

George Lewis Interview III3327 De Armas St., Nov 1. '65

"Well my clarinet, I had a rubber, bought a rubber clarinet and it fell and it broke a piece off the ring. I went into the music store in Los Angeles, on Vine St., and asked them to see if they could fix it. They said they could fix it but I wanted to borrow one for to work. They didn't have any Albert systems, he told me. So I started out, he said 'wait, come back, George,' -- I ordered my reeds there -- he said ^{Wait, I have} we got a [Albert] clarinet, and he got up on the shelf and he came down with this clarinet that he told me was Jimmy ¹²Noone's. He had bought two clarinets, and he redeemed one, and this one, he died before he could redeem it. So he let me use the clarinet, and some people put in, and we decided to buy it. Jimmy ¹²Noone had ordered them through the music store, these two clarinets from France that they wasn't selling ^{them} in the United States at that time, and he redeemed one from the music store, and he had the to hold the other one as a lay-away, you see, the one I'm using now. And after he died well there was nobody to use 'em, so that's how it was sold, and it was given to me." George Lewis doesn't know if Jimmy ¹²Noone had ever played it. "I don't know, but it was brand new. That was around about fifteen years ago. I went to Europe in '57. Between '55 and '56. That's a French Selmer, that's the one I'm using now."

On Jimmy Noone: "I heard him play, yes, I heard him play: in New Orleans."

On Effect on style of playing in trios. "It don't worry me any. Because I can play melody, although, the more mens they have of course -- I can't produce all the sounds like the trombone. And you know, the trumpet player, *but* I can play that. I never get worried; *I can play without it, I like?* I played a lot of three piece jobs: banjo and bass; piano and bass, piano and drums, I played a lot of 'em." He doesn't think playing lead has any effect on his style.

1:00 Clarinet players he heard when young: "Well I'll tell you, there was a lot of them. Everyone of 'em made an impression on me, because every one had their own style. I heard Charlie McCurdy *[Esp?], [Alphonse]* Picou at his best, George

Baquet, Lorenzo Tio, Johnny Brown, and so many others. Zeb, Eddie Cherie, Sidney Cherie rather, Georgie Boyd, many good clarinet players. Some of them didn't read of course. Georgie Boyd didn't read any music, and a lot of others that didn't read, but they played like 500. So, I always admired every one of em's style, different playing of course." Asked if they had different tones, he thinks I say TUNES. "No, they didn't have different tunes. These fellows, they didn't ^a hve no different tunes, all the tunes was the same. You find ~~with~~ Punch recording with Al Wynn, 'She's Crying For Me Blue' (sings part of it), same was played that time, as Punch played it in Chicago. Panara didn't change, some of the white Dixieland bands changed. em? Some of the white bands changed 'em around, made different arrangements. Like you take for instance Sharkey's band, or a band that was coming up behind these fellows, Louis Prima, Leon Prima, they change it around, you know, and a lot of things they couldn't [?] memorize they had to — rewrite it you know. Johnny Lala, not the one playing at the Famous Door now, the old-time Lala, who was ^a the butcher in the old Tremé Market, would play the same tunes as we play. A lot of them was composed by them like, er, (wouldn't say Muskrat Ramble), but a lot of tunes ^e thy made their own self you see. Anyway, did a lot of copying behind the colored musicians, because Kid Rena, he had a lot of musicians, white musicians; Sharkey was one of his scholars I know for a fact. Sharkey was ^{Living} there every day on Marais between Esplanade and Kerlerec; I went past playing funerals and going back into the Perserverance Hall, bringing the Perserverance Society; also the Young Men of Liberty Society, back to the hall after the funeral. And Sharkey would be out there, on his porch. Louis Prima, not Leon, not the one running the 500, Louis Prima, he taken lessons from Rena; and a lot of 'em taken lessons from ... Eddie Miller, famous saxophone player, he follow d a lot of funerals. Also Tony ^{A-} ~~Al-~~merico, they all backed behind some of the older ones, Buddy Petit, but not Chris so much because, but I think Chris had a different style that they couldn't catch

on for the tempo, for the way he set his time, you know. The way he knocked off his er ... (claps a beat). Probably the why didn't take behind it because probably, he had a different heel and toe, keep the tempo." Did any sound like Chris Kelly? "Not exactly, no. I know a lot of fellows tried to play like him. ^[Kid] Howard was one who tried to play like him, he used to make some of the phrases he made, but not sound like ^{him}. He even beated ... till he died he had that tempo of course. That's church, (clapping a beat) he got that in the church, and but to say to blow like Chris, he didn't have the tone, something was lacking."

