

HAROLD DEJAN
I [of 3]--Digest--Retyped
October 14, 1960

Also present: William Russell
Ralph Collins

When Harold Dejan was with Clarence Desdune's band, Harry Fairconnetue was playing banjo with them.

HD began taking music lessons, on clarinet, when he was nine or ten years old, studying with Professor [William] Nickerson, a fine violinist. He had a daughter, Camille Nickerson, who was a fine pianist; she is now in Howard University, Washington, according to WR. At that time HD knew many Creole songs and sang them with CN accompanying him. HD studied with Nickerson for about one year; Nickerson taught from a method book, (as did [Paul] Chaligny) after having the student learn ⁱⁿ scales, which he would write out in a little music book. HD supposes that WN wanted him to be a concert clarinetist. When [Lorenzo] Tio [Jr.] returned from New York, HD, taking the advice of Frank Crump (who had studied with Tio), began studying with him. If a student did not have his lesson well-prepared, Tio would refuse to take his money and would make him study the lesson more. When HD had advanced some, Tio would send him to play duets with Louis Cottrell, Jr. about once a week. Tio would sometimes take HD to Tranchina's [Restaurant], where he was playing [with the A. J. Piron band], and have him sit in on numbers he thought HD could play, thus giving him experience. Some of the members of that band at the time: Steve Lewis, piano; [Louis] Cottrell [Sr.], drums; [Louis] Warnick, alto saxophone. Tio later would take HD to hear the bands in the District, where he first heard John Handy (playing clarinet)

HAROLD DEJAN
I [of 3]--Digest--Retyped
October 14, 1960

Also present: William Russell
Ralph Collins

and George Guesnon, banjo; Peter Badie was playing alto saxophone, and either Kid Clayton or Guy Kelly was playing trumpet. Handy was a great clarinetist then. HD recalls the time Handy first got a saxophone; they were on a job with Kid Harris; Handy didn't know all the fingerings then, so he would pick up his clarinet when he couldn't play his ideas on saxophone [the opposite of the situation today, 1965--PAC]. HD studied with Tio about two years; HD was playing at the Japanese Tea Garden at the time he was studying under Tio. Barney Bigard, who also studied with Tio, is mentioned. When HD quit taking lessons from Tio [who was leaving town], HD arranged to study with Albert Nicholas, who joined King Oliver before he could give HD his first lesson. [c. 1924. See Walter C. Allen and Brian Rust, King, Joe Oliver.] Lorenzo Tio, sr. and an uncle, [Louis] Tio, are mentioned; there is discussion about which was called "Papa"; HD says Charlie and Peter Bocage would know, as Tio, Jr., married their sister.

HD's first job was at "at a house party or something"; the date was some time before he played with the Moonlight Serenaders. His first regular job was at the College Inn, in 1922 or 1923. Others in the band were: Ernest Roubleau, banjo; "Coochie", piano; Vernell "Bowlegs" Joseph, drums. HD, clarinet, replaced a friend, Lucien Johnson, who was going on the road. HD began playing E-flat [clarinet] at about the same time; he also joined the union, at the insistence of Tio, Jr.

The union met then at St. Katherine's Hall, on Tulane Avenue. HD joined the Holy Ghost Brass Band during that time, which was led by Pinchback Tureaud; some others in the band were [Alcide] Landry, trumpet and Wells, share drum. Tio played E-flat clarinet on parades; HD doesn't remember having heard him play B-flat on parades. HD remembers that Tio and Willie [J.] Humphrey, playing in separate bands, were especially noted for their renditions of "St. Louis Blues."

HD mentions Henry Julian, fine clarinetist and saxophone player, who worked at the Music Box (Carondelet and Canal), with George McCullum. HD thinks Julian was a brother-in-law of Frank Crump. He was from downtown.

