

January 3, 1962

Also present: Herb ~~XX~~ Friedwald, Richard B. Allen

Emile Barnes is also known as "Meley"; his home is at 3610 Metropolitan Street [in New Orleans].

HF asks EB to tell him about non-reading clarinetists who played with Buddy Petit, Chris Kelly and the like. EB says there were [Phil] "Pills" [Coycault], a ^{young, yellow-complected} /small, /ctippled man; Zeb [Lenoir (sp?)], a cousin of Pills, tall, slow-spoken and taciturn (Both Pills and Zeb were from the [Algiers] Lower Coast), and Blind Charlie, from around Gravier Street. EB says they couldn't read much, but they could play almost anything, and what [melodies] they couldn't figure out, they could "variate" [play a variation of or fit a harmony to]. RBA asks about Pills' brother, [Ernest] "Ninny" Coycault. EB says Ninny was all right, "but he didn't ^{feel} with us much." EB says ~~XX~~ Ninny ~~XXXX~~ left New Orleans years ago, with a show. RBA says Ninny is now in California. EB answers RBA's question by saying that Ninny was about the same color as Pills, but he was much heavier than Pills. EB says Ninny's playing was all right, but it was more direct [he played a more or less straight lead], whereas Pills "would swing any way ~~we~~ would swing". HF asks about Georgie Boyd; EB says he worked mostly with Punch [Miller]. HF asks a comparison of the styles of Boyd and Pills, Zeb and Blind Charlie; EB says they were pretty much the same, that they all played high register, hardly ever coming down even into the staff or below the staff. EB says Boyd was "a sport", [who lived high and got a "big head"?] and he died of tuberculosis. HF asks if ~~XXXX~~ musicians took solos as a matter of course; EB says he never did know anything about taking solos, or never heard of that practice, until lately; he says the only solos taken (and ~~XXXXXX~~ it was called playing the lead then) were for the purpose of relieving the brass instruments only [not for the purpose of showing off one's talent, so to speak]. HF asks EB to name some of the tunes which would regularly feature the clarinet as the "lead" instrument; EB says such things as "Grace and Beauty" and "Black and White [Rag]"; he says there might be something

wonders why Big Eye didn't do any of that "freak stuff" in later years, but EB does ~~XX~~ not know. EB says the reason he liked Big Eye the best was that out of all the good clarinetists, like Baquet and Picou, Big Eye had a different tone and was the most original, playing things that EB considered more valuable. EB answer HF's question, saying that Big Eye played with the most feeling. EB says that Big ~~XX~~ Eye was not a music reader, but that he could spell pretty well, so that ~~XX~~ he could look a piece of music over a bit, and then be able to play it pretty well; he says Baquet and Picou were the readers. EB says ~~XXXXXX~~ that Tony Giardina, a white man, was a good clarinetist, and pretty much on the order of ~~XXX~~ Big Eye. ~~XXXXXXXX~~ [written etc]

EB ~~XXX~~ answers HF, saying that Big Eye was fast, "all the through". EB liked his tone; Big Eye played in all registers. ~~HF~~ asks if Big Eye would play just on the chords, or would he make up his own melodies. EB says he would make his own melodies, then look around and ask how it was; the trumpet player would be Bunk [Johnson]; EB says that when Big Eye and Bunk got together it was tough. RBA asks which clarinetist[s] would play with a rough, ratty tone, make growls, etc. EB says Lorenzo Tio, Jr., played with a very heavy [stiff] reed, and got a hard, rough tone, and that he would play growl style sometimes. RBA asks if EB knew Willie Warner and Frank Lewis, and what styles did they play; EB says they were more like / "musicianers", that they played their parts; they were good, but they were more straight in their styles than hot. HF asks what musician playing now has a style which would be like the styles of Zeb, Pills [and Blind Charlie]; EB says they didn't sound much like Picou or George Lewis or Edmond Hall or Johnny Dodds, that they played more of a ~~XXX~~ variation style. EB says that ~~X~~ men like Big Eye played the lead more in the old days, that the clarinet was the lead instrument, rather than the trumpet. HF asks when the trumpet began to ~~XX~~ play the lead; EB says that