Asked which clarinetists had a tone George Lewis admired. "Well, Jimmy ^{ie}. Noone was one; Picou had a good tone; George Baquet had a wonderful tone. Those were really professional men. Charlie McCurdy, those men had played in pit bands, played for vaudeville. Isidore Fritz had a good tone but not compared to none of them people; he was; Isidore Fritz had a tone something like ^I hate to say - Edmond Hall. That's the sort of tone he had. But he was very fast, and he knew what he was doing. But for the tone he didn't have the tone. You take Edmond Hall's tone, it's ^{more raw than}, you know, some of the musicians that you can hear; although I'm not knocking him, he's a first class musician, but his tone was not the same as those people. Well, Fritz created his own ideas, ^{as he went along} Had to because that band there was ⁱⁿ that band before I joined Buddy Petit's band, there were few of 'em done any reading, Very few of 'em; Bunk was about the onliest one could read; Bunk played in that band, and also Ernie Cagnolatti's oldest brother Klebert. They was the two mens that used to come over and play with that band. Old man Louis Fritz was the bass and Junior was the trombone, Isidore clarinet; and they had a cousin Ralph ^{Laurent} ~~Leary~~ who played the violin; sounded just ^{like} clarinet, he played a lot round there. After Bunk they would send and get different trumpet players you know; Tommy Ladnier played with them too. Tommy played better than Bunk though. Because Bunk would ^{happened to be a little luckier} ~~have to be a little up there~~, you know, although he had good lips, but Bunk never was a man who could blow. Bunk was a fellow

who would blow in his days something like Alvin Alcorn. Alvin was not a loud trumpet player. [13?]

I first played with Bunk before the latter part of the twenties, across the Lake, Mandeville, also here on advertisements. Not Bunk's band of course, it wasn't Bunk's band because Bunk would be hired; because up above Canal St. ~~like~~ had down below Canal Street? In the twenties I played a lot of times [A] Louis Dumaine, old man Guss Metcalfe was trombone, also baritone and everybody was [using him?] He was one of the best baritone players playing in the city. I played with a lot of bands from up above Canal St. And I know Bunk was not the best. Bunk was around here, Bunk didn't leave. Bunk was in and out, in and out, in and out. You've got musicians playing here right now that don't live in the city. ~~I played with~~ You take, Sam Dutrey's daddy, he was one of ~~the greatest~~ them great clarinet players also. Sam Jr., big fellow who plays clarinet now, he don't live here. He goes home every week end, in Opelousas you see. At that time we was getting disgusted with Bunk. They was doing towards Bunk something like they was doing towards Buddy Petit. They was leaving his band, because Buddy was uncertain, you know. Supposed to be getting dances, and Buddy would be off somewhere else and playing. Leave you stand up there with a hall full of beer. He's lucky that he never got himself arrested. No that wasn't towards the end of his life, he done it so often, he just was pulling a jump (?) you see. I came over here, I was playing in Mandeville ^{with} Leonard Parker, and I came over here after Edmond Hall left the band I got in the band, the Black and Tan. You see the picture with George Washington, ~~trub~~, Buddy Manaday, ^[bump] Chester ^[zardis] on bass, ^[drums] Eddie Woods, whom we called Face-O that's where Zutty and all them got that word calling people face. When Hall left that band, they used to play at Jackson Square in Mandeville, like they take-ed me, you see, because Fritz and them had their own band, they wouldn't leave because everyone of them had their trade, they were brick masons. So they make more money from playing music at that time, you know, because, prices was way, \$5 was a big price. ^[meaning unclear] Earl sent for Buddy, and that's where I played with Earl and Buddy.

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Because my father was still alive then, then he was sick. I come over on Thursday and stay till Monday, or whatever date they had, then I'd go back. Come back the weekdays until my father died. And then we got a-rid of his chickens and everything and moved back over here. I taken my oldest daughter Mildred - after I got over there she was sick during that time. My father died in the month of October, it wasn't too long after my father died.

I had played with Earl when he fired Buddy, and he used Percy. Percy was a And then they got Lee Collins. Lee played for a while, and then Earl and Chris ^[Kelly] got into a little fuss. Earl left the band and I continued with Chris, all of us continued with Chris' band. Roy Evans, drummer, ^{Drummer Lee; Dave Bailey, half} Dave Ernest, his brother: ^{brother of Duke Ernest and a drummer} we used to call him Duck Ernest, he was playing bass; we all stuck together, Walter Preston and Duck Ernest on banjo and bass; myself on clarinet; Chris, and they picked up Ricard, he played second for a while. And Roy, and the trombone was Buddy Johnson's brother, Yank. Arthur Johnson. And after that Chris' band was going so good they took Manuel, Manuel Manetta. They let Ricard go because Ricard knew more then Chris, I guess, and they was gettin' in one another's way. He knew the instrument better than Chris. Ricard was a good reader and everything. Chris was what you call a speller; ^[but?] well he had ideas, you see he was more of a blues man, but for setting the band off with a swing, I don't think nobody could do that, even Sam Morgan. ^[i.e., any better than Chris] Well Careless Love was one of his tunes, a lot of old ones, ^{Gallagher} Mr Gal... and ^{Shean} Mr Shean ^{E See Abel Green and Joe Lavin, Jr., Show B} (?), came out in the early twenties. Black Snake Blues, he played a lot of blues, Maryland -- he played the hell out of Maryland, and a lot of the old standards. But his favorite number was Careless Love... Chris used a silver mute that would come with the cornet, and a toilet flusher. He was the first one I saw that used the toilet flusher, rubber plunger. He would squeeze that thing so close to the bell you could barely hear the horn whisper. Dances, we used to play for dances, no concerts; we played ^{encore}, they'd clap we'd play the same thing over again. ^[tell you?] I think he, he was a good trumpet player. I played with him, well, every Tuesday we were playing at

the Bull's; 8th Street I believe; they'd have two bands. They had two yards. One gave onto Dryades St. and a yard gave onto Rampart, what they call Danneel now you see. Ane we were on the Danneel side facing, and first it was Rena, Rena's band before I got in Rena's band; they would be facing Dryad St. And then Sam Morgan came in with his band, the men facing Dryad St. That was every Tuesday, every Tuesday night. [Besides that] hall, Perserverance Hall, Economy Hall, the Co-operators Hall, (what they used to call ~~Swells~~ Swells (2) on Bienville between Robertson and Villere. And then ^{the} on Tulane, we had a lot of things going on.

