

WALDREN "FROG" JOSEPH  
I [of 2]--Digest--Retyped  
July 10, 1961

Also present: William Russell, and  
near the end of Reel I Ralph Collins  
enters.

Waldren Clement Joseph was born September 12, 1919, in the Seventh Ward of New Orleans, at Roman and Columbus [streets]. His father was a string bass player (not by note); his oldest brother was a drummer; his second brother, Ferdinand Joseph, sang with [Papa] Celestin (Ferdinand sang "My Josephine", recorded on Decca [actually recorded on Columbia]; another brother still plays drums; another brother was in show business. WJ is the youngest in the family. His father had a three-string bass, which he converted for WJ to four-string; WJ still has the instrument. WR says [Albert] Glenny had a three-string bass; WJ says his father was a friend of Glenny. WJ's father died when WJ was about seventeen years old; WJ had just started playing trombone professionally then. WJ had been learning music almost ever since he was born; he had polio, and his father had several instruments for him to play around with; his first instrument was drums, which he later played in the Corpus Christi school band (not on parades, as the band was an orchestra). [WJ is crippled and cannot march.] WJ's father was about fifty-four or fifty-five years old when he died. Ferdinand Joseph lives at 1477 N. Roman and spends a good deal of time [in a bar?] WJ had class and individual lessons on drums, studying from a method book and learning to read; he was learning trombone at the same time; his first trombone teacher was Gene Ware. When Ware went on the road with Joe Robichaux, WJ took some lessons from Pinchback Tureaud. (Ware later died, in Muncie, Indiana.) After Tureaud, WJ took lessons from Eddie Pierson. WJ began studying drums when he

was about seven years old; he began playing in the school band when he was about 10. Manuel Crusto is the only member of the school band who played music [professionally] later; WJ played piano in a band Crusto led. WR says he has seen Crusto play clarinet; WJ says he played trumpet in the school band. WJ was about fifteen or sixteen years old when he switched to trombone. WJ doesn't remember his first job, but a funny [that is, odd instrumentation?] job with McNeal Breaux on brass bass, a drummer and WJ on trombone--only a trio. WJ's father had advised him to learn the melody of tunes first, then learn how to improvise, so WJ was able to be the lead instrument in the trio.

WJ credits Paul Barbarin with getting him into a New Orleans style jazz band.

McNeal Breaux was playing as a regular member of the Crescent City High Hatters, a band of school boys, when he and WJ played the trio job mentioned. WJ also played with another band of youngsters, but not as good as the High Hatters.

WJ doesn't know which bands his father, Arthur Joseph, played with. His oldest brother, drummer, also named Arthur, played spot jobs with Kid Rena, among others. WJ says "Slow Drag" Pavageau (who plays with George [Lewis]) was good friends with both his parents; Pavageau sometimes borrowed the father's bass, when WJ was quite small.

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WJ was 'hitting at all of them [instruments] at the same time," so he learned something about bass, trombone, drums, piano and others during the same period. Trombone became his favorite, and he began studying with Gene Ware; when Ware left town, WJ was good enough to be hired by Joe Robichaux--the first trombonist to play in that particular band. Ware was a fine musician, a good arranger; he played with [Clarence?] Desdunes, Fate Marable and others; while he was with Joe Robichaux, he recorded with the band, and is on the (Vocalion, according to WR) recording of the Thirties. Ware "was a [Arban?] man." [Arban is a well-known brass method. RB#]

WJ's son began studying the same trombone method WJ used--the White (publishing company) "Excelsior" method; WJ is teaching the boy, and has just bought an Arban method for him. WJ started the boy on valve first, then changed him over to slide.

WJ's mother's people were all musicians; her family name was Bijou [spelling?] (WR mentions Esther Bigeou, who recorded, making some records singing with [A. J.] Piron's band; WJ doesn't know--perhaps she was related), but the musicians were on her mother's side; Johnny Dave [banjo player with Sam Morgan] was a relative. WJ used to listen to the rehearsals a band with Johnny Dave in it; he also listened to the rehearsals of the Sunny South band (with Alvin Alcorn in it), across from his home. WJ's still-working drummer brother (still plays occasional jobs with Hebert Leary's band), Harold Dejan, Earl Bostic and others rehearsed at WJ's home--Leary was forming his band then. WJ also heard music every Saturday night at the Nile Hall (he thinks that was the name),

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which is on the river side of Claiborne between Columbus and Laharpe (near the corner of the former).

