

STELLA OLIVER
Reel I [of 3]--Digest--Retype
April 22, 1959

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Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins,
Mrs. Bertha Miles.

Stella Oliver, the widow of Joe "King" Oliver, says that she and Oliver were married July 13, 1912; she says he was a fine husband, a fine man and a fine musician, that she loved him dearly, and that they got along beautifully, although they had their ups and downs. She says that he died in 1938 "nearly eighteen years" [sic], but his name is still known. SO was born in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, up the river three miles from Abbeville, where Joe was born. Joe has two sisters, one in Arizona and one in New York (Mrs. Johnson is the name of the New York sister) (and perhaps one other, in Chicago) still living. Joe was born December 19, 1885; SO did not know Joe until they lived in New Orleans, where they worked near each other; Joe worked for a Jewish family, which practically raised him; SO worked at a house on Second Street, and Joe worked at his place on Magazine near Second, and they were only two doors apart. SO says Joe didn't know much about the cornet, but he was determined to learn. Answering WR, SO says she doesn't know when Joe came to New Orleans, but when they met Joe was quite a young man; SO knew Joe for four or five years before they got married, and Joe had been in New Orleans several years before that; Joe's mother had died, and Joe had come to New Orleans after she died, when he was still a boy.

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SO says Joe was raised like one of the family, that he did as he pleased, coming and going at will. SO says Joe went on a tour with a man [Kinchen?], who took a couple of boys with him, and that they got stranded above Donaldsonville. Joe was on cornet then, having been switched from trombone (his original instrument) because he was too loud; SO says that is the time she met Joe. After that, Joe began playing at various dances, and at balls; then he got so good that he didn't want to work as [yard boy with the Jewish family] anymore, and SO and Joe got married. SO says the job he had didn't pay much, but Joe could get off anytime he wanted, and he was brought up by the family. Joe's father, Henry, was a minister; his mother was named Virginia; they both had died before SO met Joe. SO says that Joe played on trucks advertising, for dances, and that she would follow him bearing hard-boiled eggs, which Joe ate, claiming it made him strong for playing. SO says sometimes two bands would meet at a corner, where they would try to out-play each other. SO says [Papa] Celestin and others would be at these meetings, and it was like Mardi Gras. Joe later played only for dances, among them being dances at Tulane [University]. [Cf. Johnny Wiggs, Reel ?] SO, answering WR, says that Joe hadn't played in other bands before the dance jobs, that the bands were "pick-up" bands. Hardly any of the musicians in the pick-up bands

had a "standard" [i. e., steady] job. SO says the first band Joe played with was a brass band, the Onward, and also the Magnolia [Cf. Louie Keppard, Reel ?]; she says both were brass bands. After that, Joe had a couple of little bands in the District; they got paid \$1 per night, and SO says they lived very well on that. SO answers WR, saying the bands got tips. After Joe had played in the District for a long time, he had a band which played at a dance hall called The Stable, on Poydras Street; one night, the place was raided and everyone was taken to jail; Joe thought it was awful that a man who was making an honest living could be taken to jail like that, so he went to Chicago. He played for a Miss or Mrs. Major, who ran a dance hall, the Royal Garden, on 31st street; then he went to a black-and-tan club, the Plantation. Meanwhile, he had got Louis [Armstrong] to join his band; SO says Louis had promised Joe he would join him as soon as Joe got a good job. SO says Louis would come to their house and run errands for them, and that Louis followed Joe everywhere he went, that they were fond of each other, and that SO called Louis her boy. Louis got a job playing on the steamer Sidney; after that, Joe went to Chicago and got a job. SO says Joe worked at the Dreamland in Chicago, and also at the Pekin, which was an after-hours place for actors. SO answers WR, saying that Joe had the job with Miss Major when she sent for him to come to Chicago, that

