

unedited first draft

ROY PALMER
REEL I, Track 1
September 22, 1955

INTERVIEWER: William Russell
NOTES: Richard B. Allen
SUMMARY: Dan Weisman
TYPING: Dan Weisman

[Note: Bill Russell, in a hand-written addendum accompanying the interview tape, explains how he arrived at an 1892 birthdate for Roy Palmer. This was based on an August 1940 conversation between WR and RP in the latter's Hand Laundry at 4416 South State Street, Chicago.]

[WR mentions that RP started playing in 1910, first went to Chicago with the Original Creole Orchestra in 1916-17, and last visited New Orleans during the 1923 Mardi Gras.]

[RP also referred to making the Jelly Roll records for Autograph, as well as two records with Richard M. Jones. He had a white label test pressing from about 1933-34, from Vocalion, of the Chicago Rhythm Kings - "You Battle Head--Beetle Head," - and said he had sung the vocal on this record. WR, 18 October 1985.]

This is Roy Palmer speaking. I want to say about the bands, the different bands that I played with in New Orleans, and in different towns, and in different places. I want to explain how I came around in the music game.

It was when I was around 15 or 18 [years old when] I studied music, taking music. In that time, I played in bands, different bands. (Loud buzz for about 20 seconds.)

And sometimes, I played with other bands. I led a lot of bands, brass bands, and so on. (Loud buzz continues, obscuring

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most of RP's remarks,)

My music was well established because I played in...and played lots of different instruments. (Buzz makes listening difficult throughout passage.)

I have an uncle who was a very good instrument[alist.] That's the thing that caused me to take up music because he had a band, and I was...(Continued buzz.)

I taken up from what [Uncle Charles Henderson] given to him. I didn't know no instrument, couldn't play no instrument at that time. (Buzz continues throughout.)

He was a trumpet player at that time, and one of the most efficient trumpet players that you would want to find. Very nice. Very sweet trumpet....He died about 1923, or [19]24. (Buzz ends.)

He was in Chicago with us....He was in the first [black] band that came up from New Orleans. We had Paul Barbarin. And we had [Wellman] Braud. He'd taken Eddie Garland's place. Braud was a bass player, and Eddie Garland was a bass player, so he taken Eddie Garland place.

We had several good trombone players. We always used, sometimes, two trombones in the chorus, you know, played together.

We'd give us two trombones. The fellow that played second trombone, he would play baritone, sometimes, in the orchestra.

We also had a very good banjo player. He was nice on banjo.

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That was Johnny St. Cyr. He's from New Orleans, also.

The clarinetist was this fellow, Duhe,' Lawrence Duhe'. He played a C-clarinet. He was very good....He's still down there [in New Orleans.]...

Louis Keppard is the fellow that played guitar. He played guitar. He was a guitar player. I don't know whether he changed to anything else, but that's what he usually featured, guitar.

We had several other musicians that came along the line at that time, see. The drummer that came up was a fellow by the name of [Little] Mack [Lacey.] A very young fellow.

He used to be about 18, 15 years old. I don't know his last name, but I know his name was Mack. He was very good. A nice drum player.

We used so many different...musicians in the band. (Inconsistent sound with drop-offs.) Some fellows wanted to play a gig some nights with different fellows, and use them.

John Lindsay was one of the fellows [on second trombone]...and George Fihle played with them. He was first, and second trombone.

In a place where they had a very large orchestra, they'd use...two trombones. And these two trombones--one would play first, and one would play second.

From that on, in Chicago, they began to build up a nice orchestra. We had nice musicians. We even had the girl playing

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with us, from Chicago and that was Lilly [Lil Hardin] Armstrong, the girl that married Louis. So, we had her playing with us a long while.

Afterwards Joe [King] Oliver came in, and he started his orchestra.

We left the place where we was playing. We were at Dreamland, and we left Dreamland, and we come over to Royal Garden where...after we stopped playing there, some of us quit playing jobs. Some went one way, and different places, you know, different directions, different bands, and that tore the band up.
(Tape off.)

The early days in New Orleans, we usually played...we had lots of jobs to play through the weekdays, such as funerals, and things like that; parties, picnics, and other things we'd play, you know.

If we'd get out too early...we never played until...In the evenings, we started around about 7:00 [p.m.] in the dance, or whatever it was we were playing for.

It would be over with at 12:00 [midnight]. It never run any further than 12:00, or 1:00 [a.m.], latest. They let them go sometimes, but they never went over 12:00.

Parties. Lawn parties. Usually, we do a lot of that work, lawn parties. Giving dances out in the open air.

It's a large space that you have surrounded with a large

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high fence. They use it as a round [crown?] to dance on.

A nice lawn, and they'd give a party. They'd give it that way, and the dances usually be about...100, or 200, people dancing.

It was very good. They'd dance on the pavement. Some of them had wooden platforms they made, and they'd dance on that.

A good many, lots of times, we'd play dances on the pavement. But, usually, people didn't go for those dances on pavement much because they wore out their shoes. So, they usually go for a dance where canvas was...laid a wooden floor.

We had a good many bands we played with such as Tuxedo band was very good. Sonny [Papa] Celestin, he died, but he was very good, and he had a nice band.

And Onward band--that was a brass band [with] George Fihle, Manuel...Perez, and [Hank] Johnson, Buddy Johnson...That was some of the old-timers, see, and they were very good. They was very good.

They had a band, you might say was stood up within the band...most of my playing was with that band, and with the Tuxedo band.

I used to go out-of-town, and play with other bands. They'd hire me to play. I was supposed to be very good, so they'd hire, and come, and get me see, bring me to those places where they had to play. And they'd bring me back home.

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I had a pretty easy time in the music line. I arranged a little...From the time after I got in a certain height in the music, I was able to give instruction and teach....

I didn't have to leave [New Orleans,] but I left because I wanted to make a little money....In that field, it wasn't paying as much money as they pay up this way, see. I guess, I come on up, and got my bunch together, and we started playing here [in Chicago.]

Now, the first job we played here, it was on the [vaudeville] circuit you might say. The New Orleans Jazz Band was playing from different theaters, different places, you know.

We went to St. Louis. We went to Peoria, and all up in Rock Island, and [in] all those big theaters we had an act.

We had a small act--one woman, and one man. Mabel E. Lane was the girl that was on this show. You used to play this part, you might say. She played a comedienne part. And she sang. And we played on the show.

We went from there to St. Louis. Different places. Rock Island, [Ill.], Iowa. All different short trips. Not too long. Not too far away.

We was working for [LeKrowser & Krauss?] there, at that time. They used to have the Broadway Theater at 4200 Broadway was the theater over there in Chicago. They used to have that. They had that theater in charge.

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Most of our playing we did was when we hung up, stopped there, and played there. Then we, stayed around Chicago until we got another [engagement.]...

[In New Orleans,] they paid around \$3-\$4. They wasn't paying so much a night, see, and at that time the scale was lower anyway. We didn't make so much. Some musicians made more, but they had a...you might say, a very good band.

