

Manuel Manetta  
I [ of 4 ] -Digest-Retyped  
March 28, 1957

Recorded at Manuel Manetta's Studio, 410 LeBoeuf Street, Algiers, Louisiana.  
Also Present: William Russell, Robert Campbell, Nesuhi Ertugun, Richard B. Allen.

*copy on MM, full*

(MM plays "Now Is The Hour," on two trumpets simultaneously.)

(MM plays "In The Mood", on two trumpets simultaneously.)

*March 21, 1957*

MM says "In The Mood" is an old number which he heard on a phonograph recording by Glenn Miller, whose band featured the tune. "March of the Bobcats" was featured by the Bob Crosby Band. Pinetop Smith's "Boogie Woogie" was featured by Tommy Dorsey. MM says, "That's the first boogie was held."

WR says Clarence Williams said George Thomas, composer of "New Orleans Hop Scop Blues," played a boogie woogie bass piano style. MM doesn't recall that he ever heard Thomas use that style. He says a pianist named "Birmingham" originated the style; "Birmingham," "Jelly Roll" [Morton] and "Black Pete" were friends. The first boogie woogie originator MM knew left New Orleans, going to Chicago; he was Albert Ammons, who died about four years ago. MM doesn't know where "Birmingham" was from; MM knew him in New Orleans; "Birmingham" was a dope head. "Black Pete" played only accompaniments by ear. He didn't take any solos. He played at the 101 Ranch, with Jimmy Palao [violin], George Baquet [clarinet], and Eddie Dorsey [i.e., Dawson], bass player, still living. "Black Pete" didn't play in the houses [of prostitution] much; his work was mainly in the dance halls and cabarets.

*copy on MM, full 2/11/57  
Black Pete had no home*

Pete Lala was first to open a cabaret in New Orleans; [Cf. other interviews and RBA's notes on the Big 25's.] It was at the corner of Iberville and Marais [streets]. Musicians in the band at the place were: Joe Oliver [cornet]; Sidney Bechet, clarinet; [Ferdinand?] Valteau

*[Reporting from source]*

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[spelling from Soards, 1898, 1904, 1911], violin (He was a good musician; he was a real nervous-type man, though."); Henry Zeno, drums. There were changes made occasionally; "Big Eye" Louis [Nelson] would substitute for Bechet at times. "Big Eye" was playing [as a regular member?] with the Imperial Band at the time. The original clarinetist in the band [at Pete Lala's?] was Willie [E.] Humphrey, son of Jim Humphrey, who taught music [father of Willie J. Humphrey].

Piano style in the old days was mostly jazz which was called ragtime. Joe "Tony" Martinez was a piano player who worked in cabarets and in houses; he was a good musician; when the music business became bad, he was appointed director of the W.P.A. Band.

MM says he wrote [i.e., composed] the last part of "Panama" for Emmett Hardy [cornetist from the Westside]. (MM plays parts of "Panama" on the piano. He repeats it at the request of WR.)

MM says a cabaret was opened on Canal Street where the States newspaper office had been; Buzzy Williams, a short, [white] piano player, had the band there; some of MM's pupils played in that band.

(At the request of WR, MM plays "Anita" <sup>again</sup> on the piano.) (MM then plays "La Paloma.")

The first recordings MM made were with [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin [with Ridgley's Tuxedo Orchestra].; The recordings were made on Baronne Street. Emma Barrett was the regular pianist with the band, but [William "Bebé"] Ridgley (manager of the band at the time) preferred that MM record with the band. The year was 1923 or 1924. The only title of the tunes he recorded then that MM remembers is "Black Rag", a name given spontaneously by Ridgley for an untitled tune. <sup>[of Ridgley's invention]</sup> Some of the personnel for

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the recording session: Hohn Marrero, banjo; Simon Marrero, bass; Joe Strother, drums (he replaced [Abbey] "Chinee" [Foster]). Strother made a special holler effect by shouting across the snares of his snare drum; WR says Sammy [Penn], of the Kid Thomas band, does the same thing sometimes when he sings. MM says "Chinee" started it. In answer to RBA's question, MM says "Chinee" played the slide whistle, and that he was with the band when they recorded "Careless Love." RBA says the three tunes recorded at the session were "Careless Love", "Black Rag", and "Tuxedo Rag." The band members had an argument about bringing MM into the band for recording; the manager of the band, Ridgley, was replaced, on trombone, by August Rousseau; Ridgley got himself another band [some of the members of the Celestin-Ridgley Tuxedo went with him, however?]. [Cf. Bebé Ridgley et al. interviews.] Ridgley is still alive, though in poor condition. [He has died since this interview--PRC]. RBA says Ridgley told him that MM made those recordings with him in Celestin's band. [Cf. discographies. RBA.]

