

SANTO PECORA
Reel I [of 4]--Digest
November 9, 1972

Also present: Richard B. Allen and Lars Evar Edegran
Recorded at Santo Pecora's home, 1804 David Drive,
Metairie, La.]

Santo Pecora's real name is Santo Joseph Pecoraro. He shortened his last name to Pecora. He explains that around 1920, Johnny DeDroit started calling him Peck. When he went to Chicago, where he stayed fifteen years, his checks were made out in the name Peck Pecora. After leaving Chicago, he went to California, and his friends there knew him only as Peck. He had to leave California after twelve years to return to New Orleans because his mother became crippled. One day, Dave Rose and a few other musicians he worked with in California saw his picture in the paper there with the caption reading Santo. They thought he had changed his name. When Dave Rose [looked in the front door, ?] SP called him in. DR asked why he had changed his name. SP explained that everyone in New Orleans knew him as Santo so he just kept the name. SP mentioned that his Dad's brother's son has the same name as he has, i.e., Santo Pecoraro. His cousin, the drummer, is sixty-eight years old.

SP is seventy years old. He was born in New Orleans on March 31, 1902, in the six hundred block of Dauphine, three blocks from the Famous Door. He went to school with Tony Parenti and started playing with him in the Italian, at St. Mary's Church. They used to rehearse in a big room in the back yard. When SP started playing, he played the "peck horn" [i.e. alto horn or mellophone] rather than the trombone. He didn't like the "peck

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horn" because there was no sense to it as one did not play melodies. (SP scats a part [to indicate its lack of melody ?]). Someone advised him to take up the trombone because trombone players were scarce at that time. SP wanted to play the trumpet, but his teacher suggested he take trombone lessons. SP became tired of the lessons since he was studying solfeggio. He didn't have a horn yet. If he didn't get a horn soon, he was going to give up the lessons. SP's father bought him a horn which cost nine dollars. Horns were cheap then. It was about [19]18 or [19]19. SP remembers it was a good horn.

Soon after he got the horn, SP was practicing in the yard and got an offer to play in a band on the basis of his practicing. He recalls that a fellow was passing the house and heard him playing. He knocked on the door of SP's house to inquire who the trombonist was. SP explained that he had just bought the trombone and was practicing. The fellow was astonished that anyone could play so well after just buying a horn and practicing on it. SP went to work to "ballyhoo" [i.e. advertise] the fights and burlesque houses. He worked with Dan Hughes, the one-eyed trumpet player. George Brunis was working there playing the "peck horn." They used to play fights at the Tulane Arena. Musicians would ballyhoo all day long. SP recalls that there were about forty musicians who would sit in the band just to get in to see the fights.

After ballyhooing for about a year, SP went to play with the Triangle band with ^[Sam] "Saddo" Margiotta for awhile. According to RBA, SM also played with the police band and is "Red" Margiotta's brother. RBA also adds that "Saddo" Margiotta is dead now. SP played with him for quite awhile. SP recalls one day when he and SM were ballyhooing on Dauphine Street, Joe Fulco called SP aside and offered him a job playing in vaudeville. SP didn't think he read music well enough to play vaudeville, but JF said he would teach him. (c. 7 1/2 mins.) Sidney Wilson, the piano player who also played trombone, and Leo Broekhoven, the trumpet player, helped him learn to read music. SP played at the theater for quite awhile and had offers to go to New York. He admits he is bragging about himself when he says that all the vaudeville entertainers made the circuit and recommended him as a good trombone player. [Sam?, Lester?] Lanin and others sent him telegrams and offered him a lot of money to leave. SP said he used to stand and play solos quite often, but another reason he was in such demand was that there was no competition. There were only four or five trombonists here who really knew how to play at that time. Eddie Edwards left two years after SP was at the Palace Theater. ^[Chromolyn?] Emile Christian played trombone and bass, RBA says his name was Frank, and his brother played good trumpet.

SP remembers that his first teacher was [Viquery ? (Barra ?)] although he doesn't remember his first name. Some other members of the Italian band in which he played were Tony Parenti, Manuel Alessandra, and Mario Finazzi. Of these members Tony Parenti and SP were the

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only ones well known out of town. SP mentions that Johnny Lala didn't play with the Italian band but rather with different ballyhoos and dances. JL played with the [Happy] Schilling band for a long time and was supposed to go to New York with the Dixieland band, but he wouldn't go. He owned a meat mart with his Dad and thought he could make more money staying in New Orleans. According to SP, JL really moved the band and was a better trumpet player than Nick [La Rocca].

SP remembers there were a lot of good musicians then. All of the Brunies [sic] boys played well. SP worked with Jack Laine and his son, Pansy Laine. The Italian band was a forty or fifty piece band. A lot of the players were older men, but as mentioned before, SP and Tony Parenti were the only ones well known. The Italian band wore Italian uniforms and played in parades. RBA mentioned that he saw a picture of them in their uniforms, standing in front of the church for the Contessa [Entellina (sp ?) Society].

SP didn't stay long with the Italian band. He started playing with a Dixieland band and then quit to go into vaudeville. After that he went to Chicago with Bee Palmer, the shimmy shaker. BP took [Leon] "Rap" [sic] Roppolo, Emmett Hardy and Johnny Frisco. They played vaudeville. That's where the New Orleans Rhythm Kings started. BP named the band Bee Palmer and her New Orleans Rhythm Kings, and the New Orleans Rhythm Kings took their name from her. BP's husband, Al Siegel [spelling ?], played the piano for the band so there were only five people in it altogether. Johnny Frisco was from New Orleans.

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He died a couple of years ago. He played with Johnny Lala and the Schilling band for a long time. According to SP, JF was a good drummer.