In the parades, they paid \$2 an hour...and they only paraded about 2 1/2 hours. We only made about \$4-\$5 on a parade.

We had so many different [jobs]...for carnival in those days. We had to play, probably, six or eight hours we played; or eight, or 10, hours at night for dances.

[Dances at] different places. At the Fairgrounds, and at the Louisiana Park. In the different places they had...acts like that. So many observers, dances, so they'd hire different bands. But, they'd use the best band that they could get, see....

I did hear Buddy Bolden. He was a man that really...he was tough on trumpet. But he didn't play a trumpet like. (Tape off.)

[Tape resumes with WR stating, say again about Buddy Bolden.] O.K. Buddy Bolden was one of the fellows...he had, he was really a loud trumpet player. One of the loudest you ever heard. You could hear him from here to the lake.

He was very good, and the numbers that he played, you might say he was used to those numbers. He only played three, or four,

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numbers that he was more familiar with. He never played too many numbers.

They all had their own tunes. They played their own music, their own tunes, their own breaks. They used that themselves, you know. Buddy Bolden was very good, though.

Sonny Celestin was extra good. He was a band leader too. [WR notes he died last December 1954.] And he was very good. He was good.

Coming back to drummers...I think Baby Dodds was one of the...(abrupt sound drop-off) first drummers that I ever played with. He gave you more time, and better time...

I played with several drummers. Tubby Hall is good too, see, and Minor Hall. But Baby Dodds was heavy, and strong--regular. If you lose time on anything, it was not his fault because he gave you very strict time. He was very good....

Louis Cottrell was very good. He used to play with an orchestra. One of the best orchestras around New Orleans. He was very, very good. He used to play with [John] Robichaux's Orchestra. They were very good. They got many dances for, mostly, for parties, and those 400 bunches.

MacMurray? I played with MacMurray once or twice....[WR and RP discuss MacMurray's name, and spelling. RP doesn't remember his first name.]...

I played with Pops Foster, and he had a brother Willie

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Foster that played the violin. We started an orchestra together. Pops Foster, Willie Foster, and a couple of other guys, new guys that I didn't really know, lived in the other part of town, the French Quarter....

[Tete] Rouchon had a good band. They had a very good band. Rouchon was the name of a musician....

Joe Johnson, the trumpet player...died very young. He was hot. He was good. He was one that brought his trumpet playing like these fellows playing now, see, and he picked that up from Joe Oliver...and those fellows. He followed their system, kept up with their system, and he played trumpet just like those fellows....

I came from Uptown. Up around Palmer Avenue, my street, Palmer Avenue...[It wasn't named after my folks.] It was named after another man. He was a doctor, an old doctor, and it was named after them. Up in Carrollton. That's way up in Carrollton. A place way up in Carrollton.

[I listened to bands] down in the French part of town, around Perdido Street. Perdido and Rampart. Different bands. Bob Lyons, and, I guess, Frankie Duson. He played trombone. He was good. Very good....

The fellow that mostly I got instruction from after my uncle died, I got from a fellow by the name of Jim Humphrey. Jim Humphrey. He had three, or four, sons, and they all were

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musicians.

[WR names Willie, Percy, the trumpet player; and Earl Humphrey, he's ^[Earl Humphrey still alive at time of this interview. -DPA] dead.] One of them played clarinet. [That was Willie, WR notes. He's still playing.] And the old Willie died. His daddy named Willie, too. I guess he's still playing, Willie Humphrey [Jr.]

I got good instruction from those fellows. There was a fellow...Frank Welsh was the man who taught me arranging, and rag music. [He arranged] the most beautifulist notes [on a page?] you ever seen. I don't see how he could do it.

He used to doctor his ink cup with something that caused it to just stand right up. It wouldn't blot, you know.

He taught me different phrases, and how to keep out the other fellow's way, playing a melody you know, and never get into the other fellow's melody.

He showed me how to keep in tone. Give me instruction on the chords, on how to form a chord, what instrument could pick the chord, and what instrument wouldn't take it. I mean, he was a very good teacher. Very good.

There were about two, or three, teachers that I went under that were very good, nice. They was kind fellows, and if you got a good, kind teacher you could learn more because he encourage you....

[Frank Welsh] was a trumpet player, and a music arranger. A

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beautiful music arranger....I learned to read music with him. My very first music. He started me off in arranging, and writing music.

I heard my uncle play several times, but I never...I was too small to take it up. But it seems like it stayed in my ear anyway. (Laughs.)

The first music [I remember hearing], and then the bands on the street. That's the first music I heard, and I begin to take an instrument.

After I learned scales, and different things about it, I began to learn; and then I played a little on the violin, and different instruments. That's how I become familiar...with arranging, and I did because I was always mixed up with all the instruments.

That's why, when they have you play trombone, I jumped into somebody's part, but I sweeten it. That is, make a nice melody to go in with that fellow that's playing.

You see, the average trombonist, they play trombone, but they just play what they see. That is the music. They just play what they see.

But, if you know your chords, and your phrases, you can play what you see and then put more into it. In other words, improvise....

I started on the trombone. I taken a liking to trombone.

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There was a show that came into New Orleans, and they had two trombones. I noticed the fellow that was playing trombone. He was quick, and fast, and he could handle that trombone faster.

Well, when I first started, I told fellows I was going to imitate that fellow, and they tried to disgust me. They say, you never play like that fellow. (Laughs.) They say, you never play like that fellow. I say, well, I don't know. I'm going to try.

I kept trying, doing it. I knew the music. I could play the music alright, but I kept trying, doing, working real hard-- scales, and minor scales, and learning how to produce those tones. I finally got it. I always feel like, since I heard that, I feel like [grabbing?] with the trombone....

It was a circus came in. The circus come every September. Every September, the circus come, and around Christmas, December. They come into town, and they bring those fellows. They had one colored band, and they had two white bands.

And that sideshow had these two trombone players. They really was good. They worked together, you know, harmonized. I said, well, I'll watch those fellows, and when I start to playing, I'll know just what to do.

After I got so that I could play, I met one of the fellows. He said, shucks. He said, I wish I could play like you now. (Laughs.) He wanted to know how I done did it. I said, I don't know. I play the tunes that you playing.

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One fellow's name was George Williams. He was one of the best, supposedly. I said that he was a better trombone player than I was, but he said that I was better than him.

Oh, he was wonderful. [He played with W.C. Handy in Memphis.] He was wonderful. He could do more with the trombone backwards than the average fellow could play forwards.

I practiced with all that, but I never used it much. But, I knew it, you know.

You can find these trombone players now. They don't use backwards [i.e., in lower positions] like that. All they know is what's forward from back, like that, but not playing back down.

This way, they don't know nothing about that...lower positions. Make the scales right in the lower positions. Keep down until your seventh position.

But, they never use it, see. I think that's why it's come so much easier to me, too, to make all those different moves on trombone because I play both positions. I play lower position, and forward, too.