clarinet and trumpet played sort of the same line, but the difference was ~~XXXXXX~~ in the tones and that the trumpet would stick to the melody, but the clarinet would play variations on the melody. He says Freddy Keppard was one trumpet player who would get a long way away from the melody, and that the clarinet would take the lead when Keppard did this. RBA asks who the good blues clarinetists were; EB says that the cabaret men were. ~~RBA~~ asks who the good blues players were before men like Sidney ~~XXX~~ Bechet and Johnny Dodds, who were good, made records; EB says Bechet and Dodds were good. RBA asks about blues players before there were records made; EB says there were himself, Dodds, Bechet, Zeb, ~~XXXX~~ Blind Charlie and [Willie] "Kaiser" [Joseph]. He says the good blues players were "tunk" [~~XXX~~ honky tonk] men, that the good ones usually worked in the tunks, such as in the District. / ^{RBA asks about the St. Bernard} The downtown musicians circle. ~~XXXX~~ had a sort of headquarters, called The Alley, next to the supermarket at St. Bernard circle; it was run by Edgar Monget [sp?]. EB says the place was not a headquarters for getting jobs, it was just a gathering place for musicians; there was a piano there, and drums and other instruments, so that any musician who felt like it could play; EB says there were sometimes two clarinetists at once, two trumpets, even two men playing one piano at the same time. He names some of the musicians who came there, a few being ^{Bechet, Dodds, Bechet} Red Allen, Robert Taylor and Arnold Metoyer. RBA asks about Blind Charlie; EB says he usually worked with "short" bands [small], and in the tonks, that he was a good clarinet player and could play the blues. EB is asked about blues, and he quotes words from some blues. RBA asks what Blind Charlie featured, such as long notes, of a lot of notes, or what; EB says he played a lot of melody, and that he might have sounded a bit like himself on blues. EB says the band ~~XX~~ EB was in was considered to be the best blues band; EB played clarinet, ^{his cousin, Michel Frasier} Little Mack played drums and Wooden Joe Nicholas played trumpet; the name of the band was the Golden Rule Band. / ^{EB was manager.} The band worked a

1 [of 4]
January 3, 1962

lot at [redacted] Hall, Franklin and Gravier. RBA infers that the neighborhood was rough, but EB says they never had any trouble. HF asks if the old-time clarinetists played the blues like George Lewis, for instance, does today; EB says no, that in the old days a musician would have the blues, and then he would go play them. He says he does not know how they play the blues now. He says he used to play the blues from 8 PM until 3 AM. HF asks who the good blues trumpet players were; EB says Bunk was the best. He says ~~XXXXXXXX~~ [Andrew] Kimball was good...
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End of Reel I

January 4 3, 1962

Also present: Herb Friedwald, Richard B. Allen

[Andrew] Kimball was a trumpet player who read and could play anything, even by ear; he would break up the place when he played blues at intermission at the Palace Theater, with [John] Robichaux' orchestra; their blues weren't like blues played by an "outside" band, but ~~XXXX~~^{it} was still blues. EB says bands played introductions to blues in those days; he hums an introduction [which sounds like intro. to JR Morton's "New Orleans Joys"]. EB says he sometimes thinks about how much bands have changed over the years; he would like to hear a real old-time band; he says he'd like a band with a violin playing lead, no piano necessary, just to hear what the difference would be between now and the old days. EB would like to hear bands playing the rags--"Maple Leaf", "Grace and Beauty", Black and White--and "Fidgety Feet", etc; he is tired of hearing "funny" songs, "open-key numbers" [common, easy to play]. EB says the bands playing now "steal" from the music [do not observe strict notation]; he ~~E~~ says "Big Eye" Louis [Nelson] played that way, as he could not read. Robichaux' orchestra played as written; a band with Bunk [Johnson] and Big Eye would not; EB would rather hear the band with Bunk; the public likes bands which "steal", or "chop". EB would rather play with a 4-piece band than with a 6-piece band, because of the added differences 2 extra men might bring. EB can't play half the clarinet he once could, but he was as good as any clarinetist playing in his prime. The best clarinet for blues in the old days was Johnny Dodds; [Sidney] Bechet and EB used to ["whip"?] him; Dodds played at Joe Oliver, and EB heard them at St. Katherine's Hall (across the street from Charity Hospital). EB says Zeb [Lenoir (sp?)] and Blind Charlie played somewhat like Dodds, in that all the clarinetists around New Orleans sounded somewhat like each other at times. Dodds was "afraid" of Bechet and EB; EB was not afraid of Bechet, because they were good friends; they used to go together to places where clarinetists were playing [to challenge them to contests]. EB says they wouldn't try to "cut" the readers; ~~EB~~ he and

