

Thomas Albert was born in Algiers, Louisiana on the 23rd day of
September, 1877. Tom's first instrument was the guitar. He never
took any lessons on it; he just picked it up. He took lessons on the
violin from the old professor at the French Opera; Jimmy Palao, who
died, would take lessons and then Tom would go to Jimmy, who would
give him the same lesson. Before Tom took up violin, he took lessons
for about six months to learn divisions--i. e., counting time [and
solfeggio?]. He would count the time out with his hands like an
orchestra conductor. Today they have 1, 2 and 3, but Tom didn't
learn like that. The method Tom used, the ABC Book, which cost \$1,
had arrows in it. Later when Tom learned how to count well^w his hands,
he started using his foot. When he started on the cornet, he knew
the music, so he just had to buy the method. He had to learn the
fingering; he needed to get the tone for A, B, etc. He started on
the guitar when he was about 17 years old. The guitar was too slow
for him, so he went and got the violin. Then he lead a band for about
six or seven years. Then the violin got a little too slow [no job?],
so he got the cornet. When he played the guitar, he was just playing
for himself. He played violin after he had learned the rudiments of
music for about a year; Jimmy, his teacher, showed him the fingering.
Then Tom started buying music from Leo Feist publishers in New York.
He joined the club where they would send two copies of the orchestrations
every month. They don't do that anymore.

The first band Tom played in was his own, Tom Albert's Band.
Ralph Collins had a card he got from from "Fess" [Manuel Manetta],
which has a picture of a short cornet and says "Kid Albert's Jazz
Band". That was the kind of cornet Tom was playing. Tom's manager
was living at 2610-8th Street [see later, this reel, and check Soard's],
uptown number [telephone exchange?]. Tom bought his first cornet at

a music store on Chartres Street between St. Louis and Conti [or between St. Louis and Toulouse?]. There was an old man there selling all kinds of music--varieties, lancers, etc. The cornet had a snake on it. That was before the first World War. Tom had his cornet when he played with Fess, in the first band that Fess was in, and they would take turns on the violin and cornet when they would get tired. The first time Tom carried Fess down into the country on a cane farm, he carried him down in a cane cart; it had three mules on it. They had just finished grinding, and they were giving a little dance for the people. Fess and Peter Bocage were both there. Fess's uncle, "Norm" Manetta was about the best cornet player in the city. Tom bought Norm's cornet when he died; it was a B flat cornet. At one time Norm played E flat cornet; he played it when he was leading the band.

Manetta told WR last night about going down to the cane farm. He said they had a drink served from big bottles. Tom says it was called vin canne [called cane skimmings in Georgia--RBA]. You grind the cane--it is hot, and you put a little whiskey in the hot juice [No whiskey needed in Georgia--RBA]. Fess told WR that that was about 1904. Fess was on his first job then, playing for the plantation dance. Fess, Peter and Tom all played the violin. Tom was using four or five men on a job.

In those times they had marches; you had a little book which cost two bits [25 cents]. The book would have about twelve pieces in it: mazurkas, two steps, marches--split time and six-eight--and quadrilles. Tom played quadrilles also. Tom got some books of varieties. The varieties is a dance something like a schottische, which was in the book also. The band had the guitar, but it didn't have drums. In the band they had violin, cornet, clarinet and key [valve] trombone.

It was after this that they started using the slide trombone. Albert Gabriel used to play clarinet, Eddie Vinson played trombone, Tom played cornet, "Nootzie" Ruben [sp?] played bass and "Skeeter" played guitar. That was Tom's band.

Tom was in his thirties when he moved across the river. He was working for the S[outhern] P[acific] then. He worked on the steam ships to bring freight from New York; he would load and unload the freighters. When he moved over to this side [New Orleans] of the river he lived on Burgundy Street. After he got here, he got with a new gang, and they named the band Kid Albert's Band. Tom was the leader of it. The manager lived on 8th Street, and Tom lived at 512 Dauphine Street. When he first moved over here he lived on Burgundy Street and St. Louis. Then he moved to the Dauphine address, where he stayed for years, until 35 or 40 years ago, when he bought the place he has now. Tom's boy is 37 now; he was born in the latter house.

