

TONY FOUGERAT
Reel I [of 2]--Digest--Retype
June 8, 1960

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Also present: Paul R. Crawford, Richard B. Allen.

Tony Fougerat was born in New Orleans, April 25, 1900. He says he had no intentions of becoming a musician; he always wanted to be a locomotive engineer. He bought a cheap cornet and just began playing without lessons; he says that he, as well as most other jazz musicians, played in only one or two keys, usually C and F, and that he never played in other keys until about 1923-24, when he began playing with Leonard Bayersdorffer [brother of Johnny Bayersdorffer] who played [piano] in all black keys [flat keys]. He began about that time, to work with better musicians, such as Leo Adde, drums; and Joe Gary, piano. They worked a lot at the Hotsy Totsy club, an upstairs joint about a block from the Little Club. [Vit] Lubowski [piano] and Max Fink^[sp?] [violin] were among several "long-hair" musicians who would come to listen to the early morning jam sessions at the Hotsy Totsy. They would throw their tips in the kitty. Fougerat says that Lubowski was a fine pianist, who could read anything and play in many styles, although he wasn't a real jazzman.

Fougerat played on Bourbon Street at the Silver Slipper, among other places. He then went on the road about 1928, when he played with "presentation" [vaudeville] shows, doing mostly stage work. (TF shows a picture of a band he had in New Orleans, when he came

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back off the road, including Jeff Riddick, piano; Billy Neuberger, drums; Al Bernard, bass; Frank Toki [sp.?], sax; and Marshall [Farrell?], sax). (Another picture shows Harry Shields, clarinet; Foster Petty, piano; a band TF had for a season at Pontchartrain Beach). He went on the road again, playing tent shows (which the men called "Tunkeys"). TF played with Jimmy Rodgers, the guitarist-singer from Meridian [Mississippi], in tent shows. He then played around Chicago on the Orpheum Circuit with the show "Hollywood Scandals". TF at the time was working with a band called the Purple and Gold Collegians, from Baton Rouge, which had a lot of LSU students as members. TF once got a letter from a "colored" club in Meridian, asking the band to play an engagement there, under the belief that the band [judging from the sound on radio] was also "colored".

TF's musical background was mostly from his mother's family. He had a cousin, Johnny Pujol, who played clarinet with Papa Laine's band, [Johnny] Fischer's band and with the band of Dan "Buck Eye" Hughes [who had a glass eye]. ^{3/} [Hughes or Pujol got TF started playing in bands; TF would be one of the 3 or 4 "dummies" in a six-piece band, with a rag stuffed in his horn, so that he couldn't play it. RBA says a cousin of TF's said that in the old "white" brass bands there would [sometimes] be four "niggers" and five dummies. ["Niggers" was TF's expression to me. RBA]. TF also played

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played with Fischer's band, [Papa] Laine's bands and with the Triangle Band. TF played at a place above a police station at Elysian Fields and Dauphine, [near?] the Lusitania, with Chink Martin, "Tots" on drums and Hogan on guitar. TF also played with Charley Christian, and in the Dominos with Willie Guitar, Nappy Lamare and Lester Bouchon. They also played at the Woodmen of the World Hall, for ~~\$~~ 3.00 and a ham sandwich each. Nappy Lamare's brother played piano. Tony Berrela [sp.?] played drums in the group. Willy Guitar carried a medicine bottle of whiskey in his string bass, which had a trap door in the back.

TF traveled with a tent show, the Paul English Players.

TF got his cornet for twelve dollars from Uncle Joe's Pawn shop on South Rampart Street, when he was about 18 years old. He says Jack Laine was still "going strong" at that time. [Laine says he quite ^{RBA} about 1918].

TF tells about some of the tough times he had with some shows. He mentions a banjoist named "Flivver" Ford.

TF says the only outstanding trumpet players he ever heard in New Orleans were Louis Armstrong, on second trumpet, and King Oliver at Tom Anderson's [!!! RBA]. Then he heard Emmett Hardy at the Owls' Hall and other places with [Norman] Brownlee's Band. TF then relates the story of Hardy's cutting contest with Armstrong, aboard the steamer

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Sidney or Capitol; Armstrong, with Fate ~~Max~~ ^{Marable}, challenged Hardy, and later acknowledged Hardy's superiority. Monk Hazel was also in Brownlee's Band at that time. TF says Hardy played two styles, one like Bix Beiderbecke and the other like Armstrong. Beiderbecke used Hardy's lighter style and became famous. Red Bolman was another good trumpet player. Kid Rena was another good trumpet player, playing as well as Armstrong--"in fact, he played prettier than Louis."

