

NORMAN BROWNLEE  
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Also present: Richard B. Allen.

This interview was conducted at 7th and Jackson streets [the home of Norman Brownlee] in Pensacola [Florida].

Brownlee says that the Invincibles [band] dates from a long time ago. In it were <sup>Lorimer Naff</sup> [Laura M'Naff?], Teddy [Fontelieu?] [check sp.], Hod Farrar, Red Mackey, and Doc Souchon played with the band a couple of times. Brownlee played terrapatch, ukulele, and for a short while played banjo, but in his [own] orchestra Billy Eastwood played the banjo, and really played it well. (Paul Whiteman made [Mike] Pingatore come and listen to Eastwood one day.). Charlie Hartman played trombone with Brownlee's band in the old days, and was always fine. Brownlee says he can recall many funny stories about his sax section. He goes on to say the Pinky [Vidacovich] played sax with him a few times, as did [Hal] Jordy and Johnny Reininger. One time Al Gallodoro, one of the greatest saxophonists of the day, according to Brownlee, played with the band, but he was not hired again because he wouldn't "team" with the other saxes.

Brownlee was born in the Algiers section of New Orleans at 232 Verret St., on February 7, 1896. The family later lived on Olivier Street and then moved to 407 Delaronde Street. Brownlee recalls that the house there had a cupola which overlooked the river; the storm of 1915 destroyed the roof of the house, and the cupola was never

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restored. Brownlee recalls that his father would call "the gang" in some nights, whistling to them across at the drug store corner; the father would award prizes for the winners in the various games, and also for the person who could sing or play the best tune. There was an Edison cylinder recording machine, and they would make records; the drums would be simulated by tapping two pencils on the horn of the recording machine. All the Brownlee family--three girls (one named Lillian), two boys (including Norman), the mother and the father--played piano, and Norman says he has played piano for as long as he can remember. Brownlee says he is not good; he hits them "loud and wrong," as he says Louis [Armstrong] told Monk Hazel, in reference to his [own playing with his?] [Hot] Five. Brownlee's father played cup [mouthpiece] instruments; he played baritone with [what he thinks was called] the Algiers Brass Band. He says that communities had brass bands in those days, centered around the firehouses; he thinks some concerts were played in the "belfries" of some of the firehouses, the "belfrey" being the place where the fire alarm bell was hung. Brownlee says Algiers was referred to as "over da river," and he says it is "the Brooklyn of the South." RBA says he occasionally sees Roy "Whitey" <sup>Dornberger?</sup> [Dornberger?], a nephew of the [well-known musicians] Brunies boys [George, Merritt, Abbie, etc.]. Brownlee says the Brunies family was originally from Gretna, which is separated from Algiers by

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McDonoghville, although he says the area has developed so much that there is no separation now.

Brownlee says everybody [the people he played with] faked in the old days, that they never bothered to read music. He learned to read treble clef on the cornet, and bass clef on the bass violin; he became quite proficient on bass, as well as reading well. He has played string bass with his own orchestra for a long time [in New Orleans and Pensacola].

(Brownlee and RBA discuss the New Orleans Jazz Club and its museum, among other things, and Brownlee mentions that several people from the Pensacola area are members of the club, among them being Stirling Turner, an official of the Chemstrand Corporation.) Brownlee mentions that he was at one time with the [C. G.] Conn Co. in New Orleans, and that he and A. J. Lacoste had the instrument repair concession at Werlein's. Lacoste was supposed to retire and buy a farm in Baldwin County, Alabama, but Brownlee doesn't know whatever became of him.

Brownlee says that Oscar Marcour could play more with eight inches of the fiddle bow [on the violin, of course] than most people could play with the whole thing. Marcour also played a little bit of trumpet, and Brownlee's band sometimes used three and four trumpets for introductions. Marcour and his violin playing fit into the

Brownlee band very well. Joe Loyacano is remembered as being a very good man on trombone, and Brownlee says he thinks he is now playing only string bass. RBA mentions that his nickname is "Hook," because of his nose, and Brownlee says it was once said that Loyacano was the only man who could smoke a cigarette in the shower. RBA says that Loyacano was very sick recently, and that the [New Orleans] Jazz Club held a benefit for him; RBA mentions that Joe Loyacano's older brother, Bud, died recently, and Brownlee says that Bud was a bass player. Brownlee says that he had a drummer, Alonzo Crumbie, who was called "Ironfoot" because of his steady beat; once the tempo had been kicked off [Brownlee says that Crumbie would tell him not to count to two unless he meant it, because he would be gone with the beat] "You could go home and come back, and he'd still have it." He played with the band, never trying to be a soloist. Brownlee says that when he himself played tenor guitar and banjo, the way to play was with the band, never as a soloist. RBA mentions that Oscar Marcour told him of a home recording that Brownlee, piano, Crumbie, drums, Emmett Hardy, [cornet], Billy Eastwood, banjo, and Oscar Marcour on violin made. The Dorseys, [Jimmy and Tommy] wanted the record [of a copy of it], and Monk Hazel had wired Brownlee to that effect; they particularly wanted "Wang Wang Blues." Brownlee said he thought that Oscar or Mickey Marcour had the record, because they were the last to have



