

RAYMOND LOPEZ
August 30, 1958

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Reel I of III--Summary--~~First~~ Draft *1-1-58*

Present: William Russell, and refrigerator man

Raymond Lopez was born in New Orleans, Thanksgiving Day, November, 1889, on Dumaine Street, between Dauphine and Bourbon [now 800 block]. His father played cornet in the French Opera, so Lopez' natural inclination was for the cornet; he heard music at the opera. He discovered, after he had joined the Woodmen of the World, that they needed a bugler. A policeman, Ben McKee, got him a bugle, and he learned to play it. Later, a friend, Frank Meade (who had a brother Jim Meade) brought an old brass trumpet to Lopez' father to have a case made for it. Lopez experimented with it and was able to pick out tunes "by ear," tunes such as "In the Good Old Summertime." A clarinetist, Freddy Burns invited him to play a "dago" wedding [reception]--\$1.50 and all he could eat. Lopez knew only about five tunes, but he accepted. Others who played that job were Charlie Burns on bass, and [Hughie ?] Murray, guitar. After about three tunes, one of the men at the reception asked Lopez if he wanted to dance (meaning that he was very bad at playing), so Lopez danced. However, he learned many more tunes

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in the following month, and Freddy Burns came to see him again.

Lopez really began playing at about age 16, but he had fooled around with his father's horn at about age 9. Lopez' father was named Edward Lopez, and was well-known among the older musicians, such as Armand Vissi' [sp ?], and Emile Tosso. Ray Lopez was nicknamed "Tosso" (for Emile Tosso, bandmaster at Spanish Fort, who also led the Orpheum Theater orchestra for 20-25 years) when he played bugle for the Woodmen of the World. He played tin whistle before cornet.

When Lopez became better, he and Gus Mueller began playing with a string band--violin, guitar, bass, cornet, and clarinet. Lopez then played with Jack Lainę, whom he gives credit for having "started everyone of those guys out." Then Lopez played with Bill Gallaty [Sr.], and Ernest Giardina at the Tonti Dance Hall. Lopez says there were camps all along the Lake, with a colored band here and a white band there, all trying to "outblast" each other. Then Lopez went to work with Tom "Red" Brown. Brown and his brother,

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Steve, were tinsmiths and Mueller was a plumber. Lopez didn't work, so he secured the music jobs and eventually became band manager. He began playing with Brown in about 1912.

While playing on a wagon advertising a fight at the Orleans Athletic Club, the Brown band was approached by Charlie Mack, of [swore ^{like, M...?} ?] and Mack, "The Two Black Crows," who told the band he would get them a job in the North. A while later, Joe Gorham, manager (and possibly husband) of dancer Myrtle Howard, offered them a job for Smiley Corbett. The band took the job and played at Lamb's Cafe, which was at Clark and Randolph, Chicago, across from the Hotel Sherman. The band was a flop at first, "there wasn't flies in the joint." Corbett wanted them to leave. Then Charlie Mack, in the show "Made in America," a Schubert production, met Lopez again and had him make reservations at Lamb's for the whole show, about 75 people. Until 11 o'clock there was no one at Lamb's; then the show people came and the place stayed open until about 6 a.m. From then on, the band was a hit. Lopez says Lamb's was

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the first place he knows that had a cover charge, which was ten cents. The year was 1915, in May.

Then Frank Clark, of the music publishers Watterson, Berlin and Snyder, put Brown's Band in touch with Harry Fitzgerald, an agent, who booked them for a New York show, "Dancing Around," which was to star [Al] Jolson; but Jolson had a disagreement with the producers, and by the time the band got to New York, he had quit and gone to Florida. The band got jobs through Fitzgerald, however, playing parties for "Diamond Jim" Brady, the Dolly Sisters, playing at Healy's and at Bustanaby's [sp ?], [see Nick La Rocca Reel?], and finally played 20-25 weeks "Loew time" [Loew theater circuit shows]. Then, one by one, because of nostalgia, cold weather, etc., the bandsmen went back to New Orleans, leaving only Lopez in New York. In the meantime, Gus Mueller had gone to work for Bert Kelly, in Chicago, and his replacement, Larry Shields, had also gone back to New Orleans. (Lopez, still in New York, shoveled snow a few nights, at 75 cents an hour.) Lopez wired