MM played at Jack Sheen's [sp ?-in The Baby Dodds Story.] racetrack, which was where the cemetery is now located [Metairie Road at Pontchartrain Boulevard ?]. [A. J.] Piron was then playing at Tranchina's Restaurant.

Asked about quadrilles, MM says people would pop paper bags during the breaks in the quadrilles. A man called the dance figures during the quadrille; he was called a "stick [dealer?]" because "when they'd get unruly, you know, he's sound the 'A' with that stick" [i.e., act as bouncer].

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MM talks about lancers, varieties, schottisches and mazurkas.  
"Lancers run in 6/8 movement; mazurkas run in 3/4 movement." (MM  
plays "Moon Winks", originally a waltz, as a waltz; then he plays it  
was a mazurka.) WR says Baby Dodds once tried to explain the difference  
between waltzes and mazurkas to him. MM says the schottische, a slow  
dance, could be <sup>in</sup> waltz time or in common [i.e., four beats to the  
measure] time. (MM plays a schottische called "I Dreamt and Cried.")  
Discussion of what the meter of the tune was; RC says 4/4 [which is  
correct--PRC]; WR and MM say 3/4; RBA is uncertain. (MM plays a(nother)  
4/4 schottische, which is called "[Poor?] Little Blackberry.")

End of Reel I

(see allenda also)

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Also present: Richard B. Allen, William Russell, Robert Campbell

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RBA asks MM where breaks in music started. MM mentions the New Orleans Rhythm Kings and Paul Mares [cornetist in that group], who played a tune called "Milenburg Joys." (MM plays that tune on piano, demonstrating the use of breaks.) MM says the Rhythm Kings [originated, or frequently took breaks?]; every man in the band took breaks at one time or another. MM says "Milenburg Joys" came out about 1908 [1908] [or 1925. Cf., Alan Lomax, Mr. Jelly Roll ~~XXXXXX~~; Duelly, Sloan and Pearce, New York, 1950, p. 293.] and came from [i.e., was published by] Melrose; WR says he thinks Melrose published it.

A slow drag was a slow dance; almost any tune could be played at a slow tempo for dancing the slow drag. "[I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My] Sister Kate" was one such number. (MM plays that tune on piano.) (MM plays "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor.") MM says he first heard Buddy Bolden, the originator, play that tune. Another slow drag, featured by Frankie Dason [trombonist] was "Ida". (MM plays "Ida.") WR mentions Scott Joplin's "Sunflower Slow Drag;" MM says it was played slow.

MM says Louis "Dippermouth" Armstrong really wrote "Sister Kate" in 1917, when Armstrong was playing [only] three tunes. MM [was then playing with?][Kid] Ory's and [Joe "King"] Oliver's jazz band; Armstrong was living at Perdido and Liberty [Streets]. MM says "Sister Kate" was first called, by Armstrong, "Take Your Finger Out Of Katie's Head." [other name: Make a dime out of it] (MM plays "Wind and Grind" twice.) "Wind and Grind" was one of the three tunes Armstrong knew at the time. The third piece Armstrong knew was "just an old blues." (MM plays the blues Armstrong played.) MM says Armstrong would play that blues day and night. Piano and drums were played twenty-four hours a day in the saloon operated at the corner of Perdido and Liberty by Joe Segretto [perhaps John Segretto, 1132 Perdido; Soards, 1914--PRC]; Armstrong would often play his cornet with them [while he was still in his own yard?, which was directly behind the saloon]. Armstrong and "Shots" [Madison] were often together, sometimes working in Poydras Market, loading coal. The piano and drums at Segretto's saloon