Once, during a tough period for musicians, HD, working at an oil [service] station, was hired by the owner [Sam Peck? RBA] (HD thinks Bill Philips sent him) of the Popeye [Club] on Decatur Street; others in the band: Ernie Cagnolatti, trumpet; Robert Davis, drums; Louis Givens, piano. The Popeye was on Decatur between Ursulines and Gov. Nicholls; other places nearby were Mamà's, the Kingfish and the Rosebowl. All had music every night. HD had the job about ten months. Kid Howard replaced Cagnolatti, and Benny Benoit came into the band on banjo. HD was not with the Holy Ghost Brass Band at the time; he had played with that band for about one and one-half years. He remembers that they played a fair at Opelousas [Louisiana], working for three days there; there was a fine

"family" band there in the town, about eight or ten pieces. HD talks about the attraction provided by an out-of-town band, regardless of how good the home band is; he remembers that the Claiborne Williams band would pack San Jacinto Hall, but a local band would draw less. HD remembers a night when the [Pythian Temple] Roof Garden had six bands, including those of Manuel Perez, Sam Morgan and the Sunny South Syncopators (HD's brother [Leo] played in that band; the band featured Duke Ellington numbers). HD says Perez was great, that he could play the clarinet part of "High Society" on trumpet, although his clarinetist, Eddie Cherrie (who was also a barber), was very good and could play it, also (Cherrie played E-flat clarinet in brass bands, but played B-flat clarinet and tenor saxophone in dance bands). HD mentions that Maurice Durand was playing second trumpet in the [Perez?] band; HD played with Durand, who got all the work in St. Bernard Parish, because he was raised down there. (Durand now lives in Californai [has since died--PRC]).

HD speaks of Professor Chaligny, who was wonderful, who taught about half the trumpet players around New Orleans. Chaligny would write his own theory book. He had a brass band, too, after Perez left town. HD's brother studied [trumpet] with him, as Perez was away, changing to Perez when he came back to New Orleans. Chaligny was also a good trumpet player, but had lost his teeth. WR says Joe "Brother Cornbread"

October 14, 1960

[Thomas]

✓ Joseph studied with Chaligny. Chaligny charged only twenty-five cents for a lesson. HD and his brother both played with Chaligny's brass band; Chaligny's son, [Ulysses?] played trumpet in it, as did [Alvin?] McNeal [spelling?], and HD thinks [Emile?] Knox was playing bass drum. HD tells of a job on which "High Society" was played (Leo Dejan had been playing trumpet three months at the time); all the trumpets except Leo dropped out at one part; Chaligny hugged and kissed him and said he was going to be something. The incident occurred in January, 1925; the band was playing for a cornerstone laying at St. John Berchman Asylum, on Gentilly Road. Chaligny, a man of good age then, was a mail carrier; he had the route including HD's home; when HD would see him coming, he'd go inside and begin practicing. HD took a couple of lessons from him, and would also go with his brother to trumpet lessons; Chaligny would show HD how to play some of the lesson on trumpet, too. Chaligny taught because he wanted people to know about music. Gilbert Young, trumpet, supposed to be studying with Chaligny, was actually picking up music from Chris Kelly; when his mother found that out, he began going to Chaligny. Young was a powerful trumpet player; HD illustrates the distance he could be heard.

HD speaks of his brother, saying that he took violin lessons before trumpet, and was able to play well. Now in California, he still plays, having played with Kid Ory a while.

The brother, Leo, works in the Federal Building [in Los Angeles], having left New Orleans years ago to go to that job. HD tells of Leo's getting a job for a friend who had just arrived in California.

HD worked in a band with Udell [Wilson?] at the Willow Inn, which was on Downman Road. Udell later worked at the Entertainers when HD was working Decatur Street. Udell was from Kansas City [Missouri]. HD says that when he was with Clarence Desdunes band, they went through Kansas City in 1929, where they inquired about Udell. Others in the Desdunes band then were: George McCullum, trumpet; Raymond Brown (father-in-law of "H.E." [Fred Minor]), trombone; Henry Kimball [the elder], sousaphone; Earl Fouche, and later, Oliver Alcorn and Lucien Johnson, reeds; Nolan "Shine" Williams, drums; Eurreal "Little Brother" Montgomery, piano. Montgomery joined the band in Jackson, Mississippi; he left in Omaha, Nebraska, going to Chicago where he had the opportunity to record with a blues singer. HD tells of how Montgomery (when they were in St. Joseph, Missouri) caused people to stop dancing because of his great piano playing.

