

ARCHIVE OF NEW ORLEANS JAZZ

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel I  
March 16, 1973

1

Also present: Richard B. Allen and Dexter Thompson  
Recorded in the Archive of New Orleans Jazz,  
Howard-Tilton Memorial Library

Digest by: Donna P. Lodwick  
Checked by: Richard B. Allen

Johnny DeDroit gives the correct pronunciation of his last name. He organized his first band in 1917 to play at a hotel in Atlantic City, but the war began and the contract was cancelled. His band played "a little jazz" in the Orpheum Theater, and Mr. Grunewald [a hotel owner] heard them. He auditioned the band, he hired them, and they stayed with him for four years. The band played in the Cave under the Grunewald Hotel (now the Roosevelt) [i.e., in the basement] and in the Forest Grill [of this hotel] on Baronne Street. JD finished at the Grunewald Hotel on the nineteenth of March and opened at Kolb's on the twenty-first. He stayed with Mr. Kolb for seven years. During his stay at Kolb's, JD made records for Okeh phonograph company. The personnel of his orchestra changed from time to time, but JD managed to give "them" the kind of music they wanted. The band's strong points were good, clean Dixieland and show tunes. JD says he had good musicians and his band could play anything. They had the best people in the town, and "some of them liked good music." Through this engagement he signed a five year contract with Okeh; Okeh went out of business. Mr. Kolb gave JD [the job of playing] the music for the luncheon period and the dinner period. Also, he had a dance band. In

ARCHIVE OF NEW ORLEANS JAZZ

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel I  
March 16, 1973

2

addition he furnished music for three Morrison cafeterias. The music in cafeterias ended when the ASCAP demanded a license for every seat.

Mr. Grunewald, after whom the Grunewald Music Store is named, was a very capable pianist, but he would only play around JD's band. Theodore Grunewald was a "big man." He knew music and musicians. He was great on intonation. JD's band had [good] intonation. JD feels that his jazz was a little better than the other so-called jazz because the musicians who were not schooled, probably never tuned. His band was supreme. Other bands made a greater reputation because they left town, but JD's band stayed here and made a living. Although recording companies were sent to New Orleans to record JD's and other local bands, the quality of the records is inferior to those JD made in New York where they were made properly. The recording director in New Orleans was more interested in having a good time than making good records.

JD had an arrangement with Mr. Kolb that he would play for him in the winter and at the White House in Biloxi for the summer. This meant he could fish, golf and have "good times." One summer while playing at the White House he met Mr. Guerringer [sp ?] who was the general manager of the St. Charles Theater. Mr. G. liked JD's orchestra and when JD suggested to him that his orchestra would be just the right one to play in the pit at the St. Charles Theater, Mr. G. agreed and had JD come see him about it. JD signed

ARCHIVE OF NEW ORLEANS JAZZ

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel I  
March 16, 1973

3

a two year contract and all they did was play between acts. JD's band was the first Dixieland band to wear tuxedos. The reason was that the show at the St. Charles Theater would often start late and the orchestra members wouldn't be able to change from their costumes fast enough to start work at the Roosevelt at 11:00.

JD mentioned that his "boys" were young, they liked "to dress," they made a fine appearance, and the girls naturally liked them. JD was the oldest.

JD's band became known as the Grill Band because they worked at the Grill which was for young people because they didn't have to spend as much money. When "we" found out the young people drank orangeade, "we" raised the price to ninety cents because "you had to spend a dollar."

JD says his band was smart. They played for benefits and bond drives. JD himself was smart. He brought his band up and never let it down. He was considered hard, but he wasn't really. He just wanted his musicians to play properly and to act like musicians and gentlemen. JD thinks that's the reason why he had some success.

JD always hired good men. JD once said to his bassist who was one of the best in town that he was fortunate to have a bass man like him. The bassist replied frankly that he was working with JD because he got plenty of work. JD says there's no feeling there, so why should he issue all the feeling. His rules were to play right, look good, act like gentlemen, come on time and no smoking on the stand. JD was taught that lesson about no smoking when he played at a convention at the Edgewater. The manager said of another band that he knew it wasn't JD's band because they didn't sound good and they were all smoking up

ARCHIVE OF NEW ORLEANS JAZZ

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel I  
March 16, 1973

4

there. JD inferred the man didn't like smoking so he made his no smoking rule. It might have been a hardship, but if it came to the point that the musician would rather have the cigarettes than the money, JD would replace him.

When JD organized his band Dixieland was the thing, although he also played show tunes, pretty tunes, and slow music because some of the young people liked to dance to slow tunes. JD's band moved to Kolb's, Friday night became known as college night. Everything from the table had to be removed or it would go off with the kids. JD says the kids were his success. He became so well known he played with the Tulane band. It was a terrible band so JD's band helped them out. For this they saw the game free. They didn't travel much although they went to Baton Rouge because it only cost one dollar round trip. All this helped make business.