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were played by various people; they took turns. Armstrong had a brass C. G. Conn horn given to him by Joe Oliver; Armstrong had come out of Jones [i.e., Waifs] Home with a "lead" horn given him by "Old Man" Jones. Armstrong and "[Red?] Happy" [Bolton?] were in the Home together. "Happy" was taken into Ory and Oliver's band by Joe Oliver himself. MM tells about playing with Ory and Oliver's band at Fabacher's Winter Garden, Gravier and Rampart; Armstrong would ask MM to get Oliver's permission ~~x~~ for Armstrong to sit in with the band; when granted, Armstrong would play one of his three numbers; he would play so well that "Happy" would become envious of the applause given Armstrong, and would show his envy by playing badly. No one, including Ory [manager of the band], would reprove "Happy", except MM, who was respected by "Happy." MM was an asset to the band, as he was a good reader; the only other member of the band who could read was Oliver; Johnny [Dodds] couldn't read. "During them times, violin [player]s was highly respected, too." MM introduced Joe Oliver to a singer, Mary Thacker, who went to work in a cabaret opened by Pete Lala; Oliver decided to take a job playing in the cabaret from eight until eleven P.M., as he liked the girl; Ory was left to run the Ory-Oliver band, using Armstrong on cornet. [Pinchback?] Tureaud was janitor of Economy Hall, where Ory-Oliver frequently played; Morgan played at the Cooperators Hall. MM says that Sam Morgan had a very popular band, but if Morgan's band played a dance the same night the Ory-Oliver band ~~x~~ did, all the people would go to hear Ory-Oliver. MM tells of a scuffle Armstrong and "Happy" had because of "Happy's" ~~envy~~ envy. [Cf. Louis Armstrong, Satchmo, Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1954, p. 59 et seq.]

Soon after the events related, the [World] War [I] began and MM was drafted. Joe Oliver went to Chicago sometime while MM was away from New Orleans. The Ory-Oliver band, without Oliver, took a job at Pete Lala's place, which had been changed from a cabaret to a dance hall. Armstrong took Oliver's place in the band.

Armstrong handed out bandbills and sang while the band [Ory and Oliver's] with MM played outside jobs to advertise dances for which they were to play.

MM says one of "Happy's" friends George Stirling [sp?], showed aptitude for drums; RBA sees Stirling occasionally, playing in brass bands [see George Stirling interview].

MM says he doesn't like to talk/<sup>so much</sup>about the histories of the people he knows and knew because they might become insulted about some of the things. He says some things have been said that he doesn't remember having happened; for instance, Bunk Johnson said Armstrong used to carry his [Johnson's] horn in parades, but MM doesn't remember that's happening; WR says Johnson said Armstrong carried his horn before Armstrong went into the Waifs Home; MM doesn't remember that Armstrong carried the horn, although MM has only known Armstrong since he was released from the Home. Armstrong didn't copy any person's playing; "only thing [is] that he had all his mind on Joe Oliver; [he was] always around Joe Oliver, that's the only ~~1~~ one." MM never played with Bunk Johnson; "most<sup>2</sup>ly, course, Bunk was playing before I was...." [He knew Bunk well?] Bunk usually played with downtown bands, such as the Superior Band and the Olympia Band; MM usually ~~played~~ played with uptown bands. MM did play with Buddy Bolden about four times, but in Frankie Duson's band. WR says Charlie Devore said MM once played for him a piece he played with Bolen; MM didn't remember the name of the piece at the time. MM says he played "Ida" with Bolden, because that was Duson's favorite piece. "Pallet on the Floor" and many "make-up" numbers were also tunes MM played with Bolden. "Make-up" numbers might have ~~been~~ names or not. Duson played popular tunes of the day. He also played the first "Panama" [by Seymour?]. [See above, reel IV, March 21, 1957 and below, reel III, March 28, 1957. RBA]

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Also present: Richard B. Allen, William Russell, Robert Campbell, Charlie Devore.

Frank Duson began to take an interest in learning to read music when New Orleans trombonists began changing from valve trombone to slide trombone; Louis Dumaine, then playing trumpet with Duson, taught Duson some things.

(MM plays "Panama (Rag?)" on the piano.) He says the piece he just played was the first "Panama." MM points out that the clarinet~~s~~ played a certain part of the piece. He mentions an old clarinetist, Frank Lewis, and says [he was the first to play that part of the old "Panama"?]

Frank [Duson?] had a man [cornetist] named Ned; MM never knew his last name; Ned played "all the high, extreme notes." MM thinks he was ~~a~~ from Baton Rouge [Louisiana]. Ned was neither Edward Clem nor Ernest "Nene" Coycault. When Coycault joined the Black and Tan Band in California, he changed his name to Ernest Johnson; he claimed to be a brother of Bill "Louse" Johnson; Bill Johnson "was a very bright [i.e., fair-skinned] fellow."

(Charlie Devore enters.)

