

TOM ALBERT
Reel I [of 4]--Summary--Retype
May 7, 1962

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Others present: Richard B. Allen, Marjorie T. Zander.

Thomas Albert's home is at 635 Burgundy. Leonard "Loochie" Albert is Tom's oldest son. He goes by the name of Albert Johnson. After the depression, he was Tom's trombone player for four or five years when Jules Barnes left. Barnes played with Tom when they would go to Morgan City, Jeanerette and Lafayette. Tom was about 16 years old when Loochie was born. Loochie is about 63 now. He hasn't played music for a while; he belongs to the church now. Loochie's son played trombone on the boat with somebody called "Red" who played cornet (not "Red" Allen). It was probably "Red" Rousseau, who is about 30 and came after "Red" Allen. Mr. Allen used to see Rousseau play in parades. He played bebop.

Mr. Allen asks Tom about why he fired Jules Barnes. Tom says he was playing in Thibodaux, La. His boss offered to loan him his new Model "T" Ford. After they finished playing, they brought the car home. Tom told Barnes to make two trips with the car and get some tires and "get straight;" one trip for him and one trip for Albert. After he made the two trips, [unintelligible]. That's why Tom fired him. Barnes went on to Alexandria [La.] where he died. Tom saw him there when he was playing a parade with the Eureka [Brass Band]. They left New Orleans about 12:00 on the I[llinois] C[entral] Railroad and got into Alexandria about 6:00 A.M. They were playing for the Odd

Fellows. Tom traveled all around with the Eureka--Bay St. Louis [Miss.], Lafayette, [La.]. Loochie also played with the Eureka at the same time as Tom did. Then they got "Red [Clark, tb], [Willie] Cornish [tb.] who died, and then [Albert] Warmer ⁿ [tb.], who was there when Tom left. "Red" might have taken Cornish's place. Someone named Young played trombone too. "Red" started playing tuba when [?] Verret died. Loochie wasn't a regular member. John Casimir was on [Eb] clarinet, Jimmy "The Hog" Mukes was on drums, [Christopher] "Black Happy" [Goldston] played snare drums. Remus "[Brown] Happy" Matthews played with the Eureka before Tom. Buddy [?] played alto; Willie Wilson, the leader, Al[cide] Landry, and Tom played trumpet. Johnny Wilson, Willie's brother, played baritone. Tom wasn't in the band with Man Creole Cato or Willie Parker. They used to rehearse the band on Treme, between St. Ann and Dumaine streets. Willie Parker was the one who made the band up, there on Treme, and then they got rid of him. Tom went to a rehearsal and stayed with them until he quit. This was after the depression. The last place Tom played was at the shrimp factory at St. Bernard [Avenue or Parish?]. Casimir, Loochie, and "R. T." on bass were playing with him then. Tom decided he was too old to play anymore after that. He's going on 85 now. [Therefore Loochie is about 68 years old.]

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Tom says he was the first one to take Sam Morgan to Bay St. Louis and Pass Christian. Sometimes, when Tom finished playing with some band on the lake, he would catch a train and go to Pass Christian and play with Johnny Handy's father, [John Handy, Sr.]. They played around Gulf Port, Biloxi, Moss Point--everywhere.

One of the first ragtime bands Tom played with was Johnny Gould's, who played violin, [Henry] Ford on bass, Albert Mitchell on guitar, and "Big Eye" Louis [Nelson] on clarinet. "Bossy" Ford also played violin with them for a while. [Check "La Nouvelle Orleans" p. 133, and Emile Barnes Reel ?] They used to play at Delacroix Island and all around there. They were older than Buddy Bolden. Tom remembers Buddy Bolden, [Willie] Cornish, Bob Lyons who played bass, a "brockly-faced" man [Brock Mumford] who played guitar [?]. Tom also helped out [when they started] with [Kid] Howard, Emile [Barnes] and Israel Gorman, who played clarinet. Later, Tom says he doesn't remember Brock Mumford, but does know Lorenzo Staulz, who used to play with Jack Carey. He thinks [Louis] Cottrell [Sr.] (probably not Cottrell--RBA) played with Buddy Bolden for awhile. [Why? RBA, Feb 3, 1962] Bolden never used a violin, but he had a clarinet. Tom thinks old man Tio might have played clarinet and certainly Wade Whaley played clarinet for Bolden. Wade played with Frankie Duson [trombone], who also played with Bolden, as did Yank Johnson. Yank played trombone

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with Tom's band too. Yank's brother, Buddy Johnson, played trombone with the Onward [Brass Band].

