

PAUL BARBARIN

Reel I

Jan. 7, 1959

1

[Russell:] He's eighty-seven years old, then--I was thinking he was a little bit older.

[Barbarin:] Huh?

[Russell:] I thought he was a little older than [that].

[Barbarin:] He could be more than that, I don't know.

[Allen:] I wonder where his birth certificate is?

[Barbarin:] You see--ah, I tell you--

[Allen:] Could be in the church.

[Barbarin:] At the church--at St. Augustine church.

[Allen:] We could check that easy, Bill.

[Russell:] Yeah. Oh, you were talking about--who was that? An uncle of yours or somebody [that was] a clarinet player?

[Barbarin:] Oh, my uncle, Louie Artidore? Yeah, they say, they say that he was one of the best--I mean, in those times, in those days, you know-- When my father first start playing, you know? And my mother always had told me that--always they say that before he died, he wrote some nice music. He wrote a beautiful waltz, beautiful waltz. A beautiful foxtrot, but they never could find the, find the music--I mean somebody, someone took it--got misplaced, something like that--it was beautiful.

[Allen:] Well, at one time, your father said that he was the only good clarinet player in the city. [Only reader probably.]

[Barbarin:] In those days, yeah, in those days. But later on in years, I mean, along about 1910 when I remember I was following the bands, I knew who was best clarinet player at that time--who was the best clarinet players at that time--because they had George Baquet and Lorenzo Tio. Well, they had,

they had other clarinet players, but they didn't come up to those guys. I think George was the best. Because anytime they played a funeral--I remember they played a funeral, they had a funeral on St. Anthony between St. Claude and Marais. [Let's see, there?] Was a saloon called Delio [spelling?]. These people have a shoe, shoestore right here on LaHarpe and Claiborne; I can't think of their name. Well, it was right next door, at that time, those people [lived over?]-they had a little shoe place there--[just was starting to sell shoes, you know?].

[Allen:] Heckmann or something like that?

[Barbarin:] Heckmann, that's right, Heckmann; it was Heckmann people. That's right. And, and it was about two doors away from them [that] this person, this fella had died. And George was known, and George Baquet was known to make--anytime they played, played a funeral and he picked up that clarinet--I mean, everybody had tears in their eyes--in those days, that's right. George Baquet--was a fine looking man. And I, I used to think that he was a pretty man, 'cause I was small, you know, and I thought he was pretty; look--he had a face like a girl, [I thought?]. You know? But he could play; ah, he could play. Gee whiz. I never heard nothing like him no more after that.

[Russell:] On the street did he play E^b?

[Barbarin:] E^b, yeah, he played E^b. Now Lorenzo Tio--I mean young Lorenzo--I mean he was very, very good clarinetist. Charlie McCurdy, he was good. They had Alphonse Picou, and--I'm talking about the guys that could read at that time. Oh, I can't remember--they had oh, "Big Eye Louie" [Nelson]--he was around [at] that time, but he wasn't a musicianer with those guys; he was--he played ratty, you know; he was a ratty clarinet player. And later

1
old, then--I was thinking he was a little

ttle older than [that].

i that, I don't know.

h certificate is?

you--

h.

it. Augustine church.

easy, Bill.

re talking about--who was that? An uncle

sl a clarinet player?

uie Artidore? Yeah, they say, they say that he

in those times, in those days, you know--

playing, you know? And my mother always had told

at before he died, he wrote some nice music. He

autiful waltz. A beautiful foxtrot, but they never

usic--I mean somebody, someone took it--got mis-

- beautiful.

... good

on in years--well, I mean [Sidney] Bechet and them fellas.

[Russell:] Oh, [did they have?]?--

[Barbarin:] But, that Bechet, Sidney Bechet, he was the most.

[Allen:] Well, who took his place after he left?

[Barbarin:] Who's that?

[Allen:] Bechet, as being the tops?

[Barbarin:] [At being the tops?]??

[Allen:] For ratty music.

[Barbarin:] Well, I remember, at Willere and Annette they had a boy they called Williams--I can't think of his other name; he died in California--he and Bechet tied up, and it was, it was about even-even.

[Russell:] You say that Bechet was right at the top, though, would you?

[Barbarin:] He was tops, yeah; yeah, he was wonderful. And that Bechet could take--I remember that--Buddy Petèt and him one time--they hired him to play an advertisement. And at that time Bob Lyons was working in a pawn shop on Rampart and Perdido--Bob Lyons, the bass player--and Bechet didn't have no clarinet. I remember this--I recall that good because I used to follow all the bands. So they say, "Well, get him a clarinet." The wagon pulls up, with a horse in it, up by the pawn shop, and they told Bob Lyons that Bechet didn't have no clarinet. And he went and got an old clarinet; it looked like, like a banana, [sort of?]?--I mean the color of a banana.