Bill Johnson got a lot of jobs; he sent for George Baquet [clarinet~~x~~] to join him in playing on the Orpheum [theater] circuit; Freddy Keppard [cornet] and Eddie Vinson [trombone] were in the same band. [Original Credit Check]

MM first went to Chicago in 1913. MM tells of being escorted to a cabaret called Dago and Russell's, which was [the musicians'] headquarters where Tony Jackson was playing. [See ad, NO Jazz, Rose Jackson 3/28/13, p. 280] A waiter who had worked at George Delsey's place in New Orleans (Delsey was a son-in-law of Tom Anderson) worked at the Chicago cabaret; when he saw MM, he told Tony Jackson. Jackson, piano, had Manzie Campbell, "one of the best little drummers up North," playing with him. Jackson was very glad to see MM; he introduced MM around the place. MM says Jackson [was kind the fellows?]. [Jackson took MM up on the bandstand, and played and sang "You Made Me Love You" for [or to?] MM?] MM played "You Made Me Love You" for perhaps half an hour. Jackson was a ragtime pianist; he also played a lot of popular songs, and some blues. MM tells

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about a piano playing contest between Tony Jackson and Alfred Wilson; Wilson, from Algiers, but living on Broadway [in New Orleans], played piano [in the brothel operated by] Willie Piazza. The contest was held when John Robichaux was playing "there" [i.e., at the Lyric Theater?]; Wilson won, playing "Maple Leaf Rag."

Alfred Wilson introduced MM at Willie Piazza's house by praising MM's ability on the piano; MM would relieve Wilson at the piano; Wilson would be gone three or four hours "getting his hop" [i.e., opium]. Wilson studied clarinet with George Baquet; he never became very good because he became ill. On piano, he played all the Scott Joplin ( and James Scott, as suggested by Charlie Devore) numbers; he had a ragtime bass style. The first time Wilson ever took MM to the house [Willie Piazza's?], MM saw a piano copy of "Let Me Call You Honey" [i.e., "Won't You Be My Honey," by Theodore Morse, copyright 1907--see Robichaux Sheet Music Collection--PRC]. (MM plays the song.)

WR and RBA ask about Tony Jackson's songs, including "Pretty Baby," "Baby, I'd Love to Steal You", and "Ice and Snow." RBA says Clarence Williams cut one of Jackson's tunes [I'm Certainly Gonna See "Bout That"] with Sara Martin on DK 8108. (Cert'ny) MM says Jackson had a number called "Cannon Ball Rag." WR asks about "Naked Dance"; he says Jelly Roll [Morton] said Jackson played a "Naked Dance" which Jelly Roll wrote. (MM plays "Naked Dance.") MM says Jackson and Jelly Roll played the piece often; it was one of Jackson's main pieces. MM talks about the naked dances; he says the dances were private at places like Lulu White's, Josie Arlington's and [Gertrude] Dix's; the dances were less private in the cribs and the places not on Basin Street.

MM played for [Berta Golden?], the original [in New Orleans?] oriental dancer. (MM plays "The Snake Charmer," which he played for [Berta Golden's?] dances.) "The Snake Charmer" is also known as "Salome's Dance", and as the "Hoochie Coochie Dance." MM played the tune as early as [19]16.

(MM plays "Cannon Ball Rag.") MM says Tony Jackson played "Cannon Ball Rag" like MM's rendition. MM says Jackson liked to hear him play it.

WR says MM told him ZEZ Confrey used to come to hear MM play piano in the District. MM says he liked Confrey's compositions, which were difficult; no one else in New Orleans could play them. MM taught Steve Lewis to play [Confrey's] "Kitten on the Keys." [Lewis or Walter Pichon?] was working for Beansy Fauria at the Entertainers [a cabaret], which was opposite the Lyric Theater; with Walter ["Fats"] Pichon, piano, were Charlie Love, trumpet, and Willie [E.?] Humphrey, clarinet. Pichon was originally a blues player, but he studied hard and learned how to play other music; MM helped him. Walter Decou was another [pianist] who started like Pichon [and became more proficient?]. Confrey went around to various places in New Orleans, including <sup>T</sup>Aranchina's at Spanish Fort. Confrey was liberal with his money. MM once thought Scott Joplin's music was difficult, but he [Confrey] wrote really difficult music, most of which was for piano. WR says his brother, who now plays church organ, played "Kitten on the Keys" when WR was a kid.

End of Reel III

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Also present: William Russell, Richard B. Allen, Robert Campbell,  
Charlie Devore

[MM plays "Kitten on the Keys" on the piano.]

Charlie Devore attempts to get MM to play a blues to illustrate the way Buddy Bolden played a trill and the way Frankie Duson filled in on trombone; CD says MM demonstrated what he wants to hear about a month ago. (MM plays a blues.) MM says the blues he just played was played by Duson and Bolden. RBA and CD comment that a break used in that blues is used in the streets now, that people shout at a certain spot in the break. Talk about the kinds of dancing done in the street then and now. MM says "They would practically do" the "Naked Dance" in the street."