[I used pedal tones.] I had a good embouchure. At one time, I could hit the highest note, and drop down below, below the ground. I used to practice that, because that's what they used to say: Palmer, you can make the high notes, but you can't make no lower notes.

Some fellows would say you can make low notes, but you can't

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make no high notes. So, I fought hard to get both, see.

Sometimes, I would catch myself, and be playing in the melody, or something like that, and make that high note, and drop down. I noticed that. I said, now that's easier to do. If you get the embouchure for it, you can do [it] with what look like the least effort.

We played a dance once...over in Streeter, Illinois. There was a high school band that was playing there, and we was playing.

I was playing with a fellow by the name of Oscar Young. We played a little in the park. They give us a nice park. The brass band was playing on one side, and we was playing on the other side.

Before we got through playing, the man that...the professor had them all over there watching me. I said, what the world you guys watching me?

I said, well, I best go ahead now, and try not to make too many mistakes because they was listening. That teacher, that man that was teaching these young fellows, and they had a big band. He was telling them...I could see him telling them something. I don't know what he was telling them. He was telling them something.

And they stood there. Those guys stood right around me, and I kind of felt embarrassed...[WR says he bet they never heard the

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trombone played in that style.] So, that was one of my attempts to find out whether I was good or not.

After we come back from Chicago, we played at the DeLuxe Theater. The upstairs they had a...tavern inn. We played up there. On State and 35th.

There was a fellow come up there from the Army. He come in. The first man he started picking at was me. Where'd you get this guy at? I said. He's tough.

He said, how long you been playing? I said, just a couple of months. He said, you can't fool me with that. (Laughs.) He said, you don't think you're fooling me with that. I'm a trombone player myself. I didn't say no more. (Laughs.)

Well, you see, it's something...it's something different. I'm not, say, bragging on my trombone playing, but it's something different because when I play around persons, before I get through, the whole gang is right up there in front of me; and the other fellows, they ain't paying so much attention [to.] But, they're watching me.

We had a very good band. This Paul Barbarin. He played with us for a while. He's a nice little drummer. He didn't stay in Chicago long. He only stayed a while. He was very good.

But, Baby Dodds is just about as good a drummer as a man want. For strict time. He was as good a drummer as you'd want. He'd hold the time....

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TYPING: Dan Weisman

...[When Baby Dodds] hits a tempo, he's got it. Of all those boys that played, there was none of them that I can play with... You know I played with all of them, but it was so easy to play with Dodds.

[WR thinks BD played with RP in (Willie) Hightower's band, back in New Orleans in his first professional job.] Yeah, that's right. He sure did. [And with Fewclothes too, WR adds.] George Fewclothes...(Tape off.)

The instruments they use now are trumpets, and trombones, and so on. Most, they use now the shallow mouthpiece, not so deep--shallow mouthpiece they made special for high notes.

When you have high notes to make, it's easy with those mouthpieces. It produces a high tone, and you have to work away, you got to work in the embouchure to get a low note. But, they easy for high notes.

I recommend a medium mouthpiece that's not too deep, and not too shallow, just medium bow. That's the best because you make yourself...that way you got the ability to make what you want to make, and you don't have to have too much help.

When this mouthpiece is made shallow, this mouthpiece help you to make high notes, see. And lower notes, you have to scramble, see. You have to scramble for low notes on shallow

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mouthpiece.

But when you get one that's medium mouthpiece you can get high; and both low, and high. So, they're very good.

I used a Conn horn. I used a C.G. Conn, and I used a York. When I first started, there was an American system. [Probably means American trombones, RBA notes.]

[It was] a little, cheap horn...trombone until I begin to learn good. After [that] I got better instruments. I originally had wanted to get me a good instrument the first time, but took the cheap instrument.

I like the King. That was a good trombone. The King trombone was one of the best trombones. ^[still is]

Conn is very good, nice, but King was better. It had a bigger bow, and you could just romp them high notes, and drop down.

You notice me on that, that was a King trombone. I just get them low notes so easy, come out so nice, and smooth.

You couldn't blast it. You never blast a King instrument, not those trombones because they had a large bow, see, and when you played high notes, they come up so sweet and nice, you know. That's why I like King, King trombone....

[The Bell] makes a sharp tone just like the trumpets, see, these trumpets....Them trumpets can make, a small Bell, a piercing tone.

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I don't think it's so good for those, and even those trombones, not such a big Bell, but a medium, we call it a seven inch bow. The best trombones get seven inch bows, seven inch Bell. If you get too much Bell, the hole stays right around the bunch, and it don't go out.

People setting out, and they listening at a band, they want to hear all those instruments, see, and sometimes, with a big Bell like that, you don't hear the trombone at all.

Sometime, when you got nice sweet little notes to make, you can't get it....The Big Bell...blast them out, you can't hear yourself, going right up under it. But, when you get way out there, that's what you got to hear....

[WR notices that trombones today have little weight back there. They didn't used to do that, did they?]

I think that's a good system now that they got because everything's gone down now. But, when I played trombone...[muffled discussion of weight shifting] can play [today] much easier, too. I can hold it up.

I used to rest mine. Some people didn't like to rest them on their shoulder because they dirty their collar. But, I used to rest mine on my shoulder, and when I felt like raising it up, I'd take it up:...

I think the best way for a trombone is to hold his trombone straight in front of him. And Chester [Little?], like he tell me

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about holding my head for that picture, nothing too high, but just a little that makes the sound go just over the heads of the people that's dancing, like that.

Not too high 'cause then it goes up to the ceiling....[Just a little bit more than straight out.] That's it....

I used [slide] oil, but it kept us buying, and was so expensive in a way. We'd buy them for 25 cents a bottle when I used it.

When I used it, I used kitty [kersel?], and laid it on the slide all the way down. Grease your slides good, and after you grease your slides with this kitty [kersel?], you put a little kerosene on it, and that slide would fly. It's not going to evaporate as fast.

Vaseline is too stiff. A lot of fellows used it, but it's hard dragging. I tried it once, but I couldn't []. It was stiff....

The care of instruments should be always...It should be mopped out after any engagement that you play, you should take that instrument and mop it out.

You have one of those little long rods, you know, and run it through that...through the slides, and through the other parts. The idea is you wouldn't go...you had to take it off, put a little bit of fresh rag on it - some kind of woolen cloth on the end - and you carry it through the slide on the outside.

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Sometimes, you push out...throws that grease out...[Put water through the instrument is a good way too.]

I'd wash my horn when I'd get through playing. I used hot water, and soap to wash my horn. But, as long as I'm playing, and going back to play, then I run it on the end of the system. That's a damp [one] because the horn doesn't sound so good dry.

You notice a fellow picks up a horn that's dry, he can't get nothing much, but as soon as you pour that water in it, it softens...you make easy tones out of it, and that's what I used to...that's the way I used to play....

