

HAROLD DEJAN  
I [only]--Digest--Retyped  
March 29, 1963

Also present: Richard B. Allen  
George "Kid Sheik" Colar

[Interview property of Barry Martyn. Excerpts issued on MONO  
MNL5 (10")]

Brass bands HD remembers from his youth: Excelsior; the Imperial (led by Manuel Perez); [Henry] Allen [Sr.]'s (from over the river [Algiers]); [Papa] Celestin's Tuxedo Brass Band; Professor [Paul] Chaligny's brass band, made up of his students; Pacific Brass Band, with Willie Parker [Compare with Parker, reel ?]; Holy Ghost [Church] Brass Band. HD liked to follow the Imperial Serenaders to hear Adolphe Alexander [Jr.] play alto [saxophone]. Eddie Cherrie sometimes played E-flat clarinet with that band, and sometimes he played tenor [saxophone]. GC says Joe Watson [clarinet] played with the Onward Brass Band, which was led by Manuel Perez; HD remembers that the Imperial Serenaders was Perez's dance band, and that the Onward was his brass band. Today, the brass bands which use music are only the Eureka (which usually brings music on the parade job), the Young Tuxedo and Dejan's Olympia Brass Band (sometimes); almost all the bands of the earlier years used music; the names of the pieces would be cut off the music so that any musician hired would have to read the music as it was written, rather than playing it from memory. [Compare other interviews.] HD says some bands of today play the same tunes all the time--for instance, "Just A Closer Walk With Thee."

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The first time HD heard saxophones in a brass band was with the Perez band; Alexander played alto saxophone and Eddie Cherrie played tenor saxophone; the time was the early Twenties, perhaps even 1919.

Difference in music between a brass band and a jazz band; brass band plays a walking tempo, regardless of the time signature--i.e., 2/4, 6/8, etc. The only music a brass band plays in 4/4 } time [i.e. 4 audible beats per measure--PRC] are funeral marches. HD saw a funeral march in 3/4 the other day, at Professor [Henry] Pritchard's house. Parade music has changed [for the worse] since the earlier days; the biggest reason is that bass drummers are not so good and not so plentiful today as before; there are <sup>fewer</sup> less brass bands today, too. Ernest Trepagnier, "Little Jim" [Mukes] and Black Benny [Williams] were rough [i.e., good] bass drummers; there are good ones today, but not many. The style of parade music hasn't changed, only the quality. The earlier brass bands used more music than those of today; they had rehearsals. HD, then in his teens, had just got an E-flat clarinet, rehearsed with the Holy Ghost Band twice a week; [Alcide] Landry played first trumpet in the band, and Pinchback Tureaud was director. Most of the musicians then were readers; HD says the reason he was able to remain in the Holy Ghost Band was that he could read the parts. The bands of today

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play some of the numbers that were played by the earlier bands, but the latter played [more numbers; also,] the earlier bands would play the jazz pieces (such as "Shake It and Break It" ["Weary Blues"] and "Panama") all the way through, rather than "do the short route" [i.e., not playing all the sections of the piece]. Today's Eureka Brass Band will sometimes play some of those numbers all the way through. Earlier bands played in tempos other than 4/4 (or split time, for marching), such as 2/4 and 6/8. HD renames some of the best parade bands [see P.1, this reel]. HD says a person had to read in Allen's Brass Band, that Allen always had the music to read; HD played one time with that band. Brass bands HD played with before he organized the Dejan Olympia Brass Band: Eureka, for quite some time (when HD took a day job, he was replaced in that band because he couldn't play the day working hours jobs); [John] Casimir's Young Tuxedo Brass Band. HD says he always kept a brass band of his own, in case another band got two jobs and gave him one of them.

Little Jim [Mukes] was a bass drummer; his drum was so big that it hid him from sight. GC says he was also known as "The Hog."

HD was born in New Orleans, February 4, 1909. He began taking music lessons when he was eight or nine years old. He first went to Professor Nickerson, because Lorenzo Tio [Jr.] was in New York. [Compare HD, reel ?] HD's brother [Leo Dejan] was supposed to study [trumpet] with Manuel Perez, but Perez was in New York too, so Leo studied with Chaligny. When Tio returned to New Orleans, HD began studying with him.

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HD's first brass band job after leaving the Holy Ghost Brass Band was with Chaligny's brass band, which played for the cornerstone laying at St. John Berchman [Asylum] (across the street from Dillard University).

The most recent funeral HD has played was about a month ago, with his own brass band. HD used to call his band the Eureka Number Two (when he was playing with the Eureka), but when his band was to be recorded [for Barry Martyn, of England], it was decided to name the band the Olympia Brass Band, after Arnold Depass's Olympia Serenaders [dance band], with whom HD played a long time; HD thinks there never has been another Olympia Brass Band, either.