Tom used to trap. He trapped for 16 years on Delacroix [Island] for muskrat, coon and mink, for their furs. He used to go down there to play music for the "Spanish men"; he had a good band then. To get there, they would catch the train here at St. Claude Street at 8 o'clock, and about 10 o'clock they would be at Reggio. There were two oxen there, and a cart; the road was so bad that was the only way you could make it. They would leave there about half past 10, and it would be 6 o'clock in the evening before they would get there. They had a four piece band--guitar, bass, cornet and trombone. Johnny Gould would hire Tom to go down there with him sometimes. He had four pieces, too. He used violin, cornet, guitar and bass. Mitchell [first name?] was the guitar player [with Gould or Albert?]. The people at Delacroix would give the band fish, ducks, coons and turtles (called coweins by Tom). They came back with a load, but also they were getting \$5 a

night. Sometimes they would stay two or three nights with them. They played the same kind of music for the Spaniards as for others.

(They are looking at a business card.) WR places the date [of the card?] before 1922--sometime between 1907 and 1922. On it are the names of Joe Lee, assistant manager, and Jules Barnes, manager. Barnes was Tom's trombone player. Tom was playing then around Thibodaux, or around Morgan City. Barnes left Tom in Alexandria, after working with him for about five years. That was after the first World War. They had been playing in Thibodaux, where Tom had a truck which carried six men. The truck was getting old, and a fellow who was selling cars told Tom he would get him a new car. Tom had a good name; he tried to do right. Everytime he went to a place once he was invited back several times. When Tom went to play on a Sunday night, on Monday he was given a new Ford. They didn't have to pay a nickel. It was a brand-new Model T Ford. The [people in Thibodaux?] were paying Tom \$40 to go and come. Tom put the car in Jules Barnes' name and told him that when they finished paying for it [not a gift?], Tom would allow Barnes two trips where the money would be for him. After it was paid for Jules wanted it all the time, and that is where they had a falling out. Tom fired him, but Jules got the car because it was in his name. Tom would have had trouble anyway if he had put the car in the band's name, because he had some contrary players in the band. He had John Handy, clarinetist. Tom was the one who brought Handy from Pass Christian. Handy was playing with his own father; Tom was playing on the lake at West End with a trombonist, Polk. Polk asked him if he had ever been across the lake. Tom hadn't, and when Polk asked him if he would like to go, he said yes. They met at the L. & N. station at 7 o'clock and they caught the train and went to the home of Handy's father. Tom played with them that night, and

with Polk. Tom went back a couple of times. He felt Handy was too good to be there by himself, and made arrangements for Handy to come to town, and Handy stayed with him for about four years. Handy played B flat clarinet; he could talk through a clarinet. Then he picked up the saxophone. Handy lived with Tom at 410 Burgundy Street [Check Soard's]. Handy's father told Tom to put Handy in his charge; Handy was a young boy; other bands would try to steal Handy from Tom. On Sundays they would meet three or four bands on the street advertising. The best band would try to win--to see who was the best band. When Handy's father would have a dance across the lake, they would go over and play with him.

There was a band in Bay St. Louis and one in Pass Christian. They would leave Pass Christian and go to play in Gulfport, Biloxi, Ocean Springs and Pascagoula, and then they would come back. The places [above] didn't have any bands then. Tom was playing for white and colored, for "the priest" and all of them. There was a band in Bay St. Louis. "Pascagoula, that is Moss Point" had a band, but it was a brass band rather than a string band [orchestra]. Tom was always on the go; he didn't know a holiday; he didn't stay home from work for fifteen or twenty years. He played parades here during Carnival; he played with [Henry] Allen [Sr.].

END OF REEL I

September 25, 1959

Jules Barnes was the trombone player and [Joe] Lee was the drummer [in Albert's band--see Reel I, p. 4]. The card [being passed around] says Kid Albert's Jazz Band. Tom says that they always used the word jazz. [Compare Bunk Johnson AM LP 6(?) and others]. In the real old days they called it jazz and ragtime; even when Tom was playing with Fess [Manetta] they called it jazz. They didn't have any drums or slide trombones in the old days. There wasn't any real difference between the ragtime bands and the jazz bands; they were the same thing. Tom heard [the term] jazz used mostly, though.