Dexter Thompson asks if there was much attempt on the part of white legitimate musicians to play in Negro style. JD replies that white musicians were influenced by the Negro style, but that negro musicians didn't seem to have the schooling or technique "that the musicians had before they started to play jazz, you see. And that gave us a chance to perhaps improve or modernize in those days their style of music. The Negro style was always good, though." cap

JD learned from Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong when he realized that he wasn't playing thirty-two bars in a measure. JD says in later years LA didn't play more than sixteen bars. JD doesn't think it is wrong to copy some of LA's choruses because LA's clean style was the style JD liked. JD had all of LA's records. Dutch Andrus, who had

ARCHIVE OF NEW ORLEANS JAZZ

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
 Reel I  
 March 16, 1973

5

a store on Oak Street, used to collect all of LA's records for JD for which JD would pay him ten cents apiece. His granddaughter knocked the records off the table. JD loved those records and wouldn't have parted with them at any price because JD's chorsuses on "Ain't Misbehavin'", etc. are great.

LA was a personal friend of JD's. When LA played down here, he dedicated a number to his "little fat friend, JD". JD and LA were pals in New York when JD was recording there and LA was with Fletcher Henderson. LA was lost in FH's band because they were playing arrangements. JD told FH to let LA play "It Don't Mean A Thing If You Ain't Got That Swing." [cf. dates on tune and LA's stay with FH] The place came alive. When LA was on the [West] coast, JD's brother used to go to the Cotton Club [where LA played]. LA was one of the finest people JD ever knew.

JD was doing so well that he didn't have time to put dates on anything. While he was in Chicago playing at the Green Mill, he was selected to play trumpet in the All Star Orchestra. JD can't tell who any of the musicians were and he knows they must all be famous. He just went to a ballroom was given the music, played with the orchestra, and was paid by the piano player. JD doesn't remember one musician, and "this was an array of stars!" The music wasn't recorded because it was a benefit performance.

When JD was in New York, he put his name on every program whether he played or not. He was a transfer member of the Union and was only

ARCHIVE OF NEW ORLEANS JAZZ

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel I  
March 16, 1973

6

allowed to play in one place for six months before joining the Union. He played a benefit for the six day bicycle races for the poor children's toys. He didn't ask the Union, and they fined his band ten dollars apiece even though JD's band wasn't paid anything. The Union said JD should have asked them anyway. When JD's band was announced there were alot of people from New Orleans there. JD was sitting in a box with the "big shots." Vincent Lopez and Paul Ash who offered the bicyclists one hundred dollars to race rather than just circle around. The next day booking agents phoned JD incessantly, but the only one JD wanted to talk to was Vincent Lopez. After JD's six months were up, he had his fill of New York and went back home. JD now feels he should have stayed there because he had everything going for him.

JD says that people in New Orleans were glad to see him back. JD feels it's bad to stay in one place too long because no matter how good you are people know what you're going to play. They know how you're going to play it and they can sing it. What JD liked about New Orleans was playing for Kolb's in the winter and the White House in the summer. JD had a share of stock in the golf club so he didn't have to pay the green fee and he could go fishing whenever he wanted. JD played three hours a night and no Sundays.

Dester Thompson asks how JD would contrast the public taste in music as it changed during the years from the time JD could remember it until about 1930. JD replies that for a little while he was not a

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel I  
March 16, 1973

leader. He had been leading the orchestra at the St. Charles theater. "It was a dramatic stock company playing two matinees a week" [That is, plus nights?]. He decided to give his lips a rest. The only time JD knew what was going on was when he went out and everyone seemed to be playing the same [kind of] music, just different tunes. The bands all had the same beat, and they all played free radio programs for publicity.

When JD played at the St. Charles, there was a big typhoon fan which made more noise than the people on the stage. It was so warm they finally closed it. Since JD was booked for a two year contract, he was offered a job with a pay raise at the Saenger [theater] where public shows were put on. JD was the assistant band leader and <sup>2nd</sup> trumpet player. Cupero [Michael?] played lead trumpet. JD says it was like being locked up. He could only play their music. JD couldn't say what was going on musically the whole time he was at the Saenger.

When JD came out of the Saenger, he played at the Suburban Gardens with his own band. The Club Forrest was his competition. They brought in big name bands and had gambling. All "we" had was slot machines. "We" had big stars, but "we" did not do the business. "They" had to get a cheaper band.

JD then decided to do commercial job spots. His band was the house band at the Edgewater [Gulf Hotel] in Biloxi, playing conventions there. The convention manager felt he could recommend JD's band because JD knew how to play for people. When he played for people over forty he played two-beat music. This was in the early 1940's.

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel I  
March 16, 1973

8

DT asks JD if in the 1920's he noticed a difference in what the young people wanted as opposed to what middle-aged people wanted in their musical tastes. JD replies that with his Dixieland band he didn't worry about what people wanted, his band played what they wanted. At the Forrest Grill, when his band began attracting young people, he catered to them by playing an occasional slow tune. Middle aged people went for two-beat music so when his band played alumni dances, JD slowed the band down. He played that kind of music with a big band because, although he wasn't getting the money, he had to sound like Glenn Miller and all the rest. JD doesn't see much difference in the style of dancing. He says that young people don't dance now. JD didn't look at rock and roll because it didn't have "that socko" he wanted.

