

PAUL BEAULIEU
I [of 4]--Digest--Retyped
June 11, 1960

Also present: William Russell
Ralph Collins

(Interview conducted at home of Paul Beaulieu on [1134 N.] Robertson Street

Paul William Beaulieu was born on Burgundy Street in the French Quarter of New Orleans on October 20, 1888. His father was an amateur flute player. PB's first instrument was piano, which he studied with Ellen Myers [spelling?], beginning when he was eight or nine years old. He studied solfege with Mrs. [White?], when he was attending Straight University (which was then on Canal between Tonti and Rocheblave--Straight merged with New Orleans University to form the present Dillard University). When PB was a teen-ager, he studied cello, the clarinet and the saxophone. He studied cello with a French artist who was in New Orleans with the French Opera Company; PB had begun studying harmony with the French artist shortly before the latter left town. PB continued harmony study with Professor Louis "Papa" Tio (brother of Lorenzo Tio, Sr., and uncle of Lorenzo Tio, Jr.). Lorenzo, Sr., moved himself and his family from New Orleans to Bay St. Louis or Pass Christian [Mississippi]. He and his brother, Louis, were cigar makers. Both brothers played all the reed instruments. Lorenzo, Sr., could tongue very rapidly; he had a sweet tone; he was an excellent musician. He taught his son, Lorenzo, Jr. to play. (WR has heard recordings of Lorenzo, Jr., made when he played the [A. J.] Piron band.) PB doesn't know where the Tio family came from originally, but he says they [Lorenzo, Sr., and Louis] got their musical education at a conservatory in Mexico; they also spoke Spanish and French fluently. Louis Tio remained in New Orleans; Louis was older than his brother. He was a fine musician, a fine conductor.

He conducted an orchestra organized at the home of [Joseph] Bloom [spelling?], where various musicians had been rehearsing already. [Compare Louis Tio, (not the clarinetist) reel ?, October 26, 1960 on above]. A number of the old-time musicians played in that orchestra. PB says it was a relatively late group, as the Lyre Club and the Ida Club had had orchestras before his time. Most of the Creole musicians then were trained by musicians from the French Opera Company; some of the French Opera men who came to New Orleans remained as permanent residents; some who did were Leoteaud [spelling?], Caquelle [spelling?], and [Beaufort? Botha?] (the latter played [French] horn and trombone). One Dupre (PB thinks that was his name), an oboe player, practiced a great deal. Docminoue [spelling?], a colored musician of New Orleans, became so proficient on flute that he sometimes played second flute with the French Opera.

Mr. Bloom, a flutist, worked for L. Frank and Company, taking care of their livestock; Bloom studied with Louis Tio. PB played cello in the same orchestra with Bloom. Louis Tio was the conductor. There were six first violins; four second violins; one viola; one cello; two basses; flute; two clarinets, [et al?]. Charles Elgar was concertmaster; some others: Armand Piron, [Ferdinand] Valteau, [John Tateneau?], Anatole Victor, Vincent Roberts, Mr. Leclair, Dee Dee Brooks, Etienne Nickolas [spelling?] (a viola player who at one time lived around the corner [from PB], and has been dead [for quite some years?]; PB played cello; [Paul?] Dominguez played bass;

a daughter of Jim Humphrey played [bass?] (mention of Willie [E.] Humphrey the elder, and Willie [J.] Humphrey the younger); the old man [Willie E. Humphrey?] played second clarinet, and [Alphonse] Picou played solo clarinet; Mr. Boisseau, the best baritone [horn] player in the city (a very fair man, who also played with white bands, belonged to the union, etc.), played the bassoon parts; Louis Cottrell [Sr.], played drums, playing some of the tympany parts on the bass drum. PB lists some of the works the orchestra played; one was a selection from "The Huguenots", with Picou as clarinet soloist. PB thinks the first concert was played as long ago as 1903. The trumpet players in the orchestra were George Moret, first, and the son of [Medard?] Nelson (a French-Italian teacher who lived on Burgundy Street two blocks from PB, and taught a lot of people, including his son), second trumpet. Vic Gaspard and Benny Raphael were the trombonists; the latter was a student of Mr. Beaufort [spelling?]. Miss Ida Rose (organist at an uptown church) played piano. PB understands that the orchestras of the Lyre Club and of the Ida Club were larger than the one he detailed. A lot of old-time musicians played with the Lyre Club and Ida Club orchestras; some were: Anthony Page; the father of Armand Piron played bass; Albert Piron, an older (but not the oldest) brother of Armand Piron.