WR asks about coon shouters [sp?]; he mentions [Mary] Thacker [see reel II, this interview]. MM says coon shouters were women who sang mostly blues; Mary Thacker, Alma Hughes and Ann Cook [suggested by RBA] were coon shouters. MM says Ann Cook used to be in the Battlefield (a section of New Orleans), around Poygras Street. WR says Ann Cook recorded for him. Colored people used the term coon shouter. Ann Cook was around during the time of Buddy Bolden; she was a frequenter of the Funky Butt Hall, the first place MM played with Bolden, who was hired by Frank Duson. MM played violin. MM explains that when Bolden's band broke up because of Bolden's [mental] illness, Bolden would play with Duson's band, which was called the Eagle Orchestra; [Cf. Charles Edward Smith and Frederic Ramsey, Jazzmen.] Bolden's band was from uptown [New Orleans], while Duson was from "this side" [i.e., the west side of the river]. MM agrees with WR that a man named Kenna [PSP?] operated Funky Butt Hall. Smith operated the Masonic Hall. The Battlefield was so called because the men and woman were so tough, always fighting, & always in jail. Ann Cook was champion of the Battlefield until she was beaten by "Mary Jack the Bear." RBA mentions Lelia Bolden and Genevieve Davis, who were ~~xxx~~ singers; MM has heard of them.

[Machine off?]

MM is asked if he remembers various rags; he says it has been a long time

since he played them, so he doesn't attempt to play them.

The main places of drinking and other entertainment [cabarets, etc.] operating when Pete Lala's place was a headquarters were the Entertainers [cabaret], operated by Beansy Fauria (Walter Pichon [piano], Charlie Love [trumpet], and Willie [E.?] Humphrey [clarinet] played there a long time); the 101 Ranch, another cabaret; Guidry and Allen's cabaret, at the corner of Howard [now LaSalle] and Gasquet [now Cleveland]; Morris Moore's cabaret, on Gasquet and Villere. Barney Bigard and Albert Nicholas played there; Bigard was trying to play clarinet then, but had a false tone; he changed to tenor [saxophone]; Nicholas was playing alto [sax] and clarinet. Bigard became a fine clarinetist after he left [New Orleans]. [Machine off?] Pat King's cabaret was located on Gasquet at Robertson. Gasquet Street, one block up from Canal Street, was in a different type neighborhood from Iberville, which was one block down from Canal Street. There was another [red light] district in the area bounded by Gravier, Perdido and Poydras [and ?]. [See ordinance in Herbert Asbury, The French Quarter, Garden City Publishing Co., Garden City, New York, 1938, p. 431]. The big-time sporting woman in that area was Hattie Rogers [sp?]; she had piano players working in her house; pianist Johnny King worked there; he later went to Pensacola [Florida]. Another piano player around the uptown district was "Dago." The piano players in that district played nothing but blues. Chris Kelly [cornet] played in that area, especially around Poydras Street; he was well-known there; he was famous for his rendition of "Careless Love Blues" [sic].

Mamie Desdume was a madam who had a house on Villere Street; she played the piano.

WR mentions Lizzie Ereen, a madam mentioned in a song called "Good Time Flat Blues." MM doesn't remember her.

MM mentions that Louise Abadie and Louise Blackenstein had a house containing "beautiful colored women" on Gasquet Street (now Cleveland Avenue, says Charlie Devore).

Chinatown was on Tulane [Avenue] between Saratoga and Rampart [streets].

Dope [i.e., narcotics] was available to anyone in Chinatown.

When Kid Rena was playing at Martin's Cabaret in Bucktown; Lizzie Miles was hired to entertain there. Rena's pianist couldn't play her ~~music~~<sup>music</sup>, as he couldn't read. Rena got MM to be her accompanist there. The engagement at Martin's was so successful that the sheriff at West End, a good friend of Jim Thom, who operated a cabaret at E West End, offered Lizzie Miles and MM a job at Jim Thom's place; the pay was to be more (although the tips were great at Martin's), but the offer was accompanied by the warning that Lizzie and MM must take the job, as the sheriff was omnipotent in the area. Lizzie and MM quit their job with Rena; Lizzie went to Chicago; [MM apparently returned to New Orleans proper.]

[Recording of MM playing a trumpet and a trombone simultaneously; from a movie session made for Charlie Devore, September 2, 1957. MM plays "Now Is the Hour" and "Farewell Blues." ]/

End of Reel IV