End of Reel I

HAROLD DEJAN
II [of 3]--Digest--Retyped
October 14, 1960

Also present: William Russell
Ralph Collins

The Melody Inn and a picture of the Moonlight Serenaders are mentioned.

HD continues his story of [Eurreal "Little] Brother" Montgomery, pianist, and his ability to stop a dance by his blues playing. When Montgomery left the band, he was replaced by a woman, Vivian, of [Atchison?], Kansas, who remained with the group until it disbanded.

HD comments on the ability of Harry Fairconnetue, banjo player from Bay St. Louis [Mississippi] (still living there), who was with the Clarence Desdune band; Harry's cousin, Warren [Bennett] (from Bay St. Louis or Pass Christian), played clarinet in the band before Lucien Johnson got in it (Warren also played saxophone and piano). HD says information about Caffrey [Darensbourg], banjo player with Manuel Perez, may be obtained from some of his kin people who live on [?] Street. George Guesnon was one of the good banjo players of that time, and still can play well. HD mentions Tony St. Leger, a barber, who played with him "on" [i.e., at] the Pelican dance hall, Rampart and Gravier, in the block next to that of the Astoria; Alex Bigard [drums] was also in the band. WR says he ate at the Pelican in 1942, [with and] when Bunk Johnson first came back to New Orleans; WR says there didn't appear to be segregation then, and HD says in that time and before people weren't so foolish [meaning differences of color, etc., weren't taken so seriously]. HD says some white boys who lived across the street from him and his brother [leo Dejan] began

HAROLD DEJAN
II [of 3]--Digest--Retyped
October 14, 1960

playing music just because the Dejans played; they all would walk to and from school together [probably not to the same school].

HD began playing on boats in the early Twenties; he replaced a friend, Louis Andre, saxophone, who didn't like the job. (HD says the first saxophone he ever played on was Andre's, and the first tune was "Tulane Swing" [i.e., WWashington and Lee Swing])). HD left a job at the College Inn to go on the boat. "Son White" was also on the boat; he washed dishes during the day and played music at night. ["Son White", i.e., Edmund Washington] HB would voluntarily help the roustabouts carry cargo, etc.; the captain admired him for his help. The boat made excursions from Columbia, Louisiana, to Camden, Arkansas [Ouachita River]. HD would sometimes play clarinet for the roustabouts; he says he wasn't so great, but he played blues and he could play the melody. When everyone was paid off, in Baton Rouge, the roustabouts would make up a little extra pot for him. HD says the reason he was hired for the Japanese Tea Garden job was because he could play melody and could read music, which he did so that [Caffrey?] Darenbourg, Louis Gallaud [piano] and Bill Phillips [drums?] could learn the tune . The Japanese Tea Garden, at Milneburg, was at the edge of the water, and near where the train, "Smoky Mary", terminated its run, at Moreau's Grocery (which is probably still there). HD says he, his brother, Sidney Montague [drums] and Ruben McClendon, banjo,

played at Moreau's Camp, Little Woods, in 1928. HD says a good saxophone player, Hickman, played at a place next to the Tea Garden; HD wanted to play like him; however, he noticed that the place where Hickman played was always closed about eleven in the evening, and HD's place would usually go until about three in the morning; HD figures it might have been because he always played enough of the melody to let people recognize the tune.

[Kid] Ernest Moliere, son of old man Paul Moliere and brother of recently deceased drummer Paul Moliere, did an act in which he took his clarinet apart, piece by piece and down to the mouthpiece, while still playing it. The trumpet player was named LaCroix [check spelling]. HD first played the Old French Opera House Bar with the younger Paul Moliere and Sammy Hopkins, pianist; HD remained there about three years. HD then digresses, speaking of his playing in various units of the [Algiers, Louisiana] Navy Band.

HD speaks of the band at the Silver Slipper (later the Dream Room) [now Your Father's Moustache--1965]; [A. J.] Piron was director of the band.