[Russell:] Yeah, a brown one, I've seen them.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, color of a banana--looks kinda yellow. And, man, I don't know how long that clarinet had been in that pawn shop. And

Bechet fixed a reed on ther and I don't know, some of the notes didn't blow. Man, that man could play. [whistles] Wow! What came out of that clarinet! And the notes that didn't work, he didn't mind that, he didn't mind that at all. That man was great.

[Russell:] Did you ever hear him on trumpet?

[Barbarin:] How's that?

[Russell:] Did you ever hear Sidney play trumpet?

[Barbarin:] Yeah, I heard him play a parade on trumpet on St. Bernard Street--that's during the days they had all of the rocks, them big rocks on--

[Russell:] Cobblestones.

[Barbarin:] In the streets, yeah--cobblestones, I mean. They was short of a--well, they had, I think they had about three or four bands in that parade, but they were short of a trumpet player, so I guess Bechet, they asked Bechet to play trumpet, I guess, [and] he got a trumpet and played it. He played all day parade. I remember that one good--on St. Bernard Street. *Cause at that time he was living on ~~MYX~~ Marais between Annette and St. Anthony. Yeah, that guy was great.

[Russell:] I wanted to ask a little bit, before I forget it, about your family background, it being a French name--you told me once somebody had checked the name way back to France. Did you know anything about your father's folks?

[Barbarin:] Yeah--~~walkxxxxxxxwalk~~ well, some people was trying to tell me, when I was working at the Jazz Ltd. [night club], that they have a lot of Barbarins in a little town near Paris. And he said

that he's gonna--I don't know how he's gonna find that out--he's gonna look up and see if they're relatives to me, you know what I mean.

[Russell:] Do you know anything about your father's father?

[Barbarin:] How's that?

[Russell:] Do you know anything about your father's folks before him?

[Barbarin:] No, I don't know anything; maybe, my sister maybe can tell you, because she heard my mother and my grandmother, you know. [talking lots of times, see?].

[Russell:] They came from France, though, I suppose?

[Barbarin:] Well, well, his father--no, his grand~~father~~, great grandfather--his grandfather, I mean, at least not his father--his grandfather, I think, was white. That's--well, you know, people in those days--you know what I mean.

[Russell:] Well, sure, [I know what you mean?].

[Barbarin:] People migrated from France, you know, and mixed with the--

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Barbarin:] Colored woman; you know how that was, I mean. So that's how come most all the people has French names, I imagine, or Spanish names, I mean, that's--

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Barbarin:] [How?] the colored people, you know what I mean. How's that?

[Allen:] It was legal in those days.

[Barbarin:] Well, yeah, I imagine it was legal; yeah, I imagine it was legal.

[Allen:] There was no law against marriages then; [unintelligible].

[Barbarin:] No, there was no law in those days; that's what I, I understand: there was no law in those days.

[Allen:] I wanted to ask you how you got your first name--were you named after anybody?

[Barbarin:] No, no, no, [I tell you?], just [a] nickname; I tell you-- well, my first cousin and his sister and my sister, this sister here [Theresa Wilson]--you mean my nickname "'T' Boy"?

[Allen:] No, no; Paul--were you named after anybody?

[Barbarin:] OH, Paul--well, that's my middle name; my first name is-- I don't call it; I don't like that name; I never call myself that name.

[Allen:] You don't?

[Barbarin:] I never call myself that name.

[Allen:] Well, we won't tell anybody it's Alphonse.

[Barbarin:] My name--I'll tell it, though--my name is Adolphe Paul Barbarin.

[Allen:] Adolphe?

[Barbarin:] Adolphe--Adolphe Paul Barbarin.

[Allen:] And were you?--

[Barbarin:] I was speaking about my nickname, how I got the nickname, [unintelligible].

[Allen:] I thought maybe you were, were named after Chaligny or somebody --I don't know.

[Barbarin:] [Who, Paul?] Chaligny? Well, yeah, that's how I got my name.

[Allen:] From him?

[Barbarin:] From Paul, yeah; Paul Chaligny was my godfather.

[Allen:] OH.

[Barbarin:] Yes.

[Allen:] Somebody had told me that.

[Barbarin:] You forgot to ask my father about Paul Chaligny.

[Allen:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, you forgot to ask him. I couldn't, I couldn't think, you know--

[Allen:] [unintelligible]

[Barbarin:] If you would of told me, I would have marked some things down, you know.

[Allen:] Yes.