the old Edison machine. Brownlee says he would venture to say that Emmett Hardy was one of the first people to make a cornet say "wa wa"-- in later years Harmon, of Baltimore, Maryland developed a mute which is called the "Wa Wa" mute. Many people got the same effect with a plumber's plunger. Hardy went on a vaudeville tour once with Benny Fields and Blossom Seeley; he did a snake dance in front of a famous shimmy dancer, [See Reel II, p 10] as part of the show. They may have played Pantime [Pantages?] and Keith circuits. Brownlee and his band [with Hardy] got to meet a lot of vaudeville acts, and the people in the acts liked Hardy; Brownlee says he was different from anybody else, too. Hardy once went to Davenport, Iowa, where Bix [Beiderbecke] lived; Bix was playing piano at the time. Brownlee says Bix would come listen to Hardy play, and that he thinks Hardy helped Bix a lot to learn to play the cornet, and that actually he taught him how to hold a cornet. Brownlee says that in later years Bix told him that Hardy was one of the greatest, when Bix came to New Orleans with [Paul] Whiteman.

Brownlee says there was a trumpet player named Walter Holzhaus who was around New Orleans for a while; after serving some years in the navy, he went back to Texas. About four months later, Brownlee and Johnny Finley [is Lloyd Finlay?] [sp?] of Houston, Texas were in a booth listening to a recording made by Finley and his band; the year

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was 1923 or 1924, about the same time that Brownlee's band recorded. As they were listening, someone came up behind Brownlee, put his hands over Brownlee's eyes and asked Brownlee to guess who it was. It was Walter Holzhaus, who was in town with Paul Whiteman's orchestra. Holzhaus had replaced Frank Siegrist in the orchestra; others in the group at the time were Buzzie [Henry Busse?], Goldy [Harry Goldfield?] [on trumpet?], Harry MacDonald on drums and [Izzy] Friedman on clarinet. Brownlee got Snoozer Quinn an audition with Whiteman, and Whiteman had Snoozer join the orchestra in Cleveland [, Ohio], right after some automobile show [that the Whiteman orchestra played? PRC]; Snoozer played with Whiteman for quite some time.

Brownlee says that Oscar Marcour, who has died, was also connected in some way with the undertaking business; he was in the vault manufacturing business, selling vaults for funerals. Brownlee is office manager for Bayview Memorial Park. Speaking of being in the undertaking business reminds Brownlee of musician friends who have died. He mentions that Mickey Marcour, who has died, was a fine, steady piano player, he played for years at the Halfway House, with Abbie Brunies. RBA mentions that Richie Brunies has also died within the last couple of weeks, and that Merritt Brunies is playing in Biloxi, according to a sign he saw en route to Pensacola. Georg Brunies went to Chicago years ago, and RBA says he is still going strong and that

he is now a comedian. Brownlee says that he always was a comedian, and that Georg and Leon Roppolo were always "carrying on." Brownlee says that Georg and Roppolo were playing at Friars Inn in Chicago at the time of this anecdote: One evening they got into an argument, and Georg said, "I'll bet you \$5," and Roppolo said, "Man, I'll bet you \$25." After a while Paul Mares came over and asked them what the argument was about that they were betting on, and they couldn't remember what it had been. Brownlee says that Roppolo had a good sense of humor and had a lot of fun. Roppolo would ask Brownlee for \$5, and when Brownlee would ask him where he was going to get \$5 Roppolo would tell him just to take it out of the pay for his next job. Roppolo played with Brownlee's band at Midway Park in Westwego, where the band worked often. Brownlee says that Roppolo "was a sight, but he really could play clarinet." Brownlee says that Harry Shields was one of the best; (RBA says he still is.); Shields was the first person that Brownlee can recall who played solo clarinet in the low register. Brownlee says the credit for this was given to Roppolo, but that it really was Harry Shields who started doing it. Brownlee says that Larry [Shields] was also a fine clarinetist, although he got in the musicians' union as a bass drummer. He had to take an examination in reading music. Nick LaRocca stood behind the examiner, a man named Stronick [sp?], and every time LaRocca, who was reading the music, nodded his head Shields

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would hit the drum. Stronick said that Shields was doing all right, and Shields said he knew he had made a mistake, that he should have hit "a double" and he hit "a triple" instead. Shields was passed, and from then on he played clarinet. RBA says he had always admired Harry Shields' sense of harmony, and Brownlee agrees, saying that he is ingenious. Brownlee says that Sidney Arondin [sp?], who was known as Arodin, was the composer of "Lazy River," which he called "Lazy [Nigger" which Brownlee will not say] something else, and Sidney got "hooked up with" Hoagy Carmichael, who had the knowledge necessary to promote the song.

Brownlee mentions that the Excelsior [Brass Band] played a kind of jazz while marching, and that Bab Frank, a piccolo player, had a band which played in Algiers a lot. Kid Thomas [Valentine] also had a band around. (RBA says that he is a big hit in England now.) Henry Allen [Sr. or Jr.?] also had bands in Algiers. RBA says that Kid Thomas has a record out now, in an anthology of New Orleans colored bands on the Riverside label. They are recent recordings, made in January, 1961, and not of the vintage of Fate Marable, as Brownlee had perhaps thought.

