

JACK "PAPA" LAINE
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Also present: Mrs Laine, William Russell, Marjorie Zander,
Ralph Collins.

The group is discussing an article about Nick LaRocca, which appeared in the magazine section of the Times-Picayune, Sunday, May 15, [1960]. Jack Laine says he would not have known about it except for a relative's telling them she had heard about it on Mel Leavitt's [local] radio program. Laine is also showing someone an old rope-bound drum which he used in Alexandria during the first World War.

WR asks about a parade held the previous day [in Gretna], in which Laine participated as a member of the Crockett [Volunteer Fire Company]. Laine says it was wonderful, and that there were about 15 bands.

Laine got his first real drum, an 18" field drum, from his father, who bought it at the Sugar and Cotton [sic] Exposition [in New Orleans, 1885] when that broke up. Laine began to go around the streets with other boys, pretending to and trying to play music. Then Laine did organize a little "field" band, consisting of drums and tin whistles, etc. Afterward he organized a "string" [i. e. dance] band, [which included accordion and guitar] and did quite well with that. Then he organized a brass band. Dave Perkins who was a fine musician taught the children how to blow their

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instruments. The field band played a parade for some political group, for which each band member received \$5. Laine, who was born September 21, 1873, thinks he was 11 years old when the Exposition closed in 1884. [See New Orleans City Guide, p. 401.] The Laines were married June 23, 1894. Mrs. Laine says that she did not know anything about Laine's playing music before they got married, but that he did belong to a "drum and major corps" [sic] in 1895. Laine says that some of his "boys" went to play at the St. Louis Exposition in 1904; he himself went for two weeks, but had to come back to New Orleans because he had so many contracts to fulfill. Laine mentions that he had the cornet players Manuel Mello, Lawrence Veca and Richie Brunies [but he doesn't say if they were in the band that went to St. Louis. PRC. They were not. RBC]. See NET television program "Papa Laine The Patriarch"]. WR asks how Nick LaRocca was in those days, and both the Laines admit that he was not too good. Mrs. Laine says she can't understand LaRocca's saying that he hid his cornet in the well at his house [to keep his father from finding it] when he was of a certain age, because he did not even know how to hold a cornet then, that Manuel Mello showed him how to hold and play it at the Elmira Pleasure Ground and other places, and that LaRocca would come to the [Laines'] house on Chartres Street to try to rehearse;

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Laine let him march in the Carnival parades, but he did not actually play his horn in them. Laine says that he began to improve "a considerable lot," and could then play pretty well. Mrs. Laine says that LaRocca did not write "Tiger Rag," that Alcide "Yellow" Nunez played it; Laine says that it was known by a number of names, including "Plarine" [Praline], "Meat Balls" and "Keep A-Shufflin'." Laine says that he doesn't know where the numbers came from, that they just sort of got together and played and all at once there would be a full tune. The Laines say that LaRocca's "Livery Stable Blues" was written by Nunez and [Achille] Baquet, and they mention the trial held in Chicago in connection with the dispute of authorship. Laine says it was told to him that an agent, who was at a parade played by one of Laine's bands, asked about getting a band to go north [to Chicago]; LaRocca was in the band, and he volunteered his services. He was due to play a Mardi Gras parade with one of Laine's bands [the next day], but he sent Abbie Brunies in his place, as he was scouting for men to go with him. Laine says he thinks Tom Brown went north first, and then LaRocca, and then his own son [Alfred Laine] took a band north. Laine himself couldn't go, being too busy.

Laine tells about the Mardi Gras day he played six jobs, beginning at 7 AM. They were, in order: advertising drugs for Dr. Cavataio [Cavado, Cabadeaux sp?] from 7 to 9, advertising the

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Merry Widow's Ball, for 9 [AM], playing a Carnival parade, for 10, playing for a review of maskers, (continuing to advertise Merry Widow's Ball), playing a night parade, and finally, playing for the Merry Widow's Ball at 9 [PM]. Laine says a brass band played the ball. He doesn't remember what year that was, and Mrs. Laine burned all the paper records relating to his music business years ago, because of roaches.

