

EDDIE DAWSON
Reel 1
April 5, 1972

Also present: Hans Asberg
Lars I. Edegran
Richard B. Allen
Flora (Mrs. Eddie) Dawson
Notes: Lars I. Edegran
Summary: Kay L. Wicker
Check: Richard B. Allen
Retype: Kay L. Wicker

ED's full name is Eddie Joseph Dawson. [Often called Eddie Dorsey by other musicians. RBA, Apr. 18, 1972.] ED does not remember valve trombonist Baboul Augustin or Valentine [sp?].

ED was an altar boy at St. Katherine's church. Around the corner from the church was St. Katherine's Hall on Tulane Avenue near Howard [St., ^{not} LaSalle]. He was raised in the Third Ward and went to school at St. Katherine's. The dance hall was separate from the church. ED played in a band with Kid Rena at St. Katherine's Hall. Many bands played there including Buddy Petit's perhaps.

12:36 There were many bands then: Kid Howard, Chris Kelly, the Pelican Band with leader Edward Clem and Frankie Duson, trombone. Kid Ory lived around Perdido and Liberty. KO played with Edward Clem on spot jobs. Later he formed his own band and left New Orleans. Dances at St. Katherine's were held about once a week or once a month. They were open to the public, and tickets were sold. Father Mole [sp?] was the priest who was in charge of the church and the hall. (Mrs. ED offers soft drinks.) No liquor was served, but they had sandwiches and soft drinks. There was no ratty dancing. They played Dixieland, now and then a hymn.

Eddie Dawson
Reel 1
April 5, 1972

2

"Dixie jazz music" started that way. When ED was an altar boy, there were bands that played in the hall, but ED wasn't playing music, he was just going to school. ED left Catholicism when he joined the fraternal organizations.

1:16 ED is now Colonel of the 13th regiment (the military department of the Odd Fellows). It is possible to become a general or a brigadier general. ED is also a major on the Grand Staff. ED is going to the meeting of the Grand Staff in Gary, Indiana in August. ED is in charge of four or five companies and three [groups of] Auxiliary daughters. Machine off. The Odd Fellows have parades on Peter Ogden Day, the second Sunday in May, and Patriarchy Memorial in October. ED asks Flo (his wife) if she knows "the history of Peter Ogden." ED says Ogden's anniversary is around the second Sunday in May. ED has been an Odd Fellow since 1920. Booker T. Glass is the oldest Odd Fellow in New Orleans. He (BTG) is now 90 years old.

ED and BTG have played together. BTG used to play drums in a dance band. Now he only plays bass drum. He was a good [dance band] drummer and bass drummer: now he is a famous brass band man. He was a young man when ED was a boy. He is probably about ten years older than ED. ED thinks BTG played with the Excelsior Band. [Cf. BTG, reel ?]

Eddie Dawson
Reel 1
April 5, 1972

3

The oldest brass bands that ED remembers are the Olympia, Onward, Eureka and Excelsior. [Cf. other sources RBA, April 18, 1972] Dance bands included the Eureka; Excelsior; Piron's; Buddy Petit's; the Creole Serenaders, [which was] Peter Bocage's band; and Celestin's. BTG played with the Creole band[s] from Downtown. BTG was from Downtown. Uptown men usually played with Uptown bands; Downtown men, with Downtown bands.

Edward Clem was the leader of the Pelican Band. Other members were Willie Warner (clarinet), Frankie Duson (trombone), Bob Lyons (bass), ED (guitar) and "a little dark fellow" (drums). BL and EC had had a falling out, and ED switched to bass. Emile Riley (guitar) usually replaced ED. They used different guitarists on spots. The Pelican Band played out of town mostly, in such towns as Amite, Lacombe, Bayou Lacombe, Bayou Lafouche, Lake Charles, and Shreveport. EC had pull with the conductor on the S[outhern] P[acific] Railroad, and the band got a cheaper fare. The band never played on the train. They would stay in a place for a weekend. EC came to New Orleans from the country somewhere. There was a good drummer from uptown in the Pelican Band. He never played with another band. He was a "dark fellow". He was not Dee Dee Chandler, MacMurray,

Eddie Dawson
Reel 1
April 5, 1972

4

Tillman, Willigan, or Little Mack Lacey. EC used Cook Shop Son most of the time; he was EC's first drummer. Cook Shop Son was the son of the owner of a cook shop which was located near Arthur Williams School [i.e., Fisk School?]. Don Martin was a bass player. He was the brother of Henry Martin. Coochie Martin was the other brother. DM serenaded 3:10 only. He was an amateur and started out on the guitar. ED started out with guitar and mandolin, serenading at weekend parties. He also played bass, but not banjo, at that time. He first played banjo with Hypolite Charles. Anna, ED's sister, didn't play. Eddie Garland is "around 80, easy" and is younger than ED. Anna was EG's girlfriend. ED played in his brother Johnny Garland's band. JG, clarinetist, had a six piece band. Then EG was not picking well but was a good bow player. ED started 4/4 rhythm [picking] with one finger. ED played with bow mostly. They played a variety of music, class [i.e., classical?] music and Dixieland. Some pieces called for a bow. "Piccaninny" was the greatest bass player here. He died. He used a bow, picked, and made double raps.