DT asks JD if he remembered what kind of dances people did such as the fox trot, tango, etc. JD replies that the kind of dance music he played depended upon who was giving the dance, whether it was a conventional dance, etc. JD says he even played polkas. During the carnival season, JD's band played at a couple of balls given by the tourist bureaus. These would attract people who may have liked to dance to music that JD's band wasn't used to playing. But, being commercial, JD had "everything in the books." He played Yiddish music and music in 5/4 time for the Greeks. JD remarks that most musicians can't play 5/4 time because it's hard, but JD was lucky enough to have good instruction. JD played for Tom Cimoli, who was a Greek, and would get spot jobs at Greek weddings. TC came down to New Orleans to

ARCHIVE OF NEW ORLEANS JAZZ

9

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel I  
March 16, 1973

hear JD. He was playing with a band called Arnold Johnson's under the direction of Paul Whiteman. The band toured Ohio, Pennsylvania, [and other states ?]. JD was featured trumpet player, and he made plenty of money. JD played a whole season at St. John's Casino at Coral Gables. [Did TC hear JD with Arnold Johnson ?]

DT is concerned with the period up to 1930. He asks if orchestras like Paul Whiteman, Vincent Lopez, and Leo Reisman had much influence on what people wanted to hear in New Orleans and, if so, what kind of influence. JD replies that these bands did have influence, and the influence was the big band sound. JD says he never stopped playing Dixieland although he didn't call it that. When he finished his arrangements, he did it in big band style, but in special choruses five men would get up and play Dixieland. DT mentions that this is what Paul Whiteman did in choruses in songs like "Mississippi Mud."

JD says he only recently started using the term big band because all the bands were big bands. JD attributes the first big band sound to the mid twenties [with such bands as Duke Ellington and Ray Miller. JD signed up with Vincent Lopez [as agent] who sent him over to the Arcadia Ballroom [in New York ?]. Ray Miller was there and he had all the greatest musicians in his band including Frank Trumbauer who played the C-melody saxophone. That was the featured band. Fagan [sp ?] who ran the place said he would like to put JD's band and RM's band on a baseball field to see who could play the loudest. JD's Dixieland played as loud as the big band! Although the musicians played without

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel I  
March 16, 1973

10

music, they played arrangements. JD says they tried to keep "the good stuff." No Dixieland man remembers what he played yesterday. If it is written down and played [form notation], it sounds terrible. "It must be spontaneous." Fagan wanted to hire JD's band, but JD already had a job. Fagan asked why he had come there, and JD said that his agent sent him. Fagan [went on at a rate ?] and called Vincent Lopez to tell him not to send anyone unless they could take the job. Fagan thought he had a prize. JD's band filled one alcove at the Arcadia Ballroom. There were two alcoves which alternated. [One band played in one, and another played in the other ?]

JD feels that no band played like his. The Memphis Five and the Wolverines played well and were popular, but they weren't true Dixieland bands. "They didn't play New Orleans."

JD remembers one Sunday when he played the matinee. The other band was the Circle Quintet and they were JD's friends supposedly, but JD thought they would like to take him down a notch so they brought in Bix Beiderbecke. BB played a number and after JD heard him he knew he had nothing to worry about. It wasn't BB's fault; it was the accompaniment from the other band who knew nothing about his music. With his own band BB was a star. They used to make very good records, but it wasn't Dixieland. JD was selling a Dixieland band. When he played the first tune in the Balconades the people went wild. It was "Red-Hot Mama." It had a beat, and people said that's the Balconades [number ?]. JD packed "the joint." He had his name in lights and he never took a picture of it. The Balconades was on Sixty-sixth and Columbus. There were four places in one building. JD was in the ballroom. Healy's Restaurant was on the bottom floor. The Duke of Wales was in New York at that time. He was quite a ladies man and used to go to Healy's. He may have helped business.

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
 Reel I  
 May 16, 1973

11

In mentioning style, DT says he read in a previous interview of JD's [in ANOJ ?] that he had an argument with Captain Streckfus about the music played on his boat. CS said he wanted JD to play the kind of music he heard in St. Louis. JD said he was from New Orleans and he played what people in New Orleans wanted to hear. DT asks how JD would contrast the two styles. JD says he can't contrast the two styles because he doesn't know what they played in St. Louis. He only knows New Orleans music. Captain Streckfus said JD was working against him. JD said the Captain was a fine man, but that he never was going to be bothered with JD again because JD was never going to work on his boat again. This was in the 1950's. RESTRICT

END RESTRICT The trouble was the captain wanted to run everything. He knew as much about running the music as JD knew about running the boat.

The other musicians caused trouble by saying JD played for CS only during Lent. JD told CS that he played for him when he could. CS didn't understand this. He had other bands who were good, but not like Dutch Andrus. DA was a fine trumpet player. JD tried to use him, but he couldn't read music. DA has a big tone and plays nice. RESTRICT

END RESTRICT CS would take advice from people who didn't know anything about music.

JD says he wouldn't change his style to play on the boat. He got his engagements because he played the style people liked. JD made

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel I  
March 16, 1973

12

\$500.00 a night for himself alone. JD feels that if people have the money he should charge them. Mr. Kolb used to let him off to go to Greenwood, Mississippi to play for the society people. JD says his band would take a tune like "Bo-La-Bo" and make fifty tunes out of it. JD's band used tricks, struck poses. They dressed well wearing silk suits and six dollar, knitted ties. JD feels it's 50% what you do and 50% what you know. You have to be polite unless you want to break with the person forever.