II [of 4]
January 3, 1962

Bechet read very little, and Dodds was not much better; hardly any of the "head" clarinetists read. Dodds was rough at times, but not always. EB could cut Jimmie "Jimbo" Noone; he made Noone jump off a truck once in a contest. Noone, although not a pupil of Big Eye Louis, admired his style. [Many] ~~XXX~~ musicians who were considered readers in New Orleans discovered they weren't too good when they went up north [and east, etc.]; Paul [Barnes] found that out, being only a third sax player when he got away from New Orleans. Fast/^{fingerers}~~XXXXXX~~ [multi-noted players] were Big Eye Louis, [Lorenzo] Tio [Jr.], Noone--in fact, everyone was fairly fast, and nobody was too fast. Barney Bigard and Albert Nicholas weren't anything until they went north; Bigard didn't even play clarinet until he left New Orleans. EB didn't hear [much?] of Willie Humphrey [the younger] or George Lewis in the Twenties; they weren't in town much. John Handy was fast, and considered good. Israel Gorman and Steve Angram weren't so good then, nor was Albert Burbank, who was only playing with young bands then--with [Bush?], Eddie, & Lawrence Marrero, Paul Barnes, et al. Louis Cottrell [Jr.] was good; he played some with Chris Kelly, and although Kelly didn't read, as Cottrell did [and does], the two were apparently musically compatible; Kelly's specialty was blues. Willie "Kaiser" Joseph, who played with [Louis] Dumaine, was good. Charlie McCurdy was good, and got "all over his horn"; he could play by ear, [as well as read] and could have fitted into Chris Kelly's band. Joe Watson, with Sam Morgan's band, was ~~XXX~~ OK. Andrew Morgan couldn't play much, not having played clarinet much, preferring ~~XXXXX~~ tenor sax. Kaiser and Bling Charlie ~~XXXXXX~~ played only clarinet, not sax; sax had just been introduced, and were considered "off instruments"; X if used in a band, they were in addition to the clarinet, not a doubling instrument for the clarinetist. The "tonk" bands didn't use saxes--bands such as the ones EB and Bechet played in; Bechet didn't know anything about sax when he left New Orleans; EB doesn't remember who played sax; he says Big Eye Louis had a

EMILE BARNES
II [of 4]
January 3, 1962

at Claiborne, in the first or second house (probably no longer standing)
diagonally across from the Harmony Inn; his father's name was also

Emile Barnes; EB moved from there when about 7 or 8 years old; *he was reading*

4, 5, 6, 7, 8 ? He heard his uncle play clarinet in a band, a serenade
late at night,
band, which played for things like surprise parties, /and sounded good.

The instruments other than clarinet would be bass, mandolin, violin and
guitar--no trumpets or trombones; there were ~~XXX~~ trombones then, but
valves were used then,
valve, not slide [~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ but slides were certainly in
~~XXX~~ existence, and long before valves].

End of Reel II

couraged by the others to play, finally becoming proficient. The violin played lead all the way through each piece, never backing the other instruments. Playing with that band until he was about 19, EB learned many numbers; the bands then usually kept up with the currently popular songs, and EB learned them then. The band played mostly for picnics, ~~XX~~ at the lakefront places, ~~over the river~~, in bordering parished, etc. The band used "Gettysburg March" to indicate an intermission. ^{for drinks.} EB next played with Edward Clem's band, and also [later?] with Amos Riley (Riley ~~XX~~ was the father of young trumpeter Theodore Riley). EB says Clem's style was somewhat like that of Kid Thomas [Valentine], in that Clem ~~XXX~~ "cut" the notes ("ta ta") [played in a staccato fashion]; [but] Clem was more of a straight player, rather than a "get-off" man. Clem's band, about 5 or 6 pieces, ~~XXX~~ had a [usually] regular personnel, although EB worked with many other bands, including that of Joe Howard (trumpet), /during the period he was with Clem [EB and the other members would give the Clem/preference of their services when notified soon enough]. The time was after the Big Storm [hurricane] of 1915, and EB was in his Twenties. Sometime later, EB began a long association with Chris Kelly; Kelly got a lot of work, as did EB, and a banjoist in the band, Peter Papin [sp?], and they would all get jobs for the Kelly band. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Before Kelly had his own band, he was working with Johnny Brown's band; EB also worked in that band, for, although Brown was also a clarinetist, he wasn't very good; he had a lot of contacts [for jobs] because he was a furniture mover. EB worked with Kelly before Depression [also probably during] ^{the World War I} and after Depression. ~~EB~~ Kelly died long after Buddy Petit's death. EB [later, or at the same time?] had his own band; nobody wanted to hire him, because everyone was afraid EB would take all their ~~XX~~ work from them [because he was so good?]. EB says he was playing with Kelly during World War I [Kelly ^{de EB were} was in army?]; they never used more than 10 pieces; Willie Foster played violin with them; Harrison Barnes