he did not just go there and look for work. [Compare Jazzmen & King Joe Oliver] SO says Oliver took with him to Chicago the following men: Johnny St. Cyr, banjo; Jimmie Noone, clarinet; the Dodds [Johnny, clarinet and Baby, drums], and Honore Dutrey, trombone. SO comments that Louis Armstrong was in the band then [at the Royal Garden], and that when Louis would play a break, Joe would "catch" it immediately; she says it was beautiful music. [Cf. books] Louis played with Joe for a long time, until business began to be slack; then Louis began playing with Erskine Tate, at the Vendome [theater]. Joe continued playing, in "hole in the wall" places, like the Pekin, until he got a job with Dave Peyton at the Plantation Club; the job was a very good one, and Joe stayed a long time, although he didn't like [Peyton?]. When the Plantation closed, Joe went to New York. SO says Joe had much success in Chicago, that that was where he made "Dippermouth Blues," which was his first composition, and which he sold for a few pennies because he didn't know any better. Joe went to New York on his own, and the trip was not a success [see later, this page]; with him were "Kid' Ory, [Honore] Dutrey [?--two trombones? Cf. King Joe Rust], Red Allen, Albert Nicholas and Paul Barbarin [and others]; he band played around New York, and did fairly well, "but not much, because the men began to get tired." Ory [and others] left the band, because [they? he?] was not as strong as

he had been. WR mentions Joe's trouble with his teeth; SO says he had "pyorrhea of the gums," and that he began "failing" on the cornet. He decided to play one-nighters. He went to Nashville [Tennessee], where he stayed a long time, but the bands he led were not up to par; also, it was depression time, and hard on the music business. SO says they had a little money, but lost it all in a Chicago bank. The band moved around, but the men got tired; Ory went to California, as did, she thinks, Dutrey (who didn't live long; he had been gassed in World War I), and St. Cyr went back to New Orleans. Also during this time, the band went to San Francisco; SO went with them. She says that was where Louis met Lil [Hardin] Armstrong, in Los Angeles [These times are messed up, California period was 1921-22.]. In San Francisco, the band played at a five-and-ten dance hall [the Pergola], which was on Market Street; WR says the place is still there. WR asks if SO remembers Bertha Gonsoulin, supposed to have played with the band for a while in California, but SO does not remember. SO says that Joe began using a non-pressure system of playing the cornet, and he did very well that way, for a number of years. He played with false teeth at one time. From California, where the rest of the band quit, the Olivers went back to Chicago, and then to New York; SO says she had it all backwards. WR says he

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has heard that Joe made a short trip to St. Louis once; SO says Joe went there to try to persuade Louis Armstrong to leave the boat and join his band. SO reminisces, saying that Joe liked [base] ball games; he also liked playing pool [pocket billiards], and SO would take his lunch to him because he wouldn't want to quit playing; SO says Joe didn't like to eat anywhere but at home, or things prepared at home. She agrees with WR that Joe liked to eat; SO says Joe wasn't afraid to spend money for food he liked to eat, and he was also very liberal about money with his friends. SO says she found in Joe's bankbook that he had sent money to Jimmy Palao, whose family was sick at the time, and Joe didn't tell anyone about it. SO says it's a shame Joe's musicians didn't stick by him when he needed them, and that she has seen a couple of books which didn't say nice things about him, and he was a nice man with a wonderful disposition. He liked to kid people, never got mad, and was good-natured about everything. He loved his home, and was not a man to stay out late [after his work]. SO says he was not a drinking man. WR says he heard Joe liked to drink sugar water; SO says he liked Chinese food [still popular with New Orleans Negroes], and would drink sugar water when he ate Chinese food. SO says she doesn't think Joe had diabetes (WR had said he had heard he might have had that disease), that he never complained. She

says he was quite depressed in later years, and always thinking. She says he would jump up from his sleep, saying he had a musical idea; he would try them on his cornet, and then write them before he went back to sleep. SO says Joe might have lasted longer [in popularity] if he hadn't been so hard to understand; she explains that since Joe was not a drinking man, and that his friends and acquaintances were [for the most part], the friends et al couldn't understand why he did not drink with them, and consequently, the friendships would become somewhat cooler. SO says, however, that Joe was really a genius. SO says Joe didn't want anyone to sell his band for him [an agent]; he wanted to do it all himself. He lost a lot of money because he cancelled contracts (because of rain, etc.), and often had to redeem pledges at pawn shows for the instruments of some of his musicians. WR asks about the bus Joe had; SO said he bought it in Nashville, and that he also bought a mail truck in Nashville, to carry his music and the instruments in, and he wasn't allowed to use the mail truck ("they" wouldn't let him). SO says Joe would probably have lived longer [and retained his popularity] if he had had someone to run his business, but he wanted to do it all himself. SO tells about how Louis Armstrong would come to their house, and how she would cook red beans for Louis and Joe; she tells about putting hock bones in the

