

Also present: William Russell

St. Joseph's Day,

"Chinee" Foster, who was born March 19, 1900 played with both white and colored bands when he was quite young *[CF mentions Lorenzo Tio Jr. June 21, 1961]* he says musicians were

in ~~XXXX~~ short supply then, as there were no juke boxes, and the demand

for musicians of any color was great. *CF mentions clarinetist Lorenzo Tio [Jr.]* CF did a Chinese act ~~XM~~ once in

a theater, and ~~XM~~ from then on he was known as "Chinee."

CF was born in New Orleans, on St. Philip between Burgundy and Dauphine [streets]. He got his first drum set at the place where he began playing, the *[Ivy Theater]* Ivy Theater, at Annette and Villere [streets]; CF distributed handbills for the theater, but he also sometimes played there with a trio ~~X~~ consisting of drums, piano and clarinet; two white men, Henry McCarty and Pete Lewis, played piano and clarinet, respectively. CF was eight years old when he played with that trio. He was so small that when he played on a balcony he couldn't be seen while seated behind his drums.

Talk of drums, including flat, single-head Haitian drums. Mack Murray [sp?] and John Vigne [drummers] are mentioned; WR asks if Mack Murray had a snare drum made from a banjo head; CF doesn't know, but Mack Murray's snare had only one head. CF's first bass drum beater pedal was a crowfoot pedal, pre-dating the overhead beater pedal; the crowfoot *The first [?] was used on the bass drum.* ~~WA~~ struck and was mounted like the ~~X~~ contemporary floor pedal. CF mentions

**- The [?] was used only on the [?]*

playing slide whistle on his last recordings with [Oscar "Papa"]
Celestin; he says that he, Louis Armstrong and "Red Happy" [Bolton], drums,
were the only slide whistle players in the city.

"Red Happy," then playing with Chris Kelly, and CF, playing with
Celestin, had a contest at Italian Hall; the musicians voted CF the
better drummer; CF says one reason is that "Red Happy" always played his
own way, for himself, but CF almost always played for the band. CF also
won another contest ~~XXX~~ over "Red Happy." "Red Happy" was about two
years older than CF.

555 The first "band of music" that CF actually played with [aside from
the ~~XX~~ trio mentioned earlier?] was that of John Robichaux, who was play-
ing for a benefit at St. Katherine's Hall, across from Charity Hospital
on Tulane Avenue; CF was making his first communion there, and the priest
in charge asked that CF be allowed to sit in on drums, guaranteeing ~~XXXX~~
payment for anything CF might break; CF's ~~sX~~ ~~XX~~ sit-in went well. Walter
Brundy's brother, John Brundy, was the drummer with Robichaux at the time;
Andrew ~~KI~~ [probably Henry?] Kimball was playing bass violin; Robichaux,
(left-handed) violin; Miss Margaret, piano; Eddie Atkins, trombone; Charlie
McCurdy, clarinet. The year was 1910. [April I, 27 July 1960, p. 2, 91.]

After playing with Robichaux, CF began playing with the Imperial

ABBEY "CHINEE" FOSTER
I [of 3]
March 9, 1961

Band, led by Manuel Perez, cornet; other personnel: Buddy Johnson, trombone; Alphonse Picou, clarinet; René Batiste, guitar; Jimmy Brown, bass. CF played his first job with that band at Lincoln Park; CF was still only a boy.

CF played as a relief drummer until his mother was able to buy drums for him; he says the older fellows would take time with him [to help him?] because he was playing things the older drummers didn't play.

CF got his experience by playing on cheese boxes, while other small boys played ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ combs. CF made his own drum sticks out of chair rungs. CF now prefers lightweight sticks. More talk of drums. CF tunes his snare drum to the pitch F, his bass drum to the pitch D [cf. Reel III, 6-29-60]. CF says if he sees that some drummer is just about to catch on to some of his licks, breaks, etc., he will ~~W~~ play the lick, break, etc. in a different way. CF says he plays ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ breaks he hasn't heard anyone play since 1926. CF says a drummer has to make his breaks in time or he'll mess up the band; he says the bass drum is for keeping time in breaks, the hands for making ~~X~~ the "foolishness." CF says Mack Murray taught him to keep time; CF liked Mack Murray for orchestra playing; he liked Louis Cottrell [Sr.] for street drumming. Mack Murray told CF always to keep ~~XXX~~ time with

his bass drum, regardless of what he was doing with his hands; CF found that to be a good rule, one he has followed ever since. CF played many solos with bands in the old days; he always hummed the melody to himself as he took his solo. (CF scats the trio of "High Society," accompanying himself by beating two lead pencils on the cover of a tape recorder, to demonstrate [with his foot?] his use of a varying number of beats per measure.) (CF continues various demonstrations; he later used drum sticks, adding cymbal effects by hitting a tin box, and tom tom effects by hitting an empty cardboard box.) (CF demonstrates playing on drum sticks only; he shows how he changes the pitch of the stick.) WR mentions Baby Dodds and "nerve beats." CF says Mack Murray used the stick on stick technique. CF says he tried to teach Alex Bigard the stick on stick technique. He says Alex Bigard's uncle, Emile Bigard, was a great violinist; Emile was the first one to vote CF a better drummer than "Red Happy" and let CF know how good he was.

