

Interviewer: Richard B. Allen

This interview was recorded in Seminar Room 2 of the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library on August 20, 1959.

Punch's real name is Earnest Burden, but he is better known as Punch Miller or "Kid" Punch. [~~This is a personal matter--RBA~~] Punch was born in Raceland, Louisiana on May 10, 1894 [he says later he was really born in 1895--see p. 6].

Some of the old parents out in the country were in a big band and they got a bunch of new instruments, so everyone that had a son, a grandson, etc., passed on the old instruments to them. Punch was lucky enough to come out pretty good: first they started him on the bass drum, then he started blowing the baritone and played it pretty good, so then he got the cornet and he took that and made good history. Of course, he wasn't reading music, but he played everything that he could whistle. The old people all died out. They were mostly readers. The music was on the same order in that band as jazz, i.e., what is now called Dixieland. That is all Punch came up under and all he knew anything about until the bop came out and he started playing a little bit of that, but he was never crazy about it' but he always did play "my Dixieland." The old-timers played mostly marches; they knew a

lot of marches. They didn't [know, or only play ?] pieces like "Banana Peeling" and all that stuff way back there. "Oh, You Beautiful Doll," they played all that kind of stuff. The marches would be 6/8. To swing in 6/8 you have to slow it down a bit and cut it up: "like a whole note, you make either one half or two half notes out of it. [This does not sound like jazz--RBA]

The man who taught Punch was Paul Rosier; he was a very good reader, nice musicianer. He was about eleven when he started playing on the bass drum and he stayed on that for about a year. Then he picked up the baritone and carried it along for about six months. They were playing pretty regular, so the boys on trumpet figured that he was pretty strong and they wanted him to play trumpet to help out more. He took the trumpet and he played it mighty good.

Out in the country he heard: "Oh, You Beautiful Doll," "Take Your Hands Away," and others he can't remember. "Take Your Hands Away" is sung by Punch at this point in part to give an idea of how it goes. They had a lot of people playing the blues. "Grizzly Bear" and "Everybody's Doin' It" were two other songs that they played when Punch was a kid. [Check dates.] Punch then sings the song "Grizzly Bear," relative to a dance of the same name. RBA says there is another about the Grizzly Bear: "Lord, if you can't help me, please don't help that grizzly bear." Punch

knows that and says it is an old piece ["The Preacher and the Bear"].

In the country they didn't do much singing, just played; they didn't sing the blues much. Punch didn't start singing until he came to New Orleans. Nobody would sing out there unless it was somebody that would start singing while they were dancing; that was the only way you had singing in those times. People would do a lot of singing when they were cleaning up around the house.

Punch plowed out in the country and made sugar cane. He would get lonesome on the farm and always wanted to leave there from when he was a little kid. It never was in his mind to stay there. He would sing some kind of blues or something to himself when he was plowing. When they were cutting the sugar cane, almost everyone would be singing. He would sing something like: "I want to leave this place and find a better home."

A man by the name of Bob Keeno used to sing a song that Punch liked about: "I ain't had nothing in a long time," and Punch sings a little of it now. An old man named Johnny Lewis used to sing that. [Did both Lewis and Keeno sing this?] Johnny Lewis was just one of the farmers. Punch doesn't remember the words to the songs that the farmers used to sing, but remembers some of the airs. However, he sings a few words of another one: "I whipped my girl with a singletree. You might of heard her hollin', 'Don't murder poor me.'" He recites:

"'Tain't but one man on the road out here; That's Buddy McMillan and he don't come here." That is what they used to sing. [Get VI 38578, Memphis Jug Pan, "I Whipped My Woman With Singletree.] People didn't take these songs though and put them into jazz tunes; wasn't anybody to fix [write?] anything like that. Punch could rewrite them now.

In the churches they would sing hymns, real good hymns, too. The one that Punch liked best was "His Eye Is on the Sparrow, and I Know He's Watching Me." [Compare Mahalia Jackson, Apollo 78.] Another was, "Oh, How I Love Jesus, Because He First Loved Me," and "Nearer My God to Thee." Punch still likes these songs. There were a lot of long meter hymns, but Punch never could keep up with them good. The hymns that the bands play now came out in these late years, like "When the Saints Go Marching In." "[Just a] Closer Walk [With Thee][ is from further back and so is "Over in the Gloryland." [Punch was ill, not hung over.] The only instrument in the church in the old days was the piano. Nowadays, REA says, you see trombones, guitars, and everything.

They had some guitar players out in the country and a boy named Joseph Philips could pick a guitar. Punch has never heard anybody play a guitar like he did. He is in Kissimmee, Florida, now, which is called a cattle town. He plays bass now and guitar. He picked with his fingers and he could rap [with a pick], too.