beans for seasoning. Joe and Louis would watch each other to see who would be the one to grab the last of the hock bones--having fun with each other. SO and WR talk about the physic Louis would insist everyone take--Swiss Cris [sp?]. SO says Joe was only 54 when he died, that she thinks he should have lived to be 65 at least, because he didn't drink and dissipate. She answers WR, saying that Joe was heavy as a boy and young man, too, that he had plenty of solid food, and he drank much water, and the water made him heavy. WR says Lee Collins told him the Olivers had a big meal for him when he first went to Chicago; SO says Joe was so good to her that the only way she could show her appreciation was to be nice to his friends, so she would cook red beans and rice and invite all his friends to their house. SO says Joe liked company, too, and liked for them to eat. SO answers WR, saying when in Chicago she lived on Prairie near 31st, but the first place she lived was at Vernon and 39th; she says [Joe] Glazer had a little dance hall near there, which is where Joe Oliver met him. WR says Glazer later had a place called the Sunset, where Louis Armstrong worked. SO says she thought [one time] that Glazer had the Plantation (but she is not sure).

End of Reel I

Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins.

WR asks SO about the music in Donaldsonville when she was a girl growing up there; she says that when they wanted a band, they got one from New Orleans. [cf. p. 14 on Claiborne Williams.] She says girls couldn't go to dances unless they had an invitation, that it was more strict then than now. She says there were no parades with brass bands in Donaldsonville [Claiborne Williams Brass Band was in Donaldsonville. cf. Esquire's Jazz Book 1945--RBA]. SO answers WR, saying they had churches, and that there was music in them; she says part of her family were Baptists, and part were Catholic, because of the ancestry of various ones. Joe didn't belong to any church, but his parents were Baptist, his father being a Baptist preacher. Joe was fond of the hymns, however, and joking, would say he would take some of the hymns and make up some songs. [e.g., "Chimes Blues."] Eventually someone did this; Joe played many of the hymns, not at dances, but at funerals. On the way to the burial, the bands would play hymns, and coming back, with the second line, the band would play "[Oh,] Didn't He Ramble." SO says Manuel Perez played with Joe, in brass bands, and they were "quite chummy;" SO says Joe always said Perez was a fine musician. SO says Bud Scott played with Joe, too, and Joe thought he was a wonderful banjo player. WR asks about Bunk Johnson; SO says she knows about him, from the time he

came back to New Orleans [early 1940's] and so did Joe, but Joe never "raved" about Bunk, perhaps because they were of different ages. [Cf. letters in Jazzmen.] SO says Bunk didn't become famous until late years, and didn't live long after that. She says she asked Louis [Armstrong] about Bunk, and Louis told her Bunk came after them [Joe Oliver and Armstrong]. SO answers WR, saying she knew Freddy Keppard, and that ^{he} was full of fun; he played a style similar to Joe's, "at the top of his voice," and was a very funny man, always having fun. SO says Keppard was the first person to take an entire band from New Orleans to Chicago; WR says Bill Johnson, who also played bass with Oliver, told him that, and SO remembers Johnson. WR says Johnson is still living, but he can't find him; WR says he went to his house in Chicago last year, was told Johnson was in Texas, wrote him, but did not get an answer. WR mentions that he knew Johnny Dodds, and especially knew Baby Dodds; SO says Baby was so funny, a nice fellow; SO says Baby was in St. Louis when Joe went to see Armstrong. SO says Joe had another drummer who was about 17 years old, and she and WR supply the name, "Red Happy" Bolton. SO says she knew Jelly Roll Morton. WR says Manuel "Hoss" Manetta played with Joe Oliver, too, and SO agrees. She says she and Joe were living on Dryades near 4th street at the time, and because the bedroom was at the front of the house, people could tell when Joe was home because

they could hear him snoring. SO says she used to give beer to the musicians, who would come by her house; she made her own beer, and would also sometimes make wine, having it around Christmas time. SO agrees with WR that Joe liked to play pool, saying that he would go without eating sometimes, to play pool; she says he was good. SO agrees with WR that Joe played pool sometimes at the "Big 25;" SO says Joe worked at the place, playing music, sometimes with only piano and a singer--in fact, he worked there for years in groups of that size before he got up a band to go away. Lizzie Miles sang there sometimes. WR says Lizzie's birthday is March 31; SO says her birthday is April 7, and Joe's was December 19. SO answers WR, saying she knows about Buddy Bolden, that Joe knew him, but they never played together, because they were both "kings." SO says if Bolden should blow from where she is, he could be heard in Carrollton--[a distance of 35-40 blocks--possible, perhaps, about 1900, on an absolutely still and quiet night]. SO says he was a great guy, too, but he was a "show-off," and [kept to himself?]. SO says she knew Lorenzo Staulz, the guitarist. SO answers RC, saying she did dance to the band [Oliver's], and admits that she was very good, especially at the Charleston; Joe didn't dance. WR asks about the dances at the Tulane [University] Gym; SO says the men in the band were given bottles of whiskey and sandwiches