SP never played at the Orpheum theater. He played at the Palace theater and at the Liberty theater with Max Finkle [sp ?] whom SP considered a good showman. After Chicago SP returned to New Orleans and to the Palace theater, but he wanted to play out of town again so he returned to Chicago. He played at dance halls like the ~~Merry~~ Midway Garden [sp ?] which was considered a good job. There were two dance halls like a T. Roppolo, Paul Mares, Georgie Brunis, Ben Pollack played with the other bands at the Merry Gardens. The Merry Gardens was on the North side on, SP thinks, Crawford street. SP also played in night clubs like the Green Mill where the Tivoli theater is now. He then went back to playing vaudeville and played at the Chicago theater in the pit with a fifty piece band. The pit band would have a stage presentation with about twenty-five members playing on stage. SP played with Benny Meroff. BM had in his band Wild Bill Davidson and [Maurie ?] Stein. MS writes tunes in Hollywood.

Georgie Brunis was supposed to buy SP's trombone for nine dollars. Everytime SP sees GB, he asks for his nine dollars to which GB replies that he still has the same trombone, but he's not going to pay SP for it. SP mentions that he really doesn't care whether GB pays him for the trombone or not. SP said he saw GB last month and didn't recognize him because he had changed so much. GB came to the Famous Door and sat at the bar. He kept waving to SP, and although SP returned

the waves, he kept wondering who the person was. Finally a friend told him that the person was GB, but by that time GB had gone and SP didn't get a chance to talk with him.

According to SP, GB is only jobbing [i.e., playing irregularly] lately. GB never played with [big] bands as SP did, although he did play with Ted Lewis. SP said that at that time one didn't have to read music. A lot of the good jazz musicians can't read. But if one couldn't read music, one couldn't get a job with big bands because musicians have to read "charts" [i.e., arrangements]. These musicians couldn't get a job playing shows. Pete Fountain couldn't stay in the band on the Lawrence Welk show because he couldn't read charts. LW wanted his other saxophone players to teach PF to read music, but PF didn't want this. He made his reputation playing one tune on the LW show every week.

SP never played music for silent films. Around 1936, he made his first movie with Bing Crosby. The movie was called "Rhythm on the River." SP was visible in the film. Larry Crosby was supposed to send SP the music but never did.

SP said in vaudeville all shows were rehearsed two hours. The [entertainers ?] would give their music to the musicians and show them what they wanted. The musicians would have to sight read and would often be given a lot of "crazy" music such as big overtures, etc. SP never had to wear costumes at the Palace, but in Chicago the band would wear costumes such as Chinese or Mexican outfits. The band would

play on the stage. SP felt playing in the Chicago theater was the best experience in music he ever had. The band had two trombonists, three trumpet players and about twenty-five fiddle players and "all that stuff". They played beautiful music when they got on stage just like in a concert. Fine musicians from all over Europe, even Russia and Finland, played at the Chicago theater.

SP made more money as a young man playing at the Chicago theater than he does now even though now he's a band leader. SP tells the story of how he was hired at the Chicago theater. He was working at the Capitol theater. Louie Lippstone [sp?], asked SP to come to the Chicago theater to talk to him. He told SP he liked his music and wanted to hire him in two weeks so that he could give two weeks notice to the band in which he was now playing. He asked SP how much money he wanted. SP said he was making good money playing at the Capitol with Roy Eldrich [sp ?], the band leader and master of ceremonies, who played the piano. LL said they usually paid their musicians one hundred twenty-five to one hundred fifty dollars. SP told LL he wanted two hundred fifty dollars. LL didn't know if he could pay him this so SP said he wasn't interested. He was making two hundred dollars at the Capitol. LL agreed to pay SP the money he wanted and had him sign a year's contract. After SP signed the contract, LL told him if he had asked for five hundred dollars he would have gotten it. SP could have "bumped his head," but he was a young kid then and didn't know better. SP said he was rated [i.e., highly] in Chicago just as he was in New Orleans. Tommy Dorsey wasn't heard of then. SP always

got twenty-five to fifty dollars more than the other musicians.

Once when SP was working at the Palace theater he got another job offer. Tony DiNapolis [sp ?] who owned a place called the Little Club had Billy Lustig's band from Scranton, Pennsylvania [i.e., the Scranton Sirens] playing there. One of the trombonists had to return home to have an operation. T.DiNapolis sent one of the musicians over to the Palace to ask SP if he wanted the job. SP asked how much they would pay him and the musician told him one hundred twenty-five dollars. SP said that was too little, but that he would take whatever was paid to the trombonist he was replacing. The musician told him that was too much money. When the musician returned, TDiNapolis asked him if he had hired SP. The musician explained that SP wanted the same pay as the other trombonist which was two hundred dollars. T.DiNapolis said to hire him at that pay so SP got the job. SP mentioned that he was making seventy-five dollars at the Palace which was thirty dollars above the scale so two hundred dollars was a lot of money then in 1920, 1921, especially since it was tax free.

SP couldn't go to Chicago right away with Billy Lustig because he had to give two weeks notice at the Theater. The band used Tommy Dorsey on the trombone until SP arrived. When SP finally got to Chicago he and TD played together. ^[who?] TB told him that he really had a big tone on the trombone. SP replied that while he might have a big tone, TD had a pretty tone. TD said his tone wasn't as big as SP's. SP remembers he used to love to hear TD play because he played so beautifully.

When the trumpet player, Johnny Bayersdorffer, was sick for about three weeks, Tommy Dorsey took his place playing trumpet in the show. According to SP, TD played a beautiful trumpet & he had a beautiful tone. [He used] no pressure. When he played the trumpet, he didn't sound like Joe Oliver [King Oliver]. He sounded more like Harry James or [Charlie] Spivak. TD liked the trombone better though. The band would finish playing at four o'clock after midnight and TD would get up at nine o'clock to begin practicing with records "and all that." SP and TD became good friends.

SP went with Jack Teagarden to buy JT's first trombone. JT was at a near-by town and used to go to the Palace to hear the band. [cf. JT interview and books.] He went backstage and asked to meet SP. He told SP that originally he wanted to be a trumpet player, but after hearing SP play these last few Sundays he changed his mind and now wanted to play trombone. He asked SP if he would go with him to help him pick out a trombone. The following Monday he and SP went to Werlein's to buy a trombone. When JT [appeared at the Dream Room before his] death here, he checked in the Prince Conti [Motel]. He left his grip with the "boy" and went to the Famous Door. He played the Dream Room and every set went to the Famous Door to see SP. They were very close friends. When JT came to New Orleans earlier, he was not playing music.