There was a lot of Jamaicans coming into town. West Indians, well every week we played two or three of those. So the money was, ain't no benefit playing in those brackets' (?). And I just got tired of playing with Chris after a certain fellow got in the band. The job would be over half the time and Chris wouldn't have the money to pay the band. Sometime a fellow would get nothing, he had drawed it all in advance, you see. He begged me to stay, but I couldn't stand it; my first wife was looking after the children and I needed the money, ^{he paid me} they didn't pay me, I didn't get the money like I should have got it. On account of a certain amount of ... my wife had just had my youngest son or the youngest one living.

You were gettin' paid advertisements, truck, say like the dance would be to-night or tomorrow night. Say today was Sunday, well you'd advertise the dance for Sunday night, ^{and} you'd ballyhoo all around the streets. If it was on a Monday ~~they~~ night, you'd ballyhoo Sunday also. Monday they didn't do no ballyhooing. They'd send out to different clubs, there were so many different clubs, what they call wayers, that would be a column of people they were inviting out of that particular club, and they would march and when they'd get to the door, they give you the sign, and the tune would be, all the time to march them in, was Gettysburg March. And they would come in with their regalias or their banners, you know, representing the club. And then they would go to the bar, and they might spend, that whole group, if they ^{maybe forty or} could afford it, \$50 right then and

there. That's why there were so many clubs. And they use-ed that tune to march 'em in. And they use-ed that tune also in the ^[country?] concert. ^{About every} After (?) there was two dances played. Gettysburg March ^{and it?} would mean you take your girl to the table and buy her something to eat; ^a a candy or a stick of gum worth a penny, you'd pay five cents for it, or ^{peppermint candy you'd?} break it in pieces, apple or a banana, whatever she want. The job would be \$7, that would be for advertising and the job. \$5 for the job, \$2 for the advertisement. You would start about one o'clock and end about five, so if you had to play that Sunday night. You'd play at first, say you'd start like down here, and end up way in Algiers, and you'd come right down here ^[i.e. in his neighborhood?] with this band through the different places, different streets, where you knew the people were living, more lively streets. And then, a lot of times you met up with another band, advertising something else, and there would be a battle right there you see. They ain't nobody Because you were working for certain people, say for instance you'd be playing for me, and another band would be playing for somebody else. Well they had a route they would want to make, you know, and they'd play three or four tunes one band would pull off, and the band that would pull off, that didn't necessarily say that they lost, because they were working for someone. His party was giving that money to make that route make their destination. I used to play for a club that was called The Jolly Uncles, and that group would make up at Son's, Son Fewclothes ^[about Louis] — you ever heard of him? — at his house. ^{in the twelfth ward} club warden. His step father was called Jessie Jackson, he was a banjo player. The man who was the head of the Jolly Uncles he was named Cus Wilson, he was a pimp ^[in a way of speaking?] and ~~.....~~ He'd start that advertisement up so when you'd wind up down here, you know what we called, some people still call it the Tremé, like Liberty Street, Tremé St., was always known as the Tremé by the people .

So, a lot of times we'd meet bands, and we'd be the first ones to pull off, we'd meet some smaller band, but it doesn't mean to say that we lost. Sometimes we'd get a bunch that just want to, the band would be ^{half-} that drunk they would even

tie the wheels together, chain the wheels up, and nobody would get away then, you'd work yourself to death."

Arnold DePass: "Well in that band, Arnold De Pass' band, Arnold was the head of the band, it was his band, There was Elmer Talbert, Benny Benois on banjo he's Cie's brother-in-law — Thomas Copeland, bass. ^{Elmer} Blacky Santiago played piano, Isiah Robertson was (the) trombone, and er, six pieces, seven pieces whenever they had a piano; Blacky Santiago was the piano player. And when that band first organised I don't know who played with them, I know Picou played with them for a while, and I went in and played with them for a while, about close to a year, something like that. Mostly they worked with white jobs, Ponchatrain Hotel was one, out there where the Saints have got their office building on the ^{The [Southern] Yacht Club,} Circle, Canola's (?) Club, a lot of white jobs. " He played " ^[At least 7] I guess twice a week sometime. I'll tell you, I was pretty lucky. ^{I know they had a lot of} I didn't really have ~~ry~~ ^{players around.} clarinet ^{But the band} (?) I never went without a job. I always had a job. Then I was, whenever I was playing with, if they didn't ^{have} ~~nothing a job~~ I had a job somewhere else. Because like I told you I played with a lot of Uptown bands. I would say I was in demand, yes, because I was younger than more of the fellows, and I could play as much as they ^{was} could, playing. I'm not going to tell you I knew as much as they were playing. Like I say there was Georgie Boyd; they ^{it wasn't the} wouldn't be playing. it was the nerve that's what ~~they were~~, you see. Because I don't care who he was I was going to ^{I play (?)} ~~cut him~~, I don't care who was playing I was going to ^{play} ~~cut~~ him, you know. Because I know things that, what you can do, a fellow that's considered better than me, can't do what you can do. There was one fellow Pill, we called him Pill, he was crippled ..., he was a very fine clarinet player. And er Cherie, Sidney Cherie, he looked like a white man -- he went to California and died -- he was a fine clarinet player. Georgie Boyd, ^I would go play with Georgie Boyd, but I would bring my own horn because Georgie Boyd always had saliva ("sleeva"), and he had big, big lips, the mouthpiece would always be wet and dirty looking; but for playing you couldn't take it away from him. I'd go to ^{Raymond} Reine