Tom helped out Sam Morgan's band and Chris Kelly's band. Sam never played with Tom, but his brother, Isaiah Morgan, did when Tom needed a second cornet with Johnny Handy [Sr.?] at Pass Christian. Isaiah got famous and played around Mobile and went on to the top. Tom played a couple of jobs with ["Papa"] Celestin too. A man named Polk played trombone with the Eureka. The first time Tom went across the lake, someone else named Polk, a trombone player, asked him if he wanted to play across the lake and he said he would. [Cf. John Handy (Jr.), Reel ?] He was playing with Handy's father. Sometimes, Tom would stay over there two or three days. Tom thought Johnny Handy [Jr.] was too good to stay over there so he brought him back over here and they lived together. Johnny Handy played a good clarinet before he started on saxophone. Johnny's father played guitar and his brother, Sylvester Handy, plays bass. Tom used Albert Gabriel from Algiers on clarinet, and later Israel [Gorman], before Johnny Handy came. Joe Lizard [sp?] had a Tuxedo Brass Band in Algiers.

End of Reel I

Also present: Richard B. Allen, Marjorie T. Zander.

Johnny Gould had the first string "ragtime" [i.e., jazz] band Tom ever heard. Then came the Tuxedo [band], Manuel Perez, Norm[an] Manetta, who was Manuel Manetta's uncle. Tom bought Norm's horn when he died. That was the first horn he ever had. At first, Tom played guitar, but it was too slow, so he bought a violin. He took lessons with Jimmy Palao ("Spriggs"), who took lessons [simultaneously] from some professor of the pit orchestra at the Old French Opera House. When the violin got too slow, i.e., business was slow, Tom picked up the cornet by himself. Tom had just picked up guitar playing around in the streets. He started playing in bands with the violin and led bands on violin. Nobody gave him lessons on the cornet; he knew the music and just had to get the scales and the tone. He used to listen to Albert Mitchell to tune the guitar.

When he played guitar, he used his fingers to pick. Some people pick with one finger but Tom used all of them. He could second with his thumb.

Miss Zander asks what kind of music people played in those days. Tom says any thing you'd hear, "ragtime." They called written music "parlor" music. The people did not want written music, but he could only read. When everyone started to read, they ran to Tom to learn the division, half notes, whole notes, the scale, etc., all of which

you have to know. Tom knew all that and that's why he could learn the cornet by himself. He bought a cornet method book and went on from there. He played with Professor [Hulett, Euilhet] once or twice. Louis Cottrell [Sr.] used to play drums with him [Prof. Hulett?]. Hulett lived in the French section downtown at that time. Tom took two lessons on clarinet with Willie [E.] Humphrey [the elder], but [other] [including] he put it down again. Willie Humphrey had two sons, Willie [J.] and Percy Humphrey.

Tom says he played a few jobs with Lorenzo Tio [Sr.?] when he needed a replacement. This Tio played violin, he thinks. [!!]

Tom remembers the Spanish-American War. He was playing guitar then. He marched with a parade that left City Park and went on Esplanade to a ship waiting at the river. Tom was only 16 at the time and living in Algiers. He wanted to go with them but he was too young. They had a colored brass band in the parade. They didn't mix up the bands racially then except that some Negroes that looked white played with white bands, like Manuel Manetta's brother, Jean [contradiction here] and old man Hulett who played cornet.