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Mueller, inquiring about work in Chicago, and was given a job in Bert Kelly's band at the Sherman House. Lopez says that Kelly, who, "played beautiful banjo," was like Jack Laine [in having work and helping musicians]. Kelly later had his own night club, Kelly's Stable, and quit playing. Later, Kelly sent Lopez to the Wincliff [check sp] Inn, as leader of the band. Benny Fields, Benny Davis, Jack Salz^{is Benny}burg, and Charlie Thorpe were there as entertainers. They [Fields, Davis, Salz^{is Benny}burg and Thorpe?] had a marvelous, syncopating trio. Blossom ^{Seeley}~~Sealy~~ saw the act and got them for her next year's show at the Palace Theater in New York (Apparently Lopez plus his band went also.), where they brought down the house. After four or five years with ^{Seeley}~~Sealy~~, Lopez went to California, where he joined Abe Lyman's band. Mike Lyman, Abe's brother, leased the Anheuser-Busch Estates' Sunset Inn, in Santa Monica, and put Abe's band in there. Abe's band later played at the Ambassador Hotel for about eight years. Gus Mueller was also in that band, and also played the Sunset Inn. Then the band began playing theaters and going on

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tour, and Lopez decided he would stay put to take care of his family.

He joined Gus Arnheim's band, which played at the Coconut Grove. Lopez says Bing Crosby got his start there.

Brown's band played 16 weeks at Lamb's Cafe. The cafe then closed for remodeling, and the band jobbed around until it became uncertain that Lamb's would be ready to reopen in the fall. Then the band went to New York. The original personnel of the band was: Tom Brown, trombone [and leader]; Ray Lopez, cornet; Gus Mueller, clarinet; Arnold Loyocano, piano; Bill Lambert, drums.

(Lopez shows WR pictures, programs, ads, etc. from scrap books.)

Lopez identifies one person in a picture as the one who wrote

"Whispering," Johnny Schoenberger. In another is Kate Smith in a studio, [with Arnheim's band?] including Nat Brusiloff, [probably violin]. Another is of a set of one of the first sound movies ever made, "Broadway," made by Universal and including Thomas Mitchell in cast; Lopez thinks Glenn Ford starred in it. Lopez held a violin

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in one photograph, having left his trumpet at home; he never played violin, but wishes he could play guitar, and says his "kid plays a beautiful guitar."

Lopez was on many Lyman recordings for Brunswick, including "No, No Nona," "I Don't Want to Cry," "Bugle Call Rag," "Honey Baby," and "Weary Weasel," Lopez' composition. One picture mentions Lopez as composer of "Bees Knee," "Livery Stable Blues," and "Honey Baby." Lyman is listed as co-composer of many tunes; Lopez says Lyman wouldn't play the tunes [written by his sidemen] unless his own name was listed. A personnel listing of Arnheim's band includes Johnny Schoenberger [violin], George Kaiey, Charlie Pierce (Lopez says Pierce was not from Chicago [Chicago Pierce played sax]); Gus Mueller, sax; Ray Lopez, cornet; [Dick or Vic?] Smith, trombone; Jake Garcias. Another picture of Benny Davis, "the kid who wrote 'Margie.'" "

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[continue looking at scrapbook] Blossom Seeley had a ragtime act (handbill from Baltimore); Lopez said she always gave him billing when he worked with her. One program billed Lopez as the only left-handed trumpet player in the world--he had cut his [right] wrist once, so he changed hands. WR mentions that Nick LaRocca and Sharkey [Bonano] also play left-handed [as do Wingy Mañone and Wingy Carpenter]. Lopez says that LaRocca saw him playing left-handed and so he did, too, thinking that was the usual way. Lopez said he saw Sharkey in California in 1921 or 1922, and Sharkey, who he didn't know in New Orleans, "couldn't get to first base, poor little fellow." LaRocca used to carry Lopez' cornet case to dances so he could get in free. Lopez says that Harry James [the agent] wanted to take Gus Mueller away from him [Brown's Band?] to open in a place two blocks from Lambs' Cafe; Lopez told him to go to New Orleans and have Eddie Edwards get him a band which was done. Lopez was surprised to see LaRocca, who had never played (except perhaps at home), with the others: Edwards,