Asked to name favorites [players] in brass bands he gives the personnel of his own band: Sheik Colar, Ernie Cagnolatti [trumpets]--HD says he sometimes uses three trumpets, sometimes two trumpets and three reeds--; Jesse Charles [tenor saxophone]; Louis Cottrell [Jr.] or Willie Humphrey [the younger], [clarinet]; Louis Nelson, Eddie Summers, trombones. HD's favorite street musicians in the earlier days: Manuel Perez, [Henry] Red Allen [Jr.], Willie Pajaud and Maurice Durand, trumpets. When Guy Kelly came along later, HD liked his [trumpet] playing in the street, as he was powerful. Landry and [with leading by GC] Shots Madison were very good. Percy Humphrey is also a favorite trumpet player. Wooden Joe [Nicholas] was a good street [trumpet] man, too. Favorite clarinetists in the old days:

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Lorenzo Tio [Jr.] and Willie Humphrey [the younger]. Following them was Eddie Cherrie (E-flat clarinet). GC mentions Joe Watson. HD ~~knew~~ ~~George~~ ~~Boyd~~ and Zeb [Leneries]; HD played with Boyd at the Willow Inn; some members of that band: HD; Boyd; Udell [Wilson?, piano?]; Willie Desbon [spelling?], violin. Boyd would send John Casimir as his replacement; Casimir was playing B-flat clarinet then. Favorite sousaphone players: Eddie Jackson; [Henry] Kimball (who also played in [Clarence] Desdune's orchestra, with HD, on the road); John Porter (who was on the road with [Bebé] Ridgley's band when HD played in it); Joe Howard (whose lips trembled when he played; he had been a trumpet player at one time). Another good sousaphone player was Verrett? [Spelling?] who played with the Eureka. Snare drums favorites of the earlier times: Alfred Williams; "[Black] Happy" Goldston; [Abbey] "Chinee Bebé" [Foster]; Clay [?] Jiles (who played with the Excelsior); Wells (who played with the Holy Ghost Brass Band); the drummer who played with Manuel Perez on the [Pythian Temple] Roof Garden, when Earl Humphrey was playing trombone in that band. The best of all the street snare drummers was Louis Cottrell [Sr.], who played with Perez [in the Roof Garden band?].

Kid Howard [trumpet], still playing today, was a powerful street man in the earlier days; he was as strong as Kid Rena or Albert Snaer of HD's brother, Leo Dejan; Howard could play anything. Leo Dejan didn't play much street work; he worked

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some with Chaligny's brass band, and was fine as long as he had the music, but he wasn't much of a street man [of the rougher style]. He played mostly with orchestras, such as [A. J.] Piron, Ridgley's Tuxedo (when HD was with that group), [Herbert] Leary (a long time), and the Sunny South band. The first band HD and Leo had together was the Moonlight Serenaders; members: Leo, leader and trumpet; HD, clarinet and alto saxophone; Henry Cassanave, alto saxophone; Arnold "Bazoo!" drums; Sidney <sup>C</sup>Gates, <sub>GA</sub>banjo and manager. Albert "Fernandez" [Walters] was playing good trumpet in the earlier times, and is still playing well. HD's main trumpet player now is Kid Sheik Colar; if either has his own job, the other will almost certainly play on it; if HD plays as extra man with the Eureka, he plays with Sheik [who is a regular member of that band]. George McCullum and Alvin Alcorn [still playing regularly] are mentioned as good trumpet players; McCullum was better when he had music to read. HD recalls that when the Desdune band was playing an advertisement in Bay St. Louis [Mississippi], McCullum started and played a number which no one had ever heard before; it was a very good number, so good the people in the street began dancing. The band was in front of a drug store whose proprietor always gave the bandsmen cigars when they played there; asked the name of the tune, McCullum said it was the "Cigar Stomp." Thomas Jefferson is a good trumpet player. Joe Phillips is good. Punch [Miller] is playing well again. Kid Howard, who has been sick, is playing well

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again--"living a second life now."

Drummers in HD's brass band: Josiah "Cie" Frazier, snare; Henry ["Booker T"] Glass, bass. Paul Barbarin substitutes for Frazier sometimes. The band usually has ten pieces, sometimes eleven; HD thinks the brass band should have eleven or twelve pieces all the time, because the sound is better.

HD says the bass drumming of Henry Glass comes close to sounding like that of Black Benny. HD thinks Glass got his inspiration from Benny. There were plenty of good bass drummers when Benny was playing.

Good trombonists in the earlier days: Sunny Henry; Louis [i.e., Albert?] Warner; a trombonist with Ridgley's band, when Ridgley was playing drums.

Some of the good readers of the early times were good hot men, too, but their solos were different from those of the non-readers. Manuel Perez, a good reader, could take a pretty good hot solo; Arnold Metoyer could "get off" [fake, or improvise]; George McCullum could get off, as could Leo Dejan. HD remembers seeing Bunk Johnson playing with different [brass] bands, but doesn't remember which ones.

There were very few musicians who played in the street who did not also play in dance bands; some of the street men were hired for dances in emergencies, but they played all right. For instance--Sunny Henry, primarily a street man, played in dance orchestras and did all right. He played with Kid Reña some.

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Albert Warner is better as a street man, but HD says he would surprise one now, as he plays some trombone [i.e., good].

[Oscar] "Chicken" Henry, an old-timer, is a pretty good trombone player.

There were "tonk" brass bands, too, in the early days; when Red Allen and Guy Kelly played [trumpet] in Allen [Sr.]'s brass band, with Walter Pichon on melophone, "they would roll up", really tonk.

Speaking of bands playing on trucks for advertising: Chris Kelly, Kid Rena, Punch Miller--Albert Snaer was another good trumpet player--one could expect to see the first three every Sunday on trucks (at first, it would be on mule-drawn wagons); they would sometimes meet on the street, where they would have music battles; there sometimes would be fights [among the spectators] in the street about who had the best band. "Little Turk" (Kid Rena) always came out well in the contests, as he could play; he played tunes like "Panama", "Shake It and Break It", "Avalon." Chris Kelly was tough, too, with his blues, which he played with a plunger [mute].

End of Reel I