Lake Pontchartrain] and business was slow and he needed a ride home, he would turn in a false fire alarm; he knew all the firemen, so he would be able to get a ride back into town with them. RBA says

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"Rabbit" made a recording of "James Alley." LN says "Rabbit" used to sing "The Downfall of the Lion," which was about the death of Chief [of Police] David Hennessey. RBA says "Rabbit's" nephew August is in Chicago; LN says he recently got word that August had died; he says August was the first person he ever played with; LN, guitar, and August, mandolin, played serenades together. "Rabbit" lived on Lafayette between Clara and Willow, in the heart of "The Battle field," a very tough neighborhood; the police wouldn't go into the area to quell a disturbance. The Peen [sp?] brothers were tough guys; "Stringbean," also known as "Long Boy," was another tough.

After playing with August, LN worked with another old-timer, a violinist called "Siyune" [sp?]; they played at Canal and Front at Eddie Woodruff's place, and for Walter Kern's parties. "Siyune" or "Liyune" now lives in Baton Rouge. "Siyune" lives near the Apex, a barroom. Johnny Bynum, who played mandolin with LN [and "Siyune"?] died in Baton Rouge not long ago. They also had a bass player, who joined the band in Memphis. [i. e., Hosea Harris?], who played bass with LN [when?], now lives in Los Angeles, California, where he still plays bass, although he must be around eighty-eight years old. Johnny St. Cyr, who lives in Los Angeles, is mentioned. LN says "Papa" John Joseph, with whom he is now rehearsing, is about eighty-eight years old.

LN says he and August played music together around New Orleans

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for about six years, until August went to Chicago, in about 1922 or 1923. Then LN began playing with "Siyune," remaining with him until "Siyune" moved to Baton Rouge. LN then joined Peter Williams; "Kid"George," trumpet with Williams, died in California; LN played guitar-banjo then; Williams played drums. There were also a clarinetist and a saxophonist; [Joseph] "Fan" Bourbeau played piano.

LN talks about playing for parties, going serenading, and playing while riding in an automobile. LN, playing ukulele, and Frank Wagner, playing guitar, would also walk around town when they were working with "Siyune;" LN says they would go anywhere they could make a dollar. If they got a dance job, they would hire a bass player, too.

End of Reel I