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trombone; Yellow Nunez, clarinet; Johnny Stein, piano [a drummer!!! compare other sources]; and Tony Sbarbaro, drums. Sbarbaro, with his kazoo solos, carried the outfit more than LaRocca did. Lopez said the [O.D.J.B.] outfit "really took Chicago," though. The O.D.J.B. had a smart agent, too. Max Hart had all the big name acts and he had his headliners go to Reisenweber's for the O.D.J.B.'s opening [so they go off to a great start]. WR reads from The New York Clipper, dated August 22, 1917, Blossom Seeley's Syncopated Studio, which bills Lopez as "Mr. Jazz Himself," and states "Not a jazz band but a group of talented artists. Everyone a star." WR and Lopez look at a picture of the band at Wincliff Inn, Chicago; Lopez was the only New Orleanian. A picture shows "The Five Rubes, with Joe Frisco," a dancer. The Five Rubes were Arnold Loyacano, Larry Shields, Tom Brown, Bill Lambert [not in picture--had a sit-in and Lopez; and they did a "rube" act on "Loew time." Picture is dated 1915, and was made in New York. [arrived in Chicago, May, 1915]

Lopez joined "Papa" Laine about 1910; his first job with him was playing a Holy Name [church] parade.

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Lopez' father was Catholic; Lopez, who was not a church member, is a mason. The family name is Spanish. His father, born in Seville in Spain, came to the United States as a musician with a circus. Lopez says the old-timers said the father was a very fine schooled musician. Lopez heard him only a few times, in concerts at West End Park and Audubon Park.

Lopez played a lot of proms for fraternities at Tulane, with Brown's Band. They also played dinner dances at places like Antoine's and La Louisiane. A priliminary once to the dancing at one of the dinners was a boxing match between two Negroes; Lopez thought it the funniest thing he had ever seen as entertainment at a dinner. All kinds of entertainment were tried in New Orleans.

Lopez says Laine had about ten bands playing the Holy Name parade. A band consisted of ten pieces. Sometimes there were two cornets, but Lopez played many parades as the only cornet, because of a shortage of players. Laine's bands did not play from music. They played things such as "Washington Post March," "It's a Long

Way to Tipperany" [c. 1914], "American Soldier [mis-titled locally as 'Bugle Boy March']" and "Temple Fidelis." They would tackle anything but "how it finished we don't know." The instrumentation of the bands usually was trombone, baritone, tuba, 2 altos, trumpet, - Laine's son Alfred played one alto and Merritt Brunies played the other-- 2 drums, and There were no saxes in the band; Lopez first saw a sax with a dance band at Fabacher's Cafe, Iberville at Royal; band was under direction of Max Fink, violinist. The instrumentation was flute, clarinet, violins, cello, piano, and bass. The flutist, a Mexican, played the sax also, for dancing only. Lopez says this was years before he went to Chicago. The first saxes he ever saw were played by a trio in a girls' vaudeville act, The Fidettes of Boston, who were re-united on television not long ago.

Others who played with Lopez in the early Laine bands were Manuel Mello [cornet], Pete Dentren, Bill Gallaty [Sr.], Lawrence Vega, [all cornets], Leonce Mello (trombone), Johnny Pezold, Yellow Nunez, Achille Baquet. [clarinets]. The main Laine band was named

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The Reliance band, and the rest were just "Laine's bands." When bands played picnics they didn't use violins--just portable rhythm instruments and winds. Some violin players around then were Charlie Duhearst [sp?] and, King Watzky. They were used on sedate jobs only as they couldn't be heard when the boys cut loose.