Another fellow Punch worked with was called by those who knew him "Rooster" but his name is Lonnie Johnson. He and Punch played guitar and trumpet up and down Bayou Lafourche a long time ago. He is from near Memphis, [Tennessee] in a town something like Tennessee City. A lot of them used to hang around the Bayou Lafourche area because out on the farms if you didn't work, you couldn't stay there. When you get on the Bayou out on the levee, no one could bother you, except the sheriff and if you just tell him you are laying off cause you are sick or something and he asks you where you stay and you tell him you live in Greentown or Morristown, well, he couldn't bother you, couldn't bother you unless you lived on this side on the plantations. So they didn't do anything but stay on the levee and play music about three nights a week and lived on it, too. They would make about \$1.50 and some good people would give them \$2.00 per night. A dollar then would buy enough groceries to last you all week.

They had three bands around Raceland: Bayou des Allemands, Raceland, and [Boutte, or Bowie ?], Louisiana. The bands were called the Bowie Band, the Bayou des Allemands Band, and the Raceland Band. Spencer "Mike" Taylor had the band in Bowie. The men were sawmill workers, only played on Sundays. Paul Rosier, who taught Punch, had the band in Bayou des Allemands. A fellow named "Tooker" had the band at Raceland, the old men's band. Johnny Hill[s] took over the young boys' band, but he never did play, so he gave it to

Punch. Punch didn't stay there long; when he got to be sixteen or seventeen he went on in the army. He put his age up in order to do so; they were calling for men from 18 to 35 years of age. He was really born in 1895, but he told them he was born in 1894, let it stay there.

Personnel of Punch's band: Johnny Hill, tp; Claiborne Roy [or Royal]. [tb or alto]; Esau Lewis, tp; Davy Lewis, [bd, alto]; Oscar Shields, tuba [or baritone]; Joseph Pugh, th; Selvin Pugh, th; Joseph Philips, tuba; Arthur Dukes, baritone; Daniel Hadley, cl; Kemp [Oscar?] Hadley, cl; Holley Taylor, tp and sd; "Bluff" Oscar Iyo [spelling?], alto; [Punch is confused in listings] Punch, tp. They had about eighteen pieces. Four [or three?] trombones, two baritones, two tubas, three altos, 2 snare drum players, one bass drummer. No saxophone. Two clarinets. Four trumpets. They had an orchestra, too. Joseph Philips played tuba in the big band, guitar and bass viol for dancing. The other bands were large ones, too. Eleven or twelve pieces. In Punch's band they tried to make rows of three men abreast for parades. They had two baritones and an alto walking together, and two altos and a trombone walking together. Tubas walked in front in the parades. Cornet played the lead. Esau Lewis played an E flat trumpet; the others played B flat trumpets. He couldn't play much, but you could hear him far, way up over everybody. He played melody, the lead. (Scats to demonstrate how much higher [one octave?] E flat trumpet played.)

Order in marching: tubas, baritones, trombone, altos, trumpets, clarinets, drums. Order has been changed now; trombones put in front. Didn't used to play the trombone the way they do now--didn't need so much room in front of them. Would play it across, up, out of the way of everybody. They used two slide trombones and one valve.

The Bowie Band and the des Allemands Band used to come around to "buck" them. Used to call it a band concert. The Bowie Band was the best, but none of its members have become famous.

Johnny Lewis's son, older than his sons David and Esau, came here, played bass tuba, was the talk of New Orleans, used to play with Buddy Bolden. He was called "BoBo" but Punch doesn't know his real name. But Punch has never heard any talk of him here in New Orleans. Punch never saw him. Punch never saw Buddy Bolden. First man he saw when he was getting on his feet with the trumpet was Bunk Johnson. Bunk was playing on an excursion train that passed Raceland going to Houma, Louisiana. Punch went on the excursion, saw Bunk play for the first time. Never saw Joe Oliver until he went to Chicago. Punch didn't come to New Orleans until he left the army in 1919. He did come up to buy clothes on Rampart Street when they made a sugar grinding, but he went right back home to Raceland, never heard any music in those times.

Bunk sounded just like his records, to Punch. He was pretty strong then. Punch remembers his playing "Alexander's Ragtime Band" [1911]. "He could play that all day for me."

Punch asks RBA how long he thinks rock-and-roll will last. Punch has it figured in his mind that it will take something different, noisy, and flashy to knock it out. Cha cha is good music, but not flashy enough to knock out rock-and-roll. Dixieland is going to hang around anyhow, and might get famous again. It's a standard kind of music. RBA says he figures there'll always be people playing the blues. Punch says rock-and-roll "ain't nothing but blues."

The best blues pickers on guitar in Punch's neighborhood [Raceland] were Joseph Philips and Lonnie Johnson. They had a lot more, but didn't compare with these two. "There was a right smart of guitar players. Used to see guys walking up and down the levee with guitars on their shoulders all the time."

Punch offers to get in touch with Joseph Philips for RBA. He's a couple of years older than Punch.

In his army service, Punch was bugler, played in the brass band and the dance orchestra. Used to go along and watch a fellow named "Chif" [Matthews--see Kid Ory, Reel ?] in the brass band parades. Was fast enough to use his fingering, but "Chif" told him that was no good. He knew a little music; Paul Rosier was showing him "pretty good" but couldn't get those marches right. When he could do that,



he didn't have any more trouble.

