

KNOCKY PARKER
REEL I [of 3]
August 28, 1963

INTERVIEWERS: Ed Kahn,
Paul R. Crawford
NOTES: Richard B. Allen
SUMMARY: Dan Weisman
TYPING: Dan Weisman

[EK, the principal interviewer, begins by giving the date etc. Let's start at the beginning, EK says, and get where you were from, where you were born, and get your real name.]

John Parker--1918, August the 8th; Palmer, Texas. [My parents weren't musically inclined.] We had a cotton farm out there, and a player piano that I was interested in all my life. That's about how I got started.

We used to have itinerant musicians who...itinerant musicians, who'd come through there. From the beginning, I learned how to play by copying the notes going down on a player piano. Put a roll in, and see the notes going in there, and then make the same notes go down in the same combinations.

Children have keen sensitivities, and can watch things going on. They can absorb more - being children, somehow - than we, as adults, can. Intimations of immortality, and all that.

And as a child you can see, keenly, little patterns going down - patterns of notes and clusters - and then make the same combinations. One, three, five is easy for a child, uncluttered by our old activities in other fields; and [they] copy the same things, and play just like the phonograph, just like the piano roll did.

From then, we had an old Sonora phonograph, and I could get records for the phonographs, and copy them, much the same way, by ear because I'd already had the authority of learning from the player piano rolls first.

That's how I started playing the piano. By copying the rolls, and the records that I heard, and, that's been, I guess, with me all my life.

I was four [years old.] Mama was on the phone one time, and she heard something. But she knew this wasn't exactly the roll because it wasn't quite as full as that, but still sort of like that it came in; and I was playing the piano, the same little piece we had on the roll.

I don't know [what was the piece], but I know one of these first things was "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," and another thing was "Aggravatin' Papa," the old thing...I always liked [J.] Russel Robinson's playing, in 1920, "Aggravatin' Papa," I remember. That's one of the tunes that I used to like mainly.

We had [rolls like] old "Helo March," and all those that were popular at the time. But, I do remember that thing by Russel Robinson.

And, I was surprised, visiting Trebor Tichenor in St. Louis, to see a beautiful "Creole Belles," a cake walk, and that was one of the ones. He put this on, and I remembered that years ago this was an old tune that I had particularly liked, and had played many, many times.

[I liked] all the old Kerry Mills things, and pieces like "Snow Dear," "Rufus on Parade," all the old cake walks, and early rags.

[I listened to the old rolls and records] before I went to

reel I

school. Between, in the period there from when I was 4-6 [years old], primarily, was filled with musical activity.

As soon as I started playing, they would carry me around to camp meetings in the summer (laughs) and...played florid, arpeggio versions of those two-page hymns, "Awakening Chorus," and "All Hail Emmanuel," and hymns from the Protestant hymn book there with many razzle-dazzle scales up and down the keyboard.

I was four or five years old. You know, they liked that back in the country days in...Texas....These are influences that came on me when I was a kid.

There was a Miss Hazel Booth at Whittle's Music Company who would put aside all through the year, all piano solos that would come in. We had...I remember, things by Cow Cow Davenport, and Old Jelly Roll--lots of Jelly Roll Morton pieces, and Clarence Williams. "Wildflower Rag," and "Organ Grinder Blues," and "Kansas City Stomp," by Jelly, and "Seattle Hunch."

And in the fall, when daddy would sell cotton, and all. We had a buddy...we'd go to Dallas quite frequently, then we'd go buy all those records she'd put aside, all through the year, waiting for me to come up....

These were mine. Ever since I was a kid, at home, before I could talk even, they would bring home player rolls, and give them to me....

[My parents] weren't primarily interested in [music.] They were familiar [with music.] They liked what I liked, and they got what was coming out. The whole market, all kinds of pieces.

[I heard live musicians.] We'd go to Dallas in the fall to get these cotton pickers, seasonal interest. In the plush years of the [19]20's, it was hard to get labor. Daddy would go there searching for musicians to come work in the cotton fields.

I'd go up there with him, and we'd go over there in Deep Elem [a black section of Dallas]--they had this Deep Elem special, a switchblade knife that would come out [i.e., that they would play?]. And I didn't know anything about that thing.

I was just a kid going there with daddy. He'd go to all kinds of places. Sometimes, the place he'd go to would have a piano, and I'd start playing....

They'd call up all of the people around at these Negro...all kinds of, sometimes disreputable places, in degree at least; and people would come there with their homemade instruments. A lot of guitarists especially--many, many guitarists I remember that would come there and we'd play together.

The pianists, too, would sit down, play four hands on the piano, and shift your hand; so there'd be my left hand, his left hand; my right hand, his right; and move all over the piano playing all kinds of ways and variations.

I'd try to copy everything they did, you see, and they liked this very much. They would laugh, and show me everything they played.

This is how, then, I learned from them. They were my first teachers. Terrific musicians, really....All these were Negroes in Dallas, down there in that Negro section there, and they got to they would look forward to my coming up there.

They'd all get on the phone, and call up, and they'd all come

over and have little jam sessions--little substandard instrumentation, I'm sure.

Anything they'd have, they'd bring up. French harp, very much like that Sleepy John Estes deal. Harmonica...All kinds of players. Anybody'd come up.

Blind Lemon [Jefferson] I met one time there, I remember. I just barely do remember. And Will Ezell was there on one occasion. I remember this one time.

And some of these musicians really played extraordinarily well. They had a kind of a style of their own that was peculiar.

They used to drink, oh, I don't know. Every time they'd get something to drink they would...get me a dixie cup. Those were just coming into popularity in the [19]20's. Dixie cups, and over the piano there would be all the bottles there, all the dixie cups all lined up there on top of the piano, and then we'd stay on there for hours.

[My father] loved it, going there, and it was sort of agreed that I'm not supposed to tell the other people exactly what sort of places we went to. They suspected, but daddy liked going a lot there, you know, and having me up there. He thought this is great, of course.

And the music was great. I was getting the finest training that you could possibly get anywhere from all these wild people.

[The main instruments were piano,] and guitar. And sometimes...a string bass on a washtub, sometimes two strings they would play sometimes. I don't know [what they called that instrument], but...Crawford? [They called it a tubaphone, PRC says.]

I never did hear, I don't know what they...a washtub bass is what I think I used to hear, but I'm not sure.

And they'd have two strings sometimes. [I don't know how they'd be attached,] but they would have two strings there. He'd play first, one; then the other, leaning it over to get...like a tension, to get the right notes and all....

I hadn't heard anything using this kind of music before. I got a big kick out of going up there with him....

Just anybody who would come in, would sit down there, and play, and we'd play a while. They'd all laugh, talk around, and they'd make fun.

But it was a very - not satire - they would just make pleasant fun of all the pianists. They would still show me all the stuff because I was just a kid, and, of course, they saw that I liked them, and there was never any feeling of black and white at all. Never involved, which was kind of strange.

Sometimes, I stayed behind the bar in the backroom, or somewhere, and go to sleep. Daddy would go off, doing some kind of business, or work, or something.

One time when there was some kind of a fight, some of the people would hustle me out of there. They sort of took care of me. It was between [192]5, and it stopped around 1928, I guess. (Tape off.)...

[The music that they were playing] was very much like the later Chicago barrelhouse idiom. Close to that sort of thing. Close to fundamental boogie woogie. Not in the complicated forms of Pine Top [Smith.] But earlier, like the Cow Cow [Davenport] school. Very much like that.

A lot of times they would get on one note, and repeat it for a long time, up high, or low, either one. A whole lot of that.