[Barbarin:] If I had known that, to ask him, you know.

[Russell:] That's all right.

[Allen:] Were they close friends: Your father and [Paul?]?

[Barbarin:] Oh, yeah, very close friends. Yeah, they was neighbors, you know--lived next door to each other; they were neighbors.

[Allen:] How did--and did he play? Paul Chaligny?

[Barbarin:] Well, I don't know what he played; I know ~~that~~ the [cornet?] was one of his instruments, but he taught all the instruments--he taught everything. Because that's--when I first started taking up clarinet, I went to him, you know.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Barbarin:] And he was going to teach me, but I decided I want to learn drums; I heard "Red Happy" [Bolton] and Henry Zeno, McMurray [and all of those guys?] and I say, well, I'll switch to drums. So there you are. But clarinet--I [really wanted?] clarinet; I was cut out for clarinet; I don't know why I didn't take it up. I'm sorry, too; in a way, I'm real sorry. That's right. 'Cause you know, I have good ideas, you know? I know how it goes--

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Barbarin:] I know the turns, you know; I know just how it;s supposed to be played.

[Allen:] Where did you get the name of "'T' Boy", too?

[Barbarin:] How I got the name of "'T' Boy"? Well, I tell you--my cousin, first cousin was named "Mack Boy." And, and his sister, they

Reel I

Jan. 7, 1959

J

named his sister "Mack 'Ti' Girl." So, they named my sister, this one here, "'Ti' Girl." Then they named me "'Ti' Boy." That was nicknames, you know. "Ti' Boy," "'Ti' Girl"--"Mack Boy," "Mack 'Ti' Girl." That's how I got the name.

[Collins:] Does it mean anything, Paul?

[Barbarin:] Huh?

[Collins:] Does it mean anything, that 'T'? Is is tea you drink, or?--

[Russell:] [unintelligible]

[Barbarin:] Well, I imagine it was tea you drink--I don't know-- I don't know why then called us ~~that~~ when they named us that. That was small, I guess, I mean; maybe, maybe 'cause it means small.

[Russell:] Yeah, maybe from the French, huh?

[Allen:] Petite.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, petite--yeah, little children--petite, yeah, that's right.

[Russell:] That's probably it.

[Barbarin:] That's right, probably it; yeah. probably it--uh-huh.

[Russell:] We didn't get your birthdate on this. We interviewed you for Life, and we have a copy of that, too,--

[Barbarin:] Yeah, you have a copy [unintelligible].

[Russell:] [We might get it right here?].

[Barbarin:] I don't remember you interviewing me. Well, you know, I always say I going to--it's no use to tell no story on this.

[Russell:] No, [weddon't tell the same thing?]; I just thought that we-

[Barbarin:] Huh?

[Russell.:] You were born in 1900 was it, or what?

[Barbarin.:] 1901.

[Russell.:] 1901.

[Barbarin.:] Oh, I wasn't born in 1901, I was born another date, but I ain't gonna tell⁶ you what date. 1901, let's let it go at 1901.

[Russell.:] Your sister is younger than you are?

[Barbarin.:] Huh? Oh, yes, she's much younger than me.

[Russell.:] You have a good memory to remember all those things your father told you, I guess.

[Wilson.:] Yeah, Well, you see, we wasn't kids that would run the street; we'd be in the house and they'd tell us all things, see?

[Barbarin.:] Yeah, we'd be in the house and they'd tell us all things.

[Wilson.:] And we'd ~~hear~~ them talking and we'd listen to them because we'd always be in the house.

[Barbarin.:] I still remember the time that--I remember the time when that man died on--I don't think you remember that--on St. Anthony between--about two doors from Heckmann--Heckmann [that was?] selling shoes, them people were selling shoes, I mean--

[Wilson.:] Uh-huh.

[Barbarin.:] You know, that's been a long time.

[Wilson.:] Oooh, yes, that's a long time.

[Barbarin.:] That's been a long time. [While ago?] I was telling about George Baquet, you know?

[Wilson.:] Wh-huh.

Reel I

Jan. 7, 1959

[Barbarin:] How great he was--people used to cry; he used to make tears--that's the only clarinet player I ever seen that make, make the people cry. Talking about clarinet players today--shame on 'em.

[Wilson:] They don't have no musicians.

[Barbarin:] Naw, shame on 'em--you should have heard those bands in those days--like the Olympia Band, the Superior Band, and Imperial Band.

[Wilson:] [Gee?], they had parades.