End of Reel I

Also present: William Russell, [later] Johnny
Wiggs, [still later] Ralph Collins

(CF seats a blues and demonstrates what he might play during a blues.)

CF has many special effects other drummers don't have. (He demonstrates, but says he needs the full set of drums for full effect.) During solos, he always keeps ^{at least} one stick playing the snare drum; with the other, he may beat the tom tom or the bass drum or some other trap. WR mentions that CF is right-handed; WR says Sammy Penn (perhaps?) and Alfred Williams are left-handed drummers. CF ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ illustrates the way he holds his drum sticks. Talk of bass drum pedal technique and of the advisability of muffling the bass drum. WR says Bunk Johnson and a lot of other old musicians liked a lot of bass drum ^{in the old days} CF says muffling the bass drum ~~XXX~~ destroys the characteristic sound; the bass drum should produce a "humming sound." Bass drum pads make the drum sound out of tune; CF says most ~~X~~ contemporary drummers don't know how to tune their drums. The batter head of snare drum or bass drum should be tighter than the other head; [the other head is the one which should be tuned to a certain pitch?] CF says when he was working at the Lyric Theater he would trade ideas with [Johnny?] Stein, drummer then working at the Palace Theater. [There apparently is some confusion concerning terms here; WR says one tunes the snare head to the pitch F, ~~XXXXX~~ and the other head is left ~~XX~~ looser; CF agrees; it is probable that the batter head is tuned, and the snare

head is left looser.]

*1950-1951
Talk on CF's drum kit.*

CF played snare drum in the street; "my hand [was] too fast for bass drum." He explains that he would forget he was playing the bass drum and would begin playing snare drum licks, or parts. CF played with organized brass bands and with casual brass bands; organized brass bands he played with: Onward, Pickwick, Excelsior and Tuxedo, which were the only ~~organized~~ organized brass bands then. Henry Allen, Sr. was leader of the Pickwick; he was the father of Henry "Red" Allen, Jr. Ernest Trepagnier was bass drummer in the Pickwick. Trepagnier, the original drummer with [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin's band, was succeeded by CF in that group. WR says the English drummer, Barry Martyn, bought a Duplex drum which had belonged to Trepagnier from Alfred Williams. When CF joined the Tuxedo Band, replacing Trepagnier, [William "Baba"] Ridgley was the trombonist [and manager] of the band. (Johnny Wiggs enters.)

5:43 Johnny Wiggs reminisces about the Saturday night supper dances held at La Louisiane [restaurant], where CF worked with Celestin; [John]

Robichaux and ~~XXX~~ Joe Oliver also led bands which played those affairs.

CF mentions other exclusive jobs he played.
CF played with Oliver when they were in the [Kid] Ory band; the band was "just gigging" [i. e., playing ~~XXX~~ casual jobs, no regular locations or dates]. WR mentions that Oliver, with Ory, played at the ^{La} Little Theater; *lc*

CF says that was on [North] Claiborne between Conti and St. Louis [streets].

Oliver was working there when he left [for Chicago?]; Louis Armstrong replaced him; "Red Happy" Bolton was playing drums with the band then.

(34) WR says Henry Martin also played drums with Ory; CF says Martin was another left-handed drummer. JW says "Red Happy" Bolton was a great drummer; he asks if CF still plays; CF says, "Yeah, I still play when I-- I do more lip work ~~XXXX~~ than anything."

"Black Benny" [Williams] was a great street bass drummer, but he wasn't an orchestra [i. e., he wasn't good?] drummer. *He introduced the 4/4*

beats (CF plays a drum cadence such as would be used in the street.)

WR mentions drummer Baby Dodds, who called a certain roll a press roll; WR says "Cie" [Frazier] calls it a crush roll. (CF scats "St. Louis Blues" and demonstrates the roll under discussion.)

CF and JW agree that a drummer can make or break a band, no matter how good the front line [i. e., horns] are. (CF ~~XXXX~~ again scats "St. Louis Blues" and demonstrates the art of playing sticks alone and on the improvised drum.) [Ralph Collins has entered.]

CF talks about the number of beats he uses on the bass drum; he says the number depends on what the drummer wants to do for the band. (CF scats a blues and demonstrates different numbers of beats ~~on~~ on the bass

(drum.) (CF again scats a blues and different numbers of bass drum
beats.)

WCF answers JW affirmatively, saying that he did play with John
Robichaux at the [Lyric] Theater. JW says he danced to CF's drumming
every Saturday night at X La Louisiane; JW and CF agree that the time
was around 1917 and 1918.