[plus money?], and Joe would take the whiskey to keep for them, saying it wasn't the best thing to do to drink on the job, because they might get too boisterous. The dances were not given every week, and she thinks they were given by some fraternity. They were held after she had been married [1912] a while. At that time they were living on Dryades and Fourth. ^{[Oliver, Joseph bandmaster residence] 2712 Dryades - 1916 Scards} Joe didn't have a regular band there, depending on picking up men for whatever jobs came along. SO says she was told the band [the ones that played at Tulane Gym jobs] was good. She says "they" would tell him to pat his feet [when playing]; she says he really could blow. SO answers WR, saying Joe used a Conn cornet; he later had a trumpet, which was given to him when he played for Miss Major [of the Royal Garden] in Chicago. [Compare photographs.] WR asks how Joe started his band on a tune; SO says he would stomp off. SO answers WR, saying that Joe did play with the Eagle Band, which she says was a brass band [Joe was in Eagle orchestra also--RBA]. SO says that for a long time they[?] did not have a regular band [regular personnel], that when they had a job the Eagle Band and the Magnolia Band [was probably only an orchestra--see Louis Keppard interview] "would always fill in" [pick up men?]. SO says Freddy Keppard was fine on parades; he liked to "buck" with Joe, and would tell him he was "going to run him in." WR asks if SO ever went to dances at the Masonic Hall, on Perdido Street; SO says she did, but it was sort of a rough place,

and Joe didn't like her to go there. SO answers WR, saying that Joe played at the Economy Hall, which is downtown; she volunteers that Joe played at the Globe Hall, which, now torn down, according to WR, was near the Municipal Auditorium. SO answers WR, saying she doesn't know if admission was charged to the Tulane dances, but she thinks they were fraternity proms, and that the fraternity [members] didn't pay. WR says Louis Keppard [who played guitar] told him, and showed him a photograph in which he was wearing a manager's cap, that he was manager of the Magnolia Band when Joe played in it; WR asks if Joe was the leader at anytime; SO says he was not, that he was never leader of any brass band [inclusion of a guitar in the band leads to some doubt that the Magnolia was, in fact, a brass band]. [Cf. Paul Barbarin, Reel ?, Oliver lead Onward at one time.] SO says Red Allen's father [Henry Allen, Sr.] was also in the band. WR asks if Joe ever had a teacher; SO says he had one in New Orleans, but she does not remember his name. Joe got his first instrument after he moved to New Orleans; his mother brought him to town [and died soon after?], and he stayed a while with his sister, but he "raised himself." SO says that Vincent Lopez [perhaps she means Ray Lopez?] took a few lessons from Joe in Chicago, and that a lot of them [white musicians] would come to the Royal Garden to listen to Joe and his band and study the "breaks." SO answers WR (who said he heard that Joe lived across the lake, at

Mandeville once), saying he did not, that he never traveled until he went to Chicago. SO says Joe was content to stay in New Orleans until the time he got arrested [see Reel I]; WR says Kid Ory, who also was arrested then, told him of the incident. SO says Joe would never come back to New Orleans after that, although he got many offers to return; she says she thinks he would have done well if he had come back. WR asks if SO remembers hearing the Claiborne Williams band in Donaldsonville [cf. p.9]; she says she does, and answers another question, saying she went to some of the dances that band played for, but a girl had to be invited to them. WR says Williams' band was resident in Donaldsonville. SO answers WR, saying Williams' band was not jazzy like Joe's bands, that Williams' band was smoother; she says Williams' son has a band in Donaldsonville now. SO says she has a nephew in Donaldsonville, a barber who also plays music, and that he has a 15-year old son who plays, and a small daughter who plays. WR asks about blues singers in Donaldsonville; SO says there were none there, that they all came from out of town--e.g., Mamie Smith, and Mary Mack of Mack and Mack. SO answers WR, saying Joe loved to play the blues. SO answers WR, saying that Joe taught Louis Armstrong by [written] music, not by ear. She says L.A.'s being able to read came in handy when he went into the Vendome [theater, with Erskine Tate]. SO says that Joe did not bother to try to teach any other boys but Louis.