[Barbarin:] Those was bands. And, and--

[Wilson:] Everybody would be waiting for the parade to come--

[Barbarin:] And the parades--you see, like the Onward Brass Band? I mean, well, Onward Brass Band--I mean they played. My father--I mean, he can't tell you about that, because you didn't ask him about that, but I can tell you: they played barrelhouse music. You can --you can forget about what he said about the other fellows, you know, reading at that time.

[Wilson:] They played barrelhouse music..

[Barbarin:] Yeah. But later on in years, I mean, it was a barrelhouse band. Well, like you say Dandy Lewis on bass drum?--well, they used him sometime. But the main drummer that I seen play bass drum with the Onward Band was "Babe"--oh, Jean Vigne and "Bebe" Matthews. That's two good drummers. [Lots of pames?]

[Allen:] And they played bass drum?

[Barbarin:] No--

[Russell:] Jean Vigne played--

[Barbarin:] He used to play snare drum--"Bebe." "Bebe" Matthews played--and, Bill, Bill Matthews was a good drummer, too; don't forget that. He was one of the top drummers you had, too; he was in that category, too. Well, they had in that band--the Onward Band--"Bebe" Matthews, Jean Vigne; they had "Buddy" Johnson on trombone; they had Vic Gaspard on, on baritone; my daddy on alto; they had Manuel Perez, Joe Oliver, and [Andrew] Kimball; sometime they'd have Pete--Pete Bocage. But those three was, was, was the great guys.

[Allen:] And did they play?--

[Barbarin:] Manuel Perez, Joe Oliver, and [Andrew] Kimball.

[Allen:] Who were the barrelhouse men in that band?

[Barbarin:] Who was the barrelhouse mens in that band? Joe Oliver.

[Allen:] He was the man.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, Joe Oliver. You, you know--he played--you, know, like they have a third trumpet player on the end in, in an orchestra? Well, that's the way it was--that's the way Joe was, in that band. But Manuel, I mean, he was just a good--he made turns, but you know, good turns, but not like Joe. Joe was always--

[Wilson:] He was like Louie Armstrong; he--

[Barbarin:] I mean, yeah, Joe, Hoe was always like, you know, barrelhouse, like Louie Armstrong or Buddy Bolden or something like that, you know.

[Wilson:] Yeah.

[Barbarin:] And people like that. 'Course--

[Allen:] But, he never used a mute, in the strut, huh?

[Barbarin:] Who's that? No, he never used--no, not no mute; no, no.

[Allen:] Would they put their hands in front of the horns then, or anything?

[Barbarin:] No, no, not in the street, no, no; no, he didn't do that. [They just played?]; they played, though.

[Allen:] ~~Uh-huh~~.

[Barbarin:] Well, when you heard those bands coming down the street --talking about Eureka and these little bands, little bands you hear today--I'm not panning them; they're good--

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Barbarin:] These days. But I mean, you couldn't--there was no comparison; no, man, no comparison--naw, uh-uh, no comparison. Y'all don't hear--uh-uh--y'all don't hear the real thing. It's too bad [you] couldn't catch those people on tape.

[Russell:] No.

[Barbarin:] And catch them trumpet players like them people--
"Buddy" Petit--

[Wilson:] And Walter Blue [Robertson], huh?

[Barbarin:] Walter Blue. Ooooh--

[Wilson:] He was a good trumpet player; he died on the street.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, he died on the street; he was out playing, playing a parade.

[Wilson:] Young fellow, too.

[Barbarin:] Yeah.

[Allen:] We ought to talk to his son.

[Barbarin:] Well, Walter Blue, he was good.

[Allen:] His son plays [something?].

[Barbarin:] Huh?

[Wilson:] His son plays music.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, yeah.

[Allen:] He might remember something, Bill.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Wilson:] He was too small, but his mother could tell you.

[Barbarin:] Had a many a trumpet player [in] those days. I mean they had, they had "Chif;" ^[Lewis Johnson] they had Joe Johnson; they had--lets see, trumpet players--Edward Clement, [Clem,] he was good; plenty guys--

[Allen:] Who was "Chif?"

[Barbarin:] "Chif?" He was a trumpet player. But now he plays--I think he's fooling around with a bass now. He racks bass[s] up on Rampart and Erato, I think it is--Erato yeah.

[Allen:] Oh, yes.

[Barbarin:] Yeah--a aittle short guy--he was, he was a good man. And--

[Allen:] Is that Dave Brown's bar, [around there?]?

[Barbarin:] I don't know whose bar--no, that ain't Dave Brown's bar, no, no; that's coming down, coming down--not on that, not on that side of the street, either.

[Allen:] Uh-huh. On the lake side.

[Barbarin:] Yeah. Lake side, that's right.