DT asks if JD was conscious that people here had different musical tastes than people in other parts of the country and that what JD was playing was different from what one heard in Chicago or Los Angeles? JD replies that in the Balconades he played strictly Dixieland. They played popular tunes in Dixieland style. The fact that his band packed the place must have proved that people liked it. JD says he made it a point to be entirely different from other bands. In Harrisburg [Pa] JD played his last note [on tour?]. When his pianist got sick and had to have an emergency appendectomy, JD brought in a man from New York. JD feels that other musicians were good, but they had their way of playing and JD had his. His band played old tunes, but the way they played it was not old. JD says that there are good tunes that are old. JD made it his policy to feature his musicians on a tune if they liked the tune.

[End of Reel]

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel II  
March 16, 1973

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Digest by: Donna P. Lodwick  
Checked by: Richard B. Allen

JD feels the violin is not fitting in two-beat music. JD used a violin with fifteen other musicians for shows and carnival balls, but he told the violinist to leave after playing "Valse Blurette." He says one must have fifteen violins to be heard with three trombones and four trumpets.

Around 1916 the [Musicians] Union had a rule that one out of every five instruments had to be a string instrument. The string musicians weren't getting the work. JD played the trumpet and violin. Certain people say they don't like brass. A social leader at the Jung Hotel once told JD he had too much brass in his band. She actually meant reeds, confusing the color of the saxophones with their classification. She tried to bring social life to the Jung. The Roosevelt had the social life. [RBA leaves]

JD graduated from high school in 1910. When JD was in high school, the Union rule on strings came in. JD worked irregularly with his father while in school. His father had a job at the original Tin Roof on Washington Avenue. JD played the violin, but brought a trumpet. When JD played the trumpet, people were satisfied because JD had more style. JD's father played legitimate trumpet only. His father had a powerful lip and played well, but he "couldn't interpolate an extra note".

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel II  
March 16, 1973

In discussing the Robichaux arrangements which had alot of string parts, JD says John Robichaux was a left-handed violinist, a fine musician and a fine gentleman. JR liked JD. JD borrowed JR's orchestrations of "Panama." JD then made his own unwritten arrangements. For Dixieland numbers, JD used only a lead sheet ([melody] with chords). JD discusses his routine. Tony Parenti; [Mel] Berry, JD and possibly the pianist would take a chorus. Then they would [play a final ensemble]. Violins weren't used much for dancing. Dixieland took over.

JD discusses on playing from orchestrations and altering them. The stocks came out fast so JD "tricked up" orchestrations. The other musicians thought he was using original arrangements. JD discusses bands not being able to play orchestrations. On orchestrations of a medley.

In 1971 and 1972 JD was the leader of the Shrine Band. The musicians didn't want sectional rehearsals. JD improved the band. JD's wife was ill. JD didn't want to leave her alone at night. The musicians wanted to have fun. They missed work. JD quit. JD won a prize in Memphis. Mike Caplan played trumpet; there were two alto saxophonists; drummer and tuba player. JD's band had decorm. They won on deportment.

In discussing John Robichaux's and [Armand J.] Piron's bands, JD mentions that he got a night off the Grunewald [Hotel] and Kolb's to hear other bands. AJP wrote "Sister Kate." He was a crippled violinist .

JD's father advised JD never to break up a winning combination.

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel II  
March 16, 1973

15

Al Ballanco was a singer and trumpet player with JD's orchestra. He sang western tunes only. Marion Suter replaced Ballanco when he was in the hospital. MS was an excellent trumpet player. He is now an officer in the Union. On a job in Reserve, JD's band was popular. A man complained about [Al Ballanco's] absence. MS was first trumpet player with the Dawnbusters. Pinky Vidacovich lead this band. Al Hirt [also] was the first trumpet player with this band. [cf. 16" discs in the Archive of New Orleans Jazz]

AB was with JD for thirteen years. JD never changed his band. He always followed his fathers advice: "Don't break up a winning combination." When JD found out a musician liked a tune, he featured the musician on it.

JD thinks New Orleans music make an impression on the rest of the country. JD discusses the WWL radio program he had every Sunday in the early forties.

JD discusses the [New Orleans] Jazz Club. He was elected to the board without a vote against him. At a New Orleans Jazz Club meeting JD met a man who took up drums, playing at home with JD's WWL radio program. The radio reached far away places. JD played in Biloxi. He found out that people in the country would hear radio from New Orleans. JD played in places he never thought existed! He worked in Paincourtville and says they had nice places there.

In Natchez JD played in a place that had a "gambling joint" in the back. [Sal ?] Franzella, the saxophonist, made passes [with dice ?]

RESTRICT:

END RESTRICT

In 1920's JD would employ a band of the size he wanted. He had key men: two trumpet players, three saxophonists, and three rhythm.

A picture of JD was shown during the New Leviathan's last concert. In discussing the New Leviathan Oriental Fox-Trot Orchestra, JD says that theater orchestras were similar to it, but not as big as the NLOFTO.

The Loews State and the Palace put a tenor sax in the pit. Alvin Gallodoro was at the Orpheum on the alto sax.