HD speaks of sight-reading "Rose of Washington Square" for the owner of the Old French Opera House Bar (his wife did a number to the tune), who raised JD's salary. HD stayed at the place, playing for a variety of performers and owners.

A good trumpet player, [Andres?] Kimball, went to the Star Theater in Shreveport, where HD saw him; it was the last HD heard of him. Kimball was a very good musician, like Manuel Perez.

HD played with trombonist George Williams, son of Claiborne Williams, in the Navy; George is back in Baton Rouge, teaching and selling musical instruments.

Henry Russ, Cie [Frazier] and a very good trombone player and teacher from Wallace College, Bertrand Adams were also in the Algiers Navy band with HD. HD was in the Navy three years and three months. Leo Dejan was in the band at the lakefront, with Theodore Purnell, Willie Humphrey [the younger] and others. After the Navy, HD got in the Navy Reserve band, acting as master-at-arms; at the request of a friend, a good bass player named Spencer (now teaching in New Iberia), he also joined the Army Reserve band, also acting as master-at-arms. The Army band was directed by Melvin C. Bryant, music teacher at Dillard University. A bassoon player, now teaching at St. Augustine High School, one ^[Edwin] Hampton, was in the band; clarinetist Harold [or ~~his brother~~ Alvin?RBA] Batiste was another; Tony Moret played trumpet; a present member of Tommy Ridgley's band was also in it. It was not as good as the Navy band, however. HD talks about life in the Navy.

HD played with Benny Benoit, Cie Frazier's brother-in-law, in the Olympia Band, with Arnold Depass. HD tells of playing

with Depass at the Crystal Palace, Clio near Dryades; employees of Brown's Velvet [Dairy] would come to the place; Depass told HD, who didn't drink, that if someone offered to buy him a beer he should take it, give it to Depass, who would give HD the ice cream the dairy employees might bring. HD says Depass and Alex Bigard had similar styles. In the same band with Depass and HD were Eddie Johnson, [saxophone] Tom Copeland (bass), [Edna] the wife of Albert Francis (piano), and [Elmer] "Coo Coo" Talbert (trumpet).

When HD and Leo Dejan were young, their mother would let them play if the leaders [or someone] would come get them and then bring them home; [Anderson] Minor, bass player and also Peter Williams, drummer were among those who escorted the boys.

HD says Earl Bostic, a very fast man on the saxophone, plays the style that Theodore Purnell used to play around New Orleans. [Bostic was in New Orleans for quite some time previous to his becoming famous--see Joe Robichaux interview.] HD says Purnell [who has been and still is sick] is better, has a good memory, still can play. Purnell played with Sidney Desvigne a long time, as did Tom Johnson, a brother-in-law of HD; Johnson, a very good saxophone player, now lives in California.

HD says Felix Goff, who played with ["Bebé"] Ridgley when HD did and when John Porter played sousaphone in the band, was a very good clarinet and saxophone player. Goff liked to travel with shows and circuses. [Check Billie and DeDe Pierce, reel ?].

Eugene Porter joined the same band (Clarence Desdune's) (spelling?) HD was in when Brother Montgomery joined, both in Jackson, Mississippi. Porter first played tenor, adding clarinet within a couple of months. E. W. Brown, clarinet, from Brookhaven, Mississippi (or environs) also was in the band; his father was "over" [directed?] the Rabbit Foot [minstrel] show at one time.

HD played with Georgie Boyd, clarinet, and Udell [Wilson, piano] at the Willow Inn. Boyd could also dismantle his clarinet while playing. He could also carry on an intelligible conversation while playing. He always had a terrible cough, dying of tuberculosis or something like that. [Joseph] "Brother Cornbread" [Thomas] had a brother who played piano; he [Cornbread?] got his [Boyd's?] clarinet after he died according to WR.

Reed strength is discussed [as usual]; HD says [Lorenzo] Tio [Jr.] told him it was very seldom two people, even in the same band, used the same strength reed, because of so many variables.