(Rena's?) place, at the Savoy on Rampart St. near Gravier, it was upstairs. ^[Morning] Sam and them: Sit down and play for Joe Watson out at ... play clarinet for Sam, the original band. ^{circle}

"So, I would go different places and play just to be playing. I'd sit in with the whole band, the clarinet player would go off. Very seldom (were there ~~two~~ two clarinets at once.) The man would want to get out, drink a little or go out, ^{for an hour or so.} or whatever. No, I wouldn't get paid.

"I consider myself a beginner from the first time I started till now. I'll tell you, ⁵⁰ I played because I loved-ed to play. ^{as} I would go out on the street and I would just say well I'm going.....or I'm going on up to the Savoy, ^I or I'd wind up on the Roof Garden or someplace where I can do ^{know} a little music, and I could sit in and play. Maybe I would play an hour or two hours, or maybe I would play for two or three tunes. You know, it all depends if I could feel the band, you understand. Sometimes I didn't feel it.

there was

"Well, when they say cut, that would mean contest, you know like a cuttin' contest, two bands meet on a corner. But two clarinetists, you could call it a cuttin' because both would play the same thing." Asked if, when A sat in for B, the band would prefer the one who sat in: "Well, none of that was mentioned, but that would be because somebody was jealous of someone in the band, or didn't like someone, you know. They might say, 'Man, why don't you come and join us,' you know, ^{many times, stuff} some of the time, something like that. But the mens didn't feel that way towards each other." Asked whether it was musical or personal. "No, it was (wasn't?) musical, because you sit in the band, I feel that I would learn more from different people's styles. Every band that plays, they have ^{their} a certain style of playing. Every man that they had in the band them days, they ^{wasn't} were roading, but they were playing like hell. You got a different feel instead of playing with the same men all the time." ^{ings}

"Now they got fellows who wouldn't go out at all. But I know I ^{was} drink. I would drink at that time, out at the 101 Ranch, Pete Lala ran that liquor (business?), I would to there at least three times a week, four times sometime. I would come from the Bulls playing. I would stop there, you see, and stay there until daylight almost, sometimes it would be daylight. And I'd just come from the Bulls playing from 8 till 2 in the morning. And I'd go there and sit down and play for Georgie Boyd. George would be sittin' ^{down,} ~~out~~ sleeping."

George said he never used the other mans clarinet. "No, I'll tell you I never used ^{any body's} ~~nobody's~~ clarinet because I ~~can't~~ couldn't blow anybody's clarinet. Everybody's clarinet don't feel the same in your hand. Not afraid of catching anything, I just couldn't because it's the reed, could be different. A lot of those mens, like myself used-ed rubbers, my feel might be not strong enough for the amount of rubbers he had, so it make it miss, you know. So, what I would do, I would always have my own horn. And I would tell my wife I'd tell her 'I'm going to such and such a place, sit down and play for so-and-so for a while.'"

"I played, I think, in the thirties I was better than in the twenties, that's my idea. That's what I feels, I think I was more mature. The Forties, for a while, I played, I never stopped playing, I played but I had lost interest. I was losing it because the money wasn't the same as what we ~~were~~ were making, ^{around 1945} other than '25 when I went to New York. Some jobs I played for 50¢ a night. I was giving it everything I had, but I just would say er, [?] ~~play-~~ ing well if you like it well I was happy, if you didn't like it I was still ~~happy~~ happy. That's the way I would feel many times. And I didn't want to quit because I knew it was something I like-ed to do, and I was going to do ^{it} regardless of ^{if} whether I got paid or not. And I accepted those ~~facts~~ jobs. Sometimes you would play for what? A dollar and quarter picnic, from nine in the morning till 4 or 5 o'clock in the evening, in the

country. I worked at the ~~Kain~~ Kingfish out there at Ursuline and Decatur, two years and something, from 8:30 till 3:30 in the morning, for one dollar. ^{and} I never missed a night, for two years. Right there out at, there's Toulouse, they have a short street there in between, ^[Wilkinson?] they had a joint there one of Lawrence Marrero's cousins used to play there, a job, 6 bits a night. Some nights we would make more and sometimes less. I could have put the horn down and say I'm going to do something that would (enhance? advance?) ."