[It was] closer to [Jimmy] Yancey, and even before Yancey and... (can't remember) that old fellow who created walking bass before Yancey. I'll think of the name in just a minute. "Cripple" Clarence Lofton, yeah. Sure. Cripple Clarence, of course. Kind of stripped...bare.

[The guitar style was] very much like Blind Lemon and, in a way, Leadbelly. Although, I don't remember the 12-string, I don't think. I don't remember it. It might have been there.

And there was somebody who would lead - he did it unobtrusively, so that you scarcely noticed it - Blind Lemon around. But, I don't remember who that was, at all, or have any idea. I know there was somebody there, but this is all very vague in my mind. I don't recall.

The guitarist would play kind of a wandering, very free style. Not entirely, not just plain chord accompaniment, but a kind of a free, rolling, little...with a lot of little filigrees thrown in now and then. But not a straight forward chord accompaniment, by any means at all....

[Remembering] after the Depression was easier. We didn't go there any more, much, and by that time I was getting on out in other aspects, and yes, that was about the time it ended, about [19]28.

I joined a little hillbilly band. Blackie Simmons. Blackie Simmons saw Duke Ellington's bus pass by one time, and [it] said Duke Ellington's...Famous Orchestra on the outside of the bus.

And he had Blackie's Blue Jackets, which was a perfectly alliterative, you see, and proper title. And then he put Blackie's Famous Blue Jackets, in imitation of Duke Ellington's Famous Orchestra that was on the back of the bus. (KP chuckling.)

Blackie used to go out on trips. We'd play honky-tonks, and I do mean honky-tonks. I wasn't but 16 [years old] then. We used to play such things as bathing suit dances in cheap dives. And brother, when you play a bathing suit dance in a cheap dive, you've got something indeed.

We'd play...these one-nighters there, and divide up the proceeds. Blackie would get two cuts. He was the leader. His wife took up tickets at the door. She'd get one cut. And his brother drove the car. He'd get one cut. Then we took out all the mileage for gasoline. And then the boys got one cut apiece.

We'd make then - oh, by the time we totalled up, this was lean Depression days - from, at least, \$8 a week to sometimes as much as [\$]25 or [\$]30. That was a lot in the [19]30's....

That was one year, I worked with him....Right after I got out of high school, as soon as [I got] that degree. I was tied down at

home until I got out of high school.

The minute June comes around, I graduated from Palmer Senior High. I'm off, at once. Right off that same month, I got the job with Blackie Simmons, and this stayed on for half a year.

I went on to school for half a year. Joined them again for the summer, and came back to school for half a year. Then joined the Light Crust Doughboys which was a much better style band, played the same tunes with the same instrumentation....

[I graduated high school in] 1935. Then I worked with Blackie Simmons for [19]35, and then in the summer of [19]36. And then I joined the Doughboys in [19]36....

[From 1928-1935], I stayed on copying the phonograph rolls that were coming at that time. The phonograph displaced the player piano, and it was easier to get records - and wider assortment - and study them.

Everybody else was having phonograph records, and I had them too...I was not so much then [playing with other musicians.] I was getting in upper grammar school, and high school then, and was concerned with other work....

[My first professional job was] I guess, as soon as I left high school, and joined Blackie Simmons when I was 16. They advertised me as a 12-year-old piano player because I was real small, green - green as a gourd - and inexperienced. They got a big kick out of these improper places we played because I was so naive, and country.

When the folks found out how terrible the business all was, they jerked me out of there. That was the reason that we were so...

At this time, the Depression was going on, and they couldn't afford to send me to college until they found out how disreputable were my surroundings. Then they could, and did.

But I got out of college as soon as [I] joined the DoughboysI quit college there, in 1936, to join the Doughboys.

I been there one year. The last semester of the freshman year, the first semester...of the next year, and then I joined them...I went up Christmas, during our vacation, to have an audition to play on a radio program with them, somehow.

They had a big radio program all over Texas, and Oklahoma. Eddie Dunn, an announcer kept saying during this week, even though there were featured pianists - I don't know how the people could have accepted it - he kept saying, seems to me I heard a piano.

And somebody'd say, oh no, that's just the banjo player. He sounds like that sometimes, and the audience never did know any better.

I worked with them a week, and left. And then joined them permanently the next January, as soon as the semester was over in college.

But by the time I was working with them as a Doughboy, I went to night school at TCU, and that's how that all came about....[I was working my way through college while playing with the Doughboys.]

[EK asks KP how he came to join Blackie Simmons' band.] I had

been playing a few a radio programs with Bill Boyd's Cowboy Ramblers.

He had already made arrangements to hire the pianist from Blackie Simmons. But [BB] liked my work better. I've forgotten but [the other pianist was] Sonny somebody.

He had made that first record with Bill Boyd but he had already made a commitment. And so, whenever Blackie's pianist worked with him, I went over to take his place, just automatically there.

It was catch as catch can in those days, as it is now. Sometimes, it's awfully hard, even in big cities, much less small ones, to get fill-ins. You find that even in New Orleans, as I guess. Is that true? [Yeah, PRC replies.]

[I'd been playing with Bill Boyd before I joined Blackie Simmons in] radio programs, and just a few odd jobs scattered around. I believe [Bill Boyd's was the first band I played with.]

I went up there one day, and started, and went in there and...I don't know how I...Somebody understood I played a little piano, and some friend carried me in, and gave me a build-up, and had me sit in with them for a few numbers. And they liked the way I played, and laughed.

I was so little, even when I graduated from school, I was, oh not...I don't know how tall but very, very...short enough to get by as being 12 years old. Country, country, country. Rice and hay all over me.

[The rest of the guys in the band] were always good to me. They thought of me as kind of a kid - a mascot, or something - and laughed. But they liked my playing very much, especially the blues. They liked that because that's been my heritage, you see. When we played the blues, I was on whole ground.

[The rest of the fellows] were country too, but they'd been out, and they were from...When we say country, now, let's qualify this. It has good aspects as well as unfavorable connotations.

But my school. I had come from a very sheltered background, and some of these musicians I worked with were from across the railroad tracks. They enjoyed just that much more my naivete.

[They put me on] always. You can imagine what it would be like. Brother, in those days when you say you put [a in that surrounding cement], that was really it....

[Bill Boyd] was the band that was playing there. That's what they mainly liked. Whenever we played "St. Louis Blues" at some little old dive there, and I'd take three or four choruses, and people would come around there. They'd stand around, you see, and they'd stop the whole show, and take two or three more choruses, and play the thing.

In those days, we would play one tune, and stop for a few seconds, then play the same tune again because our repertoire was limited. We'd play one tune twice, once right after the other.

They'd wait for the choruses to come up again, and just stand around, and watch. The guitarist was terrific, too. He was just a knock-out. Old Jim Boyd played very well--very, very well. They'd

wait for the soloist they liked especially, and crowd around there, and...have a ball.

There were about two guitarists [in the band.] One of them was the solo, and the other one was the accompaniment. Bass, two violins, banjo, piano....I don't remember the banjoist with Bill Boyd's. I don't remember him at all.

The banjoist that I remember primarily was Marvin Montgomery of the Light Crust Doughboys, who was one of the greatest banjo pickers of all time, anywhere....A tenor banjo....

[I made records with Bill Boyd.] When I was with Bill Boyd was just a few odd dances. I'd go up there, and play with them on the radio program for about a week when I first went up there to Dallas.

[That was] just before moving over, and taking the pianist's place for whom Bill Boyd had already contracted, before I appeared on the scene. During his two weeks notice, I appeared up there, and played with Bill Boyd....[After joining the Doughboys, I came back to Bill Boyd just for a few record dates.]...

I didn't know anything about bands [at the time.] All we had was the radio program at home, and our knowledge was very limited. We didn't have anything, but just what we heard there.