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Approx 1950
Laine says LaRocca did not play any funerals, but he himself did. He played for every function, including funerals, held by the David Crockett [Fire Company] and for the Lee Benevolent Association, also in Gretna, and also played funerals [and other events] for the Owls. He does not remember when the custom of playing music at funerals [for white persons] was stopped; he says it was more than likely *c. 1904. [corrected. RBA. Oct 9, 1962]* in the ~~[18]90's~~. Laine says that three of his boys went to St. Louis in 1904 to play in an artificial gardens for the [Grand View or Grand Beaufort General?] Hotel; clarinet, cornet and bass went and were joined by piano and drums from St. Louis. His boys invited him to come there; he went and stayed two weeks. He says that music at funerals was ending about this same time. Laine's funeral brass bands were usually 10 or 12 pieces; they played all "dead" marches. Their main piece was a regular military march, "Under Arms," which could also be played as a funeral march. They

** Mrs Laine burned up his business records.*

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used music, but only a couple of the members could read. Laine learned how to read from Dave Perkins.

Mrs. Laine cannot understand how LaRocca can say that he was in New York in 1917, when her son, Alfred, was there with Jimmy Durante playing at the Alamo Cafe that same year. (Durante has sent a Christmas card to Alfred or to his widow ever since then.) Mrs. Laine says LaRocca was on a television program with a lot of his "stuff;" Arnold Loyacano and the Laine's daughter called the station and told the people there what a liar LaRocca was, and LaRocca took his "things" and did not ever go back to that station.

Most of the men who played with Laine's bands are dead, including Jimmy Kendall [sp?], who died just about two months ago; among the few living are Richie Brunies, [Manuel] Mello [since deceased] and Chink Martin. Laine says that once his usual tuba player, Joe Castro became ill, so Laine borrowed his tuba, handed it to Chink Martin when they were playing a Wild West show, and told him to play it. Martin said he could not, but he began puffing at it, and in no time was as good as anyone around. Laine mentions that Joe Alessandra also played a "hurricane tuba" [i.e., a helicon,] for him at one time. Alessandra's son, Manuel Alessandra, also played with Laine, and is now a "professor" [probably a music

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teacher]. Ernest Stephens is also living, somewhere in Gentilly; he once played with Laine.

Mrs. Laine shows a photograph [of the ODJB], in which are LaRocca, Sbarbaro, Edwards, Ragas and Yellow Nunez; it was taken by Laguerre of Chicago.

Laine says the funeral bands played ragtime music coming back from funerals. [Compare Ray Lopez, Reel?] They played the last funeral march as the body was being entombed; then the organization sponsoring would assemble outside the cemetery and would march back with the band to the hall.

Laine also played many functions for the Suburban Race Track, in McDonoghville; he says he had a band there, one at Crammer's [?] Lot in Algiers and one at Crescent Park in Gretna almost every Saturday and Sunday. Laine's bands played at the Elmira Pleasure Ground every Sunday; it was a picnic ground with a regular open pavillion. Mr. Foster had the bar across from the park [Elmira], and he owned--.

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Also present: Mrs. Laine, William Russell, Ralph Collins,
Marjorie Zander, Laine's daughter.

The Laines are showing photographs; names mentioned of persons in the pictures are Ernest Stephens, Emile Christian, Tony Parenti, [Tom] Brown, [Ray] Lopen, and [probably Arnold] Loyacano. Laine had much more material.

Jack Laine says funerals had music for only a short time after he began playing; he thinks he was playing when that practice was discontinued. He played his first funeral for the David Crockett [volunteer fire company], at the instigation of Abb Rapp [sp?]. (Rapp's widow married Bud Loyacano.) Laine was reluctant to attempt that sort of job, but he did accept. He hired two men who could read, and the rest of the band followed their lead. Laine says that the men he had, like Achille Baquet, just seemed to play anything during their first hearing of the pieces. (Mrs. Laine says they received a letter from Gussie Mueller when Baquet died.) Each member of the band received \$3 for playing a funeral. Laine remembers two brass bands of colored musicians, and that one of them was good, but he does not remember any orchestras composed of colored men. [!!! RBA] He thinks white musicians first played for funerals; white bands had been playing for funerals long before he started playing at all. He says a man named Broekhoven [one of several of the same family] had the band which played for most of

the funerals, and that the father of Ernest Stephens played drums with that band. Broekhoven's band played only straight [military] marches coming back from the burial place, not any ragtime. Laine does not remember the names of any of those marches. He says that the colored bands also played straight music coming back. After some thought and prompting, Laine remembers [decisively] that Manuel Perez was the colored man who had the band that he remembers. Perez used to show Laine's cornetist, [Lawrence] Veca, some of the fingerings he used. Laine says that there is only one band in New Orleans that plays like Laine's band played, the colored band of Paul Barbarin. He also recalls that one other colored band plays like his own band, and after some doubt, says that it was the band of George Lewis (Laine is not really certain; it is Mrs. Laine who insists that it was George Lewis, and WR tells Laine that Laine once told him the Lewis' band sounded like Laine's band.). Laine mentions George Baquet, Achille's brother. [George was obviously colored.] (Both the Barbarin band and the other band were on one New Orleans Jazz Club program at the Municipal Auditorium which the Laines attended.)