Tells story about start of his bugling in the army. When he first went in, didn't have uniform yet, men were all lined up, sergeant standing up there with four bugles hanging up on each side, talking about army rules, etc. Punch forgot he told everybody to stay in line, walked out of line, said, "Look here, Sarge, if a man blows one of them bugles there, that's his job" "That's his job. Fall back in line." The sergeant blew "I can't get 'em up," gave Punch a chance to blow, made him a bugler, a corporal. Punch taught other fellows to bugle, including Oscar Shields, who came to same camp.

The captain heard three of them blowing bugles (scats to demonstrate, using hand as mute), called them one night about nine o'clock to show him. "Shucks, Man, I was solid then." Played in the brass band, the string band, and the bugle. Found out later that he was called to leave there over five times, but they always sent somebody else, kept him.

"Chif" is from up on the river, same place as Kid Ory [LaPlace].

END OF REEL I



PUNCH MILLER  
Reel II--retyped  
August 20, 1959

[Allen:] You say Chif's been dead?

[Miller:] Three years.

[Allen:] Three years now. No, I never met him.

[Miller:] You never did?

[Allen:] What did he play, you say?

[Miller:] Trumpet. He was a mighty good trumpet player, too. Good musicianer, I mean--good musician.

[Allen:] And did he play any other instrument? [See Charlie Love Reel?]

[Miller:] No, no. A lot of people don't know I played with [Papa] Celestin, but I did; I played with Celestin a good while. But Jack Carey was my main [Man or band?] you know.

[Allen:] What did you play, second trumpet with Celestin?

[Miller:] Yeah, second trumpet, that's right.

[Allen:] Was that a brass band job, or?

[Miller:] Well, I played in brass bands on parades, but I played-- I'm talking about his dance orchestra now. [I did right smart, you know, the feature(d) trumpet for him?]

[Allen:] And when was that?

[Miller:] I'd say in '22.

[Allen:] Around in there. And who was his second trumpet before you?

[Miller:] Oh, let me see who he had--I believe--no, "Shots"

[Madison] come after me. It was an old man; I forget who it was.

now. But Shots come after me, you know. Then I think [it was] Guy Kelly after Shots, huh?

[Allen:] Either him or Ricard [Alexis]; I can't remember which. They were both in there; I can never remember which is which. So let's see: you were in the Army. Who were some of the other New Orleans guys in the Army with you?

[Miller:] Well, there's Oscar Shields, [then there was about?] three of us--oh, no, what is I'm talking about! Clarence Todd, Chif, this trombone player named Ben, Ben, Ben something--he's from [off?] the river too; real Creole fellow--Ben--he name's Ben; I can't think of his first name.

[Allen:] They call him Benson or something like that?

[Miller:] Yeah, Ben. His name must have been Benjamin, but they called him Ben. But anyhow, Clarence Todd was on piano; Chif and me was on trumpets; and this Ben man--I can't think of his name--tell you the truth, I think the most of them was from New Orleans, but I just can't think of them now. But the most of them were right out of New Orleans.

[Allen:] Well, how did Clarence Todd play, what kind of piano?

[Miller:] Played nice, he played real nice.

[Allen:] Reading piano player?

[Miller:] Yeah, he was a pretty good reader.

[Allen:] Did he play ragtime tunes, or blues, or what?

[Miller:] Yeah, he played all that, yeah. Now that's a man doing some singing; he did right smart singing. But I didn't think much of his voice--I don't want to "critic" or nothing, but I didn't think so much of his voice. But he used to sing, though. And he's a lively fellow. He's a long, tall guy.

[Allen:] Did you ever know Hamp Benson?

[Miller:] Sure; that's a trombone player.

[Allen:] He worked with you--that's right.

[Miller:] Yeah.

[Allen:] It wasn't him on trombone in the Army, though, huh?

[Miller:] No, he wasn't in the Army with me. If he was, I didn't know him then.

[Allen:] It was another Ben that played trombone then.

[Miller:] Paul Ben.

[Allen:] Oh, Paul Ben.

[Miller:] Paul Ben, that's his name, yeah--Paul Ben. I know it would come to me.

[Allen:] I see. Did they feature--around that time, did they feature any tunes like "Maple Leaf Rag" or "Frog Legs Rag" where you were, or?

[Miller:] Yeah, "Maple Leaf" was the famous [one], but I don't know nothing about "Frog Legs."

[Allen:] "Climax."

[Miller:] "Climax."

[Allen:] They played that?

[Miller:] And this--what's that about the leaf? You called that--"Silver Leaf."

[Allen:] "Silver Leaf Rag."

[Miller:] Yeah.

[Allen:] "Rose Leaf" I've heard of too.

[Miller:] They had a "Silver Leaf" too. Yeah. And the other thing was out then in them days, "Panama Rag."

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Miller:] "Panama Rag," we played that. "High Society." We played all them kind of numbers.

[Allen:] That's when you were first getting started.