Lopez' first records were with [Abe] Lyman, for Okeh. Lopez was not on any of the Louisiana Five records. Anton Lada, drums, and Yellow Nunez, clarinet, were on those. Lopez never recorded with small groups. When Brown's Band was around New York nobody wanted to record anything but big [non-jazz] bands (military, also) and singers. Lopez didn't record with Blossom Seeley; he changed to trumpet with Seeley. Lopez' trumpet is the one heard on all solos with Lyman, e.g., "Twelfth Street Rag," "Honey Babe," "Weary Weasel." When Lyman's band began recording for Brunswick, Gus [tave] Henschen, Brunswick's music director, decided the band needed an additional trumpet, so they added Howard Fenimore.

Roger Graham, publisher of "Livery Stable Blues," is dead. Lopez still gets royalties from that tune.

Lopez says that when Brown's Band went to Chicago they knew only jazz tunes, such as "Tiger Rag" (but not by that name); they were required to play "pop" tunes on their job. When LaRocca and the O.D.J.B. came up, they also knew only jazz tunes. Brown's Band had to play mostly subdued music, because of the nature of Lambs, but the O.D.J.B. played at a "honky-tonk" in the red-light district. . . . [restricted] The O.D.J.B. worked seven nights a week (and a Sunday matinee from 3 p.m.) until 5 a.m.; Lopez tried to get Sammy Harris, the owner of the place, to let them out of the matinee, because nobody came anyway, but Harris would not. The O.D.J.B. played out that contract, and then would take no more matinee jobs, starting at 8 p.m. Yellow Nunez told Lopez that the O.D.J.B. had recorded Lopez's "Livery Stable Blues." Roger Graham found out that Lopez wrote it, so he and Lopez decided to claim their rights to it. Then Rocco Vocco, of Feist [Publishers], offered Lopez \$5,000 advance royalties, but Lopez was committed to Graham. (Benny Davis, who had just written "Goodbye Broadway, Hello France," wanted an advance,

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but Vocco refused, saying Lopez' tune would be played for many years, whereas there would be many other war songs written in a short time, and forgotten in as short a time.) The O.D.J.B.'s Victor Recording was a hit, but the various ownership claims for the tune tied up any forthcoming money in court. Max Hart made the members of the O.D.J.B. put up \$1500 each to fight their case.

(Lopez saw Eddie Edwards at Edwards' New York newstand about 10 years later; Edwards said he had bought Sbarbaro's interest in the case, and had therefore lost \$3,000, as no one got any money out of it, until later. Lopez began to get some royalties after that time. He says that there is still about \$30-40,000 still tied up in litigation.)

END OF REEL II

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Lopez shows WR a royalty check from Edward H. Morris [of?] Melrose Music Corporation, which bought all of [Roger] Graham's publishing rights; the check is for \$19, dated March, 1957, which is remarkable, considering that the tune, "Livery Stable Blues," was published in 1917. Lopez has also had published "Bees' Knees," by Feist.

Lopez said the first time he ever heard or played "Tiger Rag" was about 1910; it was then called "Number Two" and "C, F and B [flat] Rag" [among others]. Some lyricist in Chicago wrote words ["Hold that Tiger," etc.] to the tune, and the name was established. Lopez said that the men in "Papa" Laine's bands knew only that kind of tune, and that it had been played 40 years before his [Lopez'] time. Lopez says he thinks "Clarinet Marmalade," by Larry Shields, and "Bluin' the Blues," by Henry Ragas, were the only original tunes they [QD.J.B.] had; all the others--"Original Dixieland One Step,"

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"Sensation," "Fidgety Feet," etc.--were tunes that had been in New Orleans for years. They were "Climb off My Nose," "Kick the Bucket" and other names like that. Max Hart, agent for O.D.J.B., was smart enough to copyright them, cutting himself in for one-sixth of all profits.

Lopez hadn't heard or known about "Tin Roof Blues" until Georg Brunis, Leon Roppolo, and Paul Mares [as members of the New Orleans Rhythm Kings] made a recording of it. He does remember that the Tin Roof [Hall] was an old factory "back of town," on the Washington Blue Line [probably N. O. and Pontchartrain Railway Co.] [See E. Charlton Harper, Street Railways of New Orleans] which ran out Napoleon Avenue to Metairie Ridge; the Tin Roof was beyond [toward the lake from] Hagan Avenue [now Jefferson Davis Parkway], and was used as a dance hall.