[End of reel]

SP said his salary at Toro's was about thirty to thirty-five dollars a week. When he played at the Grunewald Hotel which is now the Roosevelt Hotel, he made only twenty dollars a week working from 10:30 [P.M.] to 1:00 [A.M.], but the band made a lot of money in tips. Tips often amounted to five hundred or six hundred dollars which would be divided among the five musicians in the band. The five musicians playing in the band then were Tony Parenti, Johnny DeDroit playing trumpet, Paul DeDroit playing drums, Frank Cuny at the piano and SP playing trombone. All the band members were good solid musicians. SP mentions that TP was a terrific clarinet player, he was not "gut bucket," but he had a lot of technique, etc. [Irving] Fazola was also a fine clarinet player; he had a beautiful style. Artie Shaw had a beautiful style, but Benny Goodman was a real "gut bucket" clarinet player. SP remembers that "Rap" [Leon Roppolo] used to play a fine "gut bucket" clarinet, too. He made a lot of records, but at that time records didn't sound the same as live playing. Playing through a megaphone [i.e., acoustical recording horn] just didn't record well.

RBA asks why Cordilla [Charlie Cordilla] played clarinet for Victor rather than LR. SP explains that he was playing in the theater then and someone asked him to make a record since Okeh [technicians] were coming to town. SP had LR, Paul Mares, an unremembered piano player. CC played saxophone on the record. He played well. CC played with Abbie Brunies ~~[Name]~~ at the Halfway House. They had a good band. RBA says on another session CC played clarinet and LR didn't make it.

LR's brother was supposed to come to make sure that CC didn't play
SR's solo. [Who? LR?] [cf. Charlie Corilla interview and biography in The Second Line.]

SP remembers when he started playing with these musicians they were jealous and said he shouldn't play what they played. If someone copied them they used to get mad. George Brunis [sic] used to get mad because he didn't want anyone to play what he played. SP said he never tried to copy anybody, he just played his own style. When he was a child, he heard Kid Ory play and would try to play "That slap tongue--pop, pop..." SP said that kind of playing was good at that time and for some tunes. SP can do this kind of playing but only when playing with a trumpet player.

When SP was a kid, he used to play at Milneberg at the Spanish Fort. There were camps out there, and "colored" bands used to "buck" each other. SP remembers it was a lot of fun. Whenever a picnic was given at the camp, a policeman had to be there in case of fights. At one picnic a "colored" band was really playing their necks off and really "knocking" SP's band down. This policeman got on the drums, and he started pushing. SP asked him how he learned to play the drums. The policeman replied that he wasn't a drummer, but that he was pushing SP's band. The policeman's dead now. He was a policeman on the corner of Common and Carondelet. His first name was Wallace. He was a policeman on that corner for years. He could really kick a band.

SP said he never played drums on a job. RBA heard him play drums for fun with Blind Gilbert at Joe Mares's. The first thing SP ever

him sixty-eight hundred dollars and a new boat which cost three thousand dollars. He got married in the service and has been married five years. He bought a horse for four hundred fifty dollars. He wants too many good things, but SP said that he has to make money to have these good things. Horses cost twelve dollars apiece just for food.

SP talks about his family. His dad was a guitar player and his mother sang. There were people playing mandolins, guitars, and bass fiddles at parties and they would "rock it." SP's father had a terrific ear for music. One could play any tune and his dad could follow with the guitar. He died a few years back when he was ninety years old. SP said his father was one of the finest tailors in the town. He made coats and worked for Ike Meyers [sp ?]. In 1915, 1916, Ike Meyers charged two hundred to four hundred dollars for a suit. SP's dad was the only one who could make Jacobs Candies [sp ?] [i.e., the owner of Jacobs Candies ?] a coat. JC had a big hump in his back and it was hard to make a coat to fit perfectly, but SP's father could do it.

On the mandolin and guitar one could play all kinds of Italian songs such as "O' Marie" and "O, Solo Mio [sp ?]." SP said his parents had their own tunes then like we have Dixieland now. Their parties would begin at 7:00 P.M. and would end at 7:00 A.M. Everyone would play music, sing, drink, eat and dance. The food was delicious; SP's mother was a very good cook.

Lars Edegran asks SP why he switched from playing music with orchestras [to playing without it.] SP said that he can't use music at the Famous Door because the stand isn't big enough and people ask for almost the same tunes every night. As soon as people come in the door, they ask for "When the Saints Go Marching In." SP's been playing without music for twenty-five years. He left Chicago to go to California where he made pictures such as "Blues in the Night," "Rhythm on the River," and "Down Argentina [Way ?]." SP has cards from people who come to the Famous Door. He always asks for people's cards so he can remember their names. People give him bottles of whiskey [and, or ?] cognac which have a label saying black market.

SP can't remember whose band played at Toro's, although he remembers Roppolo played in the band. SP said he knew the Shields boys-- Frank, Emile, Harry and Larry. (RBA thinks he has the Christians and the Shields confused) SP knew Eddie Shields; he played in the same band with him at the Little Club. He was a good piano player. He played in Chicago with Billy Lustig's twelve piece band. [See above on his Scranton Sirens.] The size of the band was later cut down. Billy Lustig's stayed in New Orleans a long time and fell in love with the town. Tony [DiNapolis ?] must have said if BL wanted to stay here he would have to come down on the price. He left to go to Chicago and that's when SP left with him.

SP played with Jack Laine all over across the river in Marrero, Westwego, and Gretna. They played at the Owl's Hall on the levee and at the Davy Crockett Fire Company.

Joe Fulco had a small band: Joe Maggio played bass; Sidney Wilson, piano; Joe Fulco, violin; Bevenetto [sp ?], clarinet; Leo Broekhoven, trumpet; and, Emile Stein, drums. When ES died, Louie Verges took his place. He was a good drummer, too, a good show drummer.