Locally, I guess, the Light Crust Doughboys was about the [peer?]. They were regarded as tops in the hillbilly field, all up and down the country....

[Hillbilly groups] were the only jobs available there for a poor white boy who couldn't read music, but could play....

Back there in those days, the guitar was sort of the heart of the hillbilly orchestra, I guess you'd call it, hillbilly band. And the guitar always plays strong, strong blues techniques.

You see, I had singled out when I talked about "St. Louis Blues," the guitar, and the piano. We were the ones who would carry those with all our own choruses; on, and, on, and on; either fast, or slow.

Old "St. Louis Blues." We'd first play slow tempo, and then fast; and then we'd stop for two, or three seconds; and play the same thing again.

Each time, we'd have long solos in the middle of both slow, and fast. And the people would come up there, you see, and holler back to each display very much the way Benny Goodman [fans were] later on, applauding each chorus....

[The bands] were not swing yet, because swing hasn't come up. Swing hadn't come up until--oh, I guess [19]36 it was coming, and I joined them in [19]35. Just about, swing was beginning to come in.

To take this business about swing. The only difference in swing, and jazz, is simply voicing; and pre-arrange, somehow or other - quasi-jazz, so to speak - because it's all pre-arranged, and voiced.

Voicing, not collective improvisation. When it becomes collective improvisation, you're getting back then into jazz. But whenever you start voicing, and making pre-planned arrangements,

you're getting into swing.

Now, in this hillbilly band you had the two violins playing primarily western. This is the first time I've mentioned the word western. That's very popular here, too, because this is close to the Mexican settlements there in Dallas, and Fort Worth.

We used to play [" Rancho Grande," "Copulita Da Allali"?] all kinds off... "La Paloma," all the Spanish songs. The two violinists, now, would play in harmony; primarily thirds up, and down the scale.

Alright. You're getting this as soon as they start playing in harmony, you're getting that package; swing, forte, and arrangement, that style.

Then, they found out they could add the guitar, amplified guitar by now. In the age of swing, amplified guitar came in...the hillbilly bands as well. It hadn't been there before.

But as soon as he started to amplify the guitar, then he has another voice to add to the violins. So, you have three-part harmony. And then a band of good musicians could figure out--well, let's add a fourth part, and then you're on your way by then.

So, we used to...the old Light Crust Doughboys would get some thing like "South Rampart Street Parade," and fix it up in four-part harmony. And we could do the same thing [Bob] Crosby['s Bobcats] could do with his instruments there. We'd four go right on, and play the same arrangements, and did....

The violinist would write his arrangement, and teach the rest of our [parts] by ear. We'd catch, the most complicated arrangements...we'd catch instantly. Strange how quickly we'd catch on to sometimes the most elaborate head arrangements....

The two violinists could [read music.] Kenneth Pitts, and Cecil Brower. Cecil Brower is now in Nashville, the leading hillbilly violinist, I suppose, in the whole country now.

He's almost done more records than anybody at all. Cecil Brower. Very famous.

Kenneth Pitts just stayed in Fort Worth. This was with the Doughboys. Those two were going to school at TCU, studying, both of them, violin. They got their BA's.

They played the Bach, two violin concerto. They kept telling the teacher about the piano player they had out there, and what he was doing, and all.

One time, [they] arranged for me to go out, and meet Keith Mixson, got on an audition, and that was the turning-point in my life then. When I finally met the piano teacher. I had been taking a few night course, but not in music. I couldn't read, and didn't know anything.

The fellow, one time, wanted to sing "Liebestraum," on the program. [He] got an old, classical, red seal Victor record, and had me go home...learn the thing off the record, and play the same accompaniment that was on this record while he sang old "Liebestraum," of all things. Why, I don't know.

Parker Wilson, [the vocalist.] He was a strange man....He had the idea that since we were the Doughboys, and since we sold flour,

and travelled all over the country, we ought to have more prestige than just a plain hillbilly band.

And also, the mores' there in Fort Worth and Dallas, [on] the country side was to look down on the hillbilly musicians as being inferior. I don't know why.

But we would [go] into the Blackstone Hotel to play our program, and go through the salon where the violins were playing some kind of sweet music, and we would think we were not up to their standards, or they would think we weren't.

This is, somehow, the reason I got my doctorate, I am sure. Because I was working there as an inferior musician there with this hillbilly band.

Although we knew very well we were better musicians than they were, actually, technically, and in every other way at all. But that was part of the motivating force behind the whole thing....

We felt that we had to show our music was good, and...this was our music. We were dedicated to our own field, and this was our banner.

And we held it up highly, and just flying this as brilliantly as we could. And in holding this up, we were holding up, by the same token--Scott Joplin, Cow Cow [Davenport,] and all these people who went up there with us, and have always been, you see. That's been our banner; then, and evermore....

We never did use the word "swing band" at all. We were still hillbilly musicians, actually, even though we played in that swing format, in a way. And had a southwest swing.

We would fall into, somehow, a peculiar tempo and rhythm that was distinctly all its own, separate from anything else in the country. Separate entirely from New Orleans music, or from Benny Goodman swing.

It really swung much more than the Goodman group did, much more. "Bugle Call Rag" was a stomping, romping thing, no doubt about it at all. Closer to the New Orleans school really, than we realized at the time....

I suppose [it was a logical development of a style.] As you began to make orchestrations, no matter how vague and weak they are. You're beginning, then, to hammer out a format, and the hillbilly musicians are beginning to organize themselves, and the program, the orchestration, the whole style is becoming standardized.

END OF REEL I

KNOCKY PARKER
REEL II [of 3]
August 28, 1963

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Crawford, Ed Kahn
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[EK begins by identifying tape etc. I asked at the end of the last reel, EK continues, what type of music these people would be playing had they been playing 20 years earlier?] That would have been 1910-1915.

Now, they didn't use the word--arrangement. They would use the word voicing, and you have your two violins playing in harmony. Their harmony, as such, with two violins--they have to be exactly right.

The other fellow playing the second lead can't deviate. He can't play wrong notes, and all. Has to stick somewhere near him in thirds, and has to be, really, on the ball.

Alright. This is very much like the two trumpets that you have with Louis Armstrong. And incidentally, the second violin was the one who would take the solos whenever it came along because he was really a...perhaps, better musician than the first.

The first played the straight lead, and the second one had to have inventive qualities to make up a harmony like that in the first place.

And he was the one. Cecil Brower. This is the name that was very famous...(Brief tape problem.) Cecil Brower, who was one of the first jazz violinists, and the foremost of them all in the hillbilly days.

He made records with Bob Wills, Milton Brown, the Light Crust Doughboys, and is now the leading hillbilly violinist in Nashville. Most of his time is spent recording, just playing some wild background cadenzas behind any singer, at all, of any sort. Terrific, terrific musician.

But, to stay back, now, in 1910. When you have the first two violins playing together. This is the beginning of a head arrangement, whether they knew it or not.

I don't think, in 1910, you would have had a third voice coming in; although the guitarist might have been playing in a bass line, moving patterns there closely akin to the role of the trombone in the Dixieland band of the same period....Just somehow filling in because [of] the space there in the bass that needs to be filled.

And the guitarist has his little [runs], even if it's nothing more than a straight one, two, three, four little old single notes leading up to the "C" before he starts playing his little "C", "G" vamp in the bass....

It takes a little pick-up note, and that little pick-up note, in its own way, is the same thing as a trombone smear. That's what he's doing there. And without realizing it, you see, there's your unconscious format, or (pause) aborigine of an arrangement. Is that right?

[The start of the style was two violins] playing together....This goes on back into the 1800's when they played Spanish music. They would have to play together....

