

PUNCH MILLER  
Reel I--Summary--Retyped  
May 24, 1958

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Present: Richard B. Allen, Ralston Crawford (photographing), and William Russell (enters late).

[RBA asks Punch for an anecdote, meaning an anecdote about music.] Punch tells a joke. He names some of his favorite musicians as Louis Armstrong, Buddy Petit [cornets or trumpets]; Johnny Dodds, clarinet; Bunk Johnson [trumpet] (when he was young); Morris French and Earl Humphrey, trombones. Morris French played somewhat in the style of Ory, but cleaner and "made more stuff"; Earl made more than any of them. He played the trombone like a trumpet. Another clarinet player was George Boyd. Allen tells of a book by William Faulkner [New Orleans Sketches?] <sup>with introduction by Carl Lerner (1957)</sup> in which he tells of hearing Boyd play on Franklin Street.

"Chinee" [Abbey Foster] was his favorite drummer. Foster is in Charity Hospital now, Punch saw him two weeks before and said he didn't seem to be too bad. . . .

Another good drummer was Black Happy [Goldston] who replaced Chinee in Punch's band. Punch never played with Red Happy [Bolton] but saw him at the Regal theatre with the [John] Robichaux band, but thought he was mighty good. Allen had never met Red Happy but had heard Paul Barbarin talk a lot about him. Punch never knew [John?] MacMurray.

Allen had heard from [George "Kid] Sheik [" Colar] recently about Milneburg where Punch used to play, and could run everybody, [Kid] Rena, Chris Kelly and all the boys. Punch said they played there every Sunday, each band in a pavilion near each other, and Punch played louder than all the rest. He had more runs than

anyone playing then, would play the clarinet solo in "High Society" which no other trumpet player could do and in other songs "put more into them" than the other guys.

Punch repeats version of "Mama Don't 'Low" concerning his arrest at 726 St. Peter Street.

Some favorite bass players of Punch's were George Foster and Chester Zardis. Joe Gabriel played with Punch, but was not so good. Foster is in New York now [?]; is from New Orleans. He worked with Punch, Jack Carey, Kid Ory, and Frankie Duson. Allen just saw Duson's grave recently and met a relative of Chris Kelly's there. The Eureka Band doesn't have any Algiers men in it, except today in a funeral ~~parade~~ when [Peter] Bocage played for Pajaud.

Allen says that four bands are playing tomorrow at Shakespeare Park, and Kid Howard at St. Claude and St. Philip [streets] at 1:00. Punch's horn is in hock and he can't afford to get it out.

Punch mentions Lorenzo Staulz as a good banjo player. He also sang. He worked with Frankie Duson, Bob Lyons, Jack Carey, and Punch. Tom Benton was Carey and Punch's regular guitar player. Punch says there weren't many singers in those days, although he sang with his own band. He didn't know a guitar player called [Richard] Rabbit [Brown] who used to hang around James [Jane] Alley back of the jail. The best blues guitar player around town was Joseph Phillips. He was a native of Natchez, Mississippi and is now in Kissimmee, Florida. He is no relation to [Joseph "] One-Eyed Babe [" Phillips]. He used his fingers in playing.

An instrument called a kazooka [i.e., kazoo] was sometimes used. It was made by putting a hole in a cane reed and putting a piece of silk paper over it and singing into it. Jews' harps were

also popular but weren't used in bands. They might be played with a guitar. Punch mentions a ukulele player named Doug Williams [or Daniels?] who went to New York and became famous, later blew his top [i.e., went insane]. He started on mandolin. In New York he had the Spirit of Rhythm which, RBA says, included Leo Watson.

Davey Lewis was a good washboard player. Last Punch heard he was in New York and going to Canada. He also sang and did funny dancing. He learned in New Orleans, and got with James Brickley, called "Black Baby," washboard; [his brother?] Bannister Brickley, washtub bass; Esau Lewis, [kazoo?]; and Johnny Hill, jews' harp. They picked up money on the street. They went to Tom Anderson's, Spanish Fort and similar places, but not dance halls.

Punch would like to get another chance to play. He thinks it's a whole lot different playing around town now than it was before. Some things that are gone are the dance halls, picnics, Spanish Fort, going away to play for maybe two nights at places like Bogaloussa, Biloxi, Gulfport, Birmingham; four or five bands getting in trucks on Sunday and playing around the streets all day [advertising] for a dance.

Punch used to have his own street parade band, and played for the Buzzards every year up in the Irish Channel. This organization known now as the Jefferson City Buzzards had a hall at Annunciation and Soniat [5200 block of Annunciation Street, near Dufossat Street] and has dances every Saturday night.

Punch believes Jack Carey died a natural death. He had a daughter named Evelyn whom Punch has lost track of; he thinks she is married.

Walter Preston, Georgia Boy [George Boyd], Chester Zardis, Chinee [Abbey Foster], and Punch all left Carey's band together to form their own band. They seldom used a piano, and never a saxophone; just five pieces: clarinet, trumpet, banjo, bass, and drums [without Jack Carey, trombone!!!]. When they used a piano it was played by Manuel Manetta. One time when they were to play there was no piano, so Manetta, nicknamed "Hoss," just sat and patted all night until his hands were sore, and collected his money.

[Joe] Robichaux played piano with them sometimes, too. Paul Barbarin played drums with them, too.

They used a two-beat rhythm usually in those times except on real slow pieces.

((William Russell enters.))

At Milneburg four or five bands would play every Sunday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., then come into town and play dances 'til four in the morning, and never felt tired. They they would meet afterwards at a night club called the Elite, next to the Lyric Theatre on Iberville and Burgundy [streets] where a parking lot is now. Out at Milneburg people would bring their lunches and drink beer and whiskey, and love and court. Sometimes there would be fights. One time during a free-for-all it got so rough the employer just left and the band didn't get paid until five months later. Girls would belong to the clubs [?]. Some of them would be turning tricks.

END OF REEL I.

PUNCH MILLER  
Reel I--Summar--Retyped  
May 24, 1958

RESTRICTION REMOVED, 1

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March 7, 1968

"Chinee" [Abbey Foster] was his favorite drummer. Foster is in Charity Hospital now, Punch saw him two weeks before and said he didn't seem to be too bad. A doctor had told Allen that his mind was pretty well gone.

[Cf. his clarity of mind in interviews!! ABR.  
March 7, 1968.]