John Robichaux, the left-handed violin player, had taken over the Onward Brass Band, in which he played bass drum; however, he wanted to develop a larger, concert band. Theogene (PB believes) Baquet,

father of clarinetist George Baquet, became the conductor of the concert band; he was very good, and very strict. PB tells of an incident during a rehearsal of the orchestra; the rehearsal was held over a bar room at St. Philip and Claiborne. They were rehearsing "Light Cavalry", by Von Suppe. Some of the trumpet players were: Arnold Metoyer, [George] Moret and Alcibiade Jeanjacques. The reed section consisted of: George Baquet, E-flat clarinet; Louis Tio, Lorenzo Tio [Sr.], [Alphonse] Picou and Charlie McCurdy played first [B-flat] clarinet; Lorenzo Tio, Jr. and PB were playing second clarinet. PB tells of the difficulty he and Tio, Jr., had in the second movement of the overture mentioned, and how Tio, Sr. had told Junior that he must play the part; PB and Junior finally succeeded.

Theogene Baquet's particular instrument was E-flat cornet; PB says he remembers only two around the city then; the E-flat cornet was small, and quite difficult to play. [Compare Henry Allen, Sr., business card if RBA's memory serves him right.] A man named René was the E-flat cornet player; when they played at a parade or funeral, they could be heard above the other trumpets.

Achille Baquet, another son of Theogene, also played clarinet, but not with the band his father directed.

"High Society" was first played by Robichaux's orchestra, which rehearsed in a barbershop operated by Robichaux's trumpet player, whose name was [PB believes) [James A.?] Williams [1711 Camp Place--Soards, 1902]. Wendall McNeal, violin and viola, brother of James

McNeal (who was director of the band which went from New Orleans to Cuba [during the Spanish-American War], (Wendall was also a member of the orchestra organized by Bloom and conducted by Louis Tio), rehearsed for the pleasure of playing; rehearsals were held on most any day). Robichaux had music sent by publishers. Babb [check spelling] Frank, piccolo, and his brother, Alcide Frank, also rehearsed with Robichaux's band. George Baquet was rehearsing with the band when they first tried out the march, "High Society." The [well-known clarinet] obligato was in the music. Baquet played the obligato, and Babb Frank also played it on the piccolo. Baquet later played the obligato on several parades; it became popular and spread. Then Picou played it and made a specialty of it. WR says he heard that Charlie McCurdy played it first; PB says McCurdy and several other clarinetists rehearsed with the Robichaux band from time to time, and that they played it at about the same general time. [RBA heard that CMcC first played it as JR lost the clarinet part.] Robichaux developed a very popular band, having as much work during his time as Papa Celestin during his. Robichaux got so much work that he organized a second band; he asked PB to be leader, but PB, then employed by the post office, declined; PB did offer to play in the band, so Robichaux got Wendall McNeal to be the leader, and PB played in the band. Arnold Metoyer played trumpet in the second band; Sunny Henry, then young, came into the band [on trombone], and turned into a pretty good musician; "Young" [?] Phillips was the drummer; Octave Gaspard or old man [?] Domingues played bass;

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Picou sometimes played clarinet with the band; PB played piano with the band. The band, known as Robichaux's second band, played engagements for Robichaux for several years, playing as much as three or four times a week. Wendall McNeal played violin with the band. Robichaux was a friend of the proprietors of Antoine's [Restaurant], so his second band played the supper dances given there during the opera season; the opera singers would be entertained at these affairs. A Robichaux band also played a Carnival ball for the Elves of Oberon; the band was the only colored band to ever play a Mardi Gras ball in the French Opera. PB talks about the ball, and describes some of the architecture of the French Opera.