[Spanish music was one of the] tremendous influences, Bill

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Russell says, from Mexico. It certainly came up from Mexico, and this is very, very important.

Bill Russell is writing some material about this. What he is writing, I haven't seen, but I know he is doing a lot of research.

Speak, Paul. [Pardon, PRC says.] Speak about Bill Russell writing this work about the Mexican influence.

[I've heard about Bill Russell's thinking about the Mexican influence, PRC says. But, I don't know about his writing. But I suppose he is. He is doing a lot of things. The last I heard he was cleaning out his photograph file.]

Well he's talking about...[He's probably writing, PRC adds. He's always had the theory.] This is important. Very important, and we have a whole lot of the contrapuntal rhythms coming up from the Caribbean. Oh, yes. No doubt about it at all. Or the Caribbean....

I think...it was the Texas musicians moving into Tennessee, Virginia [that influenced music.] I think it came that way. I think that this whole business...

The trend comes up from Texas, spreading there from roots in Mexico, more than coming down to Texas from the coastline. I think it's coming up that way. I view, I see it in this way coming from south to east rather than east to south...From the old Spanish days, ranches, and all.

The ranches have always had violinists, and guitarists. I think about the beginning there, on the ranches here, going up the east from Mexico. This is, I think, important. I hadn't even thought about that before. I couldn't imagine. This is interesting. Coming the other way.

It works both ways. I'm sure....The cattle area [in the southwest] had the Spanish influence of violins, and guitars, before they come over here. It's here.

And I thought, from the cattle range, it came back here [to the east.]...This is something that you can delve, look into a whole lot.

This is good to think about. I may be wrong, but I do think, I believe, I think I can back this up. The instrumentation was here before the people came. And they took it, and they took with it this two violinists playing in harmony. That's that old...there it is....

Now, you talking about voicing. This is important. Coming from the people singing. That's the way they would voice. They would sing. The quartet. They'd get that little pitch-pipe, and they'd voice. (Imitates.)

They'd start off singing in quartets. Scott Joplin started off as a singer. He was a part of the Melodeers - I've forgotten exactly - the Melody Four, or something like that. Melody comes into it. Quartet.

He went up there as a part of a singing group. To Sedalia from Texas. Born in Texarkana. His early training there under a German teacher there who taught him, sort of, how to voice on the piano, really.

And if you notice, over and over in this rag, you have a little broken arpeggio inside the octave. An octave "C", and then inside would be "F", "A". (Imitates.) That's "Original Rags," right there.

And over and over in "Maple Leaf [Rag]," you have this voicing in there that's closely akin to a quartet arrangement. And I think, from singing quartet style, or playing in these moving thirds, is your beginning of arranged hillbilly music.

Do you think that's so? Come in. Tell me. [EK says he's getting some understanding of the difference between eastern and western music. Drops some names....]

Well, we left the rhythm then. All of us playing in the rhythm section of the Doughboys. Now, you have extremely competent musicians. Old [Ed?]. Marvin Montgomery - the banjoist - is a terrific, terrific guy.

We had a fine little old guitarist. As I said the guitarist was one of your key men. Zeke Campbell, called Zeke. Burrell Campbell, his nickname was Zeke. (Somebody at the door.)

Well, in summary, we were talking about the guitar, banjo, bass, and violin being predominate on the ranches before the influx of...before the effete east brought in these influences.

As soon as they came here, they took back with them what they got from the Texas ranches and the whole southwest style - which is southwest style, not southeast, you know, but southwest - permeating into the southeast from there. Coming out, though the instruments were there on the ranches. Left there by the Spaniards, and popularized by the Spaniards before the folks ever came over from the east....

Style now. I never heard about a southeast style. In southwest swing, they didn't mean swing in the form of Benny Goodman. They just meant kind of a...

Before Benny Goodman swing ever came along, the southeast swing was a kind of a romping, stomping thing with close affiliation to New Orleans and, you see, particularly down there on the coastline there, around in Houston and all, you're getting very close now to the Louisiana territory....

The guitar playing behind the two violins, and the guitar plays the bass note--a chord very much like the piano except that, yes..."C" octave, "G" octave, doing the same thing that we now have in the whole rhythm section....

Bass note, chord; another bass note, chord. "C", bass chord; "G", bass chord; playing back and forth. And from there it's easy to give the bass lines to the bass player, and the guitar would play a straight rhythm [in four?].....Playing a 4/4 beat-- 1,2,3,4; 1,2,3,4.

And the bass player plays four, - or, if he wants to, added eights - if he's competent enough to. Any kind of moving lines down here.

Then, if you add a banjo, that frees the guitarist to stop playing the regular 4/4 beat; and to play the pick-up notes, if he wants to, or to play little cadenzas there.

From the idea of the guitarist playing these little cadenzas down there in the bass comes the whole motif of this poly-rhythmic form that later developed there.

And in the hands now, you see the hillbilly band that we had.

The classic instrumentation was the two violin, amplified guitar, unamplified guitar, banjo, bass, and later piano. The piano coming in the last of all.

All of us, the piano, and the amplified guitar, and the banjoist, and the bass would have to work closely together. All that moving deep in the bass was strictly his territory. The banjoist is free to run all over the place if he wants to, you see, with all kinds of passing chords in bewildering fashion if he is competent enough to do this.

He'll be playing all over the...all kinds of passing [tones?], and chords moving swiftly up and down the scale. The piano can match him, and fill in, and add a little color in the background there. And that's what we did.

The strong influence on me was always the banjo. Kaye C. Thompson has written an article saying that the banjo came from, that was made...and this was supposed to be the only American instrument I understand. The banjo, made from broken harpsichord strings.

And then some kind of - haven't you, have you all read these, at all, by Kaye C. Thompson? - very famous articles. They're in that old Record Review, years ago.

She says that they'd get any kind of a...creating a round object there to give it a depth behind the head of any sort there, any kind of a cigar box, or later on kind of a...fashion any kind of head to add resonance, and tone.

And then string up the harpsichord strings, and that was the first banjo, coming from the slaves creating their own instruments there. But, this is south now. I don't know whether it'd be southeast or west, but just south generally. [It was a Negro instrument.] This is what, you see, the east took back with it, too....

[The banjo was a big influence on me] because you could have all this movement, and all, and you can have a slurred notes slurred into notes. In my own style...there's a wild banjo quality there, you see, and taking a whole chord from high treble "C", "E", "G", "C"; and then running the whole chord down two octaves, running all four notes with you, holding your hand in a funny kind of way to slur all four notes, ending up with the same four notes an octave lower.

Which is exactly what a banjo does, as he slides up and down the scale. And in piano, I do the same that this little old banjo did because Marvin Montgomery was a tremendous, tremendous virtuoso.

He's the one I worked with back in the Doughboy days, and I've never forgotten. He's now doing all the arranging, and writing, of songs for Paul and Paula, and is extremely well-to-do now.

But, he loves this old...style music, and we always have a ball whenever we're together. Didn't you meet him, and work with him somewhere or other? I thought you had, somehow. [No, PRC replies.] He's on that thing, playing those Tony Jackson pieces with Ed Souchon....

[By the mid-1930's], we'd come a long way from the two violins....[In 1936, the backwoods musician] is still close to the blues. The blues is always there, and he's still close to it as he could be. Syncopation is a little more sophisticated, and he hasn't quite reached that yet, but instinctively, even in the blues, he's tumbling forward to it....

The backwoods string band would be working in the same direction, and towards the same ideal that we had worked before. He would just be a few years behind us.

But he heard us on the radio, by now, you see. Communication has changed all this, and everything's moving faster. He is copying the same influences as we copied those first [liners?] then.