SP says there were shows for a little while during the summer. They went to Biloxi, playing music for dancing at the White House on the beach.

SP went on Orpheum circuit with Benny Meroff and Buddy Rogers. He worked with BR at World's Fair in 1933. They alternated with Ben Bernie at the College Inn and played for Pabst Blue Ribbon which was "the big deal at the fair." SP went on the road with BR and played vaudeville for a long time. Johnny Lala once told RBA about someone named Benson who was a booker in Chicago. SP said he knew him and worked for him. George Benson had bands, booking agents "and everything." He used his own name [for a band], Benson's All Stars, and they played at the Morrison Hotel.

SP has written many tunes: "She's Crying for Me;" "Zero;" "I Never Knew What a Girl Could Do;" "Canal Street Romp;" "Baby;" and others. SP remembers that "Baby" is a good tune, but RBA said that it never did anything much. SP says people are still playing "She's Crying for Me." Two fellows from England came to town and the first thing they did as SP was getting on the stand was to ask him to play "She's Crying for Me." SP still gets royalties from it. He wrote that tune in 1925. Punch Miller recorded it with Al Wynn. Quite a few people recorded it.

SP knew Jelly Roll Morton quite well. JRM changed the title of SP's tune "She's Crying for Me." Irving Mills, the publisher, is the cause of it. [cf. Mr. Jelly Roll on publisher]. They called the tune "Georgia Swing." SP says he was in New Orleans for a week visiting his mother and went to a barroom with some fellows. In the bar SP heard the song, "She's Crying for Me." He knew it wasn't his band, The New Orleans Rhythm Kings, playing the song. The [record] said JRM. SP told Mills about it and he said a song had to be recopyrighted after five years. SP said he was a young kid and didn't know all these things. IM "passed the post" on him, and put JRM's name on his tune. RBA says that if SP had gone to court he would have won his case, but SP said he didn't know what to do and he liked JRM. It wasn't JRM's fault, it was the publisher's, but JRM got half the royalties. RBA says The Triangle Band also played that tune, and LE says Tony Fougerat still plays it; he plays all the parts and everything. SP says every time Dr. D'Antoni comes in he asks SP to play "She's Crying for Me." He loves that tune. SP's band doesn't play that tune much because they haven't rehearsed it. There are so many different parts to it. To play it right you have to play the Ropollo solo in the clarinet. LE says George Lewis played it, but they just played the chorus. RBA adds that Tony Margiotta, Red's brother, is supposed to have been hot on it according to Stuart "Red Hott" Bergen. It was Roppolo's idea to put "Japanese Sandman" in "She's Crying for Me."

SP composes a tune on his horn. He would just play it to see how it sounded. He would play by himself. SP says if he played the piano

he could hear everything. He could then write plenty of tunes, but he doesn't play any chord instruments. SP would think of a tune and after he wrote the melody another person would write the arrangements. SP would write only the melody.

While on the West Coast working in the movies, SP worked with radio bands. He worked with Eddie Cantor, Al Jolson, Bing Crosby, Phil Baker, and Al Pierce. SP had all them playing. He worked with Edward G. Robinson in "Big Town." RBA asks SP to explain about Al Pierce and "knock knock." Whenever Al Pierce began his radio show he would make a knocking sound and then would say something. "Knock knock" was his cue to come in.

SP was in California twelve years. He was there in 1933 when there was an earthquake. He was in downtown Los Angeles when it began. There was a big wind and SP didn't know what was happening. Everyone was pushing SP in the street and yelling to get out of the way. This was the first time SP had ever seen an earthquake. His wife was with him. They were running, but they didn't know which way to run. When you were in the hotel the rooms would shake; it would shake you right out of the bed. SP was playing at the Biltmore Hotel with Earl Burtnett [sp ?] who used to play at the Club Forestt [sp ?]. The hotel had big glass chandeliers which moved. Half the band didn't show up because they couldn't get to Los Angeles.

SP remembers Riley Scott, the drummer. SP thinks he was from Texas or Oklahoma or near there. He was a good drummer. In Hollywood Meyer Weinberg was working with Louis Prim^Ao. That wasn't a regular

band that made the record [as Santo Pecora and His Back Room Boys]. SP picked that band. Other people on the record were Frank Federico [guitar] and Shorty Sherock, trumpet. SS worked with Ben Pollock and other bands. RBA mentions that Thurman Teague, the bass player, might have been on the record. [cf. discographies] SP doesn't remember, but thought TT played the piano.

RBA asks who Meyer Weinberg sounded like. SP replies that MW sounded like himself; he didn't sound like anyone else. SP used to play with him, and he was a fine musician. He had a lot of technique. He didn't sound like Artie Shaw or Benny Goodman.

SP knew Sidney Arodin from "Jobbing" around in New Orleans. SA is the one who named his tune "I Never Knew What a Gal Could Do." SA wasn't in the band; he just happened to be there to give the title to the tune. SP doesn't remember how he got the title to the tune "She's Crying for Me." Elmer Schoebel gave him the title for the song "Zero." ES played piano for Louie Panico when SP was in LP's band. SP asked him to help with a tune, so ES suggested that SP title the song "Zero." Everybody helped SP with titles to his tunes. RBA mentions that "Zero" is a better title than "Number 2" [cf. other sources on this title, e.g. Jack Laine. Bands frequently have used numbers rather than regular titles.] SP says that "Zero" is a good tune; a lot of people ask him to play it. SP mentions that a lot of rock bands came out with the same version [sic] of the song "She's Crying for Me." They just changed the title and the tune a little, but it's the same song.

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SP PL W/ Murphy Steinberg & Julie Stein in Benny Meroff's band.

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SP knew Murphy Steinberg. He played with him in the band lead by Benny Meroff. Julie Stein was in Meroff's band, too. [Cf. discographies. See above on Stein and Meroff.] SP knew Roy Kramer, too.