[Miller:] Yeah, yes sir.

[Allen:] When did they start playing "Make Me a Pallet on the Floor"?

[Miller:] Oh, that's before my time; I've played it, but they start that before my day.

[Allen:] Oh, yeah. What about "Tiger Rag"? When did they start playing that?

[Miller:] Well, I going to tell you now: [?] "Tiger Rag" right here with Jack Carey in New Orleans. We [were] the first ones to start singing "Tiger Rag." Jack Carey band, first band start to singing it--"Hold that Tiger." Yeah.

[Allen:] Well, they used to sing something else about Jack Carey in there too, didn't they?

[Miller:] Why, yeah: "Jack Carey had a daughter on the M water, selling pork chops two for a quarter." Yeah.

[Allen:] Yeah; well, that fits right in, there's a melody it fits in. Now, what was the first band you played with here?

[Miller:] Ernest Johnson. You know Dave Johnson? <sup>[i.e., Dave Bailey]</sup> Played drum? He played [it was at?]. Well, you remember that Sunday you gave me \$2.00 down there by Carrie Boote's?

[Allen:] Yeah.

[Miller:] Well, he was playing the bass drum that Sunday.

[Allen:] Dave Bailey.

[Miller:] Yeah.

[Allen:] Yeah, Dave Bailey.

[Miller:] Yeah; well, that's Ernest Johnson's brother, see? They must be half-brothers. Well anyhow, they all lived way out of front of town there on Chippewa and St. Thomas, that's where they were living then. And what made me go out there, 'twas a boy I was in the Army with--he's dead now; I forget his name. But his mother lived out there and he told me to come and I could stay with him, at his house--we were good friends in the Army, see? So he brought me there, and they really did treat me nice; I lived

good. So that's how I joined that band--he went and told Ernest and them about me, see? And I got in that band there. Well, Jack Carey was on a advertise one Sunday, and he heard me play.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Miller:] Understand? He used to steal guys like that, you know. So he found out where I lived and come out there and talked to me, and I liked to come back this--you know, back of town, anyhow-- so I come on and joined Jack Carey. And I played with Jack a long time, man. 'Tain't but one fellow that I really wished woulda did something, like a record, or some kind of something before he died-- I liked him so much--that was Buddy Petit.

[Allen:] Oh, yeah.

[Miller:] They ain't got nothing of him.

[Allen:] Well, nobody's found it yet. I've heard talk of his records that he's supposed to have made, but you never know.

[Miller:] Well, I mean, who should have it?

[Allen:] "Little Dad" [Clarence Vincent]--you might ask Little Dad/

[Miller:] Little Dad? What'd he play?

[Allen:] Banjo.

[Miller:] Yeah, I know him. What become of him?

[Allen:] He living up near where Willie Humphrey lives.

[Miller:] Yeah, little short fellow, yeah.



[Allen:] Well, anyway, he's supposed to know about it, and various people have talked about it; but I don't know: you can't always tell what to believe, you know.

[Miller:] That's right.

[Allen:] You heard so many stories about him.

[Miller:] That's right.

[Allen:] But who was this Ernest Johnson, now?

[Miller:] Ernest Johnson, a bass player.

[Allen:] Who did he have in his band?

[Miller:] Well, he had--I don't know what this tipping guy [was] named, on trombone; he used to tip when he walked--a dark fellow. And Dave on drum, me on trumpet--well, he used different clarinet players. You see, he didn't never have the same clarinet player. George Boyd played with us a while; what['s] his name, "Little Pill." Did you know?--

[Allen:] "Cripple Pill" [Philip Coycault].

[Miller:] Yeah.

[Allen:] Let's see: did they have a guitar with the band? A banjp?

[Miller:] Yeah--banjo; they had a banjo player out there. I forget--. Dog, that's been so long, I [forget].

[Allen:] Yeah. But a guy from front of town?

[Miller:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] When did the banjo start being used with bands?

[Miller:] Well, they was using guitar when I first come here; then banjo jumped in there all at once. It did last a pretty good while, you know, last a pretty good while.

[Allen:] When did they start using the tubas with the dance bands?  
I wondered about that, too.

[Miller:] Well, I don't know about here, but I know in Chicago I was playing with a boy named Francois Moseley, and he had a fellow in there named William Hilliard, [and that was in the twenties], and he was playing tuba with us. And he played soft, man, you thought it was a bass violin. He didn't play no louder than the orchestra played. He [kept or shut] that tuba right down there. Yeah, William Hilliard; they called him Bill Hilliard.

[Allen:] That's right; he's on the record with you, I think.

[Miller:] Yeah, yeah.

[Allen:] I believe. Well, who was with Jack Carey then?

[Miller:] Jack Carey, myself, George ["Pops"] Foster, Little "Chinee" [Abby Foster], George Boyd. Well, I'll tell you about that now: they had a boy there--I don't know if he's kin to Old Man [John] Robichaux or not, but we used to call him Robichaux-- and he claim he's a relation to Old Man Robichaux; he played violin at the Lyric Theatre. He was real light, with nice hair. Well, he played clarinet with us the most.