End of Reel II

HAROLD DEJAN
 III [of 3]--Digest--Retyped
 October 14, 1960

Also present: William Russell
 Ralph Collins

HD says the proprietor of the Willow Inn liked to shoot hats off the head of Willie [Desberg?] for which Willie received five dollars per shot; Willie bought a bunch of cheap hats for such occasions, thus making more money.

When Georgie Boyd was unable to play this job, he would often send John Casimir in his place.

HD remembers playing quite a number of times with a good pianist, Benny Ward, who worked around the District a lot. HD thinks Robert Blake was on drums in the band he and Ward were in, and that [Wiltz White?] played trumpet.

Mike Delay played trumpet in the band HD had on the [steamship] Dixie in 1930. The ship made a round trip from New Orleans to New York every 10 days; however, HD and the band made only one trip in 1930, HD and Delay, among others, going to a job at the jitney dance hall, La ^{vida} Vereda. [Henry] "Pickles" [Jackson, drums] played with HD on the Dixie in 1936, when HD went back to that boat, having been away from it since 1930. HD worked other boats, among them the lake excursion boats Madisonville and Susquehanna, working on them a long time during the period when The Bungalow was operating. HD went on excursions on those boats on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the trips going to Madisonville and back to West End. Ruben McClendon played on that boat, and so did Sadie [Goodson], Billie [Pierce]'s sister (WR confirms HD's contention that Sadie was probably [Abbey] "Bebé Chinee" [Foster]'s first wife). "Chinee" told HD he had been playing drums since 1908, the year before HD was born. WR says the story is that Chinee began playing jobs

when he was so small as to be barely visible behind the drums. HD says he held one stick under the cymbal. Chinese drank heavily, but WR says he has an excellent memory. HD mentions taking DeDe [Pierce] on jobs out in the country years ago; he says Pierce played nice trumpet. WR says Pierce is playing better now than he has in years (Pierce has lost his eyesight [and had been sick more recently]).

HD played at the Ramona, a glack-and-tan [i.e., integrated] club, with Kid Howard. Howard sometimes sent Ulysses Jean as his replacement. WR heard Jean at a lawn party with George Lewis et al, in about 1944. HD says he himself played a lot of Carnival balls with Lewis. Kid Howard played his best in the Thirties and Forties. Kid Howard played drums on one of the first jobs HD and his brother [Leo Dejan] ever worked.

HD talks about one of his favorite trumpet players, Kid Rena, with whom he worked. He also liked to hear Rena's band because Zeb [Leneries] was playing clarinet in it. Rena was strong, powerful and could really play. HD's father, who was in the transfer business, would sometimes rent his wagons and mules to advertising bands; HD would follow a lot of them on skates, especially when Rena played. HD says Chris Kelly had to run [away from Rena], unless he played "Careless Love" or "Dippermouth Blues", at which Kelly excelled. HD worked two or three jobs with Kelly. Albert Snaer (now in San Francisco, according to WR) was another good trumpet player, something on the order of [Herb] Morand. Morand worked some with HD, on

on Bourbon Street (Dick Allen would come around to hear them [1949 to 1951 (Check Morand death date)]). Wallace Davenport played with HD on that job for about two years. "Daddy" Frank Moliere, a good pianist, was with them. WR mentions [Clarence] "Little Dad" [Vincent], banjo; HD played some jobs with him, but says Vincent played with Kid Harris (Vincent and Harris both dead now). Harris pretended he could read, but HD and [John] Handy found him out. Harris had a good ear, though. Kid Rena had the best ear; HD says Thomas Jefferson and [John] Brunious have fine ears, but Rena was the best. When HD played with Rena at the Gypsy Tea Room, others members were: Joe Harris, [as?] [William] Houston, piano, (who also wrote arrangements for them). Rena could read a little bit. He was also called "Little Turk." WR says Rena was in the Waif's Home at the same time as Louis Armstrong, around 1913 [and later]. HD says Willie Pajaud took Armstrong's place at Tom Anderson's when Armstrong left to join King Oliver. Pajaud loved to read music; HD says he believes Pajaud would rather play a funeral than have [^]~~one~~ thousand dollars.

HD heard George McCullum and Henry Julian often at the Music Box. HD later played with McCullum in [Clarence] Desdune's band, and had the chance to discover how really great McCullum was. HD never knew [GW] McCullum [Sr.] personally.