1052

Asked if his style changed at all over the years. "Well I'll tell you, I never ~~was~~ paid too much attention to that, but it's a possibility, yes, sure. [?] Because sometimes when I plays I don't feel as strong as the others, you know. Don't get the same feels, ⁱⁿ don't get the same feelings as when ~~I~~, you know, a younger man. The older ^I you get, I feel, the more I pay attention. Before I didn't pay much attention

I paid attention but only to a certain extent. And I feels the ^{older} [?] musicians, because I did notice Peter Bocage interfering ^(?) ^{for} with the drums, the drums was off, and one time he Manuel Sayles [[] talking about Peter Bocage at San Jacinto Hall recording session, during which Bocage lectured both Cie and Sayles in the middle of a number. []] Well he got that he could feel you know, that something was holding him back, probably was the drum, ^[mer?] To me, banjo, well I mean, that's the truth I'll tell you the truth, banjo ^{would worry me?} because they're not playing ^{on} the after beat. ^{That from} The onliest one who ^{to understand,} and the onliest one I hears ^{at round} here, the Japanese girl. ^[Mrs. Keiko Toyama] (played with her) just sittin' in a couple of nights. Now Frank, the boy from California, he used to play a steady beat, but I noticed there the other night he don't play that steady beat no more. Well there ain't none of them, I'll tell you, only two people that I know, that play banjo that get a good tone, ^{out of it} one that little

what I was used to.

Every last one of them you hear him playing

41 [Mike Polak]

girl, and the boy from Minneapolis, that's all. But I don't say that they [can't play?] if you play with ^{on the after beat,} awkward people they're ^{Fighting} faulting one another, fighting [as a rhythm,] fighting. On the after beat [as opposed to_] the time Lawrence, Drag and Joe had. Because the banjo is [an important part of the band.]

Everybody wants people take up guitar, but the banjos down, just like you take the majority of fellows playing saxophone today, they were clarinet players. You take Handy, Handy was a fine clarinet player, he was rough, they called him [John Moore (?)] but he could play. ^{Now he can't} put it down for the saxophone. He come back he couldn't get an embouchure, you know, the different type of tone, something to slow you, you've got to use ^{to} wide fingers, you just can't get it. Plastic reeds.

clarinet. [

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"I played saxophone for about three or four years, but I didn't tell you I liked it." When? "I had come over here from across the Lake. First saxophone I ever used was a C melody. My father bought it; he bought it from some people he knew. It was brand new. I didn't know exactly what it was but I started playing with the ^{Humphrey} band. [what?] I knew it was worse because the C melody is very hard to play. I used the C melody but then I stopped carrying it because it's so long, the case was that long. I just strck to my clarinet." Picture in Jazzways: "I was playing with Paul ^[Barnes] and Paul was playing clarinet. Well, I'll tell x you I played sax. I just got rid of a saxophone a couple of years back, I kept it around and I sold it to ^[some of P...] Mr. (Russell's?) ^[Friend?], also I didn't play tenor though because I couldn't get the right idea (?) proper tone in my [], I couldn't get the proper tone.

Bass: "Well, I played in one or two keys. I played one or two notes, that's all. But I like a bass. I always had loved the bass, and I always said if I had to give up clarinet, you know earlier, bass would have been the instrument I would like to use. Now, I wouldn't

want that totin'." Asked if he ever played a job on bass. "No, just fool around ^{like that} when rehearsin(or something like that you know. And er, wasn't more than one string. If I was to learn bass I'd want to learn it the right way." Talks about something he heard on TV the other night. "A young bunch of kids just the other night, 10 years old. I wish you'd have heard 'em on the bass." He asks Shirley "What was that program the other night? When they had them 3 boys, 2 white boys and a colored boy playing the bass?" [Art Linkletter show] "Well they were playing on this great composer, compose this high class music." ^[Craig Hummelly trio]

Ever listen to classical music? "Yeh, I like classical music. When I started out ^{world humming} that's all my mother ^{knows} she knew, she had ^[] French opera since she was sixteen, listen at French opera, I guess ^[] that's high class music. She recalled ^[she hummed a lot of it] a lot of it but then she got old she started to lose her memory a little, couldn't remember the tunes. But she would hum a lot of them to me when I first started out on my fife, little ~~flute~~ flute. She used to look to me to make the practice this, but it was impossible to make it on six holes. You see the fife got a different pitch, just like the mouth organ or harmonica. Come in a different pitch, you can get a C, you can get a ^{fife, a G Fife} B flat, a flat, different pitch. So that make you play in one key all the time you see. You could get 'em (sharps and flats), the way you finger, your ^P fork just like you fork on six holes on clarinet. But you know, some keys would be too high, some would be too low and you couldn't get down.

"I started on fife in 1907, and I played fife until, oh, 1910, ^[or after that] but I still didn't come out (till 1914?) with the clarinet. And I got my fife in a box, it was all bent up. ^[I took a table round, chair round] [Sentence inaudible up to]: ^[] I bought that fife at [what is now] Woolworths at Bourbon and Canal. It was Kirby's. They used to have kid

parades, call them Field Bands. Have a drum, a couple of fifes, three or four boys I knew could play fife, at ^{one} that time. They never took to music though, you know." Field Bands didn't exactly copy the brass bands, "no, not copied, we just played a game (?). ^{The tunes like what they played. As near to them as we could} You never could get (the same tunes) because on fife you 've only got six holes, and you can copy it; just like the harmonica - you buy it in pitch, you look on the side and see B flat, and so forth, G, cross rark, tell you what pitch that is. So if the band is playing at that pitch you can play like hell. But if not, you got to shift that thing all the way round."