[Mexican and Negro influence coming together.] And you have this in Dallas, all over the place right now. Little Mexico is very close to Deep Elem. Very close....

I remember a Bob Dunn - do you know that name, a Bob Dunn at all? -very influential before Tommy somebody...Tommy in Oklahoma, the steel guitar rag fellow with Bob Wills...Tommy Duncan, that's right.

But before him, this Bob Dunn...tremendous fellow there....Before Tommy Duncan came, this Bob Dunn, and before Bob Dunn, I don't know anybody....[He was the first steel guitarist], and he was doing on steel guitar everything Marvin did on the banjo--slurring up and down, and playing wild, wavery tones.

By now, you see, the amplified guitar came in, and right after the amplified guitar, that made it freer for the steel guitar to come in.

I think [the amplified guitar preceded the steel guitar] because, as far as I know, the steel guitar, in the hillbilly bands, is always amplified; except in those old early days when they played with broken bottles...in those first days, up, and down, and the steel bar. But, that was exceptional.

As soon as amplification came in, that freed the steel guitar to take his place, along, in swing music. And right now in rock and roll, he's just really having a blast, and blasting the audience out with the volume. Turn the volume on, and that's all....

Amplification changed the whole picture....[The amplified guitar became popular], I'd say, in the [19]30's, sometime in the [19]30's....

I don't know [who was the first amplified guitar player.] There was a Dick Rheinhardt down there, who later on went to - have you heard that name a whole lot? - California, became famous. But, he was one of the first ones I used to hear.

He had been in this [Texas] Wanderers, and he was one of the first ones, before amplified guitar, to play the trombone part. And even with amplified guitar, he would turn his down not too loud, and still play a kind of a little trombone place in the bass, there, in this hillbilly band. Very much the role of the trombonist.

Terrific, terrific guy and a very fine instrumentalist....The Texas Wanderers. You know about them?

Well, most of these were the same ones who, later on, [were] the Doughboys and all. By and large, [they became the Doughboys.]

The same bass player, Burt Dodson...he was with the Cass County Kids, somehow or other, in Hollywood - that was way later - and Marvin Montgomery, that I was talking about. This Dick Rheinhardt. [They] were members.

They used to have a Fred Caceres, a Mexican violinist, kin to some other Caceres who has a famous "Jig in G." Emilio Caceres, I think...One of the early, very fine violin pieces....

[The style was] more earthy than Joe Venuti. Much more swing. It swings more. When I say swing, I do not mean the connotation of Goodman, at all. I mean the old, get in there and pitch, barrelhouse, gutbucket fashion....

Drums came after...I don't have any idea about that. That's after I left them [the Doughboys...] it must have been [19]39, or [19]40, something.

The story is...I left the Doughboys, and continue to play on with them in other groups. I couldn't play their noon program because I was going to school. We played afternoon programs, and evening programs, and still made records.

Particularly the Bill Boyd [band.] They had another pianist who took my place, but I still stayed on with them with everything else....We just played records with Bill Boyd, that's all.

We used to have radio programs with other little groups. For instance, once a week, we'd all go over to Mineral Wells [Texas], and make 21--15 minute transcriptions of...

Slap on a record, we'd play 15 minutes; slap on another one, and make 21, and then groggily going home, and work the next day. Man, that was a...you'd get about \$25 a piece for it, and thought we were really high cotton....

[As late as 1939 and 1940], there were no drums being used. I don't know anything about drums. We didn't have any drums.

We had a heavy rhythm. The rhythm was heavy, heavy, hangs over our head. And we played very lightly too. The rhythm section played very, very lightly....

An occasional reed, but no horns. Sometimes a trombone, sometimes a trombone was the first one....maybe clarinet and trombone, but not trumpets.

I know Osie Stockard [sp?] had trumpets, but that was exceptional. And by now, you're getting quite hybrid. Osie Stockard had all kinds of instruments there. But, we didn't want any more rhythm, anyway. We would want something else besides rhythm.

It's interesting though...there was one trumpet played named Holly Hanford...worked with the Wanderers. One trumpet player. Then, quite frequently with Bill Boyd, one clarinet player. A very poor one, very poor. But, no drums ever....

We had better soloists than [Bob Wills] had....We were sponsored by a flour company, and didn't have to hustle. We didn't play dances, except occasionally when we wanted to do [them], not as the Doughboys, but as side jobs there. Little groups of us would go out when we wanted to.

We didn't have to do anything for a living but play that one, fifty minute program, a day. That's all we played. We were on the staff. We were on the payroll there. We were regarded as a little bit, perhaps, above...just a person that had to get in there, and hustle a few bucks, you know.

Bob Wills had to go out, and play dances, and divide the proceeds. I don't think the staff was yet on the payroll, but they would just divide what they make from dances. I believe this is true in those days.

When Bob Wills organized the payroll, I do not know, but I think it was after [19]39....I suppose this large [Bob Wills] orchestra was because he did not have outstanding soloists. Tommy [Duncan]. He had Tommy. Tommy was the one--over, and over, and over. I don't know the name of the pianist. You see, the names didn't come out much.

Now, in the Doughboys, old Marvin and Cecil are the standards carrying this banner real high. I'm going on, trying to play, you know, and kept up.

We had names, even then. We were regarded as sort of...oh, yes, on the records it specified who was playing solos, you know. We were the first ones ever to have bylines. So and so on the piano. So and so, and all. In those old Vocalion days. Do you remember seeing those at all? Bob Wills never did have that.

But, Zeke [Merle] Campbell, a terrific guitarist, and we were just, really, better musicians. When we were playing, we didn't need drums at all or anything.

But, when you don't have those soloists, you've got to have... This is the same thing that happened later on in swing when they didn't have competent sidemen. They had to have just a big battery....I don't think Bob Wills would agree with this, but I think that all the Doughboys would....

[The Doughboys' largest group] was two violins, two guitars, banjo, bass--seven. That's all....We could take ourselves to places, and we could go against anybody.

I think, even now, we play our "Bugle Call Rag," and Benny Goodman'd play his, and we'd top him....[These songs were always] there.

I can't remember a time when "Tiger Rag," and "Bugle Call Rag," and we used to play "Clarinet Marmalade," and "Foot Warmer." We recorded "Foot Warmer," we and the Louisiana Five. The only ones to ever make records of that, as far as I know. I may be mistaken here. But...

It's not a standard by any means. But it's a [followable?] tune. Now, where we got this "Foot Warmer," I do not know, except that it's close to the blues; and all of us, always, were students of the blues, always; and knew very much about what was going on in that field.

We used to make "Jeep's Blues," Ellington's "Jeep's Blues," for Bill Boyd, and the Light Crust Doughboys both. "Gin Mill Blues." And "Little Rock Getaway." All those old pieces....

"Gin Mill Blues" was a [Prestige label] song, and on the back

of that was something called "Pussy, Pussy, Pussy," with indescribably vile lyrics. How it got by, I do not know. But this was one of our big sellers. [This was released under] the Light Crust Doughboys, yes, of course....

We played ["Hesitation Blues"], and this "Sitting on Top of the World," and Dick Rheinhardt sang it. That was one of our big numbers, though I don't remember "Hesitation Blues," earlier.

I remember they used to sing the lyrics in another song, under another name. I don't know what it was....We called that "How Long Blues," not the same "How Long, How Long," but we called the "Hesitation Blues"--"How Long Blues," in the hillbilly idiom.

[KP sings a chorus, and doesn't know if they made a record of that.] You see, the way we used to do it. This is before...We were all non-union then, and we'd make records, and get regular royalty checks for them.

These records sold way up in the 50-60,000 [range] every time, and the royalties were a tremendous amount of money. We'd split all the money up, and have quite a bit coming in....