End of Reel I

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Also present: William Russell
Ralph Collins

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PB got his first musical inspiration as a child, when he attended the French Opera, every week. Talk of operas popular then which are seldom performed now. PB mentions that he conducted an orchestra at Xavier University, in (he thinks) December, 1932; one of the numbers was a march from LeProphet, an opera by Meyerbeer. PB tells of using substitute instruments for some his orchestra didn't have; he used a "C" clarinet for oboe, a tenor saxophone and a bass clarinet for bassoons, and two melophones for French horns.

PB played much jazz on piano; he didn't play in the District because he didn't want to go there; a lot of his colleagues did play there, however, among them, Alphonse Picou. WR says Professor [Manuel] Manetta tells of playing at the Tuxedo Dance Hall, and at some of the houses.

PB played for a lot of private dances. Dance sets followed pretty much the same order then; there would be a waltz, a polka, a mazurka, a schottische, a polka, and a waltz, which was followed by a quadrille. Then the orchestra would play something else, and the order would be repeated. PB knew all the routines, and could play them on the piano, which he did for the private parties. He learned many of the arias [,i.e., themes?] popular at the time. PB tells of arranging (from memory) a quadrille of those arias for use in the Creole Festival [, i.e., Fiesta] directed by Mrs. Synigal. PB's sister (dead about two years now) was leading a group of old people at Holy Redeemer Church in singing and dancing old tunes;

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she told Mrs. Synigal that her brother could help her get the tunes she wanted for the quadrille. PB made the musical arrangements (slightly different from the ones used in the early times, as the later instrumentation was different and included saxophones. PB got his friend [Willie] Pajaud interested in playing for the quadrille. PB and his sister remembered the steps for the quadrille, so for several months they taught them to the people Mrs. Synigal had assembled to do the dance. The Festival was presented for two days, in August, 1954; [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin was also on the program. PB and Mrs. Synigal "fell out", [i.e., had a disagreement] however; WR says she presented a quadrille on the boat [steamer President] about three years ago [1958--PRC], and that about one minute of it was shown on television [Dave Garroway's "Wide, Wide World"--PRC]; PB says it wasn't the real dance, nor was it the real music; WR says Paul Barbarin tried to arrange the music for the presentation. PB says Mrs. Synigal tried to take charge of [his music] for the presentation, but he explained to a man at WDSU [TV] that it was his, from his memory of fifty years ago. PB speaks of the accuracy of his musical memory. PB says that one of the things the musicians who played the quadrille arrangement liked was the clarinet variation, which was played by [Walter?] DeLa Rose (who has a shoe repair shop, with his brother, on Claiborne near Ursulines). Although PB didn't know the names of the composers of the arias in his arrangement, he got a copyright for the arrangement.

PB mentions some of the old musicians: [Albert] Glenny, Peter Bocage, Manuel Manetta, Papa Celestin. PB says he remembers when Celestin came to New Orleans, and when he began playing with the Tuxedo Band (which name he took for his later band), which was organized by "Baba" Ridgley. PB played clarinet with the Tuxedo sometimes. PB also played with the band led by Oscar Randall [spelling?], and with other bands. PB quit playing [professionally?] in the late Twenties; he still plays around his home, with various [amateur?] groups; he also rehearses sometimes with Mr. [Challes?], a friend uptown who is of a musical family. PB's arthritis doesn't allow him to play much now.

PB worked for the post office from June 2, 1906 until January 1, 1952, when he retired.

PB talks about the orchestra [John] Robichaux got together to play for the Carnival ball of the Elves of Oberon, held in the French Opera House perhaps three years or less before the building burned. PB played cello in the orchestra which consisted of thirty to thirty-six pieces; some others in it were: [Armand] Piron, Gaspard, Charlie McCurdy and [Joseph] Bloom [or Broome?]. PB talks of the physical arrangement of the ball, mentions the rehearsal, his exploration of the building, which was erected, he thinks, in 1859 (his maternal grandfather worked on the building--his mother died in 1928, aged 90; she was the cause of her children taking up [listening to] opera, as that was her sole amusement. The mother attended the opera even before the French Opera House was built; the opera was performed

in the building where the convent is [was; demolished in 1965--PRC] on Orleans Street; it was called Theatre Orleans). PB describes the mechanical aspects of the stage at the French Opera House, and says he doubts there will ever be another like it.

