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EARL HUMPHREY

I [of III]--Summary--Retyped

March 28, 1963 Also present: Richard B. Allen, (Jack Hurley,
photographing, is not heard)

RBA plays [Louis Dumaine's Jazzola Eight, "Franklin Street Blues] recording for Earl Louis [sp?]Humphrey. RBA looks for recording by Ann Cook;EH says she was the toughest woman in the District; RBA says she is still alive [died 1962]. EH identifies the clarinetist on Dumaine recording as [Willie] "Kaiser" [Joseph]; EH identifies the trumpet player as Louis Dumaine (EH's father [Willie Humphrey, the elder] was in the same hospital ward at the time of Dumaine's death). EH identifies the vocalist as Leonard Mitchell [banjo], and says he was the nicest fellow one would ever want to meet; EH says Mitchell is with Joe White, around Natchez or Jackson [Mississippi] (EH says George Guesnon knows where Mitchell is). [Andrew Anderson told RBA LM is in New Orleans.] When EH made the recordings (in 1927) with Dumaine, he hadn't played in six weeks; [Morris] Rouse, the pianist on the records, told him about the session; the recordings were made without any previous rehearsal. EH says Louis Dumaine directed Ann Cook in her phrasing, so that she and the band would be together; Dumaine diplomatic in his direction--a very nice person. Ann Cook made 2 sides with the band. RBA identifies the first record played as "Franklin Street [Blues]" he then plays "Red Onion Drag" (Dumaine got the name from a group of houses, all painted red and called the Red Onion Drag (very tough neighborhood), which were located behind the House of Detention, Tulane and Broad). [cf. the Red Onion, a honky Tonk, on Rampart Street. Ask WR.RBA] EH says the "Drag"

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is the same as "Rip 'Em Up, Joe," which was composed by Buddy Petit. Petit had a lot of numbers. EH says Petit would sometimes be asleep on the stand; when someone awakened him, he would play a little prelude, to identify the key of the next piece, stomp off, and make up the number as he went along. RBA says [Clarence "Little] Dad" [Vincent] told him about a number Petit had which was called "Mr. Buddy, Mr. Buddy, Mr. Buddy Petit." RBA refers to joke about drinking.

EH says he and Lee Collins had a band playing every Saturday night during the summer at a hotel in Mandeville, across the lake; [EH's brothers were (Buddie was?)] playing in a band led by a bass player called "E-flat," in which the Fritz brothers also played. Isidore Fritz played fine clarinet (now dead, says RBA) and the other Fritz brother played guitar. The father Fritz played bass violin. "E-Flat" [was he the father Fritz?] had 3 bass violins; he was good, better than anyone around N.Ø. Petit wanted to come back to N.O., where Collins and EH had connections at Besant [sp?] Park (anyone who wanted to use the park had to hire the band, too), which was at South Claiborne and the Orleans-Jefferson Parish line. Petit was smuggled aboard the train to N.O., paying no fare; he stopped at the Big 25, borrowed a horn from Batiste, a student and follower of his (Batiste also offered him shelter at his rooming house). Collins, EH, Petit and the rest of the band met the baseball team (Which was to play at Besant Park that afternoon) at 3rd and Willow, the location of National Park; all got on a truck about 1 PM and began advertising the game, scheduled for

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2:30. They met Kid Rena's band, also advertising, at Cherokee and Ann [now Garfield], where they held a bucking contest. The contest lasted so long that the band, with baseball players, didn't arrive at the park until 3:45. EH says he, Collins and Petit (on 2nd trumpet) wouldn't run from any band. EH tells of a contest at Liberty and Perdido; Black Benny [Williams, bass drum], chained the trucks together [to keep either band from leaving]. EH was playing with Johnny Brown (who played violin and clarinet), who had Chris Kelly playing with him; EH was substituting in Kelly's band for Harrison Barnes (who couldn't get off because he worked a regular job as boiler maker for the Southern Pacific Railroad); Emile "Mealy" Barnes was hired on clarinet, because Brown wasn't very good. The other band tried to chase Kelly, but he wouldn't run/ Kelly played a variety of numbers in a contest; he could play a ^{sweet} number if he wanted the crowd to stay, or he could play a number that would make the other band leave. He could play the blues better than any trumpet player in town. Lee Collins was also a blues player. Kelly was great in his use of the rubber plunger as a mute. He could really play "~~Going Back Home~~ to Jamaica" [also called "West Indies Blues"], and a lot of barrelhouse numbers. The [Kelly] band had a fine time-keeping drummer, Roy Evans, who was like Alfred Williams in his ability to keep