Brownlee and his band made one test record and a master record for Okeh records [in the early 1920's], and he says the odd thing about the session [is that he made the cuts himself?]. He and the band made

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about \$600 for the session, about tops for those days. The records were "Dirty Rag" and "Peculiar Rag." Brownlee does not have copies of those records, and RBA says he'll try to get him some. Brownlee says they were never able to find the record [with Emmett Hardy] that the Dorsey brothers wanted. Brownlee says that the Dorseys claim that Brownlee had the first swing band in America. He says that they didn't necessarily play loud, that they would start loud and drop down [in volume], and sometimes one could hear the dancers' feet [meaning the music was so soft].

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Also present: Richard B. Allen.

Jules Bauduc, who played banjo, was the leader of a band that worked at the Little Club for a long time; the band was very good, and some very good men were in it. Ray [Bauduc, d,] played in the band, as did Monk [Hazel, d,] [at different times, no doubt], and there was also a fine singer named Henry Rando. Doc Rando, who had a degree in either medicine from Tulane or in dentistry from Loyola, continued to play music after his graduation; Brownlee doesn't know how long he practiced as a doctor or dentist, but he says he left New Orleans as a musician and continued as such; he was at one time with the [Bob] Crosby band. Now he is possibly a member of the board of directors of [AF Musicians] Local 47 of Los Angeles; he was on the board, but Brownlee is not sure that he still is, and he may be practicing as a doctor. Brownlee says that Doc Rando played with him, as did "all those boys, years ago." [He is possibly referring to the New Orleans members of the Bob Crosby band.] Brownlee's was a spot-jobbing band which never took a steady job until the depression. Brownlee was managing the [C. G.] Conn Company's Atlanta branch in 1929, and he lost all his money in the crash; then he came back to New Orleans.

Bee Palmer was the shimmy queen for whom Emmett Hardy played [see Brownlee, Reel I, 5-5-61]. Brownlee mentions Mike Fritzel and Friars Inn, in Chicago.

Brownlee says his father graduated from Tulane in law, and that should have been his field, but he found law too dry; he could sing and play the piano and he was in demand, so he didn't concern himself with anything, having a ball. RBA mentions that all his family are doctors and that he was preparing for that profession, but didn't like it, so he came to New Orleans to get into the music business. When he was in the Navy he came to New Orleans, met Monk [Hazel] in 1945, and Monk told him all the good places to go to hear music. RBA mentions having heard Harry Shields and Johnny Coltraro, a trumpet player, [at the Puppy House] and Brownlee calls him "Handsome Johnny", says he was powerful and had a good lip, and that he liked Coltraro's playing; he says that he thinks he sounded a lot like Sharkey [Bonano]. RBA says he heard Coltraro long before he heard Sharkey, and that Sharkey wasn't doing much when he first came to town. Brownlee says he was on the road a lot, going as far as Las Vegas; he says he also worked the Blue Room [of the Roosevelt Hotel] for a long time.

RBA mentions that the Archive has a taped interview with Alfred "Pansy" Laine which was donated by Doc[tor Edmond] Souchon.

In answer to RBA's question, Brownlee says that Emmett Hardy did not at first use a mute to achieve his "wa-wa" effect. He then talks about [Henry "Kid"] "Turk" Rena, and says that he was one of the finest trumpet players, that he could play extremely high pitches (E and F



above the treble staff) and still had a big, beautiful tone. RBA mentions that Manuel Manetta, who still lives in Algiers, taught Emmett Hardy some and also taught Kid Rena after he was playing. NB says he was always a reader. Brownlee mentions that Al Hirt is a master of his instrument, and can play from extreme low to extreme high with the same big sound. RBA mentions that he saw Peter Bocage playing with the Eureka Brass Band, and that Bocage, at 72, still plays a beautiful second trumpet part. Brownlee is amazed and says that Bocage lived in Algiers, and RBA says he still does. Brownlee says that Kid Ory lived in Algiers, too. RBA mentions that Harrison Barnes lived there too, and Brownlee apparently remembers him. Brownlee says that Eddie Miller and Ray Bauduc, besides being fine musicians, were always good troupers and always dignified in their profession. He says Ray Bauduc is outstanding in his carriage, his appearance, that he loves a good time but always knows when to stop. RBA relates a story of a time when he was working in a record shop [the New Orleans Record Shop] [Blackstone's] and Eddie Miller came in to browse. When he had left, another person in the shop asked who that was, and when told that it was Eddie Miller replied that he didn't look like a musician. Brownlee refers to Miller as "The Little Prince," saying that he has always been well-liked everywhere he goes.