[Allen:] Played what, clarinet?

[Miller:] Clarinet, clarinet.

[Allen:] I never heard of him.

[Miller:] Robichaux--well, anybody around here'll tell you. He's younger than any of us, too. But I do believe he [is] dead. We all called him Robichaux, see, cause I went to his house one time to get him to play, and he [?] there--well, we used to whistle for musicians [whistles] like that. So his old mother or somebody come to the door and said, "What dog are you calling?" I said, "Robichaux." Boy, I burnt her up, I says "Robichaux." So he comes to the door and said, "Old man, here I am; don't pay her no mind." You know, just one of them things, you know. And Lorenzo Staulz-- I'm just putting some stuff in now--Lorenzo Staulz was with Jack Carey; so some man wanted us to go to Birmingham to play two nights; [he'd] pay all expenses and give us a hundred dollars a man a night. So Lorenzo was so funny, you know, he asked Jack, he say, "Jack, how much you gonna give him?"--talking about Robichaux. Jack say, "I'm gonna give him \$200." He said, "Man, give me some of that money; don't give that boy all that money. That boy's sitting up there playing 'I Will Follow Where Thee Leadest.' You know I don't want nothing like that." Boy, I can hear Robichaux [up there that boy crying like?] a baby. That's the truth from here to God's heaven.

[Allen:] Did you read with those bands like Ernest Johnson?

[Miller:] No.

[Allen:] Did you read with Jack Carey at all?

[Miller:] No, ~~XXXXXX~~ uh-uh. I ain't going to lie, no.

[Allen:] Yeah, well, nobody was--well, that's good.

[Miller:] 'Tin't but one thing happened--a white lady right at the Audubon Tearoom, wheresomever that was, uptown here; she had a piano copy of a song--this [is] the truth--and she brought that piano copy up there and asked us could we play it, and I played it down. I'll tell you what it was: (scats "Carolina in the Morning"); that piece there I'll never forget as long as I live. And they couldn't follow me, but you know the bass and the guitar was hitting along with me, and she thought it was mighty wonderful. She said, "I think that's nice." But the other boys just [ugh couldn't play?]

[Allen:] That's "Nothing Could BE Finer than to Be in Carolina in the Morning."

[Miller:] Yeah, that's the name of it.

[Allen:] Yeah, I remember that piece. Well now, who were the bands that played mostly--you know, society music, reading, no Dixieland?

[Miller:] Well, Tuxedo--very little reading they had though. I ain't going to lie, they wasn't pla--I'll tell you the band what had the real readers in it: Piron, A. J. Piron.

[Allen:] Did they play any Dixieland?

[Miller:] They played Dixieland, but they played a lot of  
[written] music, beautiful numbers and things, you know?

[Allen:] Yeah.

[Miller:] Yeah.

[Allen:] And what about the Celestin's Tuxedo; what would he  
feature?

[Miller:] Well, [they had?], they played most Dixieland, see; he  
played most Dixieland. Course, he'd know songs from way back,  
though, and that helped him, see. But he played solid ~~DIXIELAND~~  
Dixieland.

[Allen:] How long were you with Jack Carey?

[Miller:] Well, let me see. I about joined Jack in '20, and I  
[went and?] played with Jack until about '23. And I would have  
stayed with him all the time, but George Boyd, Walter Preston,  
Joe Gabriel, Chinee Foster and them guys kept aforcing me, you  
know, to quit Jack, and let's get our own band. They did that a  
long time before I quit. Well, I say, "Well, all right.: They said,  
"We're going to put the band in your name." Kept on. I didn't  
want to quit Jack, but they did, and so I just went on and quit.  
But we didn't never fall out. So I got my own band. We did good.  
But I wasn't thinking about doing anything like that myself.

[Allen:] Why did they want to quit Jack?

[Miller:] I don't know myself, but I guess they just figured if we--if we--'twasn't nothing wrong with him. I don't know; I didn't see nothing wrong.

[Allen:] Well now, when you quit Jack Carey, who came in on trombone with your band?

[Miller:] Eddie Morris. Went right in.

[Allen:] I see.

[Miller:] Yes, [sir?], George Boyd went and got him right away.

[Allen:] And that would be around the time you were playing with Celestin, then, huh?

[Miller:] I don't know how it mixed up, but I wasn't with Celestin then. I must have been with Celestin, in 8--19, and going into twenties, because I went with Jack Carey from--I, I don't know how that thing messed up now--from--I can't see, 'cause I left in '27; that's what got me puzzled.

[Allen:] Well, you had your own band up until the time you left.

[Miller:] That's right, that's right.

[Allen:] So it had to be Jack Carey before your band.

[Miller:] That's right.

[Allen:] And then Celestin must have been before that.

[Miller:] No, ~~if~~-yeah, yeah, yeah, 'cause Ernest Johnson was the first one. But I didn't stay with Ernest Johnson more than two or three months, see; I didn't stay there long at all.