JD discusses a photograph of Miss Dureau who sang with JD on big jobs.

JD had eight men at the Liberty Theater. People sang with slides. Now the place is a parking lot. The motion pictures were changed every week. There was a library of music for films.

The Orpheum Theater was strictly longhair until JD went in there. When JD played "China, We Owe a Lot to You," the house came down. It became a feature.

The Palace then had to do the same thing [i.e. hire jazz musicians ?]. They had better jazz men than the Orpheum. Emile Stein, a great drummer, Melvin Berry, and Santo Pecora. These boys used to double. Santo Pecora replaced Melvin Berry with [JD's ?] band when MB went to California. SP played with JD when SP was only 17. RESTRICT

END RESTRICT] SP was not reading. The leader was probably [Joe] Fulco. "The man" said SP was playing better than "the man's" music. ["The man" is the entertainer who performed the act ??]

Jazz finally took hold at the Orpheum. It was so big JD had to stand up in the pit and bow with the acts. JD's first band was called the Jass Sass Band. It is [in JD's scrapbook]. Mr. Grunewald called it this.

JD discusses ragtime. At the Odd Fellows Hall he played "[that] Eccentric Rag," "Empire Rag," etc. [This ?] showed off trumpets. They played lots of notes. "Down Home Rag" was good for this. JD discusses instrumentation which included three trumpets, two alto [horns, called] "peck horns," a baritone [horn], tuba and two drums.

JD played schottisches, lancers, and varities. Dancers formed a group. These dancers were like square dancing or round dancing of today. The band stood up. Every time they played "Trombonium," JD's father paid the trombonist an extra dollar. There was a five dollar scale, but some would play for four dollars. JD gives RBA a photo.

In discussing Carnival Balls, JD says he was too busy to play Carnival Balls in the 1920's. He played for them in the 1940's and was the official band for Rex for about twenty years. JD could make a living on Carnival season jobs. JD played supper dances. There was a shortage of musicians during the season. JD used symphony men sometimes. The captain [of the krewe] liked to make a splash.

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel II  
March 16, 1973

18

Albert Kirst played "Waltz Blurette" on violin. Then he left, JD having no further use for him. JD used four trumpets, three trombones in the 1940's and up to 1959. They played like an organized band after a couple of jobs. JD hired men for a whole season which saved a lot of trouble. JD would never take a steady job after the Saenger job.

Once JD was hired by the manager of the Broadwater Hotel. JD sent a pick-up band without himself. The manager saw that it was a pick-up band because they took time to decide on numbers to play. JD organized his sets. He chose numbers to build to a climax. JD signed off with "That's all." Concerning publicity, JD said it was extremely favorable to him even though others got bad reviews.

In Biloxi, JD's banjoist, George Potter, sang through a megaphone. JD was the first band leader in town to own a mike and amplifying system. He used it at the Mobile Carnival Balls. JD doesn't remember dates. JD goes through his scrapbook. There is a mention of the Admiral Semmes [Hotel] [preview ?] in Mobile. [See below, Reel III] There is a mention of the President of Soule College. [Scrapbook] in fire on Cadiz Street.

There was no singing with the Dixieland band. JD used ten men in Biloxi. They played three hours without intermission. New Orleans people spent a lot of money in Biloxi. Local people don't spend money in Biloxi. JD went there a week [before the local people came ?]. There was a \$2.50 admission. Thirteen people came. With a fifty cents admission, he sold 1300 tickets and made \$110 on hat checks. JD had a ten piece band. He only recorded with the

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel II  
March 16, 1973

19

Irving Fazola's real name was Prestopnick. IF played tenor sax in addition to clarinet. He "sent" JD. IF played lead on Spanish tunes. JD "got his kicks" as much as the people just to listen to--

[End of Reel]

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
 Reel III--Digest  
 March 16, 1973

20

Also present: Richard B. Allen and Dexter Thompson  
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 Checked by: Richard B. Allen

Mrs. Sam Rosenbaum is mentioned [she was visiting the Archive], RBA leaves. DT and JD discuss the scrapbook. DT encourages JD to have material copied.

JD became commercial completely. He discusses show for Lions Club. He used fifteen men.

JD discusses preview of Admiral Semmes [Hotel].

Mel Washburn was manager for JD.

In discussing Johnny Hamp's orchestra, JD says they didn't make a job at the New Orleans Country Club. JD replaced Johnny Hamp. [This was in ?] 1940.

At [ ?] the sugar refinery had a dance hall and picture show. This was thirty-five miles from New Orleans. JD's band was the only one that made the sheet, [i.e., expenses]. There is a mention of the Y[oung] M[en's] Business Club.

JD played at Bill Zetzmann's home. JD played in private homes on [St. Charles] Avenue. He wasn't careful enough in keeping his scrapbook.

People thought JD was odd from his publicity man's tales.

JD discusses a [photo of the school band with JD [and Paul Detroit] at [St. Mary's ?]. [Cf. other JD interview.] JD

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
 Reel III--Digest  
 March 16, 1973

21

played cornet solo on "In After Years When You Grow Old".

JD discusses his wife who is a Newcomb College graduate.