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George Barth took Emmett Hardy's place in Brownlee's band, and then Sharkey came into the band replacing Barth. Billy Braun, who played saxophone parts on the melophone, was also a pianist, and he would rehearse the band in new numbers; when the band had "caught it," he would switch to melophone. Brownlee tells the story of playing a Carnival ball, the Spinsters' Ball, in Biloxi, Mississippi one time. The band had excellent personnel; Brownlee, piano; Pinky [Vidacovich], sax; [Hal] Jordy, sax; Joe Loyacano, trombone; Ray Bauduc, drums, Braun, melophone; Chink [Martin], bass and Joe Capraro, guitar--and was really playing very well. Another band was also playing the same ball; the band had just been organized, the personnel was quite young (it included Mike Holloway<sup>[INSTRUMENT?]</sup> and Johnny Tobin, who was the leader), and didn't sound very good. However, the pianist could play accordin<sup>g</sup>, after a fashion, and the band had funny hats, so the crowd was giving them much attention, although Brownlee's band was so much better musically. The sponsors of the ball had just about decided to keep Tobin's band an hour overtime, letting Brownlee's band go. Brownlee and his men decided they had to do something, so Ray Bauduc began to dance in front of the bandstand (Brownlee played drums and Braun played piano.). Bauduc soon had an audience, which grew until he had the attention of everyone at the ball. When he finished, he was given much applause. Then Joe Loyacano played his trombone with his foot,

and the crowd was in favor of Brownlee's band, so much so that they kept Brownlee's band overtime instead of Tobin's, as had been planned before the comedy routine. Brownlee says that he has always advocated that a band be able to do a little something in the way of entertainment, so that they can break the monotony of just steady music.

RBA mentions that he had a letter from Eddie Edwards recently; Edwards is still playing the trombone, and Brownlee is surprised. Brownlee remembers that Edwards played with the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, and says he knew him in New Orleans, but he doubts that Edwards would remember him. He says that he saw Tony Sbarbaro, the ODJB drummer, in Miami quite a number of years ago, where he had a band.

Brownlee does not remember "Rickey Tom," or "Tom Rickey." He also doesn't remember the name of a very fine trombonist not from New Orleans, who was with Paul Whiteman for years, who came through Pensacola and played a few jobs with Johnny Niles, among others. In talking about Whiteman, Brownlee is reminded that he heard Don Goldy [son of a trumpet player with Whiteman] with Jack Teagarden at the Dream Room in New Orleans; Brownlee had the honor to have a 45 minute set dedicated to him by that group. He says that once when he and his wife went to hear Sharkey [probably at the Dream Room also] that Sharkey stopped his band and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Jazz hisself has just walked in--Mr. Norman Brown-de-lee." Brownlee says that Sharkey was always a cut-up.

Brownlee remembers that the Louisiana Five played at the Tokyo Club, on 45th Street just off Broadway in New York City; Anton Lada was the drummer and Yellow Nunez was the clarinetist, and Brownlee says about three or four of the men were from New Orleans [including Nunez and probably Lada]. Brownlee does not remember the pianist, suggesting that it might have been one of the Christian boys [Frank, Charlie, Emile], but RBA says he doesn't think so, that a man named Joe Cawley was supposed to have been the pianist. Brownlee apologizes for his memory, and says he has to have it helped along. He is reminded that Tony Parenti was a professional musician when Brownlee was just using music as an avocation, although he says that during one eight-year period he worked day and night. Brownlee says that Howard Voorhies was a fine trumpet player, and he says that Voorhies saved Louis Armstrong's lip once. Armstrong would roughen his trumpet mouthpiece by rubbing it on the curb and this roughness, apparently combined with a lot of pressure, was causing his lip to deteriorate. Voorhies, who was promoting a trumpet called Couterier [sp?] and an accompanying no-pressure method of playing, got Armstrong to place his mouthpiece in the center of his lip and to practice using no pressure in playing. Armstrong was eventually playing high C's with ease, even just laying his horn on the palm of his hand and playing. Brownlee says that the time was after Armstrong had been to Chicago, not before he left town.

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Brownlee says that Voorhies himself could play high C on a trumpet suspended by a cord. Brownlee says to ask Elvin Voorhies, Howard's brother, who operates the instrument repair department at Werlein's music store in New Orleans. Brownlee also says Armstrong says the story <sup>s</sup>in true. Brownlee says that Armstrong has done very well, having come from the Waif's Home in New Orleans and gotten to be "the goodwill ambassador" in music.

Brownlee says there were about sixteen in the Invincibles, but that there wouldn't be that many all the time. He suggests that RBA ask Doc Souchon about who played what, and says he would know. Brownlee says that when he saw Doc Souchon on the TV program, "This Is Your Life" he thought Bill Kleppinger (mandolin), when instructed by Souchon to start the tune, was going to play "Raggin' the Scale," by the way he started. Red Mackey was on bass that night. Brownlee says that New Orleans and Chicago musicians always got along fine and that they had a similar beat. He says that Eddie Condon, when asked the difference between the jazz styles of the two cities, replied, "A thousand miles." Brownlee says the distance is a little more, and that there is a little difference. He says that if one goes to the Blue Note in Chicago [closed in the spring of 1960--PRC], he will usually find some New Orleans musicians mixed in with the Chicago musicians, and vice versa.