[Allen:] "Chif"--he used to play shows with Charlie Love. I didn't know he was still around.

[Barbarin:] That's right; yeah uh-huh.

[Allen:] He played on--

[Barbarin:] We had a many good musicians. Good drummers--plenty good drummers;

McMurray, Walter Brundy--Walter Brundy, later on he played clarinet; he was pretty fair. They had--they had "Tig" Chambers; he was a pretty good trumpet player, too--"Tig" Chambers.

[Russell:] Did you ever hear of a fella by the name of Ned?

[Barbarin:] Ned? Yeah, I know Ned, too.

[Russell:] Was that his last name or first name?

[Barbarin:] No, I don't remember [unintelligible].

[Allen:] Who did he play with?

[Barbarin:] On, I guess different guys; I've heard him [unintelligible]; I've seen him with different little bands, you know. But those bands, I mean, the Imperial--I just can't, I just can't [re]call, these people, what they playing music; 'cause these fellas--[mean,--oh, man, they played. You see these Scott Joplin books, all these rags? You don't [hear that; none of them use it?]. And them guys just took that music and played that music; they didn't have to jazz it--just play it. Just play it, man. So beautiful, man. All those--"Maple Leaf Rag," "Grace and Beauty," "African Pas," "Ophelia Rag," "Entertainers Rag"--oh, man; I used to play all of those tunes, you know.. Course at that time, I didn't read, you know, at all--just guessing, you know. But I was a pretty good guesser. Yeah, I was a pretty good guesser; yeah.

[Allen:] Did you ever hear Chris Kelly play?

[Barbarin:] Oh, I worked with Chris Kelly.

[Wilson:] He was a barrelhouse musician.

[Barbarin:] Was he a barrelhouse[musician]? Chris Kelly [would] stop on the street there--

[Wilson:] He'd have everybody out of their house with their pots burning on the stove.

[Barbarin:] He'd take that [glass?], take [out?] that mute, that mute and put in there. I recall one time I played a picnic with him.

[Wilson:] Many a pot of beans got burny.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, I better leave that out.

[Allen:] You gonna leave out about that out on the lakefront?

[Barbarin:] Yeah, I going to leave that out, leave that out, on the lake, there. I'll tell you about what they did ^{of} me out there. I was playing a picnic with Bechet and Buddy Petit out there--out at the lake--and I forget who all was in that band. And a some guys from the Irish Channel had hired us. And while we was on intermission, the guy took all our coats and tied them all in a knot, man, and put them back on the chair, where we had them at. Tied them all in a knot boy. Them guys was some--~~oh~~ them guys was--

[Allen:] Did you ever work in the Channel much?

[Barbarin:] Huh?

[Allen:] Did you ever work in the Channel much?

[Barbarin:] Yeah, I played a lot of dances. Well, later on in years, I played in the Channel a lot with "Kid Punch's" band; yeah, "Kid Punch's" band.

[Allen:] Quiet places up there?

[Barbarin:] Huh!! quiet? Was it quiet? No, no them Irishes, man, they tough, man, them people; all of them is tough. In those days, those people was tough, man; they start a fight man--whoo-who. Never knew when that fight was gonna end, man. Gee whiz.

[Allen:] What did you do when the fight started?

[Barbarin:] When the fight started? Just get out the way, move out the way; try and protect my drums and get out the way. Well, they don't bother us; them'd be fighting amongst themselves. But they was good people, though; yeah, they were really nice. I played a lot of, a lot of jobs up there with "Kid Punch's" band, [in] the Irish Channel; "Kid Punch" had so much work. At that time, I had to carry my drums, you know, from down here and all the way up to the Irish Channel; see, you wasn't allowed on the street car.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Barbarin:] Or you could catch a ride with somebody--you know a wagon or a float was going up and [they'd] ask me if I wanted them to give me a lift, see? And sometime when we played in the Irish Channel, I'd have to leave--if the job for eight o'clock, well, I'd put my drums on my back at five o'clock in the evening to get there for eight. I'd walk. Way up Carrollton, way up in Carrollton, way up St. Charles, near the Protection Levee, [we had jobs up there?]. And I and the bass player, me and the bass player walked--I mean at that time, we walked together. We'd meet one another and--

[Russell:] Who was the bass player?

[Barbarin:] Gabe.

[Russell:] Oh yeah.

[Barbarin:] A fella called Gabriel.

[Russell:] Uh-huh.