Lopez recalls that he played many Mardi Gras parades and balls, although he didn't play for the big "tableaux" balls such as those held at the old French Opera House, as they used orchestras of

NO! ROMA BLUE LINE IS WASHINGTON AVE. WASHINGTON ON IT WAY TO METAIRIE.

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sixty pieces which played sedate music. He didn't even play quadrilles, mazurkas, or schottisches, as he was in bands that played waltzes, fox trots, the one-step which was called the walking dance, and ragtime. (Lopez demonstrates the one-step, singing "By the Sea," and the two-step, singing "Rock Me to Sleep in My Old Kentucky Home;" the one-step is faster. The two-step became known as the fox trot. This was followed by the Bunny Hug. Another dance of time was the Texas Tommy.) Lopez says that he would play a Mardi Gras parade from 9 to 6, then play at a ball from 8 until 2 a.m. The musicians' union played the big parades and balls, like Rex, while Laine's Band[s] played the smaller ones. When they met another band, they would have a contest. Lopez played a few funerals with Laine's and Brown's Bands, recalling that white organizations would occasionally have a leading member buried with music; the band played dirge-like music, but never played jazzy, "going back" music, as did and do the Negroes.

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Lopez recalls that Laine's Band was engaged to play at the opening of a big religious movie, at the Dauphine Theater; they began playing "Oh, Mister Dream Man, Please Let Me Dream Some More" [a cheerful tune] as someone in the picture was being crucified.

The management didn't approve, and threw them out. They were replaced by Professor Rosato's band.

Lopez said "When The Saints Go Marching In" was not played [as jazz] in the early days. He also says that the first time he heard a clarinetist take a "break" on blues was when the "Honey Boy" Evans minstrel band played "Memphis Blues" in front of the Tulane and Crescent [theaters, now the Orpheum Theater]. [See orchestration and W.C. Handy and Abbe Niles, A Treasury of the Blues, p. 14-15, p. 22-23.]

14 1/2 mins. He remembers Buddy Bolden as a loud trumpet player. He says Buddy Bolden's band played for the embarkation of a Negro regiment bound for Cuba, during the Spanish-American War in 1898. The band

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played "Home, Sweet Home," as the ship moved away; the men on the ship were overcome by nostalgia, and they jumped off the ship and swam to shore. Lopez says that since that time no military band has been allowed to play "Home, Sweet Home." Lopez was there wherever there was music. He had heard Bolden before the Spanish-American war.

Paul DeDroit, brother of Johnny DeDroit, lives [at this time] near Gus Mueller, in North Hollywood; Lopez says he is a very fine legitimate and dance drummer; he works at Fox Studio. Lopez had gotten a radio studio job for Johnny DeDroit, but DeDroit got homesick and went back to New Orleans. Then Lopez recommended Paul DeDroit to play drums at [Grauman's] Chinese Theater, and DeDroit's job was assured from then on. This was followed by a slack period. They, P.D., R.L. [and Gus Mueller?], got a job on a gambling boat. Paul DeDroit then got a job at the Fox Studio

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and has been there ever since.

Lopez never had any formal music training; in New Orleans he learned what reading he did from a Howard method book. He says his ear took care of him almost always. He tells about how he began playing his cornet with a kazoo as mute, and how others took it up. Other mutes he used were derbies, tin cans, and a little barrel with a skin head like a tom tom.

Lopez lists early trumpet players he liked: Joe "King" Oliver, Manuel Perez, who played sweet, Freddy Keppard, Louis [Armstrong] heard by Lopez in Chicago, Emile Christian [now trombone and bass]-- Richie Brunies was a good trumpet player, and Henry Brunies was "a hell of a trombone player." Lopez tells about seeing Georg Brunis, whom he describes as then being "a punk," just before Brunis went to Chicago the first time. Later Lopez met him in Atlantic City. Georg Brunis was then with Ted Lewis.

END OF REEL III