SO talks of Armstrong, about how he comes to see her when he is in New Orleans, about a living room suite he gave her, and about how she has asked Mr. [Joe] Glazer ^{city?} to get word to Louis (in Europe and Israel) that she is sick. SO shows a picture of Joe and Louis taken when they were on the boat [steamer Sidney?]. SO shows a newspaper, the Chicago Defender of April 16, 1938, which contains reference to Armstrong's opening a new job, and news of Joe Oliver's funeral in New York City. There is a picture (SO says taken in St. Louis?) of Oliver and Armstrong, with a caption stating that the picture was loaned by Mrs. Ruby Frazier, daughter of Joe Oliver, and the picture is of the two men when Armstrong first arrived in Chicago in 1921. There is also a picture of Bill Robinson, dancing, elsewhere in the paper. WR asks how tall Joe Oliver was, asking SO to compare his height with that of Bill Johnson [bass player], who was quite tall; SO says Joe was as tall as Johnson. WR says he knew several members of the Oliver band; Lil Armstrong, Johnny and Baby Dodds. He also knew Armstrong's last [present?] wife, Lucille, and says he even met Alpha Armstrong [another wife] once. SO shows various pictures, from various dates. WR asks if Joe was blind in his one bad eye; SO says he had been blind in that eye since childhood. RC asks how he became blind in that eye; SO says Joe told her someone put something in his cap, and when he put it on, the something got in his eye and destroyed the sight.

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[cf. Clarence "Little Dad" Vincent, Reel ?] SO talks about Joe, saying he was healthy, didn't drink much, but ate plenty; WR asks how much he weighed; SO says he weighed 260 when she met him. She says he was big all over. SO answers WR, saying that Joe was not a professional musician when she met him. She says they were both young when they met, and that he was only two years older than she. He quit his yardboy job when he began playing music a lot, becoming better-known; and he was married at the time. RC asks if Buddy Bolden's music was like Oliver's, but SO misunderstands the question, and says that the old-time music was better-suited to dancing than the music of today. She says she listened to a band for Universal [Furniture Store--Sharkey?], which had the right beat.

End of Reel II

Also present: William Russell, Ralph Collins.

There is further discussion about the band SO saw and heard on TV, a band playing for the Universal Furniture Store; SO says that band had about the same tempos [as the older bands she prefers, and of Oliver's band]; she thinks it must have been a "make-up" band, as she doesn't hear them or of them anymore. SO answers WR, saying that [Buddy]"King" Bolden played about like Joe Oliver did. She answers RC and WR, saying that the Bolden band would make up the songs it played [but it is probable that she is talking about the Oliver band or getting personnel mixed up--see following]. She says Ory would sing songs he had made up, and the rest would then work them out; they would whistle and sing songs they made up to each other. She says Bolden wasn't really a musician, that he didn't read music "so very well," but he was a jazzman. SO answers WR, saying Joe could read music when she met him, that he was a good reader. She says Joe and/or Louis Armstrong would play a break phrase, and the others would pick it up immediately. SO says she saw, not long ago, a "reward" posted for some of Joe's old records, a "reward" of \$50 each, but she couldn't find any of them because she had moved so much. WR asks about Joe's first records; SO says the first were for Gennett, and answers WR, saying they were made in Chicago, but they

went to [Richmond,] Indiana to make some others--she thinks to make "Down Home in Indiana," or something like that. SO says Joe's first big [hit] record was "Sugar Foot Blues" [i.e., "Dippermouth Blues," also known as "Sugarfoot Stomp"], and that Joe sold the tune for very little money. WR says Melrose published it. SO doesn't remember the names of other Oliver tunes, but she has a list; she says Joe and Lil [Hardin] Armstrong wrote a lot of tunes together. WR asks where Joe was playing when he doubled at the Pekin; SO says it was at the Royal Garden. WR asks what the name of the place was first; SO finally decides it was the Lincoln Garden, later changed to the Royal Garden. [cf. Allen & Rust, King Joe Oliver] SO answers WR, saying that Jimmie Noone went to Chicago with Joe, because Noone, [Albert] Nicholas and [Barney] Bigard, Johnny and Baby Dodds [and Oliver] all went at the same time. SO does not know when Joe first came to New Orleans; she says she met him when he was 17 [On Reel I, she says she had known Joe about 4 years when they got married, in 1912; Joe was 17 in 1902.], and that he was playing his horn then, but not working for money--just playing in bands that would pick him up, just for the experience. SO says Joe didn't play with Bolden, because Joe always read music, always wanted to be a reader, and Bolden didn't read music at all--but he [Bolden] could blow. WR asks if Joe studied with Dave Perkins; SO says he did, and that there was