[End of Reel II]

RBA asks SP when the trombone started playing lead. SP said the trombone never played lead; they played six bars or eight bars in arrangements. SP noticed in tapes and records that one hears in barrooms, one hears nothing but trombone leads. One hears three trombones playing and the trombone taking the lead instead of the trumpet. SP relaxes between almost every set of every night at the [Old] Absinthe Bar and hears these records on which the trombones have taken the melody.

SP was asked how he got the name "Mr. Tailgate." He explains that he had a club in Baton Rouge which he named the Tailgate Club. Two ladies came in and asked SP what he meant by tailgate. He replied that they would ballyhoo on a wagon when he was a kid. The trombone player couldn't get inside the wagon because the drums and other things were there and the trombone player didn't have room to slide the slide. On the outside of the wagon there were signs on both sides so there wasn't room to slide. They put the trombone player on the tailgate so the trombonist had plenty room to slide.

SP doesn't remember how he got the name "Mr. Tailgate" since it's been over forty or fifty years that people have been saying tailgate trombone player. SP seems to remember he heard someone say that there's the trombone player who sits on the tailgate. SP says a lot of people around the club ask him where he got his name "Tailgate" and he explains that you sit on the tailgate when playing because that's the only place you have room just like the bass player. SP said it was a hell of a thing because sometimes you had bad horses who would knock you

right out of the wagon. Sometimes they played when the wagon was moving. [Poorly phrased question from RBA.] They also played on corners and at barrooms just like you see [these colored bands playing on their wagons.]

SP also played at boxing matches. They played between rounds and before, but never during a fight. There would be a minute between rounds in which to play. SP says it was a lot of fun at that time doing all those things.

RBA asks SP what kind of style he had. SP said he thinks the idea of popping the trombone came from the colored trombone players who sat on the wagon and who didn't know how to read music. If SP gave someone a trombone and he didn't know--and go pop, pop, pop. (SP uses his voice to illustrate the technique of popping). Sometimes they would hit the wrong note, but they kept on popping and thought it sounded good. SP said he thought popping was a good idea at the time, but instead of playing the wrong notes, SP could hear the right notes that would go with the melody. Those other fellows would hold the first position [i.e., with the slide closed] and pop. It would sound good but with the wrong notes. SP said that it's a funny thing, but when he hears a tune, and the note is wrong, he can't play that note. He moves his slide. It looks like it drops away from him till he hits the right note.

SP says a long time ago they didn't have musicians who knew how to read. They just picked up a horn and played it and played it good. SP says you'd be surprised at the way [Leon] Roppolo could play a guitar. He could play beautifully. SP couldn't believe it because Roppolo was a guy who couldn't read music.

(SP) played good clarinet,
↑
LR?

picked the guitar and knows what to do with it. SP knows a lot of good guitar players who couldn't read music. They just have the ear and the feel where it should go.

RBA asks SP who were some of the good guitar players? SP says at that time he doesn't remember because they had banjo players. SP asked if anyone ever heard a long time ago of a fellow named Black from across the river. He played with Emmett [sp ?] Hardy. RBA knew Bill Eastwood, but didn't know Black. Black played terrific banjo.

SP knew Lou Black in Chicago. He played with him although he never recorded with him. SP made his first record down here [in New Orleans] around 1923. RBA asked with what band? SP replies that that's what he named it, The New Orleans and then hesitated. He then explained that he went to Chicago with Emmett Hardy, [Leon] Roppolo, and [?]. That's when Bee Palmer named the band the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. Then Paul Mares came back to New Orleans and SP asked him to make some records. SP picked all these guys out to make the recording with him and they called it the New Orleans Rhythm Kings. [cf. discographies on New Orleans Rhythm Kings records] Then [Arnold] "Deacon" Loyacano would say that he had the copyright. PM didn't have a copyright, but still, according to SP, the name came before they ever had a band that was known as the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, "was known by Bee Palmer". She named it.

SP said that Bee Palmer was a good looking blonde woman. She's the one who invented the shimmy. SP mentioned that BP dressed beautifully. They used to go to Sophie Tucker's. Sophie Tucker would be playing a club, and she would invite BP and her band to the club to play

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as guest stars. ^{JBP}~~SP~~ was a good singer, a different type than Sophie Tucker. She was a smooth singer of ballads. SP said that BP had a good figure. She had booking agents, managers, guys, everyone "wanted to get in her pants". She was built. She was a pretty woman.

RBA mentioned that they talkēd about Roy Kramer a while back, and then asked SP if he ever knew Charlie Bezimek who played the clarinet. SP said he heard of him, but he can't remember him now. RBA asked what Art Kassel was like and did he play much jazz. SP replied that he played all right: He had a pretty good reputation in Chicago, but SP wouldn't say he was Benny Goodman or Woody Herman. He just played clarinet. SP knew Bill Meyers, the vocalist who made a record of "Made a Monkey Out of Me" and all that comedy stuff. RBA mentions that he heard some people claim that Jessie Barnes made some of the records and then that SP made them up in Chicago. He asked SP where he was in 1923, was he in Chicago or here? SP said he was in New Orleans in 1923. He just got back from the Palace Theater in Chicago. When asked, SP said he never went to Richmond, Indiana, where the Gennett Records used to be, and where the Star Piano Company was.

SP mentions that Louis Panico had a dance band [at] Guynon's Paradise. It was a ten piece band, and they read music. Elmer Schoebel played piano; LP's brother played sousaphone. They had a few fellows. It was just a band; there was nothing great about it according to SP. LP was well known at that time. He was well known with Isham Jones; he played with IJ.