Mr. Allen asks if Tom ever saw a flag-pole raising with a band. Tom says he was playing in Reggio, they had a "pot-go" shoot [corruption of poteau, Fr., possible?], i.e., they would have something like a decoy on a pole and people would take shots at it. Tom never

played while the flag was being raised or lowered, though. [Above par. unclear.]

When Tom had his band, "Kid" Albert's band, the blowing instruments might take down for a few bars and rest for awhile. They didn't have much singing at that time. When Tom was playing with Johnny Gould, they didn't even use drums. Drums came in after the big storm [i.e., Sept. 1915] [Cf. photographs]. They didn't use saxophones then. They used an alto, also called a "peck" horn, and the key [valve] trombone, no slide trombone. The first slide trombone Tom remembers was Fess Manetta's uncle's, "Deuce" [Manetta]. Tom was playing violin then. Tom was the first one to take Fess and Peter [Bocage] on a job. Tom would play cornet, and in case his lips swelled, Peter could play cornet and Tom violin.

Tom thinks "Skeeter" played guitar with him for awhile. He didn't have any drums in this band. "Bo Bo" played left-handed violin. When Tom started playing violin, he took Bo Bo's job in a little band in Algiers. Edmond Payton [sp?] played guitar in this band. Tom knew Eddie Atkins who played trombone. Eddie played in brass bands and different bands in town like Jack Carey and Jack's brother Mutt [Carey]. Tom played a few jobs with Jack Carey too on the Algiers side [of the river].

When Tom played on Delacroix [island], the people liked different

numbers like lancers, mazurkas, waltzes, "a little rough stuff," and two steps. They liked Spanish numbers. Tom hums "La Paloma" which Johnny Gould used to play for them. The Cajuns liked all kinds of numbers but no mazurkas, just waltzes and two steps and sometimes the slow drag. Tom didn't have anyone in his band who sang in French to them. "Eh, La Bas" came in later. Tom heard Herb Morand's sister, Lizzie Miles, sing it. Loochie used to sing in Tom's band once in a while. When they wanted a new song, Tom would buy a piano copy, play the verse once and then just play the chorus. The big string [i.e., dance] bands play the introduction, the verse and then the chorus. Tom had four of the Scott Joplin "Red Back Book" [of Rags], the trombone part, violin, cornet, and clarinet. He loaned Chris Kelly his cornet book at the Treme market and never got it back, as Kelly died. Tom still has the violin book. Israel Gorman was the only one who could play "Frog Legs" [by James Scott]. Another piece was in four or five sharps. It was harder than "African Pas." Tom used to play all that stuff; it was the hardest music they had.

End of Reel II

Others present: Richard B. Allen, Marjorie P. Zander.

When Tom was playing, they didn't have many white ragtime bands; they wouldn't hire them. There was one brass band that played at Milneburg every Sunday evening. It was a regular big band and the members read. Mr. Allen asks if Tom remembers Jack "Papa" Laine's Reliance Band. He used to use Achille Baquet, Arnold Metoyer, and Dave Perkins, who played trombone with him. George Baquet and Norm Manetta, {Manuel's] uncle, who was very light too, played in white bands. Tom says there were no white bands in the streets though. At the time, Tom was going out to the lake, "Drag" [Alcide Pavageau], who plays bass, had only three pieces in his group. "Drag" was playing with "little bitty fellows" then: Willie Phillips who played cornet and was a head man. Few of them read music except Percy [Humphrey] and his brother [Willie Humphrey]. Most of the Jack Carey band was "ragtime" [i.e., jazz]. ["Big Eye"] Louis Nelson never did read. Neither did Frankie Duson, who played trombone. Buddy Johnson, Yank's [Johnson] brother, did read music; he played over the river with Joe [Lazard? Lizard?], before [Henry] Allen [Sr.] made up his band. In Lizard's band, there was Buddy Johnson, "Loochie" [Tom Albert's son], Frankie Duson, (two trombones [at one time]), George Sims on baritone, someone else named George on bass drum. It was called the Pacific [Brass Band]. Also in Lizard's band was

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Georgie Hooker, who played cornet and later baritone after he lost his lip, and Albert Gabriel. John Pendleton used to have a string band, but Tom can't remember his instrument [cornet, RBA]. He was from Bayou La Fourche. He had a couple of bands uptown and a couple here [i.e., downtown: the Golden Rule Band.]