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a steady tempo. Other ^{va} numbers Kelly featured were "Careless Love" and "D.M.F." [EH scats the latter number.] [D. is "Dirty] [M. is "Dirty"] and Kid Howard 1 cōh EPH [12"] [Compare "Three Sixes, Ike Robinson, reel ?/] EH says Punch [Miller] and Kid Howard could play the latter number. Kelly's tone was big, like a trumpet player who might be working with an opera company orchestra; Kelly didn't ever use trumpet; he always played cornet. EH says the [Kelly band] "bättery"[i.e., drums, but probably including the rest of the rhythm section in this case] was good: Chester Lizardis [Zardis], b, Alex Scott, [b], Roy Evans. [RBA interrupts EH].

EH identifies a trombonist on a record being played as Kid Ory. He identifies the trumpet player as Lee "Shags" Collins. EH then says the trombonist might be Robert Thomas, whose style was like EH's. [The recording is "Careless Love," by George Lewis's band: Kid Howard, trumpet; Jim Robinson, tb.] EH says the trumpet player is imitating Chris Kelly's style of playing, although Kelly would be using the rubber plunger, and that the band would be playing very softly; Alex Scott would sing. Sometimes when playing a blues, Kelly's band would just fade out at the end; people would continue to dance, thinking they still heard the band. Kelly had plenty of stomps, too. He had the "Red Book" [Standard High Class Rags] and the "Green Book." Kelly played in a lot of keys, not limiting him and his band to just a few keys. Talk of modulations.

End of Reel I

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EH talks about Lee Collins and jitney dances [i.e., taxi, or dime-a-dance halls]. Collins would play hard all during the engagement, as hard as he plays on the recording of "Duet Stomp" by the (Davey) Jones-Collins Astoria Hot Eight [which was just played by RBA]. The 6-piece band in the place where Collins worked could begin new tunes faster than a person can change a record; the band played at the place for two years without a day's off; a man would send a substitute if he wanted to get off. John "Son" Handy (now living in Pass Christian [Mississippi], his home) was in the band; he was a fine clarinetist who later took up [alto] sax, on which instrument he was tops. Band members at the jitney place: Roy Evans [drums]; Handy; Collins [tp]; EH [tb]; Joe Robichaux [piano]; Rene "Plectrum" Hall, banjo [EH called him "Plectrum" because he had a 5-string banjo [sic]]. Hall is now in New York or Chicago. He also worked with Collins in the Jones-Collins band. Manuel Sayles played banjo in that band at a different time. [also Danny Barker. RBA] Hall could also play violin. After the jitney dance engagement was ended [for the evening, or after the 2 years?] the Collins band began playing late (12:30 A.M.) dances at the Astoria, following [Kid] Rena, whose band played until midnight on Sunday night. Then the band began playing after-hous^e dances at a place in Shrewsbury [Jefferson Parish], where Bebe['] Ridgley (then playing drums) and "Shots" [Madison, tp] were playing the regular dance; the place was opposite Jack Sheehan's [Sp?] Suburban Garden. [cf. Bebe Ridgley, reel ?] The name of the jitney dance [in N.O.] was La Vⁱnda. There were 100 girls nightly, except on week-ends, when there were 150. So far as EH knows, the girls made their money