Brownlee says that Mike Caplan has befriended many a man in the music business, and is a very fine person. He adds that he played well, and can probably still play well (RBA confirms that he can.). Brownlee says that he himself marched with the Shrine Band in New Orleans [Caplan is an official of the organization] many times and was not even a member of the Shrine at the time; he is now active as a Shriner, and has been president of a group in Pensacola. He says there have been several occasions to have the New Orleans Shrine band come to Pensacola.

Brownlee says he just picked up the playing of cornet. He never had a teacher on cornet, or on any other instrument. He taught himself to "spell" music.

End of Reel II

Also present: Mrs. Carrie Brownlee, Richard B. Allen.

In response to RBA's question about Brownlee's favorite musicians, of any era and of any band, Brownlee says that one of the outstanding "boys" in the business--and although he had his fun, he would get down to business very quickly--was Sharkey [Bonano]. Brownlee says that Sharkey came a long way, that he didn't have the advantages that some people had, but he had the desire to play his horn, he learned to play his horn in his "inimitable" style, and when he was on the job he worked. He was always saying [when the band was on a break] that the bandsmen had better get back on the job, even when he was not the leader, as when he was with Brownlee's band. Brownlee says that on long sessions he himself has always tried to have feeling for the men playing [consideration for their physical welfare], but that he could always depend on Sharkey to be playing; even on New Year's Eve, when everybody was trying to get on the bandstand to blow the musicians' horns, Sharkey would be there playing, making a pitch, pleasing the people. Brownlee says that Sharkey is a showman, that his playing [and experience through the years] has led him to become a showman: "He can sing a song, dance a jig and play that horn." He does just a little more than playing his job, and has the ability of good timing for inserting that little extra something. Brownlee says that he himself had the reputation for playing very fine bass, but that he



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didn't really play any better bass than anyone else; he just knew when to add a little something, such as playing triple raps on the G string, and he says he would swing [move to and fro] the bass too. The reason he gave up playing bass was that his bad leg would not allow him to dance with the bass, and he says if one <sup>c</sup>an't dance with it, he should not play it.

At Mrs. Brownlee's prompting, Brownlee talks about Wingy Manone, who he says was a character. Brownlee tells of "shanghai-ing" Wingy once. Brownlee thinks that Martha Boswell had called him to say that Emmett Hardy was sick (and probably the beginning of his fatal illness) and that Brownlee had better get someone to play the job they had in Kenner. Brownlee says that he and his band always got to their job on time, no matter where it was or what mode of transportation they used. This time they were on a truck, headed for the Kenner job, and someone saw Wingy, who had just been to Grunewald Music Co. to get some polish for his horn. They picked Wingy up, and told him to come play the job with them. He protested that he could not; that he had to go practice his reading; he said, "You know, the funny thing about it, you know, I read in the North and I can't read in the South. When I play in Chicago I read; when I play in the South I don't read." As he was talking, the truck was moving further out Canal Street, and by the time he realized what was happening, the truck was almost to Kenner. So Wingy

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played the job with them, which was from about 5 PM until 9:30 PM. Brownlee thinks that Johnny Bayersdorffer's band played there from 9:30 on; he thinks that Bayersdorffer had [Bill] Bourgeois on sax, but he doesn't remember any of the others. Brownlee says that Wingy played the job very well. He says they would have played the job without a cornet if they had not seen Wingy [or someone else]; they always went to their job regardless of the completeness of the instrumentation; they always showed up.

Brownlee says that other trumpet players he has liked are George Barth, Jimmy McPartland and Bobby Hackett. RBA says that Hackett was just in New Orleans, and Brownlee says he is sorry he missed seeing him. Brownlee says that his brother-in-law, Gene Verlaw [sp?] plays almost exactly like Hackett, except that Verlaw in a "little more on the Dixieland side of it. He plays pure Dixieland jazz." Verlaw also writes Dixieland arrangements which Brownlee says are simple and very good. Brownlee mentions a picture he has shown RBA, and says that that band of five pieces couldn't be beaten when they added the trombonist, Buddy Wilkenson, who played with them occasionally. He says that Gene Verlaw was one of the finest [cornet players]. Frank Bruno, who played with Ish[am] Jones and Pee Wee Hunt, is very good; Bruno is playing in Pensacola now with a band called the Bourbon Street Six; Brownlee says they named the band that after Verlaw quit playing be-

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cause of lip trouble--he was such a perfectionist that he would not play any more when his lip went bad. Frank Horn, a fine bassist, has tapes of bands with Verlaw in them. RBA asks Brownlee his opinion of Emmett Hardy as a cornetist, and Brownlee says he was undoubtedly one of the finest. Brownlee says that Walter Holzhaus was one of the finest trumpet players; he took the place of Frank Siegrist with Whiteman's orchestra. He played with Brownlee for quite a while after Emmett Hardy. Holzhaus was a reader and a faker, and could play anything [any kind of music]; he was like [Al] Hirt in that he had complete control of his horn. He could triple-tongue, and could also play two tones at once. He was originally from San Antonio, Texas. Charlie Teagarden is a very fine cornet player, and a fine person as well; Charlie Teagarden and Ray Bauduc played with Jimmy Dorsey for quite a while.