[Barbarin:] We called him Gabe. I think he still around--he was a barber-- I don't know, they tell me he's still around, I haven't seen him. And he was a hard worker--a hard working bass player. Work hard all the time, Gabe. That was a good band we had there; Eddie Morris, playing trombone; "Punch" Georgie Boyd; I can't think--[Walter] Preston, Preston played the banjo, that's right; and Gabe played the bass. They had so many jobs till I quit the band; I got a job [going at?] Tom Anderson's in 1922--yeah, it was '22, I think it was '22-- and I quit the band; had too much work. I said, "I'm tired carrying these drums, "Punch." And I think, I think it was "Little Roy" replaced me; I think it was "Little Roy"-- "Little Roy" Evans.

[Allen:] Well, when did "Chinee" [Abby Foster] play with "Punch," before you or after you?

[Barbarin:] Oh, I, I, I don't remember. At that time "Punch"--"Chinee" was playing with, with "Papa" Celestin, at that time, yeah, he must of played

afterward, maybe afterwards. Uh-huh. That's a guy that had a big reputation; I don't see how he, how he could go back, because he played good drums, "Little Chineese." Bebé--

[Wilson:] Bebé was a good little drummer.

[Barbarin:] A good drummer, and I don't understand how he went back like that. I don't understand it.

[Allen:] He's sick

[Barbarin:] Huh?

[Allen:] He's sick

[Wilson:] He's sick now

[Barbarin:] Well, yeah, he's sick now. He act like--

[Wilson:] He come up with us, he was raised in the same neighborhood.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, rasied in the neighborhood, yeah.

[Allen:] Did he start out at about the same time as you?

[Barbarin:] Ummmmm, oh, I think after me, no, he come after me. Yeah, after me--my first job was with ah--remember Johnny Prudence.

[Wilson:] Yeah--he came after you.

[Barbarin:] While I was working at St. Charles Hotel--

[Wilson:] Yeah, that's right.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, ~~that's right~~ and I save that money--my ma took me to that ~~\$25~~ \$25 and pay on a set of drums.

[Wilson:] Yeah.

[Barbarin:] And the same day I got the drums--Johnny Prudence and them needed a drummer and they came by the house, and I had them, and that was my first job--we played for some campaign down on St. Roch and Chartres by a bassoon. Political thing, you know what I mean.

[Wilson:] He used to break all the seats out of my mother's chairs--

[Barbarin:] And ah--

[Wilson:] Playing drums.

[Barbarin:] And that was my first job. Ah, to play professionally, you know.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Barbarin:] Ah, from then on I went on up.

[Allen:] What year was that that you started with--

[Barbarin:] That was about '15, huh, about 1915. Because we lost my sister, my little sister, in an accident.

[Allen:] Well, you must have been twenty-five then.

[Wilson:] No, he wasn't that old.

[Allen:] You weren't twenty-five years old, huh?

[Barbarin:] No, [laughter]. No, I hadn't put on long pants to go play.

[Wilson:] Paul must have been about sixteen or fifteen years old when he started.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, I had to go--

[Wilson:] I don't know--I don't know if he was that--he was--was stout and heavy and he had to put on long pants, ~~because~~ he had to put ~~on~~ long pants because he was in short pants.

[Barbarin:] And then, ah, when I used to go work in the "Red Light District"--

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Barbarin:] I used to go over--and they would come and get me--this same little fella Louie Cottrell [Jr.] what's president of our union--come at the house and tell me his daddy say in his place at ah, at Rice's, and I ~~said~~ put on--I had a pair of old long pants and scatching was heavy. Be summertime--heavy piece of goods, and I put those long trousers on and go up there and play, play with Manuel and them, and Manuel Perez was at, working at Rice's, they worked there a long time, a long time; and a couple of times I worked with King Oliver--Joe Oliver, I mean, worked at Pete Lala's place, I worked in ah Henry Zeno's place, couple of times; put on long trousers. I worked-- Few clothes--guys who ever--
[Pause]
who ever was the drummer there--I think this ~~fella~~ boy that died, plays snare drum with ah with John Casimir, what's his name--Roger?

[Allen and Russell:] Ernest Rogers.

[Barbarin:] Roger, I used to go in his place at Fewclothes.

[Allen:] Who was at Fewclothes?

[Barbarin:] I was a little bitty kid; huh?

[Allen:] Whose band was at Fewclothes?

[Barbarin:] I don't know whose band was at Fewclothes. I don't know.

[Wilson:] He started when he was very young.

[Barbarin:] I know, ah I knew ah Roy Palmer was working there, I remember that.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Barbarin:] 'Cause I remember that good--he was working there.

[Allen:] Was Sidney Desvignes there? [Bad question.]

[Barbarin:] Ah, I can't--I think Sidney Desvigne was working there. If I--if I can recall. It's been so long ago, I for....

[Russell:] Remember a pianist--

[Barbarin:] Huh?