The best way to practice to get a good embouchure is play the lowest notes you can get on it, and then play the high notes. Play the lowest notes, and then play pedal note, and see how long you can hold that pedal note.

Hold that pedal note as long as you can hold it. Then, after you hold that pedal note, then go up in the middle register, and go up in the high register, and when you get through doing that, you tough....

I used to practice, sometimes, two and three hours, just depending on how I felt. That's why I imagined that it helped me a lot, see. I practiced two and three hours.

Just, I wouldn't have anything to do, I would just practice two and three hours every day. That's why I could do anything I want with the trombone. I didn't care what we had to do, I could

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do the same thing they did.

I seen a fellow, he was downtown in the loop. He played two tones on the trombone. I thought that was hard. It was hard, and he had to [lift?] the instrument. Two tones on trombone, the lead, and he played the alto too, at the same time. He had to vibrate two different notes.

I studied it for a long time. I got it down pretty good. Two tones. Sounded like two trombones.

It'd be one, but the way you hold your lip, it'd carry a vibration with the other tones....I'd go up in thirds. They would keep close together....

The fellow here was named Augustine. He was a trombone player. He come from Memphis. He was one of the first I saw [do it] after I saw this fellow do it downtown in the loop.

It's easy, but you can't press your lip too hard. Just let it loose, see, and practice getting the note that you wanted to start on. Let the lip loose, and then that third comes right in, see...I had a lot of experience on those things, see....

I'd practice holding my trombone because there's a certain way you can hold a trombone, and not let it too hard, and not let it too loose. Some fellows play with a loose pressure, and some play...they got to hold it hard up in there.

But, the way to do it is use a medium pressure. Then, that way, you can handle it. You can do what you want with that

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mouthpiece. You can make the horn do what you want.

But, if you got it too tight, you want to drop it low, and jump up to a high note, you can't do it see because you got too much pressure on it. You can't change the note like you want....

[WR asks about trumpet, and trombone, players wearing themselves out, and how that can be avoided.]

Well, one thing I can say about it is those fellows that play that way. You know what does that? You know what kills your mouth? They use too many mouthpieces.

Some fellows, they use a mouthpiece tonight, and tomorrow night he's got another mouthpiece. And the next time you see him, he's got another mouthpiece. You can't get used to a mouthpiece that way.

You've got to...almost, that mouthpiece has got to become a part of you, almost. If you lose that mouthpiece, you in bad shape. That's why: they change too much....

[I kept my mouthpiece.] I wouldn't get rid of it for nothing. I kept it. Yeah. I still got it.

So, you see, changing mouthpiece [and] all. Every time they play somewhere, they change. [They] get another mouthpiece, and they change. Get another mouthpiece, and that's what does it.

Use the same mouthpiece, and when you get used to it, stay on that one. And the instrument. You get a different instrument, and you can play it much easier with the instrument....

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[Too many high notes] is a bad thing. That's a bad thing. But, you see, the way it is now, the way the mouthpieces is manufactured--they shallow, and they can get those high notes. They don't have to strain to get them. The only scrambling they have to do is when they have to growl very much.

You watch those fellows. You notice when they playing now, they play all them high notes, but when they come down, it sound like metallic, metallic sound. It's because you can't get down there like you want. Not with those little notes with the shallow mouthpiece.

Mouthpiece should be a medium. Not too shallow, and either too deep. Just medium. When you play on that mouthpiece all day, and all night, [you] don't have to worry, see. It don't hurt you.

But, when you got a shallow mouthpiece, you play high notes, and then you want to get down to low notes, you can't do it. Can't do it to save your life.

You can do it. Some fellows get used to it, and can play them. But, those pedal notes, and those low notes is cracked. They can't get them out like they want....

I used the Ben Vereekum [method.] That was one of the first books I got. I think they still got those books there. [Published by Carl Fischer, WR notes.]

I can't think of the name [of the book my uncle gave me when I started.]...

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[After leading by WR, RP says he gives youngsters a method by Arban to learn on now.]...

[When I took up my instrument] it seemed like to me the man said it was natural for me because I had a large lip, and I played in a large mouthpiece. He said it was natural for me....(Tape off.)

[You were talking about Zue Robertson, WR continues.] He's the only man that would go...he was one of the best fellows that would go with me in bands, playing those brass band jobs, and like that.

We played together all the time. He'd play first, and I played second. He played on one side, and I played on the other. You know, for funerals, and like that.

He was very good. Nice trombone player. Sweet. Not a whole lot of harshness. Just played nice, and sweet. When we had to play loud, well, he could play loud.

But, he always played...we practiced that together. I used to go to his house every day, and he'd come to my house, and we'd practice like that.

He might have been a little bit older than me. He was a settled man. He was married when I met him. He must have been about six or seven years older than I am. But he was good.

And Jack Carey, Mutt Carey's brother. He was the man who played the trombone, and never knew any notes. He never worried

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about any notes. He could play, but he never would worry about notes. He...mostly played his music by head.

Zue was a nice reader. He would play a little bit of clarinet too. He could play a little bit of clarinet....

[WR mentions that ZR, and his wife Jessie - who played piano, and organ - sometimes played together on the theater circuit, and in West Virginia.]

He was very good. A nice trombone player....He wouldn't play with a fellow if he didn't play quite right. A man came in, and played double with him, and he got blasted.

[WR says that's why some people thought ZR was, sort of, mean, and RP laughs.] That's why they say he was kind of funny. Nice trombone player. I worked with him several times.

George Fihle was good. [WR never met him. He died two or three years ago. I went to his house, and once talked with his niece. He was over at the union hall playing cards that afternoon, and before I ever got back he was dead.] Yeah, that's sad.

He was very good. Very good. Nice trombone player. I used to see him play in marches. I was rather young then, when he used to play in those bands, you know.

Before I got in the Onward [Brass] Band, I saw him play in there. They'd play marches, you know, and things like that. He was a nice trombone player.

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That's when I learned, I found out that playing trombone, when you're playing, making those (imitates) smears, you know, and (imitates notes) following up the other instruments. I paid attention to him, watched him closely, and followed the way he played.

[Joe Petit? asks WR.] Oh Lordy. (RP laughs.) [He played the trombone without any teeth, WR notes. No false teeth.] He played good? [Not so well, WR says.] No.

[The trouble was this, WR continues. He was quite deaf. He could hardly hear.] Oh yeah, I know.

[One number, they started out. He couldn't even hear what key they were playing in, and he'd start in the wrong key. Then, when he found out what key it was, and he heard it finally, he changed.] Yeah.

[But he made a couple of numbers, just to see how he would sound. Nothing that was ever done to issue...1944-5, 1945.] Oh right, Joe Petit. [Joe Petit sides issued on ADC

["Careless Love," and "St. Louis Blues." When he was young, I guess he used the valve, WR concludes.] Yeah, that's right. That's what he used to use. Joe Petit was a friend for many years, and he had a good tone on trombone.