During one summer (from about 1934-37--one of the four summers), WJ toured with Ida Cox; he was sent out by his father, to gain experience. WR heard Ida Cox in St. Louis, June of 1937; WJ says it may have been then; he thinks he went to St. Louis on the tour, and the time could be right. His father died during the same wide time span. WJ came back to school in the fall, but quit a short time later to join Joe Robichaux. The band accompanying Ida Cox was made up in New Orleans, rehearsing at the Cotton Club, Rampart and Erato; members: Bob Ogden, drums; Manuel Crusto, trumpet; Richard Gray; [WJ, trombone]. At about the same general time, Paul Barbarin formed a big band; WJ tried out for the trombone chair, but couldn't "cut" [that is, sight read] some arrangement by Will Hudson. (WR says Ida Cox has just recorded for Riverside records, with Coleman Hawkins in the band.) Another New Orleanian in the Cox band was Nathaniel Purnell (WJ thinks he had changed his name--no relation to Alton Purnell), piano. The band consisted of two trumpets, one trombone, three saxophones and three Rhythm. (As an aside, WJ says his first out-of-town job was with Kid Howard, in Bogalusa.) The Cox tour was mostly on the East coast, going as far north as Washington, D. C.; the tour was later snow-bound, but WJ had returned to New Orleans sometime earlier, along with Crusto.

One of WJ's favorite trombone players was [Austin] "Boots" [Young]; WJ says he was smooth, had nice tone. He would come to WJ's home, take him to his own [Boots's] job at The Budweiser (a jitney dance hall) and go off gambling for a couple of hours while WJ filled in for him; when he returned, he would send WJ home in a cab. (WR heard Boots at The Budweiser about 1942, but playing bass). Boots' brother, "Sport", was also a fine musician. WJ also liked [Jack] Teagarden. (WR says Eddie Summers said Teagarden studied in New Orleans with Vic Gaspard; WJ doesn't confirm or deny).

WJ joined Paul Barbarin's jazz band about 1954; he did record with Barbarin, on Southland. The other jazz he recorded was with Freddie Kohlman, on Cook and MGM. He recorded a lot of other styles-- blues, rock and roll, etc.--with Dave [Bartholomew], Paul Gayten, others.

WJ has written a lot of tunes--among them, "Slide, Frog, Slide"-- but he doesn't know what to do with them. Speaking of recording with Kohlman, WJ says he, Kohlman, Jack Willis and Sam Dutrey [Jr.] have been playing together, [off and on, for the past twenty-three or twenty-four years; they had all worked with Joe Robichaux (WJ thinks Dutrey was working with Sidney Desvigne at the time of the Robichaux recordings). WJ says that before the jazz music "got back" [that is, the so-called revival], he and the other three mentioned (plus two more) were playing a lot of the old jazz tunes in the band they had working at the GI Club, Omaha, Nebraska; the

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proprietor billed them as "The Sons of Dixieland," but they didn't retain the name after that engagement.

WJ is [apparently?] working with Jack Willis and Sam Dutry on [Bourbon] street [at Leroy's with Dave William's band?].

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End of Reel I

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Also present: William Russell  
Ralph Collins

WJ didn't know Sam Dutrey, Jr.'s father (Sam Dutrey, Sr.), but he uses something [that is, a counter-melody] Sam's uncle, Honore Dutrey, is said to have used on "[I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My] Sister Kate" (WJ plays it on Paul Barbarin's recording of the tune, Southland records). (WR says Honore Dutrey recorded only with Joe "King" Oliver, and is sure they never recorded "Kate.") WR shows a [ (Epic LP?) record cover] picture of Oliver's band--Louis Armstrong, Oliver, Baby Dodds, Johnny Dodds, Bill Johnson. WJ thinks one of the Dodds married a sister of Paul Barbarin; WR says no, it was Jimmie Noone.[They married two sisters. RBA] WR says Bill Johnson is in San Antonio [Texas], about ninety years old; WJ asks if Don Albert knows where he is; WR says Albert didn't know; WJ says he worked for Albert with Freddie Kohlman's band, in San Antonio. The Kohlman band made a lot of trips; the band that traveled was not the same as the one at the Mardi Gras. WR shows a Barbarin album [Jazztone?], with Bob Thomas on trombone; some tunes: "First Choice," by John "Pickey" Brunious; Barbarin's "Second Line"--others. WJ worked at Jazz, Ltd., Chicago, for about five months; he worked quite a bit in New York--with Lee Allen, a rock-and-roll group, others. WJ was in Cuba for six weeks, with Joe Robichaux; he was in [Toronto?] Canada eight weeks, with Barbarin, four weeks in Montreal with Lee Allen.