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strictly from dancing. He describes the procedure at the place: price per dance, length of each number, the amount a customer could legitimately spend in a short time, etc. RBA says he went in a jitney once--the Cadillac Club--when he was looking for Kid Rena. People would sit in the band (EH says the band was working the jitney when the union was formed here); EH would have someone ask to sit in; then he would go to a colored cabaret somewhere, where Georgie Boyd, [cl], Ernest [?], Buddy Petit or others were playing; when he returned to La Vada, perhaps at the end of the job, he would give the sitter-in some money, usually his night's salary. EH talks of George Washington, a nice tb player. EH was playing with Evan Thomas's Black Eagle Band; Washington was with Ma Rainey, who wasn't playing many dates. They all were in Lafayette, La. EH borrowed money from Thomas to loan Washington so he and his wife could go back to N.O. Washington, who has since died, worked for a long time at a jitney at Carondelet and Canal; some others in that band: [at various times?] Sunny Henry [trombone]; Sidney Carrere [clarinet and sax]. EH says Washington died on Washington [Avenue] near Jackson [Avenue] [a difficult death, as those streets are parallel and 4-5 blocks apart--PRC]. Louis Armstrong and Washington grew up together in Jones' [Waifs'] Home; Washington could play ? => baritone [horn], bass horn and trombone. RBA mentions a picture with Washington in it; others: Buddy Petit, [Eddie] "Face-o" [Woods], Buddy Manady [sp?]; Chester Zardis; Edmond Hall; Earl Foster. The picture was taken in Mandeville; EH says that was the time they brought Petit back on the train without paying [See Reel I]. EH says Buddy Petit messed up his business the same as Chris Kelly did; Kelly would take several jobs for one date, split his band, add some more musicians including amateurs, and fill all the jobs; the customers, however, knew the members of the regular band, and

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they would not be happy to receive substitutes, so Kelly lost his work. Kelly had much work in N.O.; he worked in Mobile, Montgomery and Birmingham [Alabama]; he played at Tulane University, where the bands were different every Saturday night. (Bob Lyons' Dixieland Band is mentioned as having played there).

[Emile] "Mealy" Barnes (EH hasn't heard him play in over 25 years) didn't play as loud as Willie [Humphrey, the younger], but he had a fine technique; he was one of the best clarinet players around N.O. As to the best jazz clarinet player in N.O. [now], EH says it would be a toss-up between his brother Bill [Willie] and Sam Dutrey, Jr. Johnny Dodds, Georgie Boyd were both good clarinetists in the Twenties. RBA says Punch [Miller] has told him a lot about Boyd. John Handy was a good clarinet player. "Guyé" Robichaux, a soft clarinetist, played with Jack Carey; he was from some place like Reserve, where he died. *[cf. Punch M. Miller]*

[Butler] "Guyé" [Rapp] was one of the best banjo players around; he was big; he played trombone., too. He was killed by someone, on Rampart Street. He played trombone with EH, in the Onward [Brass] Band. He also played [banjo] with Sam Morgan, and, according to EH, was much responsible for the success of that band. Sam Morgan had a fine band; it played soft; the tempo was great. Yank Johnson, on trombone in that band, was good. Others: Joe Watson, clarinet; Eddie "Ti-Boy" Gilmore, bass (the last time EH saw him he was playing bass horn, around Alexandria, Virginia); Alfred Willimas, drums (a very steady drummer). Morgan's band would not buck, but

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people would follow them wherever they played. The first time EH saw Eddie Gilmore, Gilmore was playing with the Liberty Bell Band. RBA says Gilmore and [Clarence] "Little Dad" Vincent were good buddies. Talk about Vincent and his relatives, the Ogdens, where Vincent lived when he died. Vincent was almost deaf, but he could play without making a mistake, and could tell when anyone else made a mistake. Vincent had two brothers; one played bass violin; the other was not proficient on the mandolin. [Cf. Clarence Vincent, reel ?] The three brothers would mask on Carnival day, and go out to enjoy themselves; they wouldn't work on Carnival day; EH was the only one who could hire them on that day.

EH was born September 9, 1902, in New Orleans, at Jena and Robertson [streets], near where the home of Percy [Humphrey, EH's brother] is now. When EH's mother died (when he was about 6 years old), he went to live at Ama, La. (the Humphrey brothers are about two years apart; Bill is the oldest, Percy the youngest). When he was about 10-12 years old, his father was going to California, so an aunt took EH and Percy to N.O. to live. EH's grandfather, Jim Humphrey, was a music teacher; everyone who lived in the Humphrey house had to learn music. EH first picked out a guitar, but was forced to take something else; he began his study on cello. Outgrowing the cello, he started on bass violin.

End of Reel II

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EH comments that some musician on a recording [of Jones & Collins Astoria Hot Eight] being played always was a hard worker. EH says Punch [Miller] was also a hard worker; EH met Punch when Punch was playing with a Silas Green show; Punch changed his style because of playing with that show.