It was [a good business.] We'd go in there, and record for two or three days; all day long at a little, old, make-shift studio in Dallas for the Vocalion [label]. The Light Crust Doughboys. And always [in] San Antonio with Eli Oberstein for Victor....

[The first record I was on] with the Doughboys. We played "Emmaline," and "Blue Guitar Stomp," were the first two that we made. We made, then, about a dozen more that same day. I remember something like "If I Don't Love You, There Ain't a Cow in Texas," was one of them.

We recorded all day, and then, all day the next day. These records would come out every other week, or so. We made them, about two a month. All of a sudden, the record would come out, and we'd take it out there, and listen to it.

[This was the first session I was on] in about 1936, I guess, or [193]7....Art Satherly, and Don Law, [were the A&R men.] I liked them very much. We were real good buddies from the very start.

I was such a kid, so green, and all, and they...I was the one, the butt of all the jokes at the first. Towards the end of it, later on, after two or three years, I became kind of the leading prankster there on everybody else who would come in. But, in the beginning, I was the butt of all them.

Yeah, Don and little Art [Still?]. I'd like to see them in New York. And in Nashville, when I'd see them, we'd always have a ball, and stop, and pleasant memories of those days. Sure, great days.

We had the same recording people who recorded, by the way, Harry James, and all. I know that. The same engineers travelled down there....Little old portable studios in the warehouse, in the Columbia warehouse, there in Dallas.

And in San Antonio, we would go all kinds of different places. That was more complicated. Eli Oberstein would come there. He was a mean man.

We didn't like Eli very much, stayed out of his way. Eli was just mean. He wasn't kind and friendly, the way that Don and Art

were. We didn't have anything to do with him. We didn't joke, have any comradery, at all.

We just didn't like him. One reason. Eli had all his dealing with Bill Boyd, and Bill Boyd...

Oh yeah, this is interesting. Bill Boyd would get a big wad of bills there for expenses, and everything else, and he would pay us off in suits because he had a radio program--15 minutes every day, and he advertised, and sometimes he would get suits from these people in payment for the advertising ad.

Then, every one of us would get a suit of clothes for recording down there, the San Antonio recording with him. Afterwards, we'd go to the radio station. Boot and his Buddies would be there, and they were recording there, and we would have a...kind of combined jam session, and program.

They'd play, and we'd play, and all, and it was kind of fun....It was very nice. We'd stay at the hotel, and all. It was pretty good. [Boyd would pay our way.] We'd drive down there in a car at night, and then record all the weekend....

Sometimes [the A&R men gave us songs,] but the songs that they'd give us were usually poor, except that they were always looking for...any little gimmick that might be a success.

They would mainly leave us to our own. As soon as we found out we could write songs, and get half a cent royalty, we started turning out, wholesale, all kind of dirty tunes. (Laughing.)

That Marvin, he was the leader. He was the one that wrote the worst of them. "We Found Her Little Pussy," was the second one that came out; too, sold a quantity. And "Dirty Dishrag Blues."

Zeke, and Marvin, and I, wrote the things afterwards. We wrote all kinds of pornographic lyrics. These things sold in those old juke boxes. People would get drunk, and start, you know, chanting the obscene words to this song there, and feed that thing with nickels.

This is true. I'm sorry that it is, but it's so. [I'll erase it if you want, PRC says.] No, leave it on.

END OF REEL II

KNOCKY PARKER
REEL III [of 3]
August 28, 1963

INTERVIEWERS: Paul R.
Crawford, Ed Kahn
NOTES: Richard B. Allen
SUMMARY: Dan Weisman
TYPING: Dan Weisman

[Begins with EK identifying the reel etc.]...

[The A&R men] never did dictate to us. We were always keenly alert to any influences coming in, and sometimes we had our own ideas. But, they never did dictate to us.

Now, Eli Oberstein and Bill Boyd, I don't know. I have no idea what went on behind the scenes there. We were just workers with Bill Boyd there. Just kind of little sidemen and never did...

But, in the Doughboys, we took our own material, and we were the leaders there. Although Bill Boyd later made "Gin Mill Blues," and he called it "Mill Blues," not to pay royalties.

We made a tune called "Beale Street Mama," you know the famous old pop piece. He called it "Broadway Mama," so they wouldn't pay any royalties.

He called "Tin Roof Blues," "Boyd's Blues," or something like that, but it was the same old out-and-out "Tin Roof [Blues.]" All kind of fake names.

But, he might have had...I don't think so, even there we had a free hand always. We had no dictation from anybody.

I know, one time, just before I joined the band they made the record of "Gloomy Sunday," and somebody wrote "Blase'" on the tape, and sent it. It never was released, I know. But, "Gloomy Sunday."

They did "Once In a While," and that never did sell very well. And old Parker Wilson...had some little old kid singer, Charles somebody, about 12 years old, had him sing "Beautiful Ohio," and that didn't sell anything worth a...on records, and we went back to our dirty pornographic lyrics which sold always.

These records had tremendous sales, really. "It Makes No Difference Now," I know was a big seller. I know that, in that instance, they were keenly alert to whenever "It Makes No Difference Now," was somehow, finally published, and then released to other musicians. And "Pistol Packin' Mama," those were both Art's tunes.

When I say Art's tunes, I mean first recorded by Art Satherly. And first recorded by them. As soon as they were released for the materials, we were the band [that] was chosen instead of Bob Wills.

Sometimes, we would have to be careful not to duplicate Bob Wills. He did "Back Home Again In Indiana." We did "Little Red Boyd in Indiana." That sort of thing, you know. We did "Avalon," and he did something else. We could never do the tunes he did, and he could never do the tunes we did....

[During this time, we considered ourselves to be hillbilly musicians.] We were painfully aware of that fact, and always have been. I know this is a strong motivation behind our wanting to excel, and wanting acceptance, the status symbol, powerfully.

[We wanted to be accepted] by the musicians generally. If any musicians...it's the same old idea, you know, of the carving contest. The same idea down in New Orleans. You want the musicians to accept you...any musicians that happened to be around. [If] some musicians come on the scene, and somehow we'd spot them out there,

and trot out our finest stuff.

It used to be that a W. Lee O'Daniels had a band about that same time. Whenever, at state fairs, or big conventions, we'd be playing together, we'd be always very careful to use only our best material when we saw them lurking in the sidelines.

We had a quality of it, too. There's no doubt about it. The Doughboys band, I think, undoubtedly was, from the standpoint of musicianship, the very best of them all in the [19]30's.

Now you tell me what others - compare these - if you would. Do you recall the records made in the [19]30's, at all, with these other bands?

We were the only ones that made a picture with Gene Autry. "Oh Suzannah." Did you know about that? [EK feels painfully ignorant about a lot of the things that were happening in western swing....]

Did you ever hear the name, Cliff Gross, a hillbilly violinist? Cliff Gross, who came from Kentucky, who had been with us earlier?

But, even while I was with the Doughboys from 1937-40, I kept hanging around them, but you have to stretch that [19]40 to around [19]42 because I would still play radio programs in the afternoon, and side dates with members of the band, and record with Boyd.

But, during that period of time, the format changed a great deal as the hillbilly musicians became swing conscious, and as that status symbol forced us into more elaborate voicing orchestration.

It started out, though, just as plain simple voicing of two violins. Even in those days in the guitar before. And then, gradually, we found our place subservient to those, too....

I remember a long time ago with Blackie Simmons [imitating] as early as Abe Lyman's "Weary Weasel." Do you remember that? And that sort of thing.

The old Casa Loma's used to have kind of swing records for Brunswick, a long time ago, and we liked them....They had all kinds of, sometimes, swing records that came out, before this, this is before the word swing now....