Brownlee says that one of his favorite pianists was Frank Froeba, who lived out on Canal Street, who left town, and who was considered by Fletcher Henderson as one of the greatest he ever heard. Froeba could play jazz, and he could also play with an orchestra. He played "back room" or "honky Tonk" piano, too, and made many recordings of such. Brownlee tries to recall who played piano with them at the Ritz on Baronne and Common; but he is not successful. He recalls that Johnny Laport [sp?] played drums with them before Monk Hazel replaced

him. He then tells a story of a man who used to put tightly-rolled paper money into Monk Hazel's bass drum through one of the vent holes, which made it necessary for Monk to take his drum apart to get the tip money. Brownlee says he once played the Ritz, run by Jimmy Moran, with Hazel on drums, Pinky Gerbrecht on trumpet (RBA mentions that he saw him recently playing on an advertising wagon.), and Frank Pinero on piano. Brownlee says that Pinero was a fine pianist, that he could read and fake. RBA says he made some records with Louis Prima, and Brownlee says that he thinks he first left New Orleans with Prima. Pinero was not with Prima when Prima played at the Naval Air Station in Pensacola, however. Brownlee went to hear Prima there, and Prima made much of Brownlee's being there, even to the point of hugging him. Brownlee says that it made him feel good, and he has always liked Prima. He says that Prima has really made a name for himself. RBA says that he can play a lot more trumpet than people give him credit for, and Brownlee agrees, adding that he plays wonderful trumpet. Brownlee says that Leon Prima was really the trumpet player, and that as a team he and Red Bolman couldn't be beaten; Leon and Bolman swapped off playing first and second trumpet. This was in Leon's band, which played many spots in and around New Orleans.

Brownlee then mentions the drummer, Bob Stein, who played with Mike Caplan [trumpet] at various spots, including the B. K. of A. Hall

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[Benevolent Knights of America, on North Spreet] and the old Moose Hall on Canal Street. Stein was a tall man who played with a steady beat that gained him the name of "Ironfoot." Brownlee says that he has always admired Monk Hazel's drumming, too, and tells a story of Monk's recording with the Bienville Roof orchestra, for Brunswick. Monk had a mallet to hit the crash cymbal with near the end of one record, and he was supposed to use the mallet to hit a big gong a little later, to end the record. As he hit the crash cymbal, the head of the mallet came loose and flew across the room. Monk ran over to get it, and not having time to return to the gong, threw the mallet head at the gong and hit it at exactly the right time.

Brownlee says that the next time RBA comes to see him, he would like to have a session [perhaps meaning talk] with Frank Horn and others, and that he hopes it can be at a time that Charlie Spivak, a good friend of Brownlee's and a fine sweet-trumpet player, is in town. He says that Spivak enjoys hearing him talk of old timers in the music business, and says that he was just recently at the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans. RBA says he was there at the same time as Bobby Hackett.

In response to RBA's question, Brownlee says that Leo Adde was one of the finest drummers, a fine person and a very funny man. Adde was a fine reader and could play in any pit [orchestra]. Brownlee says that Von Gammon was also a very good drummer. RBA says that he

is still in Fairhope [Alabama], and Brownlee assumes that he and his band are still working at the Grand Hotel in Point Clear, as they have been for the past 8 years. RBA says that the record for long-time engagements, as far as he knows, was set by Buck Banville's band, when they played at the American Legion dance hall, Gentilly Post, at Claiborne and Music, where they played for about 14 years. Brownlee remembers Banville, and says that he played cornet; RBA says he did play cornet, but has switched to piano. RBA says that Banville had Charlie Favrot on drums; Favrot was from Belle Chasse and has died recently. Lefty Eiermann, sousaphone, was also with Banville. RBA says the band had a Halfway House [orchestra] sound, which resulted in part from the instrumentation consisting of sousaphone, drums, piano, trumpet and two reeds. RBA can't think of the name of the trumpet player [Otto Bubert?], but the reeds were Roland Leach (Brownlee on alto says Leach used to play tenor saxophone) saxophone and Luke Schiro doubling clarinet and tenor saxophone. Brownlee says that his band used seven pieces sometimes, and that they could get a good sound using [stock] orchestrations with seven.

He says that he admired Tony Parenti for his prowess in playing the clarinet parts with pit bands when big shows came to New Orleans. The shows always carried their key orchestra players with them, and would pick up the rest of an orchestra in whatever town they were play-

ing. Many of the sections in the clarinet music called for clarinets in A, and all the key-men clarinetists would change to the A clarinet, but Parenti just transposed his part and continued using his B flat clarinet. The orchestra leader was amazed, and pointed out this feat to the regular players. Brownlee then repeats his admiration for Harry Shields as a jazz man, and says that his feel for harmonies is great, even in present-day progressions.