[Allen:] Jack Carey heard you, though, while you were with Ernest Johnson?

[Miller:] Oh, yeah, yeah.

[Allen:] And when did Celestin pick up on you?

[Miller:] Well, Celestin picked up on me one night I went to Italian Hall, on Esplanade Street [i.e., Avenue]. Well, I wasn't playing that night, and I just went there and I wanted to blow some. He had never seen me. And I played a little bit, and he asked me who I was working with. I told him, well, I just wasn't working with nobody at that particular time. So he said, "Well, come to rehearsal." And I went to rehearsal. And they played a lot of old time stuff. Well, I played it; I played the second trumpet right behind him, and he told me, he said, "Get up and blow some and let the boys hear you." And I got up and blowed, and that--specially that trombone player, he was crazy about he-- Baby, what's his name, Baby?

[Allen:] I know who you mean. He's an old man now, lives uptown, up around Carrollton--on Edinburgh, he used to live.

[Miller:] Yeah, yeah, he was crazy about me, year.

[Allen:] Is that the guy, Baba Ridgley?

[Miller:] Baba Ridgley, yeah, Baba Ridgley, yeah. And I didn't play with them too long.

[Allen:] Was Ridgley a strict reader, or did he play by ear too?

[Miller:] Well, he read like the devil lots. Maybe a few pieces  
he played by ear, but he always had that music up there. *[Cf Baba Ridgley]*

*reel*  
[Allen:] Did they have any clarinets or saxophones then?

[Miller:] Yeah, they had good clarinet players.

[Allen:] Who was clarinet with Celestin?

[Miller:] I'm trying to think. The last one I know was this little  
fellow we were talking about just now. What's his name--with the  
hump on his back? That's the last one I know played with him.

[Allen:] Not the crippled fellow?

[Miller:] Yeah, Pili.

[Allen:] Pili played with Celestin?

[Miller:] Yeah.

[Allen:] At the same time you were.

[Miller:] Yeah, Pili was in the band when I got there. Yeah.

But he had a better clarinet player than Pili, though, but I can't  
think who he was now.

[Allen:] He had several of them; he had Willard Toomey at one  
time. Did you know him? *THOOMEY?*

[Miller:] Yeah. Then after, I heard he had Willie Humphrey for  
a while.

[Allen:] Yeah. Let me see, there was another one--I can't think  
of--well, let's see--Paul Barnes, I think, played clarinet. *[Or alto? ABC]*

[Miller:] Yeah.



[Allen:] Carriere.

[Miller:] Way down, he lived way down.

[Allen:] Sidney Carriere, did you know him?

[Miller:] Yeah. Sidney Carriere--yeah, I know him, but I, can't, you know, I remember, but--but I know Paul Barnes good.

[Allen:] Yeah. Well, they were all in there around that time--a little later, maybe.

[Miller:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] Who did Celestin have in the rhythm section?

[Miller:] Well, he had a lady on piano--Clarence? Sisters; Camilla Todd.

[Allen:] Uh-huh.

[Miller:] Now who was on bass? Chester Zardis played bass with him a while, but before that he had George Foster, that's right. Fellow they call Pops, Pops Foster.

[Allen:] He's the same one was with Jack Carey, huh?

[Miller:] Yeah, same one.

[Allen:] Same guy.

[Miller:] Yeah. Ah, guitar, Tom Benton. Boy, you getting me back there to think now. I got to think about them kind of fellows, you know. Tom Benton, yeah, that was his guitar player; played with him a long time.

[Allen:] Did he have a good drummer then?

[Miller:] Yeah. This boy, this guy played drum with him--Bill Matthews.

[Allen:] Oh, yeah.

[Miller:] That's who played drum with him. Dick, you sure are calling me back; you're making me get some stuff.

[Allen:] Well, we've been working on it long enough. How long have I known you now? It's been a long time.

[Miller:] Known me?

[Allen:] Yeah.

[Miller:] Ever since I've been back.

[Allen:] When did you come back?

[Miller:] No, not ever since I've been back. Yeah, I went to work at--now, I'll tell you when you know me: I just had got here; I got on at Larry's [Borenstin]--but I hadn't been here long.

[Allen:] I'm trying to remember what year it was when you first came back.

[Miller:] Oh, 'twenty--[19]56.

[Allen:] '56 you got here?

[Miller:] Uh-huh.

[Allen:] So let's see--you had different guys in your band; I know you had a lot of different drummers, I know you told me [?]

[Miller:] Yeah, yeah; I couldn't keep a regular drummer. But I didn't have but two--three, three. Arnold Metoyer--what was his name? Arnold, sArnold something--a little short, short fellow, had a stomach on him like that. Tell me he's a policy writer now.

[Allen:] Arnold?

[Miller:] I don't know. But not Metoyer, that was a trumpet player. But his name Arnold Depass.

[Allen:] Oh, I didn't know he was downtown.

[Miller:] Yes, Depass, Arnold Depass. Well, but he wasn't my first drummer. See, Chinee kept on messing up and I just had to go like the devil to get somebody, see.