another one Joe studied with, but she can't remember his name. WR asks about the name, Ruby [Frazier], on the newspaper picture in the Chicago Defender, asking if Ruby is Joe's daughter or SO's. SO says Ruby, who died about six years ago, was her daughter, not Joe's. SO tells WR that Joe's California sister, Miss [?] [Elizabeth] Watkin, lives on West Adams Street in Los Angeles; he [Miss Watkin's husband?] bought a hotel in Los Angeles, using money they had made in the policy business [i.e., numbers racket] in Chicago. WR says he saw Johnny St. Cyr, Ed Garland and Pop Foster in California recently, and if he had known Joe had a sister living there, he would have tried to see her. SO says she saw those musicians at Kid Ory's place [?] when she was there. SO answers WR, saying that the California sister is older than Joe, but is very spry. SO says the New York sister (SO uncertain that she is still living) is next [in age] to the California sister. SO says the California sister visited SO 2 or 3 years ago, and she said Vic [Johnson, in New York] had had a stroke; since SO writes only to California, she doesn't know about New York. The California address is Hotel Watkin, 2022 West Adams Boulevard, Los Angeles 7, California. Joe had a sister who died in New Orleans, also. SO answers WR, saying that Joe was only a boy in short pants when he traveled with the band in which he played trombone. She says Peyton [or Kinchen] took them to near Baton Rouge, on a gamble, and they

almost had to walk back. Joe was playing trombone so loud that he was taken off that and put on cornet. SO doesn't know when Joe played his first job on cornet. She answers WR, saying that Joe did listen to the songs railroad workers and dockworkers sang, and that he would play them; she says he also would take church songs and play them, to her objection. SO says Joe had many experiences and much pleasure, that he might object if someone like Ory [or anyone else] came to his house to tell him about a funeral for the next day, but he was always in a good humor [inferring that he would be joking when making the objection]. SO is asked if he disliked funerals; she says he liked the "coming back" part, but didn't like to play the dirges on the way to the cemetery. She talks about the "coming back" part of the funerals, saying the people would sing "[Oh,] Didn't He Ramble?." SO says Joe was too liberal [generous] with his money, and that's one reason he died so poor, but he was set in his ways, and didn't take advice. SO says Oliver's band was the highest-paid band on the South Side [of Chicago]. SO says Joe loaned a lot of money, especially to members of his band, and most of the loans were never repaid; she talks about payday in Chicago, which was done at the Olivers' house. She answers that the members of the band were paid \$75 per week plus tips. SO talks about money and about wanting to buy property in New Orleans. SO talks about not having much now, and

how she worked until last September, as an upstairs-housemaid, and how she was on one job nine years, until she got sick.

WR says he understands that a lot of dances were held on Monday nights, at places like the Economy Hall; SO does not remember why the dances were held on Monday nights. She answers WR, saying that Joe played some of those dances, or anything worthwhile; she says Joe was in demand, that all the rest of the really good men had left--
[Bygones] Louis [Nelson?], Freddy Keppard----Manuel [Perez] wasn't doing much, because he was a cigar maker. RC asks if Joe played at the lake; SO says he did. WR asks about Oliver's composition, "West End Blues," and if it had any connection with West End, at the lake; SO says it was named for West End, a resort for Negroes on the lake. SO answers WR, saying Joe played at the lake before the war [WW I], and even before they were married [1912]. SO says Spanish Fort [on the lake] was for whites. WR asks if Joe ever played at Spanish Fort, and says that [Armand J.] Piron played there; SO says Joe played there, and that he played a lot for white dances, because there was no good white dance band around New Orleans. SO answers WR, saying that Joe played at Milneburg, and she says Milneburg was also for Negroes. SO says New Orleans was a great town, but not anymore. SO talks about inexpensive living in New Orleans, and talks about "lagniappe." SO says lagniappe was to get the children [who went to the store for the