They had another fellow played with Joe Petit [by] the name of Yank Johnson, that's Buddy Johnson's brother. They could put some of the powerfulest tones on trombone.

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They didn't think about sweetness or nothing like that. Just blast it out. I mean, they could blast them tunes for two hours, you know....

For parades, that's alright. But, for playing in a dance or in a place where a party was, you couldn't do that. You could do it, too, but the people didn't like it so well. You played nice, and soft, and music is sweet.

We had a lot of boys used to...I remember start telling them fellows how to play trombone. I listened at them [and light].

Some of them don't do it on the trombone. They handle their instrument alright, but they don't understand how to take advantage of it. They don't take advantage of it. They just blow, blow, blow.

Now, I tell you a fellow that plays nice trombone. This fellow in two brothers...Tommy Dorsey. He plays a nice trombone. He gets nice tone. And his brother...clarinet, Jimmy Dorsey.

[TD] plays nice trombone. He's good. No loud noise, and all like that. I heard him play solo. I heard him play the number behind the band, and with the band. I heard him play a number, and he's good.

[Do you think most of the band play too loud? WR asks.]
Yeah. They could gauge themselves. They could gauge.

You know, some fellows want all the glory. [They say] I don't [] to you. I want to be seen. I want the people to see

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me playing better than you, or louder than you, see.

[They say,] I get up there, and I won't let you play your part right because I'm going to try to go, over you, and that stuff. But, when they play together, then they find out it's nice....

[WR mentions that he had been told that New Orleans bands work out arrangements playing some chords soft...] Yeah, yeah.

Sometimes, the leader, he just say (imitates) s-s-s-s-s, and they just quiet right down, see. Right on down. You don't have to tell them nothing, just s-s-s-s-s. They stop right away. They watch you, and they go right down.

Then, when they want them to come up, he make a motion that he want them to pick up double forte', then they go into it. But, once you saw it, that's all he did, s-s-s-s-s. They come down.

That's why a fellow asked me. He said, how did you know when they going to get soft like that? If you watching the leader, you can't help from know[ing]. You tell yourself, thereafter, you've got to come down on your instrument. Oh, there lots of little tricks in the bands.

[WR asks about leadership of bands.] Well, I tell you about the bands. Like, I've seen the tenor saxophone lead a band. That is leader of the band.

He took the most principal parts, see, of what they had to do...their work. He took the principal parts of it, and he led

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the band.

He had trumpet players there, and gave them their parts, you know, what they had to use. But he led the band off. And it was a nice little band...led by a tenor saxophone. Tenor saxophone. Tenor saxophone--a nice little instrument, anyhow.

Anette Nelson used to play with us. We played at Ritz-Carlton over here at [?address in Chicago]. We played there, and Anette played there, tenor saxophone.

They had [Teddy] Weatherford. [He's dead now, WR notes. He went to India, and died there.] He played with us. Weatherford, Anette Nelson, and a boy named [Willie?] Harris, a drum player...and Tommy Ladnier.

You ever heard Tommy? [Yeah, sure, WR replies. I heard him in New York.] He died too, didn't he? [Yes, 1939 he died, WR says.] Yes, Tommy Ladnier.

[I heard the last records he ever made, WR notes. I got to go to the session. He made them for Victor with Mezz Mezzrow, and Sidney (Bechet) was in on them.]...

[RP asks about Eddie Jackson whom WR confuses with Preston Jackson, the trombonist.] No, I know him [PJ]. I taught him. Not him, this other Jackson.

He played, I believed he played drum. I think he played drum. Jackson, he went off from here with...Noble Sissle, and he was playing with him. He was a good drummer. Nice drummer.

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[Sidney Bechet was with Noble Sissle, WR says. You ever play with Sidney?] Sure. Sidney come up right around me. We played together several times. Sidney Bechet. He's nice.

[He's in Paris, now, WR adds. He likes it in France.] Really? Didn't he have a wife? Did he take his wife? [He has two wives since he was in Europe, WR answers. One a German girl.

[Somebody who had seen Sidney recently, and came back from France said he had married a real young girl, now.] Uh-huh, huh.

Sidney Bechet. He's a good clarinet player. [Yeah, I knew his brother very well, too, WR continues. A doctor.

[He died about three years ago. I always meant to see him...Awfully nice. He played trombone.] Yeah. He sure did.

He died, you say? [Yeah, WR replies. He wasn't too good a musician.]

He was a dentist, wasn't he? [He was a dentist, WR repeats. He fixed up teeth for Sidney, and he fixed up Bunk (Johnson's) false teeth. Bunk's false teeth. Dr. Bechet.]

Dr. Bechet. He was nice. He was a nice fellow. Leonard, I think his name was. [Yes, Leonard, WR says.

[When did you play with Sidney?] I played with Sidney before he left here [i.e., Chicago.]. I played a couple of jobs, not here, New Orleans.

I played a couple of jobs with him. He used to come. That's where he got his start, right here with us. We used to take him,

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and let him play, you know, and he had that style, too--Big Eye Louis [Nelson] style on that clarinet. And he'd come with us.

We let him - he'd call that sitting in - let him sit in, you know. We was glad to set him in because he was catching on to a lot of stuff.

He'd come over, and played with us sometimes. We'd let him set in, and he had that system like Louis [~~Armstrong~~], and Big Eye Louis [Nelson].

He wasn't reading so much, you know. But, Louis [Armstrong] didn't read too much, either. [It wasn't until he went on the (river)boat, they say, WR notes. He really had to learn how to read on the boat.

[Did you ever play on the big boats?] I played a couple of jobs on the boat. But, I didn't like it.

I was afraid of the boats. I played [on] a couple of bands down there. I mean: going up, and down, in the water, and they singing about that boat sinking...

[I can't swim, either, WR says.] Me, either. I can't. (Laughs.) That's why I wouldn't bother with those jobs.

[I was raised on the Mississippi River, too, in Canton, Missouri...and I never learned to swim, WR notes. Some of those boats used to come by our town. I don't think I ever heard you. Maybe, I didn't know you then.]

Fate Marable. He was a [light?] fellow. There's another

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Fate, too, that's in California. You might have met him. A tall light fellow, played trombone. [RP can't remember his last name.]

He played with Bill Johnson, too. I think he played with Erskine Tate, too. He played with Bill Johnson, and them, out there, I think.

Bill Johnson's been to California again, they tell me. He just come back. He said the man can't get a job in California if he don't belong to the right union. He can't get a job.

They make you wait a while. If you're there, you have to be there a year before you can get a job.

I told him, I said, you try to go to California, and figure on going to work, and then after you get there a while, get yourself acquainted, and then stay around....

I'm surprised to hear about Eddie Garland. I didn't know that...about his scrap with [Kid] Ory. [He's not hard to get along with, I don't believe, WR says.] No, he ain't. [Everybody likes EG, WR adds. He's such a friendly fellow.]

What is his address? [WR doesn't know for sure. He has it at home, and will try to find it...Unless he's moved.]