Joe Petit, Buddy Petit's ^(step.) father, used to play key [valve] trombone in Johnny Gould's band.

Tom told [Bill] Russell [on tape] about going into the music store on Chartres and Toulouse Streets and buying 25¢ music books. They had everything in them: waltzes, schottische. There was a book for every instrument. Tom would get four books for \$ 1.00 for cornet, violin, [probably clarinet] and trombone. They used to get piano copies there too. Then, they started buying from Werlein's.

Tom used to live on John Sock's Lane in Algiers where he first started to play with Eddie Vincent. Mr. Allen has heard Vincent on records with Freddy Keppard. TA taught EV. They made up a band with "Skeeter" and traveled all around. Then, Tom started lessons with violin and started to lead. They had a four piece band, Skeeter, Eddie Vincent, Tom and a bass player named Peter. Joe Lee [Lisle, Check sp.], who lived on Lee's Lane down near McClellanville [sp?] also played bass with them. Tom moved from there to what they called [Dublin? Deubien?] near the waterworks. Tom came from Belle Chasse

when he was eleven. That's where he was born. That was when they had the crevasse; the Grand Island [Isle] road was going through and the high water came, so his family moved to Sock's Lane. Mr. Allen recalls another bad crevasse about two years before depression [i.e., about 1927] around Poydras. Tom was living in the city then. He was playing out in the country with Johnny Gould and [Big Eye] Louis Nelson.

Tom wasn't in the service in World War I. He was 45 years old and called to come in and register, but at 3:00 o'clock in the morning, he heard the boat whistles blowing; the war was over. He was always too old or too young to be in the army.

The music shop on Chartres Street was between St. Louis and Toulouse streets on the woods [i.e., lake] side. There was an ice house right next to it.

Mr. Allen says he is 35. Tom says he was playing with Johnny Gould and them before Mr. Allen was born. "Fess" [Manuel Manetta] played with Johnny Gould too but after Tom did.

They just started taking solos lately. They never used to have all that singing or anything like that. When they played a number Tom would "make it in his mind," sound it off, and the others would know what he was going to play and what key. They used to play in F and in B flat. When they got music, they started playing in G and

D. He would stomp one time to get ready, then stomp three times and everybody came in. The leader stomped once to indicate "go out." In those days, they all played together, but not everybody would play lead. There was the trombone player's part and the banjo player's part, but they just started using piano lately. There was no sax or drums either, just clarinet, violin, guitar, and bass. Mr. Allen asks if the clarinet would play through the whole number. Tom says they did variations--some would lead and could take the violin part like Pete Fountain can do today. In the old days the clarinet would keep going most of the time. The cornet player would take down and rest awhile and the trombone player too, for two or three bars, and then pick up again because there wasn't any singing. It wasn't like today when they just take a chorus [solo], even down to the drums. Violin was the big lead instrument in those days. Now the clarinet has taken charge. With rough music you can't hear the violin well. RBA says Peter Bocage is about the only violin player still playing. Tom knew his daddy who used to play guitar with [Oliver?] Dorsey in Algiers. [Norm?] Manetta played cornet; Louis Douroux [sp?] played cornet also; Dave Perkins played trombone; [Louis] Cottrell [Sr.] played drums; and Albert Gabriel played clarinet in that band.

Tom knew Charlie Deverges in Algiers. He taught all kinds of instruments, but Tom never saw him as the member of a band.