EH learned bass to play in the [Humphrey] family band, which had a rehearsal every Friday night, even if only [EH], Bill [Willie Humphrey, the younger], the grandfather [Jim Humphrey] and the aunt were there to rehearse. Neighborhood children (such as C.J. Thomas, and Ike Williams, who became a fine clarinetist, moved to California for his health, and died in that state) would come to the rehearsals [to play and/or to listen?]. Many neighbors, white and colored, would come to hear the band rehearse.

EH took a few lessons on trombone. He listened to [Kid] Ory and [Joe] "King" Oliver and their band at the Astoria every Sunday night. The first job EH played on trombone was with "Poydras Market Dan," a guitarist, who had a job at West End or Spanish Fort--somewhere out there [on the lakefront]; EH played another job out there with Dan the following Sunday. Manny Gabriel, ^{MARTIN Joseph Gabriel} a pretty good trumpet player, heard EH play and hired him; Gabriel had a week-end [Friday, Saturday and Sunday?] job; EH stayed with him a good while. Manny's son, ^{MARTIN MANUEL GABRIEL} ~~Dede~~ Gabriel, played drums [Little Manny?]. EH says there is a Gabriel playing guitar now, Clarence Gabriel; RBA knows Clarence's brother, Percy, who plays bass; Percy is young. EH says August Lanoix, bass with [Peter] Bocage, married one of [Manny] Gabriel's two daughters.

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"Poydras Market Dan" lived in the rough part of the District [sic], on Liberty between Perdido and Poydras; he couldn't sing, but he could talk and rhyme, and entertained the prostitutes a lot; he worked with [or was like?] George Jones and Cornelius [Tillman?]. They just used strings, unless they got a job requiring blowing instruments, in which case they picked up some horn men. Dan is probably dead, as he was an old man when EH first knew him. The man was called "Poydras Market Dan" because he would help the butchers at the Poydra Market (Poydras and Rampart) clean their stands; the butchers would give him the meat they didn't expect to sell the next day; Dan would give it to underprivileged people; EH says Dan helped a lot of people in this way. Dan had connections with some good people, who would give him [music] jobs; his trumpet player was Willie Phillips; Dan would hire "Cook Shop's Son" (RBA had heard [Manuel] Manetta talk about him), on drums. A peg-legged man, "One-legged Ike" Williams, about the same age as Dan (and not the clarinetist mentioned earlier in this reel), played bass; the last EH heard of him, he was in Galveston, Texas. When Dan couldn't get Williams, he would hire Albert Glenny to play bass. (RBA says Glenny would drink his water [chaser] first, then follow it with whiskey, to get rid of the awful taste of the water.) [This was indicated by action, not by words. RBA] EH says he, Glenny and [Dominique] "T-Boy" Remy (in California now) had a lot of fun; they had the Columbia Band [from '22 to '24?]. RBA knows of Remy from the Eureka [Brass Band]. Remy, EH, [trombone] Eddie Dawson (porter with the Whitney Bank for over forty years now), [bass?], Glenny [bass] and a drummer (who was also a good violinist, and the son of a musician) [were in the Columbia Band?]. The drummer was in the class of [Louis] Cottrell, [Sr.,]

and played with [A. J.] Piron and those guys. The drummer's reading ability was better than that of "Red Happy" [Bolton], but not as good as that of Walter Brundy. The drummer was secretary of the union when it was first set up; [Papa] Celestin was the president. EH says the drummer's first name was Joe; RBA mentions Joe Strohter, Joe Lindsay, and "Windy Joe" Wynn (EH says Wynn went to Pensacola and kept on going; Wynn tried to break up the New Orleans union). EH remembers that the drummer's name was Joe Welch; Welch was steady, the same type drummer as Alfred [Williams]; Welch played nice violin, too. He lived on Paillet Lane. Joe Welch's father could write music [manuscript] which looked as though it were printed; the father played with EH's grandfather. Remy was a good guitar player, one of the best in New Orleans. He took up trumpet later, and was the trumpet player in the [Columbia] band with EH; the others: Joe Welch; Eddie Dawson; Albert Glenn; Arthur Williams, clarinet (Williams had a bad eye).

End of Reel III