(RBA returns) [RBA worked with Mrs. JD ?]

In 1917 JD used trumpet, clarinet, trombone, piano and drums in his first Dixieland band. Other bands used banjos. George Potter, a banjoist, then played at the Absinthe House. JD got him from this job. GP stayed in New York, then he joined ? Tad [Teeman ?]. Frank Froeba, JD's pianist, became ill in Harrisburg [, Pennsylvania.] FF stayed in New York.

Bands first used banjo and then guitar according to JD.

[Cf. photos and other interviews.] JD used a guitarist at [the] Beverley Gardens and in Biloxi. This musician did not play banjo.

JD thought he should have had bass instead of banjo. His pianists knew that the bass [notes on the piano] had to "come out." Frank Cuny was a good and versatile pianist but not a hot man. [Tom] Zimmerman was great. He played by ear. He made up music on the organ for motion pictures. He always played in theaters. He made up a beautiful grand march. He would think about Aida and make up his own grand march. It should have been recorded.

[Ed Norman ?] was one of the great organists in town. John Hammond was featured on the organ at the Saenger. He was from New York.

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel III--Digest  
March 16, 1973

22

JD made extra money by playing solos. He might play "The Holy City" at Easter.

Ray McNamara was a fine organist; JD had a program with McNamara on WWL. Ray McNamara played dance music, too, and was a composer. JD thinks RM is a member of ASCAP. [Confirmed by Ray McNamara, September 8, 1973.] RBA adds that JD recorded one of Ray McNamara's compositions. ["Nobody Knows Blues" by JD and Ray McNamara on Okeh.]

JD used eight men for society jobs, e.g., in Biloxi. In discussing instrumentation JD used three saxophonists, two brass and three rhythm-bass, drums, piano; two alto saxophones and one tenor sax. JD used eight men at the New Orleans Country Club. At conventions he used bigger bands, sometimes fifteen men. At these JD couldn't use Al Hirt because he was too loud. He couldn't use him at Carnival Balls because he would sound like a solo. Russ Papalia tried to use AH. [International] Musician [magazine] has an obit of Russ Papalia this month.

RBA heard last night that Elry Maser died [from Bill Crais ?]. JD says EM played tenor sax with him. He was a good musician.

Lester Bouchon was underrated. RBA says LB went into the bar business.

JD used the same tenor sax man, Cliff Curry, for thirteen years. He was a scat singer. He sang "Save Your Confederate Money the South

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel II--Digest  
March 16, 1973

23

will Rise Again" at Keesler Field. This was in the late 1940's and 1950's. There was competition between the Northern officers and southern officers. They would get up and wave and cheer. Cliff Curry was talented and nice looking. He dyed his hair. He looked good with gray hair. He was a major in the Port of Embarcation and a C.P.A.

Huey Long was campaigning when JD was playing at the Club Forrest with Barney Rapp's orchestra. HL got free music between speeches. JD did not meet him. HL liked musicians. Although it was said that Earl Long didn't drink, he looked "loaded" all the time to JD. Mrs. Earl Long was a fine lady and liked JD. HL would have given anything for an oboe player for LSU. If HL liked you, you were in because he was a dictator. HL ran the Roosevelt Hotel. JD never [was employed by] HL, but for Earl Long and Mrs. Long.

[Emile ?] Tosso was leader at the Orpheum Theater. JD started the practice of playing jazz with him in his band. In the acts JD would bust loose. Leslie George was a society orchestra [leader]. Rene Louapre inherited LG's business. LG's family were society people. LG hired an all-star band including JD and Irving Fazola [to play] at a ballpark. LG introduced and extolled his men. He was smart. He was a good business man. Val Barbera [sp ?]

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel III--Digest  
March 16, 1973

24

is a bassist. He is a good business man. He does spot jobs.

Jimmy Gable [sp ?] is dead. His real name is James Ginzberger [sp ?].

He had the Jax program. He played a fine trumpet with JD. He was a graduate of Tulane.

Al Strieman died last month. He was in the spot job business before JD. JD had tough competition. JD discusses spotting. He put Russ Papalia in the business. The Jung Roof didn't want a trombone.

Ray Teal [sp ?] , a saxophonist, liked violins. He was leader at the Jung Roof. The times were tough. RT was M.C. at the Saenger. RT used [one] trumpet, three violins, four saxophones, piano, bass violin [and drums ?]. RT's band included Fazola. It was not easy for JD as he was the only brass man. JD contracted the job and could tell RT to shut up. JD put him on his feet. RT became a successful movie actor. He was used in Westerns. RT played "You're the Cream in My Coffee". JD believes that was the only tune RT could play. Jimmy Lynch, JD and RT played golf every morning. It rained at 11 a. m. RT and JD wanted to start golf early.

Straight mutes were popular. George Peterson, dean of drummers, made mutes out of fiber, a stiff cardboard material. RESTRICT

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel III--Digest  
March 16, 1973

25

END RESTRICT JD used this cigarette can and megaphones as mutes. He used many improvised mutes. Around 1917 he first used the cup mute.