WJ talks about studying in company of his friend, Clement [Tervalon]; they both played with Joe Robichaux. On various jobs, WJ and Clement might alternate between trombone and bass.

There was a pump pianola in WJ's home when he was young; the pump action was supposed to help his crippled leg. WJ had polio when he was thirteen months old.

WJ says that he has found that if a musician keeps the melody going, he will be able to hold on to a job longer.

WJ says he thinks New Orleans trombone players play more "pedal" [that is, low] notes than players from other parts of the country. He says it seems New Orleans musicians can "get together," sound like an organized <sup>[i.e. band]</sup> bay in fifteen or twenty minutes of playing together, but musicians from other parts of the country don't seem to be able to do that, at least not so rapidly. Discussion of trombone style continues; vamp style is specified.

Talk about composing tunes; WJ uses the piano. He and Paul Barbarin got together on "Slide, Frog, Slide" thusly: While playing at the Mardi Gras, the band would get requests for Kid Ory's "Ory's Creole Trombone." The band didn't have any time to rehearse, so WJ and Barbarin worked up the "Slide" number to satisfy the requests. WR says they interviewed Ory in California two years ago; [Manuel] Manetta was along on the trip. WJ loves Manetta. WR met Ory the first time in California in 1940; Ory was playing bass then. Discussion of bass and trombone playing.

WR mentions Willie Cornish, Frankie Duson, Morris French; WJ never heard them, but says French is the uncle of Albert French.



When WJ was coming up, it was hard to get a job with trombone--bands were using mostly all saxes; he and Tervalon went with Robichaux, however, it seems likely, and were rescued from having to desert playing music for a living. WJ doubled on piano, bass, etc. to be able to continue playing. WJ says trombones are being used a lot now in rock-and-roll. WR mentions "bop," WJ is reminded of J. J. [Johnson]; he says, that as matter of fact, when Sam Dutrey, Jr., Jack Willis and Clement Tervalon were with Pha Terrell (who had been with Andy Kirk; Terrell and Clarence Love formed a band), J. J. left to join Benny Carter, and WJ replaced him with Terrell.

Some bands WJ has worked with: Sidney Desvigne, Joe Robichaux, [Papa] Celestin, Kid Howard, George Lewis, Paul Barbarin, Albert French (Celestin's old band), others. He has worked with nearly everybody in New Orleans; has worked every house on Bourbon Street. WJ has never played with a brass band, even in concert; he had hopes of playing in one when Willie Pajaud was trying to organize one on the order of the firemen's band, to be sponsored by the city, or some organization, but the idea didn't materialize. [He has later played in the Onward Brass Band on "sit down" jobs and at least one rehearsal. RBA.]

WJ had a tough time choosing between trombone and drums, but his physical limitations decided on trombone. He still plays drums, occasionally relieving the drummer on a job.

WJ heard a lot of advertising jobs with bands; if his brother happened to be on a job, he would make sure the band came by WJ's home; WJ says that if there was music anywhere nearby, he would go to hear it. When he was growing up, people gave many more parties than now, and hired little bands to play for them, even during the depression.

WJ attended Corpus Christi School through the eighth grade; he went to Xavier [Prep.] through the 10th grade. WR mentions seeing John Brunious' son playing in the Xavier Prep band.

One old-time drummer WJ remembers liking was Joe René [brother of Kid Rena (sic)].

Discussion of playing all styles of music, making a living at it, etc. WJ only plays music for a living.

End of Reel II