Mrs. Brownlee, from the next room, mentions the Five Aces in Biloxi, and Brownlee says that it was a good band. The men in the band were Bob Sackman [sp?] [or Sacks: See Rust Jazz Records, AZ, 1897-1931], a marvelous saxophonist; Bert Lilly [leader, according to Harold Peterson], cornet; Al Johnson, piano and Jimmy Boyle, drums. RBA says that Curly [sp?] Liza<sup>n</sup> played with that band, and Brownlee says that Liza<sup>a</sup> also used to play in Pensacola, at Floridatown, quite a bit. [See Curly Liana interview.]

Brownlee tries to remember a pianist who studied architecture at Tulane and played with Brownlee from time to time, but he is not successful at the moment. [Chester Wicker? RBA]

In response to RBA's question about saxophonists, Brownlee says that Johnny Reininger was one of the finest, and that he had many offers to go out of town with bands but he never wanted to go. RBA says he is still around town. Brownlee mentions that [Howard] Voorhies



got Howard Reed a job playing trumpet at the Orpheum Theater, and that Reed was very good. He says that Al Gallodoro, as a saxophonist, has reached the pinnacle of success. He mentions that a big boy of Italian ancestry, whose father ran a shoe store on Dryades Street, was helped by Gallodoro to a job playing tenor saxophone with Whiteman once. Brownlee sold the boy's father, for the boy, a set of saxophones, from soprano [through alto and tenor] to baritone, all in burnished gold.

End of Reel III

Also present: Mrs. Carrie Brownlee, Richard B. Allen.

Brownlee says that he recently received from Dr. [Edmond] Souchon a lovely letter in reference to Brownlee's work in the old days of jazz; he was in the hospital when he got the letter; and [by way of apologizing for his delay in answering the letter] says that he would like to give his old bass to the New Orleans Jazz Museum to hang as an exhibit, providing there is room for it. RBA says he thinks the exhibits will be rotated, several things being shown for a time and then being replaced by others. RBA mentions that Jack Laine's bass drum is in the museum, and Brownlee says that [Leon] "Rapp" Roppolo's clarinet is there, too. Brownlee asks that RBA notify Dr. Souchon and Harry [Souchon] about the bass. He says that he saw the [TV] show, "This Is Your Life" [about Dr. Souchon], and says that perhaps Bill Kleppinger will remember him from their days of playing in the Invincibles [orchestra]; he says they did a lot of minstrel work in that time, and mentions that he worked with [Bonnie? Barney] [sp?] Casey, Dennis Casey, Warren [unknown], Chester Aikens, Richard Nichols, Joe Ferguson--bank directors and all . . . they would let anybody be in the minstrels. They would present the first part and a little "olio" and then they would get out their instruments and play for a dance; anybody who wanted to stay to dance would be charged a little extra. They put on shows in La Place, Sorrento and other Louisiana towns.

Brownlee says he used to play a lot for Frank Williams, who married a famous movie actress named <sup>Marguerite?</sup> Marguerite Clarke; the home was at Soniat and St. Charles. RBA says he worked there, too, cataloging a record collection which Dr. Souchon gave to the [New Orleans Public] Library. [The old Williams home is now the Milton Latter branch of the library.] Brownlee says that Williams called him as late as 8:30 and 9 o'clock, asking him if he could get a band to come play a party, and that he would get his band together and go play the job, and have a good time.

Brownlee says that the Owls orchestra was a fine group, and he names some of the men who played with it: Monk Smith, Benjie White, Dick Mackey, <sup>ie</sup> Red [<sup>ie</sup> Mackey] and Earl Crumb. In response to RBA's question, he says that there were good bands in New Orleans other than the Owls and Brownlee's--and that in fact, one couldn't go anywhere in New Orleans and not run into a good band. The Owls and Brownlee's band played most of the fraternity and sorority dances at Tulane, and at the Loyola Gym.

Brownlee mentions the name of [Mike] Cupero. Then he goes on to say that he himself was employed by Werlein's, and at one time by Conn, to organize school bands [for the purpose of selling them instruments]. He also demonstrated the musical instrument called the theremin, named for its inventor, a Russian scientist. He said he demonstrated the theremin for Madame Schuman<sup>n</sup>-Heink [sp?] on the same day that she held

an audition for Marian Anderson. Brownlee played on the theremin such pieces as "The Rosary" and "Because." He says that Johnny [Wiggs] Hyman, who was also at Werlein's, used to fool around with the theremin, too. Brownlee says that he doesn't think that the instrument lasted very long as a home instrument. He then explains a little about the playing of it, saying that it was built on a radio chassis and had various rods for controls.

Brownlee explains that his band got the recording date with Okeh because Okeh was going around the country recording, and several bands were made up in New Orleans and recorded at the same time, among them being Johnny DeDroit's band, with Paul [DeDroit], which recorded "Tulane Swing;" the year was 1923 [check date]. RBA surmises that Papa Celestin and BaBa Ridgley must have recorded for Okeh at the same time, and Brownlee says if they recorded for Okeh it must have been then. The recordings were made at the Kimball Piano Co., which shared a building with the [C. G.] Conn Co. at 123 Carondelet. Brownlee says that the saxophone players on the Brownlee Band record date were Harold Jordy, who played a "sobbing solo" on tenor sax, and Harry Shields, who played clarinet and bass sax on the date. Brownlee thought at first that perhaps Bill Eastwood, the regular banjoist, may have played the bass sax, as there was a lot of swapping around on instruments, but he says it must have been Shields. In response to RBA's

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question, Brownlee says that he did know a [ ?] Martin who played sax, but he best remembers a Martin originally from Sarasota, Florida, who played sousaphone with him, and later went with Jan Garber.