Mr. Allen asks about an early saxophone player uptown who was also a barber, but Tom doesn't recall his name [probably John Joseph. RBA]

Tom thought the "Red Books" had the hardest music. They would get piano copies and copy off of them. Sometimes, Louis Dumaine used to buy them, and would write a part, for example, for violin or cornet. That's all he needed, just one copy. If the musician knew it, the rest would catch it off of that. [They just needed the melody.]

From Dublin, Tom moved to 512 Dauphine Street. At that time he was playing with John Casimir and many others. He would use Albert Gabriel, [clarinet,] George Hooker, [cornet?] and [Charlie] Love on cornet when he first came here from the country. Tom then moved to 635 Burgundy where he lives now. He did room for awhile on St. Louis Street when he was working the Crimmer Line [steamship?] on the wharf. He also trapped and toted bananas for two months, but he never worked long enough to get Social Security. Tom isn't eligible for an old age pension because he owns property.

When Tom was young, the best cornet player was Norm Manetta and George Moret and Manuel [Perez] were good too. [Alphonse] Picou played clarinet with Moret. Mr. Allen asks what made them so good. Tom says they knew the [written] music and had good range and tone.

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Others present: Richard B. Allen, Marjorie P. Zander.

There was a good cornet player called "Dude," a mulatto, but Tom can't remember his other name. It wasn't "Fostaire" [Lewis' brother]. He played brass bands and in the district a lot and was a good reader. "Fess" [Manuel Manetta] should know him; he probably played with him. Jimmy Palao used to play in the Golden Rule Band and, like Peter [Bocage], in "most all of them bands." They played downtown including the Ninth Ward; Jack Carey and them played uptown. Mr. Allen asks Tom if he knows Adolphe "Tats" Alexander, [Jr.] who plays clarinet, saxophone, and baritone, and Tats' father who used to play cornet and baritone too. Tom doesn't know him [or remember him? RBA], but he knew the two brothers, Vic Gaspard and "Oke" Gaspard. Tom thinks Vic played trombone in the Golden Rule Band and "Oke" played bass.

[George] Moret was the first leader of the Excelsior Brass Band. After him came, he thinks Manuel Perez, who played cornet. [Check!] Norm Manetta and "Deuce" Manetta, his brother, played with Moret. That's when the slide trombone came in; the rest were playing key trombone. Joe Petit played with Tom for years. His son, Buddy Petit, started playing then and "Chinee" [Abbey Foster] used to play with Chris Kelly then. Mr. Allen says "Chinee" plays drums well again; he's come back after some accident to his hand [!!!] Mr. Allen heard

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him at a party, playing with Punch [Miller] and Ernest Roubleau. They played "South of the Border" and "Yankee Doodle" and "Bucket's Got A Hole In It."

The first brass band Tom ever played with was [Henry] Allen [sr.]'s. Their uniforms were blue shirts, white pants, and blue caps like a policeman's. Tom played alto and cornet too. He used a little bigger mouthpiece [on the alto]. They always wore blue pants for funerals. In the Eureka Brass Band, they wore black shirts and navy blue pants for a funeral[?]. Tom gave away all the funeral marches he had. [Confusing on colors above. RBA]

Now, they play all the old music over again that they played years ago. Mr. Allen says maybe they learned [some of] it from the old records. He adds at rehearsals of George Lewis's band, they used to listen to Louis Armstrong's Hot Five, and that [Kid] Howard can remember a lot of the old stuff like "Climax Rag" and "Indian Sagway." RBA continues, says he and Israel [Gorman] get together on it. Mr. Allen asks if Tom knew a Joe Lee who was a drummer. Tom thinks Joe Lee played bass. Tom played with Jimmy Mukes on drums and Joe Lizard [Lazard? sp?] in the Eureka Brass Band. In his string band he had several different drummers and [John] Handy on clarinet, Jules Barnes on trombone. He had Tom Strother [sp?] on banjo and several others. "R.T." was one of his bass players. He seldom used

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a piano but in dances on St. Charles Street [i.e., Avenue] sometimes they did if they had a piano in the house. In the Audubon Tea Room, young fellows used to come and dance, and when they used six or seven pieces, they might use a piano. At that time drums were used. He never had a regular piano player because when you traveled, you could not carry a piano with you. They traveled all over and played excursions on boats crossing the lake, and on the Tchefuncta river. Some of his men just played music; some had other jobs too. Tom used to work on the river and trap. He'd put someone in his place until he came back. He'd play in the movie in Violet, [La.].