The opera orchestra was about thirty-six to forty players. The resident impresario, [Michel Lescale?] went annually to Europe to select a company for the season. Musicians who had come to New Orleans with previous companies and had decided to settle in New Orleans were employed in the opera orchestra. PB thinks the impresario also played cello in the orchestra. Mr. Beaufort [spelling?], who taught trombone to Bennie Raphael (PB would go with Bennie to his lessons), owned, in later years, a wine shop, on Chartres between Toulouse and Madison [or Wilkinson?RBA]; after his death, his widow opened a bar room on Chartres between St. Louis and Toulouse, river side of street. It was for white only, but the widow recognized PB, [Paul] Chaligny, [Wendall] McNeal and others as they passed her place, so she invited them in for drinks in her dining room. At that time bars were segregated. When the opera was operating, the opera musicians made the widow's place a social headquarters; it was here that PB met Lescale, who started teaching PB cello, although PB had had some lessons with Professor [William?] Nickerson. PB also studied harmony with Lescale for a short time, until Lescale left New Orleans. PB then began studying with Mr. [Louis "Papa"] Tio. PB still studies

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music at home--harmony, counterpoint, etc. His friend, Mr. [Henry] Pritchard, is also interested in studying music.

PB mentions Ulysses [spelling?] Picou, brother of [Alphonse] Picou; Ulysses was a singer, and had a band. PB met the Picou family by visiting a friend of his who lived in the other side of the house from the Picous.

End of Reel II

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Ralph Collins

[Alphonse] Picou's brother, [Ulysses Picou], was full of jokes. The family was Creole; they spoke as much or more Creole than they did English; WR says Ulysses sang a lot of Creole songs; PB agrees, and says his story concerns Creole. PB tells of writing a song utilizing Creole words; two people are supposed to be talking; it is a question and answer affair in which the main question is never answered. PB is writing the song now, having decided that the particular kind of song will sell. PB also talks about an old song, never written down, which was played by Manuel Perez, a young violinist, Vic Gaspard and others, when they were young; it was called "Down in The Tin Cup Row", and is somewhat vulgar; PB intends to write it down, with revised lyrics. PB says he knows only one person who could sing those two tunes [i.e., sing them properly--PRC]--Lizzie Miles; WR says she has said she is not going to sing anymore, as she wants to retire and devote her time to the church. PB doesn't know her personally, but his (late) wife, also very religious, used to meet her in church. WR says Lizzie Miles recently turned down an offer to sing ragtime songs on a national television program.

PB plays the "original" melody of the Creole tune, "Eh, La Bas", on the piano; he says the one popularly used is not the correct one. WR says Albert Burbank and De De Pierce sing the other "Eh, La Bas." PB says it's not the same as his, which was composed between 1910 and 1914 [perhaps he is speaking of the one inspired by Ulysses Picou, and not of the well-known "Eh, La Bas?"].

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PB met [A. J.] Piron when they both played in Bloom's orchestra. Piron later had a barbershop on Claiborne, near Columbus, right next to where the present musicians's union [Local 496] is located. A non-musician, Freddy Ratliff, brought an original poem, "What Is This World To Me?" to Piron, who set it to music; Piron had PB (who played jobs on piano with Piron before Piron met Clarence Williams) make a piano arrangement of it; they had about fifty copies of it printed which they passed around among their friends; PB didn't save a copy for himself. It was Piron's first composition. The time was around 1912. Then Piron met Williams; Piron wrote down "Brownskin, [Who You For?]" which he had been playing with his orchestra for some time; Piron and Williams published it. PB wrote the music to lyrics called "Where's All The Presents That You Promised Me/", written by his friend, Jean Marie; they had it published; PB thinks he still has a copy. It is now in public domain, as the copyright was not renewed. PB also set music to Jean Marie's "Jail-house Blues" (another tune of the same name was recorded by Bessie Smith, says WR); PB set music to Jean Marie's "Blow It Big", too.