Did people pay attention to the Field Bands? "Yeah, they did. It would be at night they would always rake you take ^{carving} carbon (?) boxes (?) and cut different designs, use soap paper on the inside, put a candle in there inside, you see it ^{pass and look like a I Flat} glow. Also they would take cheese boxes; cheese ^{that} would come in a round box, and they'd rake drums out of it, the wooden box. Get 'em from the grocery store, and they would put a goat head on it or that kind of skin that would produce a loud tone. Last fellow I knew (in a field band) he didn't become a musician, but he played, was a fellow by the name of Walter Baptiste. Believe he played fife. There was one more ^{The Red Garter} Vincent his name was, he used to come by (with Ricard ^{sometime?}) well he switched from fife to clarinet but he never made a clarinet player. His name was Vincent but we called him Van- Son (French pr.)."

George Lewis says the house he now lives in, "I helped put the finishing on it myself; me, Lawrence and Drag. This was two houses, in fact, the frame of this house is real good (inaudible section). I didn't want to live in Algiers, but I couldn't find no other where to live, see (inaudible). ?"

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE 2

"They started me at school when I was about the age of six I think. I went to school until I was about twelve, beginning of my thirteenth year and then I went to work then. First one I went to -- if I tell you where I went to school you wouldn't believe it -- first school I went to was called, ^(St. Louis) Bienville school, at Rampart and , where the First precinct jail. And then they moved from there to Bienville and Robert~~e~~ son, and from there across Claiborne, the school was called, Bienville School was called Wicker's ^I ~~(Academy?)~~. ^{E.g. Albert Wicker School, 1720 Bienville Ave.]} The principal was called Mr. Wicker, and after he died they named the new school after him. I didn't learn anything in the public school. My mother sent me to a pay school, Professor Medar ^d H. Nelson, (after the public school) because at the 4th grade I couldn't read the primer. And she sent me to this school, a dollar a month. This old man was teaching so much ⁱⁿ French, Spanish, and there was colored and white at that school, right there at Mother Cabrini's, ^{playground} near Barracks and Burgundy. They got a little house on Burgundy, near Barracks, and they used that as the office and that's where this man lived, in that little house; and that's where I went to school; rough bench. He was a teacher because he taught me the little I know now. He ³beated it in me. There were about 25 (students in the school,) something like that. Practically everybody you talk to knew old man Professor Medar Nelson; and most all the boys in my class -- they're men now -- had got an opportunity to go there. And he was going to make you learn something. Because he didn't play. He didn't play and you didn't play. So, 12 o'clock in the day, lunch time, you'd eat your lunch, you'd sit there if you'd brought your lunch with you, and you'd sit right in your seat and eat your lunch. And you'd start school back again. And nobody played ^{How you see} ~~there~~ he was very strict, about your finger nails, about your neatness, trousers and stockings, shoes shined,

and everything, hair combed. Colored and white went there, yes. It wasn't unusual because I went to public school and they had white teachers, I had a white teacher, and I remember her name ~~as~~ good as I remember mine; her name was O'Hara. It was a big high school back there on Governor Nicholls between Derbigny and Roman, I think it's Crest. ^{[Jos S] Clark} I remember ^{when first was called Bayou Road School?} And remember another called Barbara Rose. ^{no Negro?} (?) she was teaching us. It wasn't unusual. But this man, when I was going to his school, it was a little unusual you know, a lot of Italian people went there. Take for instance Louis Massina's brother-in-law, Louis Massina, the prize fighter promoter, his brother-in-laws Mike and Johnny and several other white boys I knew, went there. And they were treated the same way we were treated. If he come to whip you, he whip anybody. He was colored, Professor Medar H. Nelson. Now he's got a grandson who work right there by Pat O'Brien. He's been there quite a while.

We had no special subjects, 'rit'metic, spelling, definitions, a little ^{bit} Spanish, ^{bit} little French, ^{were taught} we ~~started~~ all that for a dollar a month.

There's a big high school named behind him right now. He was ^{due to become a} But he never finished out with it? He was tall, wore a Prince Albert coat and striped pants like they use for a weddin', with boots. He always had a piece of silk - between his teeth like ~~that~~ that (polishing teeth). [?] cravat ties, he'd put

'em away and throw 'em away after one wearing. That's what he wore.

And he would tell you to stop at a period; a lot of times you'd try to cheat, ^{and he look at this} to make a period ^{we just to do a lot of} ? Music? no. ^{Hit you side the head} [The only music we had

was saying our prayers, in the morning. And he would give grace, you know, before lunch.

Then, ^{he'd say} like he'd pack up your books, you, you, you, you, and if I lived in the same neighborhood you lived in, he would send you home probably an hour or half hour ahead of time -- started throwing them out at 2:30 then he'd let me go, ^{that's} as in order we wouldn't be together.

And he'd come ^{and} he look in he 'd say, 'What? How is it? You ain't gone home yet?' You'd say 'No.' 'Well, I'm punishing you? What you punished for?' 'Nothing.' He'd say 'Oh, I punished you for nothin'g? Well pack them books.'" [Cf. Danny Barker interviews.]