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TF followed Kid Rena's band when it played on the street, ballyhoo-ing. Rena played one tune, "[Underneath] Hawaiian Skies" which TF liked so much that he still plays it. Rena used a very small ^{mouthpiece} motherpiece. Rena didn't play many variations, but he had a very beautiful, big tone and played everything well. Rena was, in TF's opinion, the best trumpet player. TF mentions that Buddy Petit was also good, as was [Sam Morgan of] Sam Morgan's band.

TF used to jam at Fats Pichon's house years ago. Pichon later played piano for many years at the Old Absinthe House, but at that time was working with various bands around town, among them, he thinks, being that of [A. J.] Piron, with Peter Bocage on trumpet, at Tranchina's at the Lake. Another friend of TF's, Al Coras [sp?], a good pianist, also joined in some of the sessions at Pichon's.

Frank Christian was more of a "straight" trumpet player, a "ragtime" trumpet player like Nick LaRocca, than he was a "dixieland" player like Rena, Armstrong, Sam Morgan, Emmett Hardy, Bunk Johnson, King Oliver and others of that nature. TF intimates that Christian's playing was of less interest to musicians than the music of the others mentioned.

Lester Nelson was one of the best tenor sax players around New Orleans, who had a good, rolling legato style predating Eddie Miller.

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Nelson was a little younger than TF, but older than Miller. TF played in a band at the Vanity Club, Bourbon at Bienville, in which Jack Miranda played alto sax [he was also a good clarinetist], and Nelson and Harry Shields played tenor sax, forming a very fine section; others in the band were Angelo Palmisano, guitar; Joe Harris, piano; and [] Rogers, drums. TF says the band was so good that it would go right to the top now, but the people of New Orleans just heard their music as good music, and not anything unusual. They worked for about \$ 3.00 a night. TF worked at the Spotlight Cabaret for \$ 1.50 a night, with Ray Zimmermann, piano; Jerry Cooper, singer; Candy Candido [bass?]; "Coco"^[Otto Hind (sp?)] [guitar] and Joe Valenti; and a drummer.

TF talks about "variating" and the necessity of melodic playing, and playing for the public.

Tunes that TF likes to play, tunes not played much by others, include "Singin' the Blues", "Maple Leaf Rag", "Mood Indigo", "[By the] River St. Marie", and "Someday Sweetheart", including the verse. Once Dutch Andrus and TF's band had a "bucking contest" at The Circle, Elysian Fields at St. Claude; TF won because his band played things different from Dutch. TF therefore got the job for the rest of the season. [Sharkey [Bonano] and Leon Prima opened The Circle, which is now occupied by one of Schwegmann Brothers Giant Supermarkets. TF used to hear Sharkey every Sunday at Milne-

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burg, in the early 1920's or earlier; a person got to Milneburg then aboard the train "Smoky Mary"}. TF says Sharkey is another good trumpet player who didn't get any breaks in the early years although he was lucky in later years; TF says many good trumpet players didn't get breaks, winding up at other jobs, like Red Bolman who is now a plumber, and TF who sells insurance. TF says he had a break once, when he went to Chicago, but he got scared and came back home. He had another break when he joined a band in Shawnee, Oklahoma; the band consisted of Brooks Pruitt, piano; Joe Harris [also with Benny Goodman's orchestra], trombone; Sidney Arodin, clarinet; Roger Boyd, drums. The men later went on to fame [according to TF]. TF always wanted to come home, so he didn't take his breaks.

TF had a little musical training in later years, studying with Professor Cupero. TF has played with reading bands, but "my main music was music from the heart,...jazz music".

In the Sharkey-Prima band were Harry Shields, either Monk Hazel or Leo Adde [a fine drummer] on drums, and Julian Laine on trombone.

TF says that older bands used two trumpets, even in "fake" bands. He says Pete Dintrans was one of the finest fakers, 1st or 2nd trumpet, with whom he ever played.

End of Reel II