Even in the very early Casa Loma's, some of their records were very close to jazz. Do you have any of those here? Do you know anything about that Paul? [PRC doesn't.]

"Put on Your Old Grey Bonnet," and "Alexander's Ragtime Band," I remember especially by Casa Loma. [PRC doesn't know.] This is back in 1935, and then. [There were guys I know that were playing, PRC says.]

Some of the same ones that went into the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra....And the old [Cab] Calloway band....In a funny kind of way, [we were trying to come up to them.] Instrumentation. We had that same idea, got it from them....

This is why I wanted to go to school [to get away from the hillbilly connotation.] I'm sure why all of us were trying to break the strains....

I think we carried [the hillbilly tag] all around with us because always the violinist who played this breakdown, and old Cecil Brower played "Beaumont Rag," and all that business...Yes, we carried that always and were proud.

There's a great deal of virtuosity, really, in playing "Sailor's Hornpipe," [" Reel"], or sometimes quiet, difficult

accomplishments, really, and our violinists played superbly.

We were proud of them. They were the ones who played these little breakdowns, and we'd laugh, and go on...

[Breakdowns] had always been there [in the repertoire.]... Cliff Gross, from Bowling Green, Kentucky, had been the first one to play them. Whenever he left the band, we had to [have], kept - ASCAP came in later on - and we had to...clear everything, and clear all the breakdowns, too.

And we didn't know. He was the one who played all of them, and we didn't know those, and when he left the band, he took with him his whole catalogue, and itinerary.

But, he had left...we used to make a record every day. Every day, we would make one record that would be made in triplicate by the recording engineer for the radio stations in Arkansas.

Gross had made years of these records, you know. These accumulation of records was his whole repertoire of breakdowns, and we simply, the violinist simply...copied them all from the records that we had [of] everything....

We liked [the Grand Old Opry performers] personally. Roy Acuff [for] a while was there in Fort Worth when he wrote "Walking The Floor."

[EK and KP realize Ernest Tubb wrote it.]...I remember Ernest Tubb, [whom] we liked very much personally, and old "Walking the Floor." We kind of looked on that, we smiled. This is kind, we thought, this is kind of vaudeville, or something, really, you know.

We liked him o.k., but he's kind of a personality singer. The same way that now, I'll be tolerant, Elvis Presley, you know, is alright. Knock the poor guy, but he's something, another genre....

[Nashville people were regarded as another kind of music.] Probably so, probably so. I don't know. We were...We had by now kind of...We developed ourselves into a unique category.

We were very proud of our group. We were very, very proud of it. I know that they were very much concerned when I left. They were happy for me to be going to school because they had made it possible.

But, they were still concerned because it broke up the group. I had been with them...We had our things worked out, and all, and it wasn't quite the same...

We were the three that, primarily, crystallized that band. The banjo, the guitar, and my piano playing. We three were the ones, really, who always have, even today, clung very closely together....

[EK wants to discuss KP's experience with the border stations.] Alright. Somebody from Mineral Wells--what was that man's name?...[Some discussion of the name....]

Somebody who had old stock in Mineral Wells with Crazy Water Crystals. That's where the company first started....and there's a big spring there, and all. It started with that old spring, and then he started bottling this crazy water, and selling it.

Everyone would go to that mineral, kind of a spa there in

Mineral Wells, that's the name of the town. Mineral Wells. That's where the whole thing came from. Crazy Water.

And a little select crew, once again I say the ever-loving three. Two violinists went with us. It seems to me, we picked up another bass player, or somebody else downtown.

There was enmity in the band between some of the others...and we picked out our own stalwart faithful, and one night a week, we'd go over to Mineral Wells. We'd leave in the afternoon, and get there around 6:00 [p.m.].

He had a quantity...of big discs. This is back in [19]36-37. Big 15-minute, 16-inch discs. Slapped these discs on, and we'd start playing. Right about the time, sometimes during the playing, the guy would make out the program while we were playing.

Just slap down a number there in the key, and we're...that's it, we're off. Then, he'd point to somebody...and they'd play solos.

They had an accordion, and a piano. Also, they had an organ in this studio. For the evening programs, we'd want some lullabies, some organ. I couldn't play...I didn't have any idea how to play the footwork [on the organ]....

But they had this bass. They would bow this bass...as if it were organ music. Bowed bass, you see, and the other parts of the organ playing, and nobody would know the difference. And the violins playing dreamy, dreamy music.

Seven of the radio programs were for night. Dreamy lullabies for going to sleep. 10:00 [p.m.]. We used to hear them sometimes on XEPN, and they would tone down the music there, and put in an ad. Then, they'd bring up the music, tone it down again, and put in another ad, constantly selling all kinds of stuff....

Then, in the noonday program, we'd be a little bit freer. We didn't have any vocalists then. Everything was instrumental, so they could do this. Also, they thought if we didn't have any vocals, there'd be no identification with the group, but it was...

Anybody with any knowledge of the music could identify who it was, that banjo especially. This was Marvin Montgomery, no doubt. The tunes, the same arrangements, and everything. There'd we go....

[The name] was something they cooked up, something, I have no idea. They'd whip up something, call it something. Three different names. One for morning, one for noon. In the morning--wake-up stuff, wake up, arise, alert songs. And the three different names for the three different groups, but I don't know what they were....

[No vocals,] so they could bring in ads. And they brought them in constantly....

We used to play, also, [for] Buck Brand work clothes. A fellow would say...Buck Brand work clothes wear like leather, and then we'd play "Leather Britches," for the theme song. Buck Brand work clothes, work clothes in Fort Worth....

[I remember] those two [sponsors.] That XEPN thing, and then Buck Brand buckaroos twice a week. We used to get paid, it seems to me [\$]3.50 per radio program by the station. For those Buck Brand buckaroos, we'd get \$7 a week, coming in from that. But, in the

Depression days, it helped out.

But, you see...this gave us the status of a staff band, in a way, and this was above the other groups, the Bill Boyd even, and all those others. Roy Newman...and all this other stuff, and gave us a little standard.

Whenever we'd have to get substitutes, we'd dip into the other bands. We could always get the other band members. Where we didn't have very many who left at all, who would die, or go off to California. Dick Rheinhardt, going off to California....

[We worked for the border stations] just about one year. I don't know what happened then. I think they started repeating what we had already done. We had a backlog enough, so that was it. They could even turn those on today, and do the same thing if the man would think of it....

[I was only with XEPN], and that's just because the fellow there at Crazy Water had bought some stock...in XEPN Station and was able to, you see, just import these little...He'd hire us cheap, and we were good musicians. He could get readily there, conveniently at this recording studio....

Oquacka Flower Company, from Minnesota, one summer came down, and made 32 transcriptions for use...in Minnesota....[This refers to radio transcriptions KP made.] We were always unidentified except on records.

There was some talk with the records of doing the first dirty lyrics, but we got by with it first, and then they became dirtier, and dirtier. [We never put our name on those.]

I told you, on this one. This is interesting. This tune called, really, the title is "Pussy, Pussy, Pussy," and there was a refrain that was unmistakable as to symbolism. On the back there, we were going to put something that would be a...little bit better, high status.

We had a good arrangement of "Gin Mill Blues," so that was what we put on the back of it, the "B" side of it, "Gin Mill Blues," which we thought wouldn't sell anyway. I mean, it didn't really. Nothing could compete with that...with that "A" side of that record ever.

It did sell enormously in the juke boxes. People would see that name there, and this is enough for a nickel anytime. They should re-release that thing. (Laughs.) I think I'll write Don, and tell him about it....