Public school. "Well, it was too easy, too much a playing. The teachers didn't care, ~~what they get into you~~. They've got a lot of 'em right now that they don't manage to ^{give} get results. But ^{if} if sets you on fire, and I mean I was set on fire rany rany years." At that time George Lewis was living at 1226 St. Philip St.

Willie Cornish: "We played together on the first Eureka band, I played with him. All that band there what they call the Eureka Band, ain't none of them original members of that band. Right now I think I'm about the onliest one alive. Even Albert Warner, he was not an original, I mean of that first band. I imagine there might have been many (men who played trombone with Bolden,) but this particular picture that you see in the magazine, that's Willie Cornish. And some of them mens, like you got one of the pictures with old man Jimmy Johnson, bass. Now I played with him, he lived up there by the ^[Infirmery] ~~in what you~~ Touro, believe-it-was called the 12th ward. Well he went to Georgia, and he used to play with Don Albert's band, and -- ^{him and a} young boy was called Buddy Collins, he went somewhere through Georgia and they beat him up unmerciful, and Buddy Collins didn't live six months after that, and Buddy ^[i.e. Jimmy] Johnson he diidd also after. I think Howard was playing with that band then. They caught him on the highway and beat him up for ~~his~~ nothing at all.

Willie Cornish "was a friend to me, I can tell you that about him because he helped me out a lot, because rany times I didn't have money to buy food for my kids, and he helped-ed me (get it?). Well there ain't nobody I could say that play like him now. Eddie Summers is about

the onliest one." I suggest he played in a "simple" style. "Well I don't know why they call it simple, I don't see nothing simple about it. No, I mean like they're playing, you take for instance like a trombone player who sing, they call it singing, well he get to taking the melody, the trombone is not supposed to play that way. It's a vamp instrument you know. It's a vamp because pah pah pah (imitating trombone style) its a vamp instrument. In other words, it's a 'feel' instrument. Bass is a 'feel' instrument. Yeah, I mean, in between you don't have no frets, so you feel for that note, you see, and you become accustomed to that, your ear become accustomed so you know just where to put your fingers. Most of the bass players today are not that way now. Play like the way Chester Zardis play, Twat. ^{playing} ~~Now~~ I'm not talking about the younger bass players like Placide and them that's fingering, note for note like a violin. But that trombone, sometimes you get, most of them that they don't even get to the proper note. They're always a little bit out, you see; it's a 'feel' instrument. Now you take people like Bill Russell, they know exactly where to put their fingers on a violin, but it's different because the violin plays the melody but on trombone; but I don't think that's simple. Because, the reason I say that, the majority of trombone players you see now they don't play a note further than that much away from their lips. So, naturally they're ^{trying}, they're doing it ^{mostly} more with their lips. ^{work} Well the trombone's got seven positions on it; just like you're supposed to go down and make that pedal note, you never see 'em go way down there, very few go way down there. But Willie Cornish went that way, Yank, Old man Joe Petit ^{who} was Buddy Petit's step-father, went that far down. And many others. That's why they call it a tailgate. ^{He} never carried no melody. But you ^{now} hear a trombone ^{your} you ^{carry the} hear ^{and sing} that melody, just the same way Tommy Dorsey and them. ^{other trombonists} instead of ^{around}

Buddy Petit's last few jobs. I tell him of the versions in Charters and Rose and Souchon. "He played a -- it wasn't no picnic, it was a job, the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th of July; no it wasn't no picnic. He had played ^[Martin] with Lawrence "Toca", Buddy, two trumpets, Ernest, ^[Ernest] Milton, myself; we had played ^{them} in two nights. Come back every morning. It was at Empire, down ^[there] below the river on this side goin' towards the mouth of the river. That 4th of July morning, the 4th or the 5th, I think it was the 4th, because we had one more job to play, when we come there he was dead. ^[and] He couldn't go. He was dead, yes, he couldn't make it. He died ~~in~~ right on St. Philip between St. Claude and Liberty. A little house that used to be a church; he lived upstairs, it was called the 'Try Me.' After the church they made a hall out of it. Try Me Hall they call it. It was named behind the soft drink. He lived-ed up there, with a woman from Mandeville, that was his wife. ^[?] And I could bring you ^[?] Buddy's brother, show you, he'd tell you the same thing. He lives on Dumaine and Burgundy, all the time. He lives ^{around} in that neighborhood, still livin'. Joseph Crawford, that's his brother's name (i. e. Buddy Petit's name). I think his brother's name is Crawford too. I think (Joe Petit) raised him mostly." [Buddy Petit's brother's name is John Ventress. I spoke to him about a week after this interview. He is aged 78, and lives at 1026 Dumaine. He was not very willing to be interviewed. He and Buddy Petit had the same mother, different fathers. He said Buddy Petit was buried in St. Louis No. 2 Cemetery, but did not know when. He and Buddy were not raised together, and he said he never could "keep up" with his brother. He said Buddy was influenced by Manuel Perez, and would follow him on parades "all the way from Canal Boulevard right down to Chalmette."]