PB has a lot of music, both jazz and classics; he says classical music is really his hobby, although he used to play all of Scott Joplin's rags from memory. In his later musical years, he did more composing and conducting than playing. His cello, heirloom from his mother's family, was burned in a fire at the home of [Wendall?] McNeal, who played in the [John] Robichaux orchestra with PB (the orchestra rehearsed at McNeal's house), and whose daughter was using

the cello during the time of its burning. The instrument was burned around 1923. PB later got another cello, one not very good, but also not expensive. PB still has his saxophone (a present from his wife) and his Albert system clarinet. PB says all the Tios, including Louis "Papa" Tio, played Albert system clarinets; PB says Louis told of once having a ten-key clarinet, much more difficult to play than the thirteen-key clarinets used later. (WR mentions that Ralph Collins, who studies with Manuel Manetta, likes his thirteen-key clarinet better than the fifteen-key instruments.) WR mentions Sam Dutrey in connection with double and single embouchure on clarinet. Louis Tio could play any of the reed instruments, including several obscure ones, among them the oboe d'amour; he was an accomplished conductor and composer. He graduated from a conservatory in Mexico, PB understands with honors, but PB didn't find out much else about his background, as Tio was sensitive about personal matters. Lorenzo Tio, Jr., was called "Lanky"; he was married to a sister of Peter Bocage, says WR. "Lanky" had several brothers. Old man Louis Tio was slightly hump-backed; he was also one of the best musicians around New Orleans; some others were [Docminique? Dominich Remy? Compare Soard's City Directory, 1924], a flutist; [Valon?] Dupre; and Alcibiade Jeanjacques. Jeanjacques, a cornetist, left New Orleans with a show; when he returned, he had a beautiful tone. Other cornetists who had beautiful tones: René Moret (brother of George

Moret) and Arnold Metoyer. Charlie Dlublet, who was before PB's time, also had a beautiful tone; he died just after PB became acquainted with him. Paquette Valentino [Soards, 1892--Valentine, Paquette, carrier, P.O., r 236 Elysian Fields], a dentist who made PB's plates, was a fine solo cornetist; he later moved to California, where he died. [Could this be Punkie Valentine? RBA]. Jeanjacques also played French horn very well; he played horn in Bloom's orchestra. [Barrios?] Stewart played trombone and horn; he played second horn in Bloom's orchestra, with Jean jacques playing first. He [Stewart or Jeanjacques?] died two years ago. PB and Picou call themselves young musicians in comparison with the ones PB has been mentioning. Picou is older than PB; PB thinks Picou must be in his eighties. Albert Glenney, who was about eighty-eight when he died, was an acquaintance of PB from the time PB was small.

"High Society" is mentioned again. WR mentions Clarence Williams, and Melrose [publishing company], and Porter and Steele. PB says the piece was brought to New Orleans, where it was played by Robichaux's orchestra, which included people such as George Bacquet and Babb [check spelling] Frank, Picou and others, who played the variation which is now known all over the world. It is known as a New Orleans tune, because New Orleans musicians made it famous, but it was not composed in New Orleans.

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Also present: William Russell 16
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PB thinks there were some [instrument only] concerts given at the French Opera, although he didn't attend any of them. PB talks about "potpourris" which were given at the end of the opera season for the benefit of the troupe; one act from three separate operas were presented. PB talks about the apparent scarcity of contraltos; he mentions various operas, among them "Aida." PB tells the story of Meyerbeer's "The Prophet." PB knows many operas, the stories, music and libretti.

When PB met Joe Oliver, Oliver was working for Jake Levy, [who lived] at the corner of Magazine and Second; PB met Oliver through trombonist Bennie Raphael. Oliver was a good musician, one who read well; he played trumpet; he organized the Melrose Brass Band. PB played a lot in brass bands during the same period, which was between 1914 and 1917. (WR mentions talking to Oliver's widow, Stella, who has moved back to New Orleans) PB and Oliver were good friends; he played in Oliver's dance band and also in the Melrose Brass Band. Oliver was a butler at the place where he worked; he also lived there; he was considered so essential at his job that he decided that the only way to leave his employer was to leave town; he told PB he was leaving, [Compare Stella Oliver, reel ?] and the next PB heard, he was being called "King" Oliver, and was making a lot of records, in Chicago. Oliver's playing compared favorably with that of Manuel Perez.