[Allen:] [Did] he blow you up, Chinee?

[Miller:] Yeah, used to blow me up a lot of times. But I'll tell you who played with me a long time: Happy Goldston. He took Chinee's place. I kept him when I got him. That was before he went to the Tuxedo.

[Allen:] Well, Chinee was with the Tuxedo.

[Miller:] Chinee was a good drummer, but Chinee'd get high like that and mess you up, man.

[Allen:] Did Paul Barbarin ever play with you?

[Miller:] Well, yeah, Paul Barbarin--I don't want to tell that, though. Paul Barbarin, yeah, when he first come back from Louis [Armstrong] he joined me. [Wrong. Probably back from Chicago the first time.]

[Allen:] I thought maybe he'd played with you in those days, in years gone by.

[Miller:] Before--

[Allen:] Yeah, with Eddie Morris and Georgie Boyd.

RESTRICTED [ Miller:]

RESTRICTED

].  
[Allen:] Well now--

[Miller:] But he knowed better, yeah, but he just thought he could  
get by with it; he knowed better.

[allen:] Where, where all did?--

[Miller:] [Unintelligible] Now, I've been all over the country, and nothing like that ever worried me. Nothing--Canada and everywhere I've been, and nothing like that ever worried me; I always know where I belong and be there; I never let nothing like that worry me.

[Allen:] What kind of jobs did y'all play in those days, with those different bands?

[Miller:] Well, lawn parties was the most; they was going big--middle of the week, any time. And, like maybe they'd call Buddy Petit to go to Bogalusa Friday and Saturday; they'd call me to go to Gulfport or Biloxi Friday and Saturday; they'd call [Kid] Rene to go up here in maybe McComb (City) [Mississippi], or Baton Rouge. That's how the band would make their money; every band, like Saturday and Friday, they'd go off somewhere. Sunday they had to benback here, playing [these Economy Halls?] and for, you know, advertising and things all like that. Now, all day Sunday the band that is not on the streets is out at that lake; the band that wasn't on the streets was out on that lake, playing like the devil. I remember sometimes they used to have seven and eight bands out there. And Dick, I don't mean far apart--this man got his pavilion here, you got one right over there--and I'll tell you how close together: if they're playing, we have to stay still, and people would rather dance by their music. When we played,

they

they'd dance by our music. That's how close we is together.

They had them things built out in the water, you know.

[Allen:] You remember any of the different guys that was playing?

Around--

[Miller:] Playing where?

[Allen:] At Milneburg, out there.

[Miller:] You mean out on them things?

[Allen:] Yeah, the different other bands.

[Miller:] I'm telling you now: Rena, myself, Buddy Petit'd be somewhere, Chris Kelly'd be somewhere, and different bands, you know, like that.

[Allen:] What about the white bands? Did they have white bands out there?

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

[Miller:] Well, they played at Milneburg the most: I mean Spanish Fort; that's where the most--they'd play out that way, see, and we'd play at Milneburg, see?

[Allen:] Let me see now: did you ever play in the Irish Channel?

[Miller:] Oh, yeah, but my God. See, I used to play--I'd sign a contract--I'd finish this Mardi Gras and sign a contract right there for next Mardi Gras, for the Buzzards. You ever heard of the [Jefferson City] Buzzards?

[Allen:] I've followed them.

[Miller:] Well, all right: I used to play for them every year-- the Buzzards. They was good; I mean they treat you nice, boy. But any other--I remember, I remember the only way I got by one time out there. I had to telling them boys who I was and everything. I said, "This is Kid Punch. I play for the Buzzards every year." Boy, they [was] fixing to crucify me.

[Allen:] For what? For nothing?

[Miller:] They just didn't want you to walking through there. You didn't have no business walking through there, [that's what they ask me?]. Say "Nigger, where you going, walking? Do you know where you're going?" I said, "Yeah, I live down--up here." They say, "Well," they say, "you ain't got any business through here." I said, "Well, I come to see the man about signing the contract for the Buzzards. I play for the Buzzards every year." So for some reason--this man had a saloon right across the street, see, and so another boy come up and said, "Well, there's the man over there. You want to go see him?" So I went there and said, "Look here," I said, "I'm Punch, Kid Punch, play for you." He said, "Oh, yeah, yeah, what's happening?" I said, "Well, I'm trying to get home. The white boys want to whip me up up there." And he come on out of there, and said, "God damn, y'all leave that fellow alone; that fellow plays music for me every year." Yeah, that's true.

[Allen:] They were pretty rough in the Channel, huh?