Laine quit playing music right after World War I. Most of his men were drafted. A band was formed at Camp Beauregard [Louisiana], and Laine was requested to come [take over]. He was quite busy at

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the time, and he had to leave his extra men behind to keep some of his jobs going. He went to the camp and stayed about 7 weeks. His pay was fifty dollars a week and "cake." The band played for various functions; some of the men went so far as to display a hat, for tips, and Laine says they got plenty of tips sometimes, as high as eight or ten dollars a piece. Then there was some talk of an armistice, so Laine, who had to go anyway, went back to New Orleans; the camp was emptied of whites and filled with colored. When Laine came back from the camp, he continued to run a couple of bands for a short time, but then he realized he didn't have the men any longer, so he quit playing music.

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Laine's bands played for all kinds of parties, including lawn parties and surprise parties, and for picnics, weddings, King cake cutting parties, balls, etc. He says he would be playing every night some weeks. When his band played at Milneberg, always on Sunday, they would then go across the river to play at parks as late as 12, 1 and 2 [AM]. He says a Negro named Green, [See J.L., Reel ?] deceased, used to tell him that the colored bands which began playing at Milneberg would tell each other that "you'd better play good music, the Reliance [Laine's] band is out here today", and Green said the colored bands copied a lot of Laine's "stuff."

Under questioning, Laine says that Nick LaRocca did not write "[Original] Dixieland One Step," "Fidgety Feet," "Skeleton Jangle," "Sensation" or "any of them." He says LaRocca learned all those tunes while playing in Laine's bands, and then "he done the thing" [probably referring to LaRocca's copyrighting and having the tunes published]. He says that LaRocca was just somebody who came to rehearsals, and then later he would be hired to play, and Laine "would pay him just as well as I would pay the rest of the men." LaRocca stayed around, playing jobs, until the time he sent Abbie Brunies to play a Mardi Gras parade in his place [at which time he went to Chicago to be part of what was to become the Original Dixieland Jazz Band]. WR asks for verification of LaRocca's story that Laine would stuff potatoes in the instruments of men he hired for jobs but who couldn't play. Laine answers "no," later, but first tells of the time his band was playing for Martin Behrman's campaign for mayor when he first ran for mayor [of New Orleans], and Alfred [Laine] put limburger cheese in Chink Martin's tuba. Laine says the bandsmen were always playing some kind of joke on each other; they were young and enjoyed that sort of thing. If the band was to play an out-of-town engagement, Laine would have the bandsmen sleep in his garret, because he didn't trust them to show up in time for the train the next morning. Once he had to get Joe "Rag Baby" Stevens

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out of bed at his home, on Toulouse or St. Louis near Decatur, and hustle him down to [the L & N station at] Canal and the river to catch the next train to Biloxi for a job.

Laine is 7 years older than Mrs. Laine. They were married in 1894. Laine bought a toy drum from "old man Gilmore's boy" [before Laine had a real drum]. He began playing music when he was about 13 years old. His first real drum (a field drum) he had came from the [Cotton] Exposition, and his first bass drum was from the Salvation Army; both were rope-bound. Laine's first parade, with the neighborhood children, was in and around the vicinity of Spain Street [near the river]; they used Laine's drum and carried the flags of many nations that they bought from the Exposition. Mrs. Laine said that the bands [later] had most of their rehearsals at Laine's house at Mandeville and Chartres Streets including Raymond Hickey and his sons [check]. Dr. [Edmond] Souchon has taken pictures of the house.

During the Spanish-American War Laine had a band of 15 pieces who "really could play bugle and piccolo and drums." The armistice prevented the band from going across [to Cuba]. Laine says his bands played "ragtime" [i.e., jazz] then, but not the band just described. None of the men in the "war" band ever played anywhere else with Laine. (Laine shows the visitors a horse-drawn hook-and-ladder wagon that he built.)

Laine never played a funeral on the New Orleans side of the river; all of his funeral jobs were played on the Algiers-Gretna side. The bands of Broekhoven and of William J. Braun played the funerals on the New Orleans side; Laine says they had contracts with the organizations, but that he never had any contracts like that, he just played the funerals when he was called.

Mrs. Laine shows a picture of the first band to play over the radio, station WOWL; the band was that of Alfred Laine, and in it were Jimmy Cousins and [Leonce] Mello, [tb], Bud Loyacano, [b], among others.