3:34 Arthur Banks, called "Chicken," was a mandolin and guitar player. He didn't play regularly with anyone, just "a little good timing...on the weekend." Edward Clem used a violin

Eddie Dawson
Reel 1
April 5, 1972

5

player, Professor Young from Donaldsonville. "Piccaninny" usually played with a three or four piece band. He didn't belong to a special band and was not a professional musician.

3:46 There were many short [i.e., small] bands in ED's early days. These were string bands. There was a white four or five piece string band from the area of the Irish Channel. Raymond Burke could give the history of this band. ED used to serenade at his friends' houses at night with a string band and surprise them. People would invite them in and give them drinks.

3:57 Jobs paid \$3.50 a man a night. Music was cheap those days. There was a seven or eight or nine piece band at the Francs Amis [Hall], the San Jacinto [Club] and the Autocrat [Club]. They had big dances there.

The drummer with Kid Clayton was also a good harmonica player. He was a bushy-headed fellow named Jacques (or Jock) who also played bones. Dave Bailey also played harmonica and drums. His brother Duck Ernest played bass.

4:08 Some good violin players were: Peter Bocage (who didn't play with any short bands), Manuel Manetta, and Freddie Keppard. FK started on the violin. [Cf. Louis Keppard, reel ?] FK was a sight reader. Louis Armstrong didn't get musical training until he went North.

Eddie Dawson
Reel 1
April 5, 1972

6

He was the only one who was not a good reader [!! RBA,
April 18, 1972.] (End of track 1) LA didn't know divi-
sion [of time values].

4:20 Tinette [sp?] was a good violin player and was good at
reading music. He worked with ED [i.e., in ED's band?]
in 1920 at Harry and Charlie Parker's dance hall before the
^{→ PARKERS GONE by 1920 [Joel Palmer] 5/13/84}
fire. [What fire? RBA, April 19, 1972]. Manuel Manetta
played piano, ED, guitar, John Vigne, drums, Tinette, violin,
and Old Man Willie [E.] Humphrey, clarinet. "They" didn't
allow "blowing" (i.e., brass) in the [red light] district
at that time, just piano, drums, clarinet and guitar.

ED was the first to bring in [brass] instruments. ED had
4:28 no bassist. There was dancing in the hall, and liquor was
sold. Women worked in the dance hall, hustling. Men would
come in off the ships to spend money and dance and have a
good time. They would drop their money in the "kitty box"
for the numbers they wanted to hear. This was the last job
for Tinette that ED knows of. ED doesn't know what happened
to T. The fire [see above] at Billy Phillips's "kilt every-
4:34 thing." Freddie Keppard (cornet) sat in with the band one
night. The boss, HP, offered FK protection (because FK
was not supposed to play there) and promised to get a permit

Eddie Dawson
Reel 1
April 5, 1972

7

from the mayor so FK could play there regularly. Joe ["King"] Oliver's band [i.e., probably six or seven men] began playing at Huntz and Nagel's soon after. Brass instruments were not used before this because they were considered too loud, and they would disturb the peace.

4:41 ED doesn't remember Abadie's. RBA says that the band at Abadie's included Joe Oliver, Richard M. Jones, Big Eye Louis Nelson, Wooden Joe [Nicholas], etc.

4:46 ED says that JO's Magnolia Band, which was before Celestin[s band], had Louis Keppard (guitar), Pops Foster (bass), Willie Foster (violin), and Charlie McCurdy [sp?] (clarinet). CM was the best clarinet player and was also a saxophonist. He could write a melody on his cuff after he had heard it [once]. He was better than Bechet, about the same as Tio. He's been dead a long time.

5:00 ED worked with Charlie Galloway's band, playing guitar, for about two or three years. CG (bassist) had one leg and had a good "Dixieland" band. He was younger than ED.

[Cf. other sources.] "Cripple Pill" [Coycault] played clarinet. There was also a famous guitarist, a "dark fellow," in the band, but ED does not know his name. ED doesn't remember Frank Burnett (or Barnett), drummer, who

5:14 played with CG. Ernest Roubleau is mentioned. ED has

Eddie Dawson
Reel 1
April 5, 1972

8

heard of Hugh "Hughie" Rankin (bassist with Billy (or Henry) Payton, accordion, RBA). ED has heard of B (or H) P.