JD neglected many things because he was busy. He was always tired. His uncle owned river front houses which were rented out to Negroes (\$9/month) and JD refused them. He didn't have time--there was no time to collect. JD had property of his own. Being a band leader was hard work. He rehearsed often. JD discusses the problems of being a leader. If he had to do it again, he would be a sideman. JD discusses the need for arrangers. He had to set a doctor's life story to music, etc. JD discusses carnival balls which required much extra work from JD.

Frank Skinner was JD's favorite arranger of stocks in the 1940's. Before the 1940's stocks were just the verse and chorus. Johnny Warrington was good, and Archie Bleyer was good. Some of Bleyer's stocks were a little far out. If one used stocks, all bands sounded alike so JD "tricked" them.

Among JD's favorite composers is Johnny Green, composer of "Body and Soul". He likes Gershwin. JD has been out of the business since 1959. He had so many composers in the band that some nights JD played only his band's own tunes. JD wrote many tunes.

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel III--Digest  
March 16, 1973

26

People requested nationally-known compositions, e.g. "Night and Day". Local composers were not seemingly as popular. New Orleans once was very lively. There were composers, publishers, agents and song pluggers here. JD was paid ten dollars by a song plugger for playing tunes at the Cave. JD played six sets at the most. There was a twelve dollar minimum there. In World War I a man gave the band war bonds.

JD discusses Nick Clesi, the composer of "I'm Sorry I Made You Cry", a national hit.

JD also knows that Verges was a non-reading pianist. He wrote "Don't Leave Me Daddy".

Irwin LeClere was a composer and pianist.

JD discusses the Brunies brothers. Henry died early and was a great trombonist. Merritt played trombone. In discussing Abbey Brunies, JD says he didn't have union solidarity but was a good trumpeter and a swell guy. He brought JD up to the stand in Biloxi, where audiences remembered him from his younger days.

JD played trumpet for keeps. "They" said his trumpet said: "Listen to Me." JD recorded "The Tulane Swing". [See his Okeh records.] He is ashamed of it now. He made \$10,000 on this recording. Trumpet players wanted the chorus which he wrote. Tulane did not have a song.

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel III--Digest  
March 16, 1973

27

The Tulane band was poor. JD's father tried to teach them. They had no discipline. They wouldn't listen to JD's father. JD's father was the bandmaster of the U.S. Army. He was strict. He taught the Tulane band free of charge. JD's band came up from Kolb's to play with the Tulane band. They made a couple of trips. JD's band had no uniforms.

[End of Reel]

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel IV  
March 16, 1973

28

Also present: Richard B. Allen and Dexter Thompson  
Recorded in the Archive of New Orleans Jazz  
Howard-Tilton Memorial Library

Digest by: Donna P. Lodwick  
Checked by: Richard B. Allen

In discussing the origin of the term "swing", JD says it came in with the big bands. Arrangements such as "Casa Loma Stomp", "Deep Henderson", "Tampico", etc. had terrific saxophone choruses. There were so many good tunes, one didn't need a terrific hot band if one had a big band that could play even the stocks. Even good bands wouldn't change the stocks sometimes like "South Rampart Street Parade" which is a classic as far as jazz is concerned. It is [relatively] recent. In the days of jazz and Dixieland "they" didn't refer to swing at all. "They'd" make new terms. JD thinks they were trying to describe the fact that although they were a big band, they played with a beat. They did. They always had hot men in the band. JD thinks that big bands came in because they sounded better. He likes "good" big bands. To JD a baritone sax is [something?]. He worked them to death. JD had a good tuba man who played with the [other] brass in all the introductions. JD liked good introductions. To him an introduction was like a herald, a fanfare.

JD feels big bands had their day, but he always played some Dixieland. He played some two beat because some people would never get on the floor otherwise. JD discusses "High Society" as a good

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel IV  
March 16, 1973

29

dance tune and its clarinet "chorus". JD knew little of Jelly Roll Morton. JD was<sup>s</sup> busy.

JD believes he was the only orchestra that played "My Wonderful One" by Paul Whiteman. JD made a hit [in some country places ?] because he played it.

JD discusses programming. When Spanish music became popular, JD was on the "boat"--you'd play some Rhumbas and Sambas. They used to have a Congo<sup>v</sup> line, sometimes, but only at private affairs. They never had a Congo<sup>a</sup> line at a public affair.

JD opened with a sure-fire tune, e.g., "Stardust", to get the kids on the floor. Next, he played a jumpy tune. [The third piece is not described] He finished with a lively arrangement. Usually JD played four tunes to a set. He never played a rhumba in the middle of a set. JD would open with a rhumba or with a tango so a man who couldn't rhumba or tango didn't have to ask a girl to dance. Everyone danced to "High Society". It was called a walk-around. Some people wanted [Dixieland], not nice "Blue Room Music" [i.e., the type of music played at the Blue Room of the Roosevelt Hotel.]

JD was at the Roosevelt when the Charleston was popular. People charlestoned at the Country Club because they knew one another. Musicians gave the Charleston beat to many tunes. The dancers

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel IV  
March 16, 1973

30

recognized the Charleston beat. People who danced to JD's band were not dumb. They had money. JD discusses musicians attitudes which are "far out", their ideas don't bring money.