Mrs. Laine destroyed Laine's [paper business] records when they moved to a house that Jack built on Florida Walk at Clouet [street]. Laine says that he actually gave that house away [several years after moving from it] to keep a fellow from being sent back to Germany.

Laine doesn't know any bands that played over the river except that of Johnny Fischer, which didn't play there much.

Laine never heard of a band headed by Norm Manetta, which played over the river. He had heard the name Al DesVerges [sp?], [The name Al DesVerges suggested by WR.] [Compare Charlie Love, Reel ?] who taught on many instruments. . . .

Laine says it seems to him that no other band had a chance when his was around, and that his band played for anything that required music. His band was very sociable around people [on the job], and the people liked that attitude; Laine says about the band's attitude off the job, "Don't ask me."

Laine says the bands on this [East] side of the river were those of Broekhoven, William J. Braun, Frank Christian, Charlie [Bohler?], (not the one who played with Laine--the Christians still living are Frank [not the leader], Charlie and Emile, all brothers) and a couple more brass bands, but all of them played "straight." It wasn't until his band came along, with limited musical knowledge, that the bands began playing ragtime [i. e., ragging the time of the tunes]. Laine said his men didn't know all the other "stuff," so they made up their own and played it in their own way. A member might come in with a new idea, so a rehearsal would be called, and everyone in the band would work at the idea until it became a full-fledged tune. Laine said the "boys" named all the tunes, that he himself never had anything to do with naming them. Laine's band had a march called "Crockett's March," composed by Manuel Mello, which the colored bands began to play shortly after Laine's band presented it. Ernest Stephens still knows the march. (Mrs. Laine says Stephens had a stroke in December [1959].)

At 87 years of age, Laine still "gets around," walks a lot, works on firemen's hats and belts, etc., and considers himself fortunate that he can still do so much. Laine tells about his membership in West End Fire Company No. 3 in Biloxi, and about how he invited the other members of that company to come to the Crockett parade, and about how some of the Biloxi people did come to the parade.

Mrs. Laine's parents, from Cuba, could not speak English; Mrs. Laine spoke only Spanish until she went to school. Her parents never went anywhere, nor did their children. Laine had to have someone of the family along when he took his future bride for a walk. Laine says he fooled her father, that he had to steal the daughter from him to marry her. The father was very angry at first, but eventually animosity diminished.

Laine does not remember whether Nick LaRocca played left or right handed. He does know that Johnny Provenzano played a rotary valve E^b cornet in his band, played left handed, and could play it well. Mrs. Laine says LaRocca came to rehearsals at their house at Mandeville and Chartres [streets], even though he was not a member of the band, and that he would sit on the bandstand at the Elmira Pleasure Ground with the band, with Manuel Mello, who taught him how to play. Mrs. Laine says LaRocca was not even around when Laine had

such musicians as Bosco [?] [See p. 16, below], [Lawrence] Veca, [Dave] Perkins, [Alcide "Yellow"] Nunez, and that her son [Alfred Laine] played most of the fights which LaRocca claims to have played, and that Raymond Burke can confirm this. JL played only a few fights. She says she does not understand how LaRocca can say such things, but Laine says it doesn't bother him at all. Mrs. Laine says [Tony] Almerico used to like him [Alfred Laine?]. "Frenchy" Fay, a good friend of Alfred Laine, had a lot of pull with the fight promoters [so Alfred got most of the work there]. Contrary to Mrs. Laine's statement, Laine says LaRocca could hold a cornet and could puff on it, that he did not know the things Laine's band played so he had to learn them. Laine's band had only a few readers in it, so the readers (mainly taught by Dave Perkins) would play the score (Laine bought scores for "heavy" marches.) down and then help the non-readers to learn the piece, and then they would play it.

Laine has been in the [volunteer] fire [company] business since he joined the David Crockett company, in 1904; he paid dues until 3 or 4 years ago, when he was put on the life-time membership list. He organized the Dennis Sheen company in 1936 in New Orleans' 9th Ward. David Crockett company was organized 125 years ago [1835]. It is still volunteer, although the City of Gretna furnishes the