End of Reel II

Also present: William Russell, Johnny Wiggs,
Ralph Collins

CF says Joe Oliver and Bunk Johnson "were on the same style." CF says Peter Bocage, Manuel Perez, Arnold Metoyer and Andrew Kimball were more musical, i. e., they read music more and ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ ~~XXXX~~ stuck to the written music in content and style more than Oliver and Johnson. *JW says that was the exercise book.* CF says that when ~~NW~~ he was a child the top bands wouldn't hire a drummer who could read because if a drummer had to read music he wouldn't be able to swing the band. CF, WR and JW talk about how smart and fast a good drummer, playing by head, has to be. WR says Baby Dodds talked about that.

The only ~~X~~ lessons in music and drumming CF ever had were in arguments, i. e., discussions, with other drummers. CF mentions his own phenomenal memory.

Mack Murray [sp?] was a good street drummer, ~~XXXX~~ a good show drummer, a good dance drummer. John Vigne played in the street, but he was basically a dance drummer. The real street drummers were Louis Cottrell [Sr., snare drum?] and Ernest Trepagnier [bass drum]; in later years, "Bebé" Matthews, brother of Bill Matthews, was a good street drummer. WR asks which ~~X~~ of the Matthews brothers, including Bill (later a trombonist), was the best drummer; CF says "Bebé" was best. Other Matthews brothers, all ~~of whom were~~ drummers, were Remus and "[Brown] Happy."

"Happy" and Remus are dead; "Happy" ^{died} ~~was~~ first. "Bebé" played a while with Manuel Perez's Imperial Band. ~~WR~~ Walter Brundy was a great show drummer and a great orchestra drummer; he wasn't explosive, but he balanced the band. CF thinks Cottrell was "the best rolling drummer we had; he could make more different rolls than any one man I ever heard in my life."

WR says Alfred Williams tunes his snare drum to a high pitch; Cie Frazier tunes his lower; Baby Dodds tuned his to a high pitch. CF puts medium tension on his snare drum; he tunes his snare drum (the batter head) to F and his bass drum (the batter head) to D. (III)

WR mentions that ~~XXXX~~ in military bands the bass drum and the snare drums play cadence [i. e., the drum beats used between numbers played by the entire band], but the New Orleans brass bands have the snare drum ~~XXXXX~~ play cadence alone; CF says that's the way it has been, but that the white bands in New Orleans use the bass drum also; the colored bands are the only ones who use snare drum alone.

CF says the reason the bass drum is always to the left of the snare drum in New Orleans brass bands is so the snare drummer can see what the bass drummer is beating; the bass drummer can clip his music [if any] to his bass drum, but the snare drummer has no place for his; ~~X~~

the snare drummer can get his time from the bass drummer.

Henry Zeno was a good drummer, both in the street and in the dance band.

CF advocates playing drums for the benefit of the entire band, not for the benefit of the drummer. He says the drummer should help the blowing instruments, give them support and fill in the holes they leave. He says ~~XXXX~~ he might use four beats to a measure when two beats are indicated by the written music because four beats might sound better; if he discovers that four beats crowd the music too much, he will change to fewer beats per measure. CF advocates playing one's own style, not copying the style of ~~XXXXXXXX~~ an admired person. CF says his business cards ^{bore} ~~XXXX~~ the inscription, "I originate while others imitate."

CF mentions playing a job with [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin for Commodore Jahncke on a yacht named "Reveille;" they went across the lake to Madisonville and Mandeville although they had been warned not to go out because of a storm; someone took motion pictures of the trip; the year was 1923.

CF began wearing long pants about the time of the big storm of 1915; he was then working with Henry Davis, a good trumpet player; they were then working for Tony [Vicari?], who had a night club at St. Philip and

Decatur [streets].

JW mentions Buddy Bolden. CF doesn't know that he ever heard him; he did hear that Bolden was the loudest, most powerful trumpet player during his time. CF later played with men who had played with Bolden. WR mentions Frankie Duson; CF mentions [Willie] Cornish.

The best jazz and barrelhouse trumpet player CF ever heard was Joe Oliver; the smoothest and most musical trumpet player was Manuel Perez.

Joe Lindsay was an "ordinary" drummer. WR, who mentioned him, says Lindsay played with Kid Ory, and with Louis Armstrong when he was young [when both Armstrong and Lindsay were young?]. CF says Lindsay did most of his playing with men like Chris Kelly and Sam Morgan.

WR asks about drummer Henry Martin; he says Martin also played with Ory. CF says Martin was "a ^{great} very sensational drummer." CF agrees with WR that Martin was left-handed. ~~WR~~ Martin was good in the street, in shows and ~~X~~ at dances--"in other words, an all-around drum player."

CF played with trumpeter Freddy Keppard; "nice blues player, he was a blues player; he wasn't a real musical player, he was a blues player."

The musical [i. e., reading] band CF most liked to play with was Celestin's; the faking band he most liked to play with was Ory's band.

CF liked to play any kind of music, although he says he played blues so much in the old days that to this day he doesn't like to play blues.

(CF X scats "Over the Waves" and demonstrates how he would play the tune, a waltz.)

End of Reel III