"Well Buddy had been playing little jobs off and on with that group of mens, because it really wasn't an organised band. I played with that band the whole three nights, down in Empire. And when I came back, ^{in that} in the morning Buddy was dead. 'Cause he missed one of the nights. He ^{took} got sick; he went on across the street, right opposite to this place; they had a speakeasy. And he went in that speakeasy and done a lot of drinking. Right opposite ^{to} where he lived on St. Philip, and he went in there and done a lot of drinking; and so he was sick, got sick -- he had been sick anyway, and he couldn't make the last job, so we came in from the last job, and he was dead. He died early that morning we left.

"He was playing pretty good (those last few nights), he wasn't say like the Buddy of years, you know, before, but he was playing pretty good. He was a very heavy drinker. Probably could have been kidney trouble. He must have in his 40's I'm sure, close to 40."

In the band, "Ernest Milton was the drummer, Lawrence Toca, he's still alive, ^{using two} he even ~~teach~~ trumpets, Ike Robinson I believe, Isaiah Robinson, I can't ^{remember} bass. We were playing for a dance, right on the water, at Empire, Louisiana. It's down there about ten miles

57-0683 before you get to Buras, not quite ten. Also during that year Louis Armstrong was down here. It was the first trip that he had made

here, to play at the Club Forest, out there ^{L.A. Swing That Music 10.97. at Suburba Gardens.} when Buddy ~~Petit~~ on South Claiborne ^{Kenner (?)} Louis was playing there when

Buddy Petit died. That's where Louis was playing. 'Cause Louis was a pall-bearer. But ^{it} this band wasn't my regular band. I was still playing with -- not with Buddy Petit -- mostly with Howard sometimes, I was playing in the Eureka band, because some of those men hadn't ^{done} ~~(?)~~ died. round about that time (when playing with Arnold DePass.) But I know it was before it changed to the

Thirties. (I say Louis Armstrong supposedly came here in 1931, thus possibly identifying the year of Buddy Petit's death.) "Well he came here twice, I mean Louis did. First time he came down 'Peanut Vendor' was very popular. They had a saxophone player that was playing with him. I never saw him, all I could hear em say was 'hold it Al.' He holded one note, like you could hear Andrew Morgan play so long. And the next time he come down here was in the Thirties, I know it was in the Thirties because I was living at 1215 Burgundy St. and we went to meet him at the ^{& N} ~~main~~ railroad station at night, and marched him off to the Patterson Hotel on South Rampart and Julia, I was playing with the Eureka band then." Which of these two times was it that Buddy died? "I think it was the first time, I'm sure it was the first time. Well there ain't but one way to find that out (when Buddy Petit died) go and see, let's see, since I've been down with my damned ankle - try and strengthen up a little bit -- I could see Sonny, his brother, they call him Sonny. He could tell you.

"I played for Buddy Petit's funeral, I played for Chris Kelly's funeral too. Buddy had two bands, he had the Eureka Band, and another pick-up, get-together band. And Chris Kelly had, oh, I don't know how many bands, maybe he had about [twenty (?) of 'em. He was very popular. Also Buddy was popular too, but Buddy had come on up before Chris you see. Chris was right out ~~of~~ the country, and then he started playing; he started a band down in the country, oh I don't know, I guess him and Jim, Sam and all that bunch started out in the country. They all come from [down there] the same place, Deer Range, that's where Chris come from; that's down, down the river, [by the coast.] Jim, come from Deer Range, Jim and his brother who died, Sam. Sam Morgan, [they all from the same], the other side but, they all knew one another, they'd cross the river, they'd come in

a skiff you know, from one to the other. I'm most sure that it was the first time that Louis came; it seems to me it was before the Thirties, because in the early Thirties I was living on Burgundy, 1215 Burgundy, and I also made my 33rd year there, 1215 Burgundy, and I only remember one time meeting Louis during that time, was from Burgundy St. The first time Louis come in I didn't meet him.

George Lewis says date of Evan Thomas murder, "that was in '32, because I made 33 years the following year, and ⁱⁿ this house where I told you I was living, so it would have to be around '29; but anything Sam Charters writes, just don't read it; he's just as full as a Christmas turkey. He came back here and helped put up a chicken fence; he showed ^{assured} (?) that he helped me build this house, he helped me build this house, ^{How the hell he helped me build it?} ~~sure~~, stretched a piece of wire across the yard to keep the chickens in. Sam, he wrote a lot of things that just wasn't so. If I couldn't get the thing right you know, I wouldn't put an accurate date on the thing. You see, say 'between ~~such~~ such and such a time.' But ^{like you} he wanted to write, he wanted money. He should have done more research. I can get, try to get, somebody would have remembered. Buddy Petit was buried ^{across} around the corner from Claiborne St., the cemetery right there, St. Louis No. 2, on the corner facing. He was buried in a vault. Sometimes they do (have the date written on the vault) sometimes they don't, it all depends on the people. You can go back in the same Cemetery, and look ^{at} ~~for~~ Marie Laveau's grave, there's no name on her grave, she's buried right in there, that same cemetery, the wall giving on to Iberville St. You go in the big gate there, you go towards Claiborne as far as from here to that wall, and there was more than that much of ^{the thing showing there} ~~big~~ [?] Maire Laveau, chalk marks and things." Buddy Petit, "I ~~think~~ I think he was buried in the first part of the cemetery, which would be St. Louis St., back of the wall facing, in other words,

I'm sure it was."

END OF INTERVIEW