company a housekeeper. Laine played music for Crockett long before he became a member; he joined because he played for them so often, was with the members so much and because the other members begged him to join. He frequented a saloon run by a good friend [and member of the company?], Johnny Lotz. Laine's band was the Crockett band. Laine says that all four volunteer companies from there [West side of river] used to come over here [East side] and parade with the old-time volunteer companies from this side. Mrs. Laine reads from a photograph bearing the inscription, "Organized July 4, 1841," which would make the Crockett company not 125 years old. MTZ reads, "Incorporated May 7, 1844." Mrs. Laine points out Chink Martin in the picture. Laine says the bucket brigade started 125 years ago. Laine says the picture is of the company in Biloxi, the West End Number 3, in 1910. Mrs. Laine points out Jimmy Kendall, Martin [Kirsch or Chink], Manuel Mello, the two Kirsch [brothers]. Laine says the Crockett picture was taken after 1904. The people present look at photographs, one showing an advertising wagon at Laine's camp at the lake. Mrs. Laine points out Blasco, Freddy Neuroth, Angelo Pelligrini, Dave Perkins, and old man Joe Allesandro (tuba). The picture is of the Reliance Brass Band, 1906. Another name mentioned is that of Sidney Moore. Another picture shown is of the Ragtime Band, 1910, with Manuel and

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Leonce Mello, tb, Chink Martin, tu, Tim Harris, Yellow Nunez, Alfred Laine, Martin [Kirsch or Chink again]. [See Jazzmen.] The band was playing for a show run by Streakley [phonetic spelling]. The picture shows the drum traps Laine himself made, including drum pedal which struck the cymbal, on the side of the bass drum, at the same time it struck the drum; it struck from the side of the drum. Laine thinks Dr. Souchon still has those traps, which Laine gave him. Mrs. Laine points out other people in a photograph, including DiDi Stevens, Martin Cohen [? and Kendall sp?], the Mellos, the Kirsch brothers, Emile Christian. Laine says he had three bands working in Biloxi that year, 1910; his son, Alfred, was leader of one of them. Laine's bands were named the Reliance, Laine's Band and the Tuxedo Band.

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Also present: Mrs. Laine, William Russell,
Marjorie T. Zander, Ralph Collins.

The group continues looking at photographs. The Laines [especially Mrs. Laine] repeat that Nick LaRocca was not playing at the time the picture was taken, 1910, in Biloxi. Mrs. Laine again points out Martin Cohen [sp?], DiDi Stevens, the Kirsch brothers, [Jimmy] Kendall and Emile Christian. The sign on a furniture wagon used for advertising, with a Laine band with nine men playing, advertises a dance at Jackson Hall, Mike Schenck being the operator of the hall, which was at Congress and Burgundy. A picture of Johnny Pujol, who played clarinet with Laine, is shown. Capt. Willie Peterson is shown in a barroom on Decatur Street, run by "Doublehead" Spriccio, where Laine was bartender. Laine is shown as a blacksmith in another picture, a trade he followed at one time. Frank Christian is shown in another. The blacksmith shop mentioned was on Chartres, between Mandeville and Marigny; a stocking mill is located there now. A picture is shown which WR says was divided when shown in Jazzmen. Charles [Edward] Smith had borrowed the picture from the Laines. Alfred [Laine] is shown at age 3 or 4 in a picture taken at Milneburg; Mrs. Laine says it was taken about 1899. A picture of the lugger landing at Ursulines and the river is shown; Laine says he was a small tot when the

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picture was made even though the copyright date is 1900. A picture taken at a Mardi Gras parade is shown, and Snyder is identified as being the bass drum player; Laine on snare drum; Charlie [Berg?]; Yellow Nunez; [Joe? RBA] Viscara [sp?], who had played saxophone with the Mexican band that come to the Cotton Exposition, and also played at West End; the picture was taken at Canal and Royal. Laine rarely used a piano in any of his bands. Laine played Mardi Gras parades every year until World War I; he played when Capt. [William J.] Braun had the contract for the parades, and when Benny Mars got the contract, Laine still played, and he played when some other fellow got the contract, also. He played day and night, and played at the balls, too. Nick LaRocca did not play any Mardi Gras parades; he was to play one year, but that was the year he went to Chicago, and he sent [Abbie] Brunies to take his place. Laine does not really know what year that was. LaRocca did not play with Laine very long. Laine says, "He played a many a job, though, he played a many a job with me, but he didn't play very much with me." [Perhaps he means LaRocca played many jobs with Laine's bands, but only over a short period of time.] Laine says he had a lot of cornet players, and that LaRocca was not considered one of the best. The best Laine had on cornet were Richie Brunies, Manuel Mello, Lawrence Veca and Charlie Deichman. Richie Brunies could

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"reach high C like nobody's business." The best second cornet Laine ever had in any of his bands was Alfred Laine. Laine says there used to [be two bands every two floats?] in the Mardi Gras parades, that the bands would come from Mobile, and as far away as New York. [Alfred?] died the first of March.

End of Reel IV