was the trombonist. He was a good [all-around] trombonist (including the blues), better than most trombonists today. Lawrence Marrero played banjo, Eddie Marrero played bass; at one time, there were 4 Marreros in the band. [Josiah] "Slé" Frazier [~~XXX~~ cousin of Barnes and the Marreros] also played [drums] in the band, at one time, but the drummers were frequently changed. Some of them were Red Happy [Bolton], Black Benny [Williams], Dave Bailey and Alex Bigard. EB worked with different bands, at different spots, during the [Kelly] time. *He had a book*

to write down his list.

?] ->

Admitting that some of the other drummers of the times [and of the present time also] were good (such as Alfred [Williams] and ~~Slé~~ Frazier), EB says the best drummer he ever played with was Dave Bailey, who was an all-around good drummer, with plenty of spirit and ability to keep good time; EB says that "Face-o" [Eddie Woods], who left New Orleans, was also like Bailey in those respects. *They were the best two he ever played with.*

EB played with Bunk Johnson after Bunk got him his clarinet [see beginning of this reel]; [~~Bunk told EB he would have still been playing with him if he hadn't sold his clarinet?~~]. Bunk was leader of the band then, and until it broke up; *unless he dropped too much.* Lawrence Toca was also a good trumpet player. In Bunk's band at the time [besides EB] were Jimmy Palao [violin], Peter Bocage [trumpet?], Louis Cottrell [Sr.], drums, Buddy Johnson [trombone], and others; it was called the Imperial Band. Bunk had also played in the Superior Band, and ~~XXXXX~~ several men in the Imperial ~~XXX~~ had also been members of the Superior; EB says leaders would entice players from one band to another. EB had played in the Superior also; he and ~~XXXXX~~ Jimmie "Jimbo" Noone ~~XX~~ were hired, together, to replace someone; they ~~XXX~~ played with the Superior on an advertising truck, and Noone jumped off the truck [because EB was "cutting" him--see earlier in interview].

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When quite young, EB moved from Piety and Claiborne to Port, between Robertson and Villere; when he began playing music, he was living on Villere, between Spain and St. Roch, and he was playing in the Young Imperial Band. Others in that band were ^{his cousins,} Simon Marrero [banjo], John Marrero [bass] and Sam "Sugar Noo" Frazier [drums?]; Robert Taylor (who must have left town) played trumpet; there ~~was~~ ^{was} no violin or trombone. EB moved from that part of Villere to the corner of Spain and Villere; he was playing with Chris Kelly at the time. EB doesn't remember what band he joined after playing with Kelly, but it was a band he played with several times [different periods?]. He did play with Kid Thomas. [Valentine], being a member of Thomas' band about 3 different times. He became a member at first because Thomas had heard Kelly's band and liked EB's playing; EB quit playing with Thomas because of the distance from his home to Thomas' jobs, over the river. EB worked with Kelly over the river, too; a lot of Kelly's job connections were from over the river, including Harrison Barnes, who played in Kelly's band. Thomas heard the band over there, and EB and his brother, Paul Barnes (on sax), went to work for Thomas. Thomas always did have a "funny hat" (and skirt, etc.) routine; none of the others [in the band?] did "monkeyshines", but the band was popular because of Thomas. Some others in the band then were "Little Tom" [drums, Alton Theodore [banjo] and "Loochie" [Leonard Albert], trombone; the latter two have since joined the church [including giving up playing secular music]. Thomas' work was all on the other side [Algiers] of the river, down in the bayou country, not on the east side [New Orleans], all spot jobs. The band was always full [6 or more pieces], and Thomas played as he does today--strong--because he allows himself ~~plenty~~ plenty of rest in the ~~same~~ tunes. After Thomas, EB took his own band to Grand Isle, working Wednesday through Saturday at a place for Tony [?], owner; besides EB, there were Harrison Brazley ^{Dr. Buster Moore}

trombone, [Ernest?] Poree, sax, Mitchell Frazier, piano and an unidentified drummer. Then EB got another job at Labat's dancehall in Raceland, so he started another band, and had both jobs; Willie Pajaud and Bob Anthony were the trumpet players. EB had 14 pieces in all, split into 2 [equal?] bands, one at Grand Isle and one at Raceland; EB ~~XX~~ played alternate weeks at each place; the period was sometimes after the Depression, in the Thirties. EB did not play jitney dances in New Orleans, but the Grand Isle and Raceland jobs were jitneys; they were not as hard as the New Orleans jitneys; EB says they ~~XX~~ would play one number and then wait until all the dancers had cleared off the floor, for ticket-taking, and then they would play again. The owners liked the way EB handled things; he says they have asked him to play for them recently, but he won't go. EB says he did play with Thomas about two years ago at Raceland, and there was a hill-billy band there then; HF had just said there were rock-and-roll bands there now. EB also worked with Buddy Petit; Petit had a band about like Chris Kelly's.