SANTO PECORA
Reel III
November 9, 1972

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SP asks if he has told RBA the story about going to Davenport, Iowa. He played there with Bee Palmer. Bix Beiderbecke used to come in the room. They had one of those big old rooms with three beds. There was "Rap", [Johnny] Frisco, and SP. BB used to come practice with Emmet Hardy because Bix liked the way EH played. BB played so badly that SP asked EH why he didn't get BB out of there; he gave SP a headache; he couldn't sleep or do anything; but EH said BB was a nice kid. SP explained that they were smoking that weed and all that stuff and SP didn't care for that so he had to get out of the room. When SP was working in the Chicago Theater, he happened to go to the Union. At 12 o'clock at the Union there are nothing but musicians, hundreds that bummed around there because the Union had a club, pool room and everything. While he was there a guy tapped him on the shoulder and said, "Hey, Peck." SP turned around and returned the greeting, and the other guy said, "Don't you know me?" SP replied that he thought so, but that he wasn't sure. "I'm Bix," answered the fellow. BB was playing with Jean Goldkette. SP heard him play and said that here was a kid he told EH would never be a trumpet player, that his playing stunk, etc. BB asked SP if he remembered what he told EH, that he didn't like BB's playing and that he'd never be a trumpet player. SP replied that he had to hug BB and that he sure played beautifully now. It was funny. Then BB went with Paul Whiteman. SP said that BB sure played with some nice bands.

RBA asked what EH sounded like because he'd never heard him play. SP said he played a nice trumpet. Lars Edegran asked if he had any

similarities to BB's playing. SP replied that he had some similarities, but that BB developed "a little style of his own." A tune that BB played and that SP liked was "(I'll Be a Friend) With Pleasure." RBA mentioned that Armand [Hug] still played it and that he was the only person in town that RBA knows who plays it. SP said he'd like to play it himself, but the band didn't know it, and he has to rehearse all that stuff. RBA thought he might be able to get the changes and melody for SP. LE said that they have the music at Tulane. He knew that Johnny Wiggs played it because he played it with him a couple of times. He's one of the few who plays it. SP mentioned that JW liked BB and tries to play like him.

RBA asked what it was like to make those records with JW. SP said he made "Bourbon Street Bounce" and "Congo Square." RBA mentioned that he still hears the latter on the radio. He asks SP how he happened to make records with JW. SP replies that JW asks him. He wasn't a regular member of the band; he just made a recording with him. RBA asks if SP was ever a regular member of a band that was an actual working band on the job. SP replies he doesn't think so. RBA mentions that he was thinking specifically of Sharkey's band in New York. SP then remembered that he had recorded with him. RBA asked about the piano player, Clyde Hart. SP said he played well.

SP was playing with Wingy Manone, as were Sharkey Bonano, Frank ~~F~~ederico, Ray Benitez, and Ben Pollock said he wanted them to record. So, he got this colored guy [Clyde Hart]. [Irving] Fazola played as well as SP, SB, and FF. They all just made that recording; it was just a date like they do in New York. When these fellows make a

recording, they get all these good guys and they get charts and just go in to make a record. Just like Urbie Green [does]. Almost everybody in his band is a leader. He picked all the good guys and made some terrific records. SP thinks UG is a trombone player who plays beautifully. SP mentions UG is from Mobile. He can name his price for TV shows and everything.

SP doesn't remember who sang on the records with SB. He only has one of his own records even though he has a beautiful record player. RBA mentions that they are reissuing all his records in Europe and this country both. SP said that it is a shame because he made so many records in Chicago and New Orleans. He made a lot for Roger Wolfe who was in town the other day with his wife. He recorded with Sharkey. They he recorded for Norman Grantz of Mercury [record company]. That was before George Girard, SP's side-man, was ever known. SP had Pete Fountain who played so soft SP told him he had to get into the mike closer because GG and SP played so strong. GG played a loud trumpet and SP was SP was loud, but Pete was too soft. That was in the 1950's, and PF was just starting out.

RBA mentions that [the Archive] has all those things with PM. *who? Paul Mares?*
The [records] SP made under PM's name in Chicago. SP asks if we had the Mercury with GG and RBA doesn't remember. He explains that the book they had which lists those things only went up to 1942. SP doesn't have that record he made with Norman Grantz. That's four tunes. SP made "Canal Street Romp". [Hums tune. This was with NG on Mercury. [Cf discographies]

RBA asked if PM in the 1930's was a working band or just a studio band. SP replied that it was a working band and they played at the Merry Gardens. ^[Midway?] SP never played with him, he played with the other band. A saxophone player and a trumpet player had the band, and SP just played with them. The band was called Rizzo and the saxophonist whose name SP can't remember.

RBA asked what happened to PM when the [New Orleans] Rhythm Kings broke up. SP says that he went into the barbecued ribs business. PM was a shill at Mike Fritzel's place. They had a dice game. SP couldn't remember the name of the place. It wasn't the Friar's Inn, but another famous place where Louie Prima, Jerry Lewis, and everybody else played. It is upstairs on the North Side. The club is well known. SP said that Fritzel had the Friar's Inn downtown.

SP tells the following story about Wingy Manone: SP was in Chicago when WM called him on the phone and said to come to New York because he had nothing but money. SP gave his boss two weeks notice, and asked him if he could leave before two weeks were up. His boss agreed if SP could find a guy to take his place. SP hurried to New York and went to the Plymouth Hotel. He had his trombone in one hand, the grip in another and the mutes "and all that stuff." SP put his baggage down and who is at the desk but WM. SP asked him what happened, and WM asked SP what he was doing here. SP told him that he had made him quit his job "to come up there to make nothing but money." WM said that everything he had told SP on the phone went bad. SP says that Sharkey [Bonano], [Frank] Frederico, and Fazola and everybody were up

there, and that was a great thing. WM said he was going to try to get a record date. He arranged one, but since they were staying at different hotels, WM didn't wake SP up and he overslept. SP woke up at 11 o'clock and went to the lobby and asked for WM and was told his band left a long time ago. SP didn't know where they went so he didn't make the record with them.

After that, WM got a job to go to Boston, then to Portland, Maine where it snowed like hell. Then they went to Hollywood where they played at the Famous Door. Louie Prima was playing there, and he was finishing as WM was coming in. SP stayed out there and said to hell with WM. He never got to make a record with him, and it's a funny thing because they're good friends.