[I haven't seen him for about six, or seven, years. He was supposed to come here this Winter.]

[There was a trumpet player, a white kid, who had a band, and when he asked Ory, he was going to come here in June. But, Garland didn't come with him....So, I'll look up his address....]

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[You always look well. You look as young...nobody looks as young as you. How do you do it?] (WR and RP laugh.)

[Baby Dodds...said Roy Palmer looks just as young as when he was 30 years old. When I first saw you in 1940, that was 15 years ago. What are you doing?]

Well, you take care of yourself. A man don't run around too much, getting drunk, or running out in the snow. That ain't no good.

I've seen some nice musicians, I declare, it's a shame...[You don't have any grey hair or anything, WR notes.] No. That's to keep up. [I don't drink, drink at all, and I've lost some of my hair, WR jokes.]

Well, some people do lose their hair early, you know, and a lot of people keep their hair a long time before they drop.

Yeah, I never worry about nothing. When you get to worrying, you're going to get old, sure enough. I seen fellows right around my age under the ground. I just feel sorry for them. I feel sorry for them.

END OF REEL I, TRACK 2

unedited first draft

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REEL II, Tracks 1&2
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INTERVIEWER: William Russell
NOTES: Richard B. Allen
SUMMARY: Dan Weisman
TYPING: Dan Weisman

[Presumably this is Track One, which is only one minute long. Tape reverses direction making identification of Reel II tracks difficult.]

[They suddenly go to pieces, WR says.] Yeah, all to pieces. It seem like they worry a lot, you know, about...used to worry about nothing.

You eat plenty, do like you and me. Just have a nice meal. The others go out, and get drunk, and all that stuff. Hang out in the snow. That's bad.

[If you take care of yourself, WR says, it's better.] That's better, you know, because, even so, a man don't have a million years to live. He does want to enjoy, and make the best of it he can, see.

I didn't quit playing trombone, stop playing trombone because it was too hard for me, or anything like that. The only thing I quit, it wasn't no work for us. It wasn't no work.

I'd love to go to work, and do like a lot of those guys. Get out, and get to stealing, and robbing, and you know...(Tape reverses.)

[Presumably, this is where Track Two starts...]

[Can you tell me about Freddie Keppard? WR asks. Did you play with him?] We played with him. He played...he come with us

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at...Dreamland. He played with us a while at Dreamland.

[That was the Dreamland at 35th Street and State, WR notes.]
That's right...It sure was. He played with us at Dreamland over here, see.

He was a good trumpet player. A nice trumpet player. He had one style of playing, though. He had jazz style, too, pretty good but he didn't have it, like so much of it, as the other fellows.

He was very good, and he knew his instrument nice, put good tones in it. That guy would get to playing sometimes, and playing the melody, and get to sweating. He was so fat, you know. (Laughs.) Yeah. He was so fat.

By the time he start playing, he begin to get sweating. Louis Armstrong does that, too, now. About six-to-eight handkerchiefs. He's got to carry about eight handkerchiefs with him, see.

I don't know whether it's that beer, or what it is. Whatever it is, they got it down see. They use their old handkerchiefs, and mostly for them sweating...

[Here's another question, WR says. I keep changing the subject, but I think about Louis' neck puffs out so, when he's playing. Did you ever have any trouble like that?] No. I never did do that, and puffing the jaw too...

I blow from my throat, just right from the throat; right out of the throat, and I never puffed my jaw. Very seldom some, very

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seldom I puff my jaw. I don't, even on pedal notes. I don't puff my jaw.

[WR mentions one trombonist, George Brunis, the white fellow from New Orleans.] I know him. He used to come from over in Algiers. He come from across the river.

We come up together around there. George Brunis, and Milton Brunis, his brother. I forget this other boy. There's [another boy, come up there with an orchestra... [Albert 'Abbie']

[WR mentions Paul Mares, and Tom Brown, both of whom RP remembers. Anyway, Brunis puffs out of just one cheek, WR continues.] Yeah, one cheek.

Is he playing here? [Yes, he's up at the 1111 Club, at Bryn Mawr, on the Northside.] Yeah? Like that...

There's another boy, too, that's with them. I forget his name. He played trumpet. He quit playing, though. He's from Downtown. I couldn't think of his name. Jelly Roll [Morton] knew them all.

But, Brunis is a bass trombone player. Puff, puff. Boy, with his jaw like that. [Is there anything he can do about that? WR asks.] He'd have to lay off the trombone about two, or three, months. Two months, and change his style of playing.

I had a style [of] playing, too, and I changed that style. I saw it wasn't no good. It prevented me from making quick passages.

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All that stops, you see. That wind. You got to draw it back in there, and they trying to execute with the instrument. It's very hard.

They good trombone players, but they's lazy, and slow. They ain't got that snap. They can't do it, see, 'cause their jaw's full of wind. They trying to make quick passages, and that wind got to come way back up here, and go around.

[WR asks about the style that the trombone should play in the band...] It depend on how the melody run.

If you got a good stomp melody - or something like that - the trombone should be played right between the melody, and the other part of the harmony. Like, the after-beats, and after-counts, and all that... use, you might say, the whole note in some places.

Play configurations around...a melody when a fellow's playing, and don't stay in low part all the time. Jump in the lead somewhere. Don't stay there long, though, 'cause you're taking his part from him.

Hit in the lead sometime, and get away from there. Go on back to vamping....

Make it like a balance in the orchestra. I would put any orchestra on good balance because that's how I played with them.

I played the lead along, and the fellow thinks I moving my ducks away from him, and go over here. (Laughs.) You can hear it

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on the things. Buck away from him, and go over there.

[A trombone can play...melody, or something very like a rhythm part, too, at times, WR notes.] Yeah, rhythm...

Snaps off, see. That's arpeggios, and things like that. Any part. It's nice if you can handle them.

A lot of fellows try to handle them, and they get mixed up. That slows them down. Slows them down. They can't get those notes in between those arpeggios, you know, and that kind of slows them down.

That's what makes them scared to take...to venture out, you know, to try to do anything is...If you ever play arpeggio...any arpeggio--you play in, and jump into the melody.

But, some fellows, when they doing that making an arpeggio, they make it so slow they can't get that up note...and they can't get that turning note...turns, you see, and like that. It's easy, alright.

[When you play a solo, what do you try to do? WR asks.] Well, sometimes I take a solo, and they're playing, they're vamping me, and I'm playing this solo.

I may take it up in 16ths. I may take it up in 16ths, play a whole note, and use some 16ths with it. But, I'm going to use 16ths in the place of...

But, with the same melody. Just like you say...(imitates...) See, I'm going on with the melody right on, but I'm putting

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something in between there. (Continues to imitate...)

See, I get on back on that part. I never stay in that part. I go away from it. Because if you would continue playing with him, with his melody; I keep playing melody, well, that takes the sweetness away, the beauty away from the piece from him.