EB doesn't remember making any records with any band until late years, when he recorded for Alden [Ashforth] and David [Wycoff] [~~in~~ ^{issued} recorded ^{on} for AM in 1945?], in 1951; they came to the Harmony Inn, ^{perhaps} where EB was working, and asked him to record. ^[I don't think I ever saw any in the Harmon Inn] EB played for 16 years at the Harmony Inn; his band built up the business from nothing to very good; ^{the size of the place increased, too;} ~~XXXX~~ EB and Lawrence Toca, trumpet, would sometimes play for nothing when business was ~~XXXX~~ bad. Arnold DePass played drums and Alma [?] played piano. EB says he could play there now if he wanted to. RBA says that when he ^{on a job} first came to New Orleans, about 1947, he heard three bands in one night; Kid Rena, at the Brown Derby, told him about "Big Eye" Louis [Nelson], so he went to Luthjen's; he met ~~AR~~ Art Schreiber [cab driver at present, 1964], who told him about the Harmony Inn, where he heard ^{At this time the University of Georgia played in the Sugar Bowl} EB and Toca. ^A HF says the Harmony Inn seemed to be doing pretty well when he recently heard [Ernie] Cagnolatti and

Paul Barnes there, on a job EB had arranged for Paul. When EB left the Harmony Inn, he went to the River Belle, Clouet and Chartres for a short stay; then he went to a place on Tulane Avenue [near Carrollton], and worked for the owner, named Harry. He worked at Mama Lou's about 3 or 4 years ago, with ~~E~~ Andrew Jefferson as leader. EB opened Luthjen's; Toca played trumpet; Luthjen's is older than the Harmony Inn; the owner of the Harmony Inn heard EB's band at Luthjen's, and got them to come play for him. Toca played most all the small clubs with EB; Toca quit playing when EB did. EB played at Manny's Tavern, at Benefit and St. Roch, with Billie and DeDe [Pierce]; EB's/bands ~~XXX~~ didn't use trombone, except at Manny's, where Harrison [Brazley] played. EB began playing with [Albert] Glenny many years ago; Glenny was his "right hand fiddle", as was Eddie Dawson. Glenny played in the band at Mama Lou's with EB. EB played with most of the brass bands, having quit only a couple years ago. He ^{has} played in recent years with Andrew Jefferson. He played Eb clarinet once upon a time; Willie Parker gave it to him. EB repeats that he played in almost all the brass bands; he says the reason he doesn't play now is because ~~XX~~ he won't join the union; he joined once, but he wouldn't pay any dues; he wasn't in the union when he played the small clubs with Toca. EB also played in the band at the Palace Theater, for vaudeville; Kid Howard was leader; EB says they didn't have to read, that they could pick up all the tunes [by ear]--show tunes, dance tunes, etc. [Paul Barnes] ^{or Manuel Paul?} played sax in the band; the instrumentation of the band was sax, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, bass, violin and drums [piano?]. Howard was playing well then. EB says he doesn't like to say that one man sounds like another, because each man sounds like himself; he says the clarinetists of the old days mostly had their own styles, but that the ones today sound more alike.

(3:52 "Ear" brass bands ~~XXXX~~ played Dixieland music; someone would get a job, get his friends and they would go play the job; today, the contact

musician has to belong to the organization offering the job. Today things are altogether different from the old days; the musicians are not as friendly to each other, for example. [Next section not transcribed].

EB says if old-timers like himself, Peter Bocage and others would get together and rehearse for a couple of days, ~~XXXX~~ ^{their music} would sound like the music of the old days, but that the young people's music does not ~~XXXX~~ [and never will?] sound like the old. The old instruments are being replaced by saxes and guitars, and one day even the brass ~~XXX~~ will be gone, except in a big orchestra. EB says the drummers coming up are so different that the old timers can't play with them.

End of Reel IV