Sharkey Bonano was the trumpet player on the date; Brownlee remembers that this is so because the composer credits for two numbers, "Peculiar Rag" and "Dirty Rag" (both by Brownlee), were listed as Bonano-Brownlee-Shields. Alonzo Crumbie was the drummer, and Bill Eastwood played banjo. There was no bass. [Tom Brown, tb. See discographies and listen to record. RBA.]

Brownlee replies that Behrman French was his brother-in-law by his first marriage, and that he played banjo with Brownlee a while. Brownlee says, incidentally, that Dr. Lochte, who was married to Brownlee's sister-in-law by his first marriage, was Emmett Hardy's doctor. Brownlee adds that Behrman played only a short time, but he got to be pretty good.

Brownlee says that he doesn't know whether his father, in playing in brass bands, ever played for funerals, as his father's brass band activity was before his time; he was the youngest in the family. As an aside, he says that he himself was stricken by a fever, while playing a job at the [Southern?] Yacht Club, and was taken to the Navy Hospital in Algiers, where he was when his father died, and that he didn't even know of the death until he had recovered. He did see many

funerals with bands in Algiers, saying that everyone in Algiers always walked to funerals, with the exception of those in the official funeral cortege. He often saw white bands, as well as colored, and says that he doesn't remember any band names, but that probably organizations such as the Woodmen of the World had bands. The white bands played only dirges; the colored bands were the ones which played jazz coming back from the "last resting place of their friend."

Brownlee doesn't remember Frankie Duson, although, he says, he probably heard him, as he heard Kid Thomas and others. He remembers a violin player from Algiers who was similar to the violinist at the Lyric Theater, [John] Robichaux. RBA mentions several names--Charlie DeVerges, Manuel Manetta and Peter Bocage--as perhaps being the violinist Brownlee mentioned, but Brownlee says no. RBA asks about Charlie Love, who Brownlee doesn't know, and RBA tells about Love and Bocage recording from the "Red Back Book of Rags." Brownlee asks the name of the violinist who played at Tranchina's for years, and RBA supplies the name, [A. J.] Piron. Brownlee says that Piron recorded songs that Joe Verges and Jimmy Dupre [sp? See sheet music. ASCAP books], wrote. RBA mentions "Don't Leave Me, Daddy" [Verges], and Brownlee says that Dupre had one called "Jelly Bean." Brownlee and Dupre wrote one called "In A Cozy Little Blue Room;" Verges, in New York, let them know that he had sold his "half" and he wanted to know

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what they were going to do with their "half." Brownlee says that Dupre sold "My Purple Rose of Cairo," which Dupre wrote, to Piron, who published it under his own name. Brownlee says a man would have to be a dope fiend to think up a title like that. RBA says that Peter Bocage told him that Bocage wrote all the music for the Bocage-Piron songs and that Piron wrote the words. Brownlee says that Dupre was quite a character, that he thinks he used to write himself letters. Dupre left New Orleans, and Brownlee doesn't know what became of him; he became a member of ASCAP, as did Joe Verges.

Brownlee replies that some of his favorite banjo players were Jules [Bauduc] and Bill Eastwood. He says Eastwood could play either tuning, but he preferred <sup>u</sup>kelele tuning; his preference led to quite an argument with [Mike] Pingatore, who claimed that Eastwood couldn't play a particular arrangement with his particular tuning. Eastwood proved him wrong, to Pingatore's amazement which caused Paul Whiteman to laugh much. When Whiteman met Snoozer Quinn, Snoozer, who could play the guitar by just fingering the strings at the frets [on the fingerboard with his left hand only], shook hands with Whiteman while still playing. Whiteman enjoyed this very much, so he sent for Pingatore to shake with Snoozer, and later for Roy Bargey and others. Brownlee says that the reason Snoozer left Whiteman was that Whiteman took him to so many parties with people like [Mayor] Jimmy Walker in



New York to show off his playing that Snoozer couldn't stand the pace, so he had to come home to Bogalusa, Louisiana.

Brownlee says he has enjoyed the people in music, but that music has been only an avocation for him. He played for a living during and after the depression, and says he can remember a lot of "mules" in that time--"mules" were jobs on which the promoter couldn't pay off the band. Brownlee says that he was in Memphis once, and the Ben Pollack band, with Eddie Miller, Ray Bauduc, Harry Goodman and the others, came through on a road trip, from the West Coast, headed for New York; they had had thirteen mules on the trip so far. Brownlee says that the reason he got to Pensacola is that his band was offered a job at Floridatown, and they wouldn't go unless Brownlee was with the band. He went, and stayed in Pensacola. He worked for the CWA in various capacities, is president of the [musicians'] union [local], member of the welfare board, is in the cemetery business, secretary of the Rotary Club.

End of Reel IV