SP never had a big band himself. He says he lost his big chance. The Music Corporation [of America] asked him to make a band up. SP had a friend, Buddy Baker, who's now with Disneyland and makes all the arrangements. BB came to Hollywood busted. SP fed him, gave him a few dollars everyday and asked him to do a favor and write some arrangements for him. He wrote five or six arrangements. SP had that plus Benny Goodman "Let's Dance" and "all that stuff." Music Corporation asked SP to make an audition. He had a bunch of school kids from Los Angeles who played like mad. SP played five or six tunes for a man [from MCA] and he called SP to the side and told him what a great band he had and asked how long they had been rehearsing. SP said a couple of days, and the man said it couldn't be because the band was really together. SP replied that these kids just can play, and the man told

SP that the band was really great and that he should come to the man's office. SP went to the man's office and the man told him he was going to book SP in Balboa Beach three nights a week., SP was playing radio [show] at the time and he couldn't go to Balboa Beach for three nights a week at \$45.00 a week. SP told the guy he couldn't take that kind of money because he made too much money playing radio.[shows]. The man said he was going to do something with the band because it was a great band. SP said no that he'd stick to radio. Then Stan Kenton entered the picture. He was working sidelines in pictures and wasn't making anything. The man told SK that SP had a good band and asked why he didn't take these guys.. That's just what SK did. He took SP's band with all those kids and made Stan Kenton's band. When SP was in Chicago playing at the Cafe Continental, he went to the Blue Note on a Sunday afternoon to see SK. On this Sunday afternoon in a jam session, SK said to the people that SP was a friend of his who worked with him in Hollywood in pictures. He said that if it weren't for SP he wouldn't have the band. Jimmy Niehaus [sp ?] and Buddy Jackson were with him. SK's band went to Balboa Beach for three weeks, starting from scratch. It wasn't big right away, but he made it and made a lot of money.

RBA asked what kind of mutes SP used in the old days since he mentioned carrying a sack of mutes. SP said that orchestrations a long time ago were free. One could go to a music publisher who would give them all the new tunes. In one office one could pick up twenty or thirty tunes. The musicians would play the tunes, and if they didn't like what was in the orchestration, they'd ad lib.

[End of Reel III]

SP continues talking about orchestrations and mutes. A musician might play a tune and want to change an arrangement. He might change a whole note; he might play six or eight beats instead of four beats. He would make it the way he could hear it. The way "these guys" make orchestrations it's just like: (SP knocks a few times). They're not trying to make anything fancy. They're just putting the note there, the harmony and that's all. Then the musician puts his own ideas to it, and it comes out better. RBA asks what kinds of mutes did SP play with it: a Harmon mute, straight mute, or cup mute? SP replies that sometimes the orchestrations would tell you what kinds of mutes to play.

RBA asks what kind of rooms were at the Grunewald Hotel [now the Roosevelt]. SP says that where the restaurant is in the Roosevelt Hotel on Baronne Street was the location of a nightclub. SP can't remember the name of it. That was the place where all the high class people went. Then SP played the Cave [in the Grunewald]. They had big revues there "like Ernie Young from Chicago, New York. They'd bring about fifteen gals and big shows like singers, acrobats, and everything." SP says it was a beautiful place. RBA thinks it's a laundry now.

RBA asks SP if he ever knew Tom Zimmerman the piano player who worked with Johnny De Droit. SP never knew him.

SP never went to the Isle of Capri in Biloxi. Although SP never played the Jung Roof, he did play at the Tin Roof. The Tin Roof was on Baronne Street and was owned by Tony DiNapolis [sp ?]. It had a tin roof because there was a sprinkler system on it and they could

"make it rain like hell." The MC would say to the folks that they can't go home because it's raining like hell. Some would say they had to go home because they had to go to work. When they went outside, there was no rain. SP says the sprinkler on the tin roof made it sound like a storm. A lot of people didn't know that. It was funny. The Tin Roof was on Baronne Street near Julia.

SP worked with Buddy Rogers and also Will Osborne. He made a [motion] picture "Blues in the Night" with WO. SP never recorded with Buddy Rogers, Benny Meroff, or WO. He just made movies with them. He thinks BM never made a record, and he was very popular too. [see discographies] SP worked at the Palace Theater in New York with Eddie Cantor and George Jessel. It was a terrific show. They had Burns and Allen before anyone knew them. Lucille Ball used to work on radio when SP worked on radio. No one knew her. Dinah Shore used to sing once every two or three weeks with Al Pierce when SP was with him. She didn't have a steady job. All these people made it big except SP. When SP worked with Ted Weems, Perry Como sang with the band. SP thought he was just another singer. PC got really big too. TW had some good musicians: Elmer Tanner and Rosy McHargue were in the band. RH used to make mouthpieces for SP. He made trombone and trumpet.

RBA asks who were some of the good arrangers SP worked with. SP names Dave Rose, Elmer Schoebel, and a few other guys he can't remember. RBA says Rosy McHargue could arrange well. When SP played with a band like Will Osborne or Earl Burtnett there were two saxophone players and a pianist making arrangements. Everybody got ten or fifteen dollars

to make a whole arrangement. Now it's in the hundreds. One guy would make an arrangement and would get a couple of guys to copy. It would take a long time to copy the whole thing. SP never did arrangements himself. He wishes he knew how to arrange. SP said all he cared about was women, automobiles, fooling around, and dressing up good. That's all he wanted to do. Now SP has horses, but at work he dresses up. With horses he can't put good clothes on.

SP is married. His wife and daughter work for SP's sister as cashiers at a supermarket on Chef Menteur, the Speedy. SP had lots of girl friends. He's been married three times. He's been married to his third wife for twenty-eight years and has two girls and a boy.

SP worked regularly with Ben Pollack when Harry James played with him. They worked all over the West Coast and even played Reno when Reno was just a small town. They worked Eugene, Oregon; Seattle; and Salt Lake City. When they went to Salt Lake City, two trumpet players got lost, and SP had to play trumpet parts. SP can read trumpet parts. They tried to get a couple of kids from Salt Lake City to play. It was at a big dance hall like the Paladium. SP thinks this may also have been the name.