Tom played with Henry Allen, [Sr.]'s brass band and the Eureka Brass Band. The Eureka was playing at the same time when Tom was playing with Henry Allen. When one of the men in the Eureka died, Tom went to rehearse with them and he played first trumpet. At that time the Eureka had John Casimir, clarinet; Jimmy [Muke?] on [bass?] drum; a tuba player who died returning from a funeral across the river (not Eddie Jackson); [Willie] Cornish on trombone. [Albert] Warner replaced a trombone player who played with Cornish who had died. Joseph "Red" Clark replaced Cornish on trombone when Cornish died.

Willie [Wilson], the leader died and then Johnny Wilson, his brother, the baritone horn player died afterwards. Then Cornish died. The alto player, whose name was Buddy, died too; he used to work at Joy's, the big clothing place on Canal Street. There wasn't a saxophone player in the band then. The first sax player was a barber, from uptown.

Besides Tom, the other cornetists with Henry Allen were [Andrew] Kimball sometimes, John Pendleton sometimes and George Hooker sometimes [check instruments]. On trombone were Buddy Johnson and Eddie Vinson (The latter had learned with Tom.). Eddie started playing the trombone with the Excelsior Band. Tom never did play with the Excelsior Band.

Joe Lizard [sp?] was the leader of the Excelsior [Compare Tom Albert, Reel ?]. The Excelsior Band used to wear green suits. Henry Allen's band wore white pants and blue pants [sic]. They had a blue blouse and white [pants?]. For funerals they had a black shirt and blue pants. For a parade they had blue blouses and white pants. They wore a cap. In those days the pay was \$3 for funeral; the most you could get for a parade was \$5. When they played for the Eleonore [sp?] [Carnival] Club, they got \$10 a man. That was for all day long, from 6 [AM] until 6 [PM]. They would go real early in the morning and take them around to pick up the gang, and then they would start out. That was some sixty-odd blocks [each way]--all the way up to the other side of Audubon Park. Tom played for four seasons with them. After it was over, they would take the truck and go down to the [Delacroix] Island or to Shell Beach or to the mouth of the river. Also they would go to Berwood [sp?]. Sometimes they would catch the train in Algiers for Grand Isle. Before they broke up [discontinued?] the train, they used to have coaches you could take to go to Buras, [La.]. After they went to Buras, they would catch a mail boat to [?]. They would play on the wharf at Pilottown as the ships, coming from the Gulf, passed by.

On long parades, when the band started getting tired, they would pick up an easy piece to play. They would play the hard marches at the beginning. Fess told WR. that they used to play "If You Don't Shake, You Don't Get No Cake." That was one of their favorite numbers. Tom hums a little of. [Compare Jelly Roll Morton, "Mama's Got A Baby", Gen 1710 and Riverside LP ?]. They just picked that tune up from some other band. They used to call Tom a "parlor" musician, because he wasn't a head man so much. If he could see the music, he could play it about two or three times so he could get the chorus, and then

he would have it. He couldn't get the verse. Tom preferred to play by music. When they had to read they would come to Tom, everyone of them, to learn. They would come to Tom: Sam Morgan, Kid Rena, Chris Kelly, Buddy Petit, but they would still call him a "parlor musicianer". They would get the tunes so fast [Apparently many new tunes became popular at one time--RBA] that they couldn't think of them so they would go to Tom to learn. Some of them knew the music but didn't know the divisions. The division is the principal part.

Johnny Lindsay, trombone, who was playing with [John] Robichaux at the Lyric Theater, took two or three lessons from Tom at 512 Dauphine. Lindsay also used to play bass. WR heard him on bass. Lindsay could play but he wasn't sure of himself. He and Tom played several pieces together. Tom had a new piece from Leo Feist, a waltz probably in three flats. They were using the long shank then---they had two shanks then. The long shank put the instrument in the key of A, or you could take that off and put on the other shank and you would be in the key of B [flat]. They played and came out even--Lindsay could play, but he just wasn't sure of himself. Tom told him he could go, and he hasn't seen him since; that was about 35 years ago. WR says that Lindsay died about 8 years ago, in Chicago. Lindsay's brother, Herbert, and his father did not read music. Tom played with them also. The old man, playing guitar, had a band with Johnny on bass, Herbert