The music played by the uptown musicians in New Orleans was a bit rougher than that of the downtown musicians; the uptowners had

some good musicians, especially in the line of jazz and ragtime. The Dutrey brothers, Honore and Sam [Sr.] were good musicians; the last time PB saw Sam, then playing flute, was at a reception held at the school [Straight University] PB had attended (before the merger between Straight and the other school [New Orleans University] to form Dillard University); PB got together and conducted the orchestra for the affair; Sam became ill and died shortly after that time. PB says [Alphonse] Picou tried the flute once; PB himself also tried flute.

PB knew of Freddy Keppard; he knows his brother, Louis Keppard, who lives nearby. They played good jazz. Buddy Petit also played good jazz. Buddy Bolden was very popular with the uptown people. Papa Celestin was also popular; he always had good players with him; among them were [Adolphe] "Tats" Alexander, Jr., who played saxophone (he was with Celestin when Celestin died) and baritone [horn]; PB knew his father, who was a trumpet player (he may have played alto horn too). PB heard of Bunk Johnson, but never met him. As far as PB is concerned, any of the Tio family played as well as any other Tio; Lorenzo "Lanky" Tio, Jr., was good both at reading and at improvising, playing blues, etc. The Tio family was just naturally gifted. They were good interpreters of music; PB illustrates the difference in interpreting by telling about a parade to dedicate the lights on Canal Street; several bands--Public Service Band, Police Band, Firemen's Band, Shriners Band--were playing; PB's wife, not a musician, noticed the difference in interpretation after hearing

two of the bands play the same piece. Lorenzo Tio, Jr., borrowed PB's old Turkish oboe to play at a funeral; the crowd was entranced by the sound. Tio, Jr., got the oboe from Louis Tio, who had borrowed it from PB to play a concert at St. Katharine's Hall; Louis died before the oboe was returned to PB; Lorenzo had it by that time, however; Lorenzo returned the oboe to PB before Lorenzo went to New York, where he died shortly afterward, in the last week of December, 1933. [Not with Piron then. Compare other interviews.RBA] [Joseph] Bloom died the first week of 1934. [John] Robichaux died in the Fall of 1934. Not many years later, [A.J.] Piron died. PB heard that Charlie McCurdy died, and that [Andrew? Henry?] Kimball died.

Charlie McCurdy, a good clarinetist, reader and transposer, compared favorably with the Tios and with [George] Baquet; aside from the Tios, PB considers McCurdy tops, as far as knowing his instrument, being able to transpose, etc.

"Big Eye Louis" Nelson Delisle was gifted; he got a sweet tone from the clarinet, was a good variator, and did well; he told PB that he had learned to read, but in his prime, Louis was a "routiner" [i.e., one who plays from memory, or by ear, not from reading music]. [Sidney] Bechet, another gifted person, was the same way as Louis Nelson. He was only nine or ten years old when he began playing; he could really play. PB says illiteracy is the cause of musicians like that not aspiring to read. (WR says Bechet died the preceding ~~fall~~ in France).

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PB only heard of Jelly Roll Morton, who played in the District, according to WR. PB says he didn't want to go into the District then, as his family wasn't brought up that way. PB played for private parties at that time; in later years, when he played clarinet, he worked with "Baba" Ridgley, Jack Carey and Oscar Randall; in later years, PB played piano in John Robichaux's second band. PB thinks Robichaux himself was playing at the Lyric Theater; PB played piano at the Lyric on occasion, when he was playing with Piron; it was after PB played there that Robichaux took his band into the Lyric. The reason Robichaux lost the job at the Lyric was that the manager couldn't afford the new union price quoted him by Robichaux (the union has just been organized, with the encouragement of the white local; Robichaux helped organize it, PB thinks); "Big Eye Louis" took a non-union band into the job, but the theater didn't remain in business much longer.

End of Reel IV