SP knew Charlie Barnet a long time. SP met him in [19]38 or [19]39, and rehearsed with him a couple of times. CB rehearsed a lot of bands, but never could get anywhere. RBA asks if CB were a character or [this reputation] was just publicity. SP thinks CB is a nice guy and not wild. He was good looking and rich and took out a lot of movie stars, but SP says everyone else goes out with women. They're not going straight home to watch radio [sic].

SP worked with Joe Venuti and says he was a crazy son of a gun and a wonderful fiddle player. If they put you on radio with him, he'd make you laugh. SP thought JV should have been a big star. JV and Jerry Colonna are good friends. SP agrees that JC sat in at the Famous Door.

SP worked with Spud Murphy at the Casino, a dance hall, in Hollywood. It was the same year he made "Rhythm on the River" with Bing Crosby. During World War II there was a rumor that the Boulder Dam would be bombed, etc. People left Hollywood. He returned home and went to work at the Casino Royale where he had his own band for a couple of years. Balboa [sp ?] owned the club. [Massera ?] who owned the buildings adopted Balboa. Balboa's a good and well known lawyer around town.

After that SP went to Gulfport and Pensacola. He played with small bands because one couldn't get musicians. An Italian home in Gulfport was actually a club. Everyone from the Edgewater Gulf Hotel came there. It was the only place during wartime that one could get steaks. Steaks were available there through the black market.

SP worked with different bands on riverboats like the Steamer Capitol. When SP came back from Hollywood, he worked with Tony Almerico on "the boat" for two or three weeks. When SP was working at the Dream Room, TA to his last day on which he was able would walk down Bourbon Street every night to see SP. A lot of musicians didn't like TA because they thought he was tight, but SP couldn't say that about him. Musicians used to say TA had the first nickel he made, but when

SP and TA were playing one-night stands in Biloxi and Mobile, TA used to pay for SP's food (not that SP wanted him to). SP liked him. He used to go over and jam with him on Sunday.

After SP played Gulfport he returned to New Orleans and worked at the Copa Club on Dauphine and Bienville. Frances Giardina owned it. SP asked RBA if he remembered the Inferno which Jimmy King owned. RBA explained that he didn't come here until 1949 which was when SP played with Sharkey at the Famous Door. That was when Lester Bouchon was sick. SP thought highly of LB and thought he was underrated. RBA mentions that nobody now understands his style of tenor playing except-- SP says that Pete Fountain thinks LB is the greatest, and a lot of other clarinet players liked LB, too. He played gutbucket. He also played bass sax and good tenor. SP says that LB played just like Eddie Miller. SP thinks they are about the same age. LB and EM used to live in the same neighborhood and went to school together. That's why they almost played alike.

SP worked at the Famous Door for twenty-five years in all. He started there in '48. He played with Sharkey's band and his own band only there. Sharkey Bonano's band was SP's band. SP's band including SP played the speed derby at the St. Charles Theater. When that finished, SP went to Dreamland where Schwegman's is now on the ^{Airline} [Airland] Highway, and he brought SB with him. From Dreamland SP went to the Prevue on Canal [and University Place]. The owners only wanted a four piece band because the room was small so SP let SB and Lester Bouchon ^{60?} to, using trombone, piano, drums and bass. SB got in the Famous Door

because Monk Hazel told Hype Guinle he should have a Dixieland band in the Famous Door rather than a Spanish band and to get SB to make up a band. SB got Jeff Riddick, Lester Bouchon, Chink Martin, [Julian] "Digger" Laine, and a girl singer. Something happened to DL, so SB called SP and asked him to replace DL. SP stayed a couple of years with SB.

SB's band had a jam session at the auditorium [actually a concert]. SP had tickets made and rented the auditorium. Then SB got big. His band had the first television show here. They played the top [of] the Hibernia Bank [Building] before the station moved to Royal Street. SB's band played the banana boats for [Blaise ?] D'Antoni. SB got so famous his wife began saying that SB was the king now. SP agreed with her but added that without the band backing you up you can't be king. SB's wife replied that SB didn't need SP or anybody. Later SB got an offer to work free for fifteen weeks doing a charity radio show. SP told SB that he would play for two weeks and after two weeks he could get Tony Almerico or someone else to play the next two weeks. SB replied that SP could take his notice if that's the way he felt. SP took his notice and went to the Dream Room for awhile. Then he went to Baton Rouge and opened his own club. SP said he could have made money in Baton Rouge if "they" didn't close him at 12:00 because of a curfew due to the school there.

RBA asks how many jobs a day SP played with SB. SP replies that on Saturday they worked the banana boats. The radio program was once a week and they had a jam session [at Tony Almerico's Parisian Room]

on Sunday although they were off on Sunday [from the Famous Door]. SP played the Blue Room [of the Roosevelt Hotel] with SB. They used to go to the Blue Room from the Famous Door. Smilin' Joe used to fill in for them until they returned. It was really hard working four and five jobs a day (according to RBA), but they didn't get much money for all that work. If they made two hundred dollars a week they considered it plenty of money. The band used to get ten or fifteen dollars for those jobs. They used to pack the Coker Room at the [Municipal] auditorium. There would be about five hundred people there, and they were told it was only forty. SP said he got gypped all around. The band was incorporated.

SP played on the Capitol with Tony Almerico. When SP was about fifteen years old, he played on a boat. The boat had two bands, a colored band, Fate Marable's band, and an extra band that a club would hire so the music would be continuous for dancing. SP played with Dan Hughes, Jack Laine, [Happy] Schilling, and others on the boat.

SP never worked at the Silver Slipper before it was the Dream Room. He was at the Casino Royale. SP never knew Martin Burke, the drummer.

SP mentions that Paul Mares, Jess Stacy, George Wettling and he worked at Harry's New York Bar in Chicago. SP heard of Omer Simeon who worked with Jelly Roll Morton. SP and Marvin Saxbe are good friends. [Cf. discographies.] They used to work together. The players in the Triangle Band were Tony Margiotta [trumpet]; Saddo Margiotta [clarinet]; SP on trombone; Lou Boudro [sp ?] on drums; and Harry Barth on trumpet.

SP says he likes to play medium tempo best so that people can understand the music. He thinks fast tunes are a lot of noise. SP