[Russell:] Thomas--ah--George W. Thomas, do you remember ever hearing him.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, piano player?

[Russell:] Yes.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, Big George, yeah, Big George Thomas, yeah, I knew him, yeah. I--

[Russell:] He worked there, I think for a while. Bob said for--

[Barbarin:] I think he was working there at that time. If I'm not mistaken, I think he was. I--I recall, I mean who all was working them.

[Allen:] Oh, no.

[Barbarin:] I remember ah, Roy Palmer working there. Now, that's a trombone player. Talking about a "getting-in-the-gutter".

trombone player, he was that, I know he is now. But--

[Allen:] Bell's seen him.

[Barbarin:] Ain't nobody had no--shame on ["Kid"] Ory.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Barbarin:] That's right. Shame on Ory. Ory ain't had no stuff for him. I'm gonna tell you what I--how I feel about it, you know what I mean. 'Course you know, I hate to say these things, you know, I mean--'cause like guys want to be the greatest, you know what I mean, but give a man what's comin' to him. Roy Palmer could put you in the gutter.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] How was "Zue," you remember "Zue" Robertson?

[Barbarin:] "Zue," yeah, I remember "Zue" spitting off all that tailgate, yeah. [laughter] Yeah, he played a many a advertisement. Yeah, that "Zue" Robertson. He was a good--good man--good musician.

[Russell:] Johnny St. Cyr gave me an imitation of him spittin'. He'd spit.

[Barbarin:] Don't you remember "Zue" Robertson played a trombone?

[T.W.] I think so.

[Allen:] Was he ratty at all?

[Barbarin:] He'd spit on the--huh?

[Allen:] Was he ratty at all?

[Barbarin:] Who? Ratty? Naw.

[Allen:] Did he play by ear?

[Barbarin:] No, he was a good musician; I mean, he could play by ear, too.

[Wilson:] The only thing he want to know is that ratty stuff, and he shoulda been ah been born in those days, when they had--he should have been about this time when they had the ratty stuff.

[Barbarin:] Yeah. But you have, you have a book about that big.

[laughter]

[Wilson:] Just about the age is now. Then he'd a found about the ratty stuff.

[Allen:] Tow feet high.

[Barbarin:] About that high.

[Wilson:] They don't have any more Carnival, you know.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Wilson:] The Carnival we had was so much different than the Carnival now.

[Barbarin:] Ah, yeah. No Carnival.

[Wilson:] The colored people would mask, and oh, they had good bands, and good parades, and everything; they don't have no ^{more} Carnival.

[Barbarin:] Naw. They don't have no ~~more~~ Carnival.

[Wilson:] People don't go out and worry about carnival--it's mostly for kids. I mean in those day they had carnival; they'd sing; they'd dance; they'd do anything' they'd dance "ratty" and every-thing. They do their best on Carnival...

[Barbarin:] [while his sister talks] It's sad Carnival now, I mean, in those days it was Carnival; they had, I mean, everybody, didn't see nobody--wasn't nobody fighting--nobody wanna or nothing like that. No, I mean, gee whiz, yeah, sure, yeah, sure, dance and all that sho' and play joke on people, you know, and ah women, you know, say, they get out and holler you out and "You ain't no good, you so-and-so-and-so--you know, you ain't no good, you so-and-so-and-so."

[Wilson:] Nobody went in the street without a mask, and they did anything they wanna do under that mask. Nobody could--

[Barbarin:] And go on about their business, [you'd] say who was that, who was that.

[Wilson:] That's right. When they'd meet the fellows, they'd have a big bunch of keys. "Come to my room" or something. Give him a key and he thought sure he was goin' to that ~~room~~ broad's room, but he wasn't going nowhere. Because they had those keys, delivering 'em around to all those fellows. [laughter] They had fun. It was really fun, ya know.

[Barbarin:] Yeah.

[Wilson:] And the fellas would dance and mask--like a woman; you know, dressed up like a woman.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, dressed up like a woman, too.

[Wilson:] And they danced with the men and the men would buy them a whole lot to drink and after they went off--

[Barbarin:] And I danced with a guy one night at the Economy Hall, and I thought he was a girl.

[Allen:] Really?

[Barbarin:] All night long. And I didn't get--I didn't get angry--there was nothing to get angry about--you know, some people would, you know, fight.

[Wilson:] Some guys'd beat 'em up.

[Barbarin:] You know--want to shot you, you know. I mean, no. No, that wasn't--

[Wilson:] That's what happened when my daddy got kil--shot--he didn't want to say, but that's what happened. A fella was dressed up as a woman, and dancing with another fella.