My last date with Bill Boyd must have been as late as [19]42, right before I went in the Army, I think. Real late. When I left to go into the Army, that was the end of all that [western playing.] But as long as I was around in Fort Worth, and as long as they were recording, I was there....

[I came out of the army] in [19]45...We took off right for Los Angeles, and left the scene entirely, forever, never to go back again. It couldn't have been the same any time....

[After I got out of the service,] I went to Los Angeles, and started working with Zutty Singleton, Albert Nicholas, and Vic Dickenson at the little Cobra Club. I was the only white musician

in the band.

Negroes in a section of Los Angeles that was then involved in a dispute between the recently released Japanese, and the Negroes who had taken over during the internment. And the Board of Equalization had me leave the group. A little white man there. They were worried about it.

I went off to Reno, working as a soloist at some little club there. When I was in Reno, took my credentials to the University of Nevada. During Los Angeles, I had gone to school at USC while I was working there at this little club...and playing solo piano in Los Angeles.

We were striking out after the war. When I started out there in Nevada, when I took my credentials to the University of Nevada, and started teaching there, that was the big change over there....

[I joined the faculty at the University of Nevada]. While I was playing at night, at--I think it was the Derby Club downtown. That went on for about a year.

After which time, I got an assistantship [sic] at Columbia University in New York. While there, I would play pick-up jobs at Stuyvesant Casino, [Paramount], Town Hall, and little places there that had pick-up jazz bands, Friday nights.

By that time, you see, the things had changed, and I had left the hillbilly bands actually. But I always call...when I go back home....

These good [hillbilly musicians] that I'm talking about could fit in anywhere, do anything. The rest of them couldn't do anything in the first place.

But, you often find that in jazz musicians. Somebody who had no business being there. You know, get lost Bud.

But normally, yes, the very best of the hillbilly musicians, and the best of the jazz musicians would have no trouble at all. [They] would sit right down there, and go right on with no question, and nothing to get them any separation at all, not the slightest.

I see Paul nods his head at this. He concurs in some of this...Always, I've liked it whenever you've nodded your head in what I'm saying. This is so, Paul...This is true.

The good hillbilly musicians fit easily into any good ensemble anywhere. Swing, jazz - either one - rag. The same in reverse also.

This is interesting too. In your late period there of this Bob Wills. So often, he would have swing musicians come into his group, and if they were good swing musicians, they'd fit well into it.

That's when you're getting into these late days after I left the Doughboys, and I don't know much about this. But I do know I kept hearing about names.

Some trumpet player who died...Benny Strickler is one of them. And speak about this please...[PRC says he was a trumpet player from Oklahoma. Some discussion ensues...BS subbed with Lu Watters and made some records with Bob Wills....]

Yes. Lots of records with Bob Wills that fit in ideally. That's the theory that I was talking about. A good musician can do

anything, and that's it....

Now, this Cecil Brower that we're talking about. The one who was the leading hillbilly violinist right now in Nashville making more records now than anybody in the area of hillbilly music is. Make no mistake about it. A classical violinist, no doubt about it.

He was the one. He, and Kenneth [Mirson], and Marvin, studying out at TCU who told the people about me, and had me go out there.

The first day I went out there, I was scared to death. The teacher had me come out there, and play "The Man I Love." I was trying to play it like I imagined it was written.

The teacher saw, at once, what was going on. [He] stopped me, and had me play other things, and arranged to give me free lessons in the afternoon. That's how I broke away into the scholastic life....

[My degree is in English.] I wrote my dissertation, though, on music. American studies is what it amounts to....

[The dissertation topic was] sociological influences in the development of jazz, taking periods separately--ragtime, jazz, swing, and bebop as four entirely different units emerging from the backgrounds of the times, economic, and social.

But, hillbilly music permeates, and goes on through all because it's a close...this is close to folklore, and the folklore is close to hillbilly there, and you get those two...

Now, this is why I keep talking about blues instead of jazz, or swing, or anything else. Blues is the format that links them all together. Isn't that right now? [Yeah, PRC says.] All of them.

Any time...even when these awful boppers, when they start playing blues, instinctively, sometimes, if they're good enough, they all begin to get back to the old traditional form, or to the roots, if they're good enough. They'll go on back to the roots, there.

Sometimes I think, with Errol Garner, you get some of this, sometimes. He starts playing pretty good when he starts playing blues, just instinctively because it's there....

Any time you hear, even, any time minstrel, circus bands, and all, the old roots of the blues will tie them on with the whole American theme. Comment.

Now, you didn't say anything about minstrel bands, or circus bands, and I'm not sure they have anything to do with hillbilly music, at all. But certainly, that western influence does. That's very important here. The western influence there.

I think it comes up from Mexico, south, and spreading out there through Texas, by and large. Through Texas, comes more than even the New Orleans, well, yes...

I started to say more than the New Orleans people would identify, but that's not true. They, all of them; [Bill] Russell, and Dick [Allen], Paul [Crawford], and all these people have a great deal, oh yes, to say about Texas influences coming into New Orleans, and all. I hear that a whole lot.

Of course, New Orleans influences going that way too. Yes, indeed...But, that's kind of a little grouping there. I mean this

is close to home, you know. Houston's not too far away from Louisiana....Shreveport and Lake Charles comes in here. This whole Gulf of Mexico section there.

Comment. [PRC says there has always been a hotbed of jazz in various sections of Texas like Dallas, San Antonio, Galveston....] The New Orleans people say that though, don't they? [They were always playing out that way too, PRC notes.] Yes, indeed.

That little clarinet player. [(Leon) Roppolo, PRC says. And they're still doing it.] Well, [Boyd] Raeburn, certainly, yeah. I think goes over there sometime.

I came up here one summer, and worked with that other clarinetist, after, who took Roppolo's place...One summer here, right after I left the Doughboys when I was going to school, took off one summer, and came here at the Hush Puppy. The one who was with the New Orleans Rhythm Kings...Sid Arodin, but that's beside the point.

But we were closer...we, and the Doughboys, and New Orleans jazz were closer than you'd realize....

[I never went back to hillbilly music because] I had left that territory. Mine had been this little select crew down there anyway, always, and it just seemed expedient. That's the next place you go. They were the ones who were closer to me.

I still play a stronger...there's a strong West Texas, harder, harsh attack in my playing that makes it, I think, singular. Comment on that...free-wheeling, daredevil type that comes with the Doughboys. I think this is always with me.

I never was with any of the hillbilly musicians anymore. [It was just a matter of where I happened to be.]

[Our tape is running out, EK says.] That's about all I have anyway. [Let's have a final close-off, EK continues...] Well is there anything there that you want? [About an hour and a half, EK answers.] Is there anything there that you really want? [Yeah, EK says.]

Ed, a last minute summary, now. One of the differences that makes what the music I been talking about, the Doughboys and the Fort Worth [area] different from the eastern, and all others, is the very close kinship with the Negro blues from Dallas.

The Negro blues in Dallas, more even than New Orleans, was a focal point there. If you look back, even the "Dallas Blues," is the first blues. Leadbelly, and Blind Lemon, and all, coming from there is one of the influences that makes us different from them because we're closer than that.

We're closer to that even than we are to jazz which gives us identity, and a little bit of...Some of the precious treasures from that comes through our closeness to the blues, always the old Doughboys there, and because we were somewhat close also to the Gulf of Mexico, and New Orleans. That gives us a difference from the other people, and, I think, that makes us a little bit better, and I treasure this very much.

[That's great. We may as well cut it, EK says.] That's all. The whole idea there. You can think of so much coming from Texas--

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the first blues, and the first ragtime, and all. You know, Texas is the birthplace of jazz. (Laughing.) In a different way, separate from New Orleans.

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