He might have a nice part to play, see. I'll start him off with it. Every boy'll get in together. I'll start him right off with it. I'm gonna stay with him, and after a while I'm gone. (Laughs.)

They got a little tricks with that, see, playing that way. It helps the other fellow.

A lot of fellows likes to take down, you know, when they're playing melody, and like that. But, all you got to do is just bow his head if he's going to take down.

He's losing the lead, and that's something--look over there at me, I'll hold them eight measures, and play it for him. Then, I turn him loose, and go right on back into that part.

Vamping on trombone is the best thing that a man could do. Vamping on trombone, and playing the off melody. That sweetens a band right up, see. If you're playing not all the way through. (Imitates...)

You heard them records. Some fellows couldn't go nowhere but vamp. That's all he can do...just vamping.

You see, like that [line?], and then you get away from it.

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You'll vamp it, get away from it, take some leads, see.

And you're listening. That's when you're playing a piece, and you're playing it by music. Or by ear. Listen for the guy, what he's doing over there. Whatever he's doing over there, you do it different, but do it in unison, together.

Yes, sweet bands, sure. Only sweet. Guys used to point out fellows who they want. Take the break. Take the break.

A fellow stood up one night, after about two hours, and said, how do you fellows know when...who's going to take it? He don't notice...the leader just pointing over to the fellow. He don't know.

He say, how did he know he had to take them break? They used to it. They got it down.

We used to play at the place over here at Wells. That's the first place we played on coming to Chicago, a tavern. It was a tavern, and - oh, man - that place was like to [be] happy [about] the idea of a band from New Orleans.

That man made money on me, and he made money hand over fist. He wanted to keep us. But, I don't know, it seemed like them fellows that he had working there. Them guys, they were taking tips. A lot of them guys were stealing from the tips, you know...a man would give [the waiter] a dollar [for us], and he would stick it in his pocket.

The man didn't want us to leave, you know..He wanted us to

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stay. I think his name was Dimling. What is that? Is that Irish?
I'm not sure. Dimling. That was the guy's name.

He didn't want us to leave. He wanted to keep us over there.
But, the boys all got mad, and said, we can't make no money. So,
we left.

[What do you think about bop, and all this new stuff they're
playing nowadays? WR asks.] This new stuff is alright.

The new stuff they got now ain't got no...you might say, no
foundation. Ain't got no foundation. Everybody's jumping up, and
you can't tell, you can't get the significance of the piece....

You don't know what they're playing. You can't tell the []
]. There ain't no lead. The fellow that's playing the lead, [who]
should be playing the lead; he's jumping from here, and different
places. You can't tell what they playing.

But, you get one band that has a good lead, and then them
fellows playing that other junk, too. It's better, see. It's a
lot better.

Hell, we had a nice band. [WR would like to hear RP.] Well,
some day, we'll practice some, and get together. We'll get
together.

[It wouldn't take you too long to get back in shape, WR
opines.] I wouldn't think so, no....A couple of weeks, I guess.
[Better than anybody could do now, WR notes.] Yeah.

These fellows that playing now, I don't know. I'm not

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knocking them, or what like that, but I don't know.

They don't seem to get the right bass, on trombone. It seem like they off some way. It seem like they way back.

Sometimes, I pick up...Sometimes, on the radio, I hear some fellows playing, and he's alright. But, just a few of them.

The majority, it looks like as many bands as they got, look like they ought to always have good trombone players. But, it's hard to get a good trombone player.

Now, Preston Jackson. He's a nice trombone player. He plays nice trombone. [He took lessons from me.]...

Albert Wynn took a few lessons from me. He didn't stay, but he took enough to play pretty good. What become of him?

[He's around, WR says. He's up in our place where our friend - our friend that we have up here - owns, sort of, a studio. Not a real big recording studio, but some bands used to come up, and rehearse.

[About a year ago, he was there with a few people...Jasper Taylor...and Albert Wynn played pretty nice, I thought.] Is that so?

[He doesn't work much, WR continues. Like I said, there aren't many bands here in Chicago that use a trombone...I think we better quit....]

[At this point, presumably, a brief Track Two continues, as

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WR asks about Dave Peyton.] He was a good pianist, a nice pianist. He arranged, too.

[When did you start arranging, and composing...? WR asks.] [It was] in New Orleans where I started arranging, and getting myself set for arranging.

After I come here [to Chicago], I just kept on arranging, kept up. After you get a set-up, and know just what you're doing, and know what to do, you just go right on. You don't have to worry.

I didn't graduate in no school of music, music school for that. I just did. [WR knows a lot of people who do...who have that talent.] Obviously, yeah...Arrangement training.

[Work at it yourself is a real experience, WR notes.] That's the idea, yeah...I had to fight myself, but I made it.

[When did you start teaching? WR asks.] Well, I had more pupils here [in Chicago] than I had in New Orleans. I had about 40 [in Chicago.]

I had about 12 white boys from over on the Westside. And then, I had more than 40 boys.

They come in every other night. I wasn't doing nothing but teaching. I didn't have any worries. Teaching them on different instruments, see. They'd come in the night.

The only thing that bothered me when I was teaching. I'd give a man too much time. I can't get away from that. I'm just

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taking up, and giving...[if] I know it[']s] doing any good.

I want to see them do good. And I forget about the time. Some teachers would give them [a half hour], and you have to go.

Sometimes, my wife used to tell me: my goodness, you teach a fellow that long. I say, I don't know. It doesn't matter. I see him doing the good, and I just get...I want to see him do still better. That's why I hold myself over that way.

But, as far as teaching. I believe I can learn any of them anything if they listen at me, and go the way I want them to go. It'd be easier for them.

Like this boy there...he's been kind of sick, and he ain't been playing much. They dragged him off the trumpet for a while. He's a young kid. He's about 18, or 19 [years old].

But, he's good. He can do all that Joe Oliver stuff. All the diminishes, and stuff like Louis Armstrong play. He'll pick that up himself. I got him on...[RP speak a little about the boy's progress, in technical terms.]

I think the best way to instruct a person--take him slow. Let him see slower, [then] they'll work up fast on it. Take them up on it slow, make them divide it right. When you let them loose, they gone. Go themselves... 'cause he got the right way to go.

A lot of fellows teach a fellow, they don't care. They just do it for the money. That's all they want. Doing it for the

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money.

A guy takes too much interest in my scholars, that's the trouble...[RP explains that he gives one man too much time, he is cheating himself, and possibly, another student out of the time. But, he goes ahead anyway.]..

[I taught on all the different instruments,] clarinet and everything. Clarinet, violin...trumpet...bass fiddle, bass drum, bass horn...I had to know them...I just kept on, got them all down. Worked on them.

I got some good...I put some good bands together. Almost something about these boys, these young boys. They don't stay long enough to learn what they ought to learn. If they learn how to play the bugle, or something, and you get a couple of breaks, and play a couple of [the leadership,] he's gone...

I had a boy by the name of Joe [Volliday?]. He was a nice trumpet player. He went on himself, after he got his 15 lessons. He went on. I couldn't hold him. He went on.