Arnold Metoyer was a very good trumpet player, too. WR has a picture of him, with Albert Nicholas and Paul Barbarin, when they were playing at Tom Anderson's. HD tells of Metoyer's ability to eat a sandwich and then play without blowing any food through the horn. WR says that Professor Manuel Manetta said that AM liked to gamble. Metoyer's widow and a son are still living.

Manuel Perez's son now lives in California, and a daughter lives in the 1100 block of Touro or Pauger Streets [in New Orleans]. Perez had two sons; the one who played trumpet is dead; the California son plays saxophone. Perez would have rehearsals at his house, and would take the younger musicians on jobs, as [A. J.] Piron did later. WR says he met a Perez son at Natty Dominique's home in Chicago. WR mentions Baby Dodds and Francs Amis hall; the Perez son in Chicago said the Perez family had belonged to the organization; HD said all the Creoles belonged to Francs Amis. HD mentions Artesan Hall, Jeunes Amis Hall, Cooperators Hall, etc. He says sometimes there would be three funerals in a day with music; the Catholics had music until recently [when it was frowned upon officially]. WR mentions that Isidore Barbarin, a Catholic, had music recently; HD says a few Catholics are still buried with music. HD played Catholic funerals with the Holy Ghost Brass Band, which was loosely affiliated with the Holy Ghost Church, a Catholic church. [Alcide] Landry played with that band.

Earl Fouche was a great soprano and alto saxophone player; he taught HD a lot about his saxophone playing; HD met him when Fouche was playing with Sam Morgan, at San Jacinto Hall. HD met him through Johnny Dave, banjo with Morgan (Dave or his brother drove for HD's father). Fouche and Paul Barnes were really good on saxophone at that time; Adolphe Alexander [Jr.], who played with Manuel Perez's Imperial Serenaders, was also very good on clarinet and saxophone. "Son" Johnson, clarinet, saxophone and piano, was the best around for a long time [on which instrument or instruments?]; Johnson had offers from many big bands, white and colored, to join them, but he preferred remaining in New Orleans. Warren Bell, a younger man, plays as much alto as Charlie Parker.

HD and Walter Pichon would get a quart of ice cream each, and go to a place where a band was playing; they listened and ate ice cream. One place they would go was [The Palmer?] where Eddie Johnson and Ernie Cagnolatti's brother Freddy Klebert, drums, and perhaps "Curly" on piano, were playing.

HD describes playing in speakeasies; the group was piano, saxophone and drums. Brother Adam, a pianist who worked with them, died some time ago. Adam's "mind left him." They played softly so that the police would not hear.

HD thinks a drummer, William Joseph, brother of Ferdinand Joseph, who sang with ["Papa"] Celestin, and of Waldron "Frog" Joseph, trombone, gave him the name "Duke", but he doesn't know why. HD used the name, "Duke" Dejan and his Rhythm Boys; when

HAROLD DEJAN
III [of 3]--Digest--Retyped
October 14, 1960

he went on the steamer Dixie, he used "Duke" Dejan and his Dixieland Serenaders.

HD says the group at the Melody Inn was fine; Lionel Ferbos played trumpet; "Daddy" [Frank Moliere] was the first pianist, later replaced by John Smith; Alex Bigard played drums; HD played saxophone [and George Guesnon later came in on guitar, replacing the piano? Compare Mighty Four LP notes (on Mono)].

HD has all of Willie Pajaud's music, although he has thrown away the spare parts. HD and Pajaud played the last jitney dance in New Orleans, the La Veeda; a Mr. Burk [spelling?] ran the place; HD still sees him occasionally. ([Willie] "Kaiser" [Joseph], HD and Mike Delay were working at the Alamo before HD went with Pajaud at the La Veeda?] confusing). Jitney jobs were tough until a person became accustomed to them, after which they were routine. HD describes the routine of playing only two or three choruses. He tells about a different routine used at a jitney he played with Arnold Depass, every Saturday night, in Raceland [Louisiana].

End of Reel III