[Miller:] Oh, yeah, man, they was rough. Well, the Negroes was rough too, partner; yeah, they was tough too. Yeah, man, they had a girl there, got broke out after me there. She was going with a working fellow there, you know what I mean? I didn't know, Dick. And there were about four of them; they were going to kill me when we get in that night. We had played at the St. Elizabeth Hall on Napoleon--up there at Napoleon Avenue. And I'm coming in that night, they're all in a corner--well, [it was luck Dr. Johnson?] was in front of me and Dave and them, and they was--me and Dave and them back there talking and running our mouths, half drunk, you know. So when Ernest got there, they asked him where was I. They said, "We're going to kill that son of a bitch tonight." Said, "For what?" [The man said?], "Well, he's been fooling with this man's old lady." So Ernest said, "Aw, no, man." Well, I wasn't. She was after me but I hadn't never bothered her. So they got that thing up and found out she was lying, see. She was just after me, but she was lying. See, [when they got after her she was lying?] So I got to be good friends with them; they never bothered me after that.

[Allen:] This was a colored dance?

[Miller:] Yeah, colored, yeah. And you know what she did after that, Dick?



[Allen:] What's that~

[Miller:] That woman bought--told me she was going to bring half a pint to the Cooperators' Hall, and [it] had poison in it!

[Allen:] Good Lord!

[Miller:] But Lord is good, something keep on telling me. I put that thing beside my chair, right there, and something just kept awhipping me, "Don't you touch that bottle." And doggon, a fellow took that bottle--some boy that drinks a lot, he'd drink anything--took that bottle and went to find out what was wrong with it. He said yeah, it was pure poison. Something [that would- just have et me up if I'd drunk it. He didn't drink it neither; he found out what it was, see.

[Allen:] Well, I guess a lot of people used to do all kind of things in those days.

[Miller:] We had a guitar player--I forget that boy's name--but he had a knack of--five or six women at a dance with--we was with Jack Carey and them--playing at National Park. Boy, that was a jumping spot. And he'd have five or six girls there. And he's biggety-like, you know; he's nice looking, but he's biggety. I can't call his name. "You go ahead; I'll see you tomorrow. You go ahead; I'll see you--" you know, all that. Kept on with that stuff till one of them gals poisoned him, and he swole [swelled] up like that. Don't nobody know what happened--who killed him. Yeah, they'd poison the devil out of you in them days, Dick.

[Allen:] They said that about Buddy Bolden, too.

[Miller:] Uh-huh. And they had another trumpet player, I didn't get to see him, [but it was Buddy Bolden days?]. But I know--~~no~~ yes, I did get to see him--when I got to see him, he was paralyzed, and they say a woman told him--he was going to kick her down the steps in Economy Hall, and she told him if he kick her down the steps, he would nver use that arm or hand no more. And that's the truth--that leg either. He kick her, and God dog it if he wasn't [paralyzed?] ever since. Some old trumpet player; I don't know who

he was. Yes, I do know his name, too, but I can't call it now. [Aug. 23/1960  
Reel II, says this was Kid Robert Taylor]

[Allen:] Was he from uptown or down?

[Miller:] Uptown. Tall, dark guy.

[Allen:] Did you know Edward Clem?

[Miller:] It wasn't him. Hot dog, [can't remember a man's name right before me?].

[Allen:] It'll come to you later.

[Miller:] Yeah.

[Allen:] Did you play any excursions out of here?

[Miller:] I was the only one played them, till I left; then Lee Collins played one. But I played all the "Booster Excursions"; every time one went out, I played it.

[Allen:] Where'd you go on those things?

[Miller:] Houma--on the Southern Pacific, [you'd better say that?]. But the best excursion I ever played was from Chicago to Memphis.

[Allen:] Whose band was that, yours?

[Miller:] Mine; little made-up band. Let me tell you what happened: I asked François, who had the band--he wouldn't come, you know; none of them didn't want to come. So I got me a little made-up band. And we come--the boys--it was Charlie Allen, that was the man running it. He asked them did they want to work partnership, or did they want a salary. No, man, no partnership--just give us fifteen dollars a man. Dick, they had a great big yard, see, and you pay at the gate. \$1.25 at the gate. And that yard was packed and jammed; the hall was packed and jammed, you couldn't get in, you see. So he paid them the \$15--'twasn't but five of us--and I worked with the, with it, you see; I worked with it. And they played all them off, that night--now, what you reckon they gave me, Dick?

[Allen:] What's that?

[Miller:] Three hundred and five dollars. Boy, I never made that much money before in my life. And then, you know they got mad with me? And he asked them, how did they want to work. Asked them in front. Now, that wasn't my fault, was it?

[Allen:] No. Well, people are jealous, ya know.

[Miller:] Well, they'd take that baggage car, see. They got barrels of beer on the side, and they got gambling over there, and they got the space, you know; got them two doors barred off, you know, bars to keep people from falling out. And we'd set way up in the corner with the band. Them people would dance like hell out there. Yeah, and you got so many hours to play, and you get so much for them hours, and you come back and play so many more hours. We played sometimes until two or three o'clock in the morning. The train running, and we're playing. Yeah.

[Allen:] It must have been good.

[Miller:] It was good, Dick; all that stuff was good, partner.

[Allen:] What kind of gambling games did they play?

[Miller:] Huh?

[Allen:] What kind of card games?

[Miller:] They played poker, and--

End of Reel II.