supplies] to come back again, and that sometimes the adults would require the children to bring back a specified item for lagniappe, thus depriving the children of their "little something extra." SO says she wonders why she settled down in New Orleans, after having traveled around with Joe to so many places; she says the place she really would have liked to have settled is Nashville, Tennessee. She likes New York, too, but likes Nashville better. SO says Joe played in Nashville a long time, but did not ^{make} ~~many~~ anything [money] there. SO answers RC, saying she came back to New Orleans because she had relatives in Donaldsonville. She also says if a person "can't make it here, you'll never make it anywhere else" [i.e., get along on little very well]. SO answers WR, saying Joe never had a car in Chicago, never cared for a car because, she thinks, he was afraid "for his eyes" [his one blind eye]; WR says Baby Dodds had a car in Chicago, and always told about how Joe wouldn't ride with him. SO answers WR, saying Joe never drove his bus, because [he might go to sleep]; she says he would sometimes sit down and go to sleep almost immediately. SO says Joe's last days were not happy, that she was in New York when he died, in Savannah, Georgia. SO concludes by saying that one just has to carry on.

End of Reel III

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Reel II
April 22, 1959
- excerpt from page 11 of digest

also present: Wm. Russell,
Ralph Colliers
Transcription: M.L. Spencer
check: RBA

0025 [WR:] I was wondering, did your husband ever mention about hearing Buddy Bolden?

[SO:] Oh, yes.

[WR:] Did he talk about him much?

[SO:] Yes, oh, yes.

[WR:] Did he ever play with him, or anything, did he say? You remember?

0037 [SO:] No, they never played, you know, because they were supposed to be two "kings". (chuckles) Oh, yes, Buddy Bolden was a great guy. Oh, yes, I remember him.

[WR:] You remember him, too.

[SO:] Oh yes, I remember him. If he was [here?] standing on the corner blowing that cornet, you could hear him almost in Carrollton.

0053 [WR:] Really loud. Was he louder than your husband, do you think?

[SO:] Oh, yes. He was much louder than Joe, louder than Joe.

[WR:] He was.

[SO:] Oh, yes. He was a great guy too, but ~~he was~~ he was one of those ^{"show-off"} kind of fellow who showed off, you know. He was very much to himself, he was. Yes, I know all of them. And Lorenzo Staultz.

[WR:] I never knew him.

[SO:] You never did know him.

[WR:] Guitar player.

[SO:] Yes.

[WR:] Did you ever dance to that band at all, Mrs. Oliver?

0080 [SO:] Oh, yes. I used to dance, yes indeed, I danced! I cut quite a step, I'm telling you! And I'd do the Charleston and the first [unintelligible]. I was kinda heavy on the Charleston. But Joe used to make me get behind a chair. I'd take a chair like this and then I get behind it because you had to be light on your feet to dance the Charleston. And everybody was dancing, and I wanted to learn so bad. Well, I finally got behind a chair, you know.

0105 [WR:] And hold on to that to practice.

[SO:] That's right. And it tickled him, he'd like it, but he never danced.

[WR:] He never danced?

[SO:] He never danced. He and I would go out, but he never danced.

[WR:] Oh, before I forget it --

[End of excerpt]

[Excerpt from p.17 of digest]

0122 [WR:] You remember did Bolden, King Bolden, if he played about the same style as your husband?

[SO:] Oh yes, oh, yes, oh, yes, oh, yes, oh, yes.

[RC:] The same kind of tunes as well?

[Unintelligible] (mumbling?)

[WR:] Do you remember any of the numbers he might have played, —
when you were a girl -- any of the songs that were popular or --

[SO:] Oh, they would make up their songs.

[WR:] They'd make them up mostly?

[SO:] They'd make them up. Ory's --

[Excerpt from p.18 of digest]

0143 [RC:] I don't suppose that he ever got to play like with Bolden or
anything like that?

[SO:] Joe? Oh, no. He wouldn't consider Bolden as he was, you
know because Joe always read music. Bolden never did, but he could
blow.

[WR:] Oh, yes.

[SO:] He could blow and he was a jazz man, a jazz band player --
and then people -- them times they never [cared?] as long as you
could play, whether you read it or not.

[WR:] [Unintelligible.]

[SO:] Joe was always anxious to read. He was always anxious to
read.

[WR:] I guess he must have taken --

[END of excerpt]