But, he come back, and I wouldn't fool with him. I wouldn't, because I knew he would be too good a trumpet player if he had stayed, and took what I wanted to give him.

He got out there too early. After he got out there early, them fellows started saying, you ought to stay under that man, stayed there, and learned something.

He couldn't read good enough, you know, to stay with

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them...They told him, you should have stayed under the man you were under, then you'd be able to play.

He come back, but I wouldn't fool with him. I told him, I say, this is best. I wouldn't fool with you because you had a chance to learn trumpet, and do what you wanted, put up your own band.

If you don't know how to play good, I say, you can hire fellows. He said, that's right. He said, I'm sorry.

But, I wouldn't fool with him. Taking lessons in the day, and maybe, day after tomorrow, or the next week, he'd do something like that. Just losing time.

[Did you ever work with a whole band, a young band, and try to teach them? WR asks.] Yeah I had a band. I put together 20 some odd pieces. I had it together. I put it together.

Sometimes, I take them out of the first grade, a band. All the good ones, I pick them out. The baritone, clarinet, this and that, and the other.

You can play in three sharps, two sharps. A man can play in two sharps. You can take him, put him in a band, and he can make out. Two sharps, or two flats--you can put him in there, he'll make out.

When you can get them...from the lower grades. The first grade: them boys they didn't know their instruments. They just know the scales. I wouldn't put them in there until later on when

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they learned how to play in different scales.

Oh, I had a ton [of] good bands. Some half-way bands. Some of them weren't going to learn nothing.

I had a band...of ladies. They was good...[WR comments, possibly, on some pictures, while they're talking...Sort of a brass band, WR says.] Yeah. Sort of a brass band.

I don't know. They was playing, and practicing, and playing. They could play numbers.

When I picked them up, they was playing already. But, there wasn't one of them women who could hardly could play a scale. Couldn't play a scale.

/ They could play by ear. They knew the notes. But, I don't know what you could say about it...I guess they needed to practice, and study.

You know, they wouldn't study. Whenever they had a job, they would come out of their homes full of cobwebs. They done had enough.

When they'd hear about a job, they'd goes around, just playing. Sure, they got their horns, and they'd shine them up. You know how they're fussy.

[Before I forget, WR says. I want to ask about learning trombone. How young do you start?] You can start a little kid. Say, about eight years old. You can start a kid about eight years old, and he'll make it.

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[WR says, I play violin myself, and I started about 3/4 size, small.] Yeah, 3/4. A little, bitty guy.

[About 12 I got a little bigger one, WR notes. But, trombone is only the one size.] Yeah, trombone is only the one size. Unless you got him one of those sliding cornets.

[Louis had one of those on the boat, WR says. I've got a picture of Baby Dodds, and Louis.] Joe Oliver tried to play one, too. He didn't do good though. I don't know why he didn't. He couldn't make good on slide trumpet.

There was one fellow. He was a white fellow. He was playing slide, and trumpet. He come through here....I guess he must have been an ex-trombone player. He must have been. He was really good....

You can start a kid at eight years old. But, as he goes on... You got to give him a year, anyhow, to get him straight, and make him...teach him that position--where to hold that, and all like that.

Like, a little girl playing piano. They can play that piano all over, and if there's a key out; that girl play that piano, and she don't think about that key, and play that whole piece.

That key...is out, a dead key. She play over that dead key. I couldn't go there, and play over. Somebody who plays piano couldn't hardly go 'cause the first thing they say is this piano's dead. It's missing that key. I can't play.

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That girl just go on, and play. She's learning, you know, the kid is just learning. She's doing fine. A lot of those kids are smart, very smart. You just have to take pains with them, though.

[WR was going to ask about those records RP made with Jelly Roll Morton when you played the "Tiger Rag," and "Weary Blues." Could you tell me anything about that session? Who all was on that?]

I know some of those fellows, but some of those guys got away from me. There was some of them that left Chicago. I don't know where they went to, but they left here.

I do know that Arnett Nelson was with us because many time Arnett Nelson used to tease Jelly Roll, you know.

Jelly Roll had a place down in the Loop, and he used to be down there. He wore a derby, you know, and long shoes. Guys started to picture Jelly Roll [i.e. imitate], and made him mad. (Laughs.)

You know Jelly Roll, don't you? [I knew him, yes, WR replies.] He got mad. Got kind of sore. But, he got alright. After, he was alright.

This guy, Arnett, myself, and Jelly Roll had two, three fellows I didn't know from over on the Northside. Lived way over. They lived on [Cedric, Sedgwick?]. Herman Edwards, he lived over on Cedric.

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A fellow played bass fiddle...that's a Burton, too. He played with Jelly Roll. Burton, and I don't know what's his first name. Burton, bass tuba player. He quit playing...

Lee Collins was with us...He played the trumpet. I believe he had a medium size, you might call it a cornet, a medium sized. He played...

All the records were made right here in Chicago. Most all of them, outside of those that were made in New York with [] and the band, when we went over to New York. But, we wasn't with Jelly then.

Some of them, we made in New York. We made with Melrose. We made most of...those numbers with Melrose. I wish I could get a good number, and put on those records to show them trombone players how to play....

I'm going to get together, and practice. (Laughs.) [I'd like to hear you, WR says. I've never heard you in person, except on records.] No, sir? [And I wish I would, WR continues.]

You'd be just as happy as you would if we were sitting, listening to that. I don't do a bit more. [I've heard everyone talk so much about how wonderful you were, WR says.] I used to get a lot of praise.

[Is there anything else you'd like to tell about Jelly Roll, WR continues, and how you liked his piano style? Was he considered, about the best pianist?]

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The best pianist I heard was the other fellow was the best pianist. I played with him at the Ritz-Carlton. He is about the best piano player I played with around.

He played in Earl Hines a little. I played one or two jobs with Earl Hines.

And this fellow, Zinky Cohn. I played with him. [He died.] He was a nice piano player.

Lilly Armstrong. She's nice. [She was here last year, WR notes. She's back in Paris.] Oh, is she back in Paris? Yeah? [With Albert Nicholas, WR adds.] Yeah, yeah, sure. He was an alto saxophone player...and clarinetist.

[Did you ever play with Louis Armstrong? WR asks.] Louis Armstrong? I played with him a while, a little bit. He played with us, over at the Dreamland. He played with us, a while, over there. But, I never played regular with Louis.

I played more regular with Joe Oliver than I did Louis. I was with Oliver about 1922, I think, or [19]20. Something like that. Yeah.

We was over there [at the Royal Gardens.] We used to alternate with them. We used to shift from the Dreamland to the Royal Garden.

After...Joe got here a while, he got with a band. He wasn't with a band when he come here.

He had to send, and get them boys what he had. Then, Louis

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Armstrong was in St. Louis. Louis come from St. Louis here. [He was on a boat.]

So, that was our starts and our beginnings. (Laughs.)...

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