JD played medleys of hackneyed tunes so that he could get them finished quickly. He played mostly waltz medleys. Bands stole his medleys so he changed them. In Biloxi he played long medleys because people were in the cars smooching. He had to give them time to come back into the building to give the appearance of leaving. Morning dances in Biloxi were free to the public. Ties were required to get into the pavillion. JD bought ties and kept them for the people. JD is uncertain of dates. His biggest years were when he played in Biloxi.

Mr. Kolb kept JD's band in the summer because he wanted them for the winter. Later JD got a job in Biloxi for the summer. Walter White of Biloxi hired JD at the White House until Labor Day. JD got free room and board for his wife, daughter and himself, twenty per cent off on laundry, \$250 a week working three hours a night and no Sundays. JD made money.

JD was lucky. He worked hard. Now he is independent. He's been married two years to his second wife. They have made six trips. He goes to Shrine conventions. JD feels the Shrine band isn't so good. JD is used to [professionals]. JD would appear after the band was set. He bowed to the public. He played requests. He knew what sets to play [i.e., understood programming]. After 12:00 JD played requests. This was popular with the people. People

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel IV  
March 16, 1973

31

thought JD was a celebrity. He was just a bandleader making a living. He never had trouble. Once a man got mad at JD for not playing "Night and Day". JD says the man did not request it.

JD loved music. He thinks he would do it again. One must love music to play it at places where the piano was unplayable. Frank Cuny tuned pianos. At the Patio Royale, now Brennan's, FC repaired the piano. At times he had to play in the middle register when he only had time to tune that range.

In Raceland FC did not play because the piano was so bad. They turned the piano to the wall. Al Strieman went there and refused to play the piano. AS was a pianist and the bandleader. The manager of the place said JD played last week and was better than AS. AS asked JD what he did about the piano. JD replied that he didn't use it. AS was expected to play as he was the leader.

Russ Papalia used a portable piano when they came out. JD quit in 1959 because his first wife had cancer and was so sick. He got calls which he refused. He made Cliff Curry the leader and gave him the music [i.e., his library of sheet music.] JD didn't miss it. One gets enough of that excitement.

JD discusses Carnival balls which he says were hard jobs because people made unreasonable demands. The band must be able to play everything. They give you twelve men and you must be able to play "big operas" all night. Then during call outs you must be a Dixieland band. JD used symphony men. JD's first trumpet is now with the Philadelphia [symphony ?]. He was paid twenty-five dollars

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel IV  
March 16, 1973

and he was happy to get it. He was named Tailor or some similar name. JD feels the New Orleans Symphony is made up of people who are coming up or going down. JD was with the [New Orleans] Symphony, playing the third trumpet. There were hard parts. JD discusses playing Til Eulenspiegel [sp ?]. This composition was in Bb, but many parts were written in odd clefs [for other compositions]. JD played with the symphony, in vaudeville, and dance music all in one day.

Sidney Arodin was a fine saxophonist and clarinetist from New Orleans. He wrote "Lazy River." JD discusses [Hoagy] Carmichael and other composers. The people who worked with HC are neglected as they are not as well known. Also, JD discusses verse of "Stardust". Musicians do not know it. JD wrote it for Sharkey. Dexter Thompson says the verse is in the middle of the stock. Others stole JD's [arrangements/ ideas ?]. JD says anything that's successful is worth listening to. JD discusses stocks and rearranging them. Barney Rapp gave JD [a trunk of ?] arrangements. JD discusses his medley entitled "X 20", which opened with "Whispering" and finished with "[Darktown] Strutter's Ball". People in Biloxi requested "X 20". JD used to fake after intermission because people were drunk. He let each musician play what he liked. JD had Benny Manale, tp, Freddy Neumann, piano, with him. FN was on the Dawnbusters [radio program.] JD once said "For the love of Mike". The band went into the waltz of this name.

JD's brother played with JD and was a great drummer. His brother was humorous. [Paul DeDroit] called JD "Israel". PD said JD had

JOHNNY DeDROIT  
Reel IV  
March 16, 1973

33

Jewish instincts. PD also called him "Simon" after Simon Legree. PD was the first person JD ever heard to take a half chorus on the drums. PD was with the Los Angeles Symphony and with Alfred Newman. [Did Newman conduct this orchestra ? RBA, July 6, 1973.] PD played the vibraphone. Arrangers gave PD freedom. PD was with them [i.e., the LA Symphony ?] twenty-three years. He was first drummer [in the section ?]. He made a lot of money. At first he was on call all the time. [James Ceasar ?] Petrillo changed the rules. One must call before 6:00 PM to hire musicians for the next day. At one point [PD ?] could play for three TV stages at one time. Alfred Newman had three TV [sets] on his rack. It became inhuman. The rhythm section used earphones.

JD refuses payment [for the interview]. He has kept the dollar RBA paid him [for the first interview]. JD was paid \$25.00 for being an MC [Master of Ceremonies] for floor shows. JD said that the union rules required \$25.00 [to his employer ?]. There were no such rules.

JD discusses all making up rules. [There was ?] payment for rehearsals. JD didn't play acts for which he hadn't rehearsed. JD discusses performers appreciating him. JD discusses a rope walker remembering JD from the Orpheum.

When JD was with Barney Rapp, his [BR's] brother used to put on a--

[End of interview]