He remembers an old guitarist named Jim Gibson. Philip Nickerson is another famous guitarist. His brother, Sam Nickerson was a good bass player. PN and SN played in "standard" bands, not serenading groups. ED doesn't remember others in the family.

5:26 ED was living on Bienville Street with his late first wife when the Robert Charles riot occurred. This was over 35 years ago. He was playing with Kid Rena then. The mob came up to Claiborne and Poydras. From Claiborne back [i.e., towards the lake] between Tulane and Poydras, was the Battlefield. [Cf. dates with other data. KR's age at that time? RBA, April 19, 1972.] The Battlefield bunch was rough and armed. Some "bad guys" in the bunch were: Willie Peen [sp?], the Keelin brothers, Frank (who also played trumpet) and "Chippy" [sp?], and Jamsie Baker. The [old] Basin [Canal] was back there. "Schooners would come in...as far as Erato before you get to Rampart Street.... That's how far Basin would run." Boats would bring in lumber from across the lake. The Madison Lumber Company would send boatloads of green lumber. People used to

Eddie Dawson
Reel 1
April 5, 1972

9

shoot dice on Bertrand [Street] between Poydras and Lafayette. ED lived nearby on Bolivar between Gravier and Perdido. The Hypolites [sp?] were among the bad bunch who would catch a policeman and beat them up. They would also take the policeman's helmet, nightstick and gun. A. J. Bradley, who was "short, but...all man," was caught shooting dice. He knocked the policeman off his horse, took his helmet and nightstick, and brought them to the [police] precinct 5:53 [station]. They let Bradley go, but the policeman got fired.

"Dutch" Krummer [sp?], a mounted officer, was afraid of these men also. "Boar Hog" was from around Franklin Street. Jack Lee and others ran kotch games in the district, on Gravier between Franklin [Street, now Crozat] and Saratoga. There were two red-light districts, one uptown and one downtown around the Vieux Carre. [Cf. other data.] Black Benny was a fighter and a drummer. "He was pretty bad." ED can't place Aaron Harris or "Sore Dick."

6:05 There were also some bad women. Mary Jack the Bear was a hustler who, according to RBA, killed Black Benny. She would fight with razors, knife, or her fists.

6:08 Ann Cook was "another one." She lived near Franklin [Street] and Gravier. AC "bummed" at John Segretta's

Eddie Dawson
Reel 1
April 5, 1972

10

bar room. Louis Armstrong and Kid Shots Madison (trumpet) also came from that neighborhood.] ED never saw AC sing with a band. ED never heard AC sing at all. ED doesn't remember Genevieve Davis, who played piano and sang. GD recorded with Louis Dumaine (as vocalist) as did AC.

There were female vocalists in some bands. "We" had a band with a woman who played piano and sang. ED has a photo. This was an organized band with Manuel Sayles, August Lanoix (tuba), ED (banjo), and Dominick "Ti' Boy" Remy (trumpet). Both Hall boys [probably Clarence and Robert] were on saxophone, Harris [?], Niggie (?) [or McGee?] was the drummer. ED thinks Niggie(?) was a good drummer. Manny Sayles took ED's place on banjo in the band. [See letter August Lanoix to RBA, 18 Sept, 1972.] [Manuel Sayles does not remember this band. RBA, May 4, 1972.] The band was famous. The lady was a good pianist and a reader. She also played organ at St. Katherine's Church. She was from "back o' town."

6:32

[Many hustling women could play piano but weren't professional. There were places where there were "little passovers" at which pianists and guitarists played the blues, etc. Many of those women would play piano for pleasure.

Eddie Dawson
Reel 1
April 5, 1972

11

6:36 Ann Cook was hustling in the district. ED didn't know of her any other way. ED lived on Liberty between Gravier and Perdido. RBA heard that AC killed seven men with her bare hands. ED doubts that she kilt all -- [changes subject.] "Lessie" killed a woman on Gravier between Franklin and Saratoga. She was in the bunch with Ann Cook "and them." Esther Bigeou and Lela Bolden are unknown to ED.

6:44 ED's father was in the Spanish-American War. ED was drafted in 1915 or 1916 [sic] but was never called. [Cf. data on World War I drafting.] Armistice was declared on the day he was due to go.

ED doesn't recall Octave Landry, trombone, but he says that Frankie [sp?] Landry [i.e., De Landro?] was a guitar player. Tom Harris, Tom Albert, Tricky Tom are mentioned.

End of Reel.