[Ernest] "Ninny" Coycault made a record when he went to Los Angeles in the twenties. [Ninny or Tom?] used to use "Pill" Coycault on clarinet a long time ago. Lawrence Marrero told Mr. Allen "Ninny" was with the Superior Band. He came to the city [from Violet].

Johnny Lindsay used to play trombone. Mr. Allen asks how the "shank" worked to change the key; but Tom says that was on the cornet. Lindsay would pull out his tuning slide. When Tom was playing, they had a short shank and a long shank on the trumpet. The trombone player would play in a different key. When Tom would play in sharps, he would have to pull out and put the long shank in. When he played F or B^b, he'd put the short shank in. Now, one shank will do. Someone like Albert Gabriel always carried two clarinets, an A and a B^b.

Tom knew Edward Clem but only played with him once or twice in the street. He never played with "Tig" Chambers, a good cornetist; he played in uptown bands. Tom doesn't know if he was from New Orleans or not. Most of those fellows came from different parts of the [surrounding] country. Tom knew old man Lindsay, who played guitar. Johnny Lindsay played with [John] Robichaux and string bass with his father. Herbert Lindsay played violin with them too. Tom played cornet with them a few times. Jack "Pie Eater" [Williams] played with them too. Joe Payen used to play alto with Joe Lizard. Johnny Lindsay took three lessons from Tom; he could read but he wasn't sure [of his ability]. Tom joined some music club and would get two copies a month [out of the Red Books?] He played a piece of music in four flats for Johnny and he hasn't seen him since. Johnny never played trombone with his daddy. The Lindsays usually just used three or four pieces at fish fries and places like that. At a fish fry, people liked to hear slow drags, quadrilles, but few waltzes.

Borsey [of Algiers] used to play picnics under the oaks across the river. There were white clubs that used to hire the Algierene musicians, and they would come over here and get the rest like Dave Perkins; Norm Manetta and ["Big Eye"] Louis [Nelson?] were all over in Algiers. They would have a big dance platform under the trees with tables all around, all kinds of drinks and food, and would play from

about five P.M. to midnight. Dorsey had a big string [i.e., dance] band, sometimes with eight pieces, two cornets. "The Cutoff" is about four miles down from the Canal Street Ferry. Jimmie Noone was from around "The Cutoff." Or maybe from around Fazendeville. Sam Ross used to play cornet around "The Cutoff." Jimmie Noone played clarinet with him for awhile but left. Sam had a pick-up band; if someone got good, someone else would grab them. That's what Tom used to do, but he could always get whomever he wanted because he'd pay them.

There weren't many "jump-up" brass bands in the early days; the only ones were Joe Lizard's and the Onward; Lizard lived on Verrett Street [in Algiers]; Allen's Brass Band was later, the last of the West Side bands. Allen was not young when he formed his band; his son [Henry "Red" Sonny] [Allen, Jr.] was about 5 years old at the time [born 1908]. [Cf. Robert Goffin, La Nouvelle Orleans..] TA rehearsed with the Allen band from the beginning, although he was never a regular; TA played relief with the band, either on trumpet or on alto horn. He was a regular only in the Eureka [Brass Band]. TA says some of the "ear" bands were rougher than others; Buddy Bolden's was quite rough; TA never saw Bolden play a parade. TA says Bunk Johnson [Bunk] [around 1945] left his trumpet at TA's house, forgot where it was, and eventually came back for it; TA says Bunk was playing somewhere like the Municipal Auditorium. TA knew Bunk many years ago. Bunk lived

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at Toulouse and (Dauphine or Burgundy), and drove cotton floats for a living; he was playing some then.

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