[Barbarin:] Uh-huh.

[Wilson:] And when the fella found out it was a woman--man, he, they started to fighting; that's when he shot him, when he was trying to get away.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, that's what ~~mummy~~ mum say there.

[Wilson:] Yeah.

[Barbarin:] Uh-huh.

[Russel:] Huh.

[Allen:] And what would they sing?

[Wilson:] People had they fun.

[Barbarin:] Huh?

[Allen:] What would they sing?

[Wilson:] They would sing all kind of French songs. Creole songs, and all.

[Barbarin:] Oh, yes, all Creole songs.

[Allen:] Do you know any of them?

[Barbarin:] Just a few words, I mean, you used to say most of them. They say, "Ai Ai Ai Mo' Pas Lemmé Ca, Mo' Pas Lemmé Ca, Mo' Pas Lemmé Ca." [check spelling] "AI AI AI MOI PAS AIMER ÇA." (DVT)

[Collins:] What does that mean?

[Barbarin:] Oh--

[Wilson:] "I don't like that."

[Barbarin:] "I don't like that."

[Wilson:] "I don't like that."

[Barbarin:] "I don't like that."

[Allen:] That's real good.

[Wilson:] We'd sing all kind of Creole songs. We'd put all kind of words in them--well, they know how to talk that kind of stuff, you know, and they--

[Barbarin:] Yeah.

[Wilson:] Theyall--they'd make a read song out of it. They'd rhyme it up.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, those good days.

[Allen:] Did your father speak Creole?

[Wilson:] Huh? My mother and my father.

[Barbarin:] French.

[Wilson:] My whole family.

[Barbarin:] Speak good French--my mother. [coughs] Excuse me. Yeah, my mother speak good French.

[Wilson:] We should speak it, but we never did bother. We wouldn't--

[Barbarin:] She hardly ever would say in American; she always talk in French. American. She--

[Wilson:] She spoke it arounda all the time. We understood it, but we never did speak it.

[Barbarin:] You know the kids--yeah--we understood it but we picked it up to go fast, to rattle it fast like they did--but everything they said--they said in French. My grandmother and all of 'em. They'd be in the kitchen [mocks talking] [laughter] but we'd understand what they were saying, you know--but we couldn't answer them fast like that--couldn't answer them. But we'd have to take our time answering them.

[Russell:] Well, when your father went to school, was that a French school, when he was a boy--do you suppose?

[Wilson:] I don't know; I guess it sorta French, you know.

[Barbarin:] Yeah.

[Wilson:] Uh-huh.

[Barbarin:] Uh-huh.

[Russell:] You know how--

maybe Harrison Barnes--you talk with him--he'll tell about it. Walk--never get tired. The other fellas be tired, and he just walk. And in those--those days, I mean, they played parade from eight in the morning to about six in the evening, just walk.

[Collins:] But they didn't have no streets like they have now.

[Barbarin:] And no streets like they got now.

[Wilson:] St. Bernard Street over there, they had great big stones like that, and they had big old tree would be--

[Barbarin:] Used to be street like--big rocks, big stones like.

And you'd be walkin' on the big stones. On Esplanade Street

[Avenue] all that was big stones. In those days you'd be walkin' --ya walkin' like that, I mean--

[Wilson:] Right big stones they were, that's right--canal over there--

[Barbarin:] All St. Bernard was--

[Wilson:] On St. Bernard Street--our life. We were little bitty kids.

[Barbarin:] All that was rock, I mean. All [of] the street[s] was rock. Big stones and all.

[Wilson:] Stones and all.

[Barbarin:] He's lucky he could walk at all.

[Allen:] Say, is Walter Blue's wife living?

[Wilson:] [unintelligible]

[Barbarin:] She live back of the Fair Grounds, the last time I seen her. Ah, you know who could tell you--ah Lawrence Marrero.

[Wilson:] She's still--

[Allen:] Yeah, that's right, they're real close.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, real close.

PAUL BARBARIN
Reel I
Jan. 7, 1959

27

[Wilson:] His sister-in-law--

[Barbarin:] Yeah, or you catch little Blue, I mean, well, it's hard to catch him, I don't know.

[Allen:] He's at Luthjen's--

[Barbarin:] Huh?

[Allen:] He's at Luthjen's, I think now, you know, "the old folks' home."

[Barbarin:] Oh, yeah.

[Allen:] With, ah, what's his name Wiggins--Earl Wiggins-- is that who he played trumpet for?

[Russell:] Yeah, that's the end of this reel.

[Barbarin:] Yeah, yeah.

End of Reel I

Jan, 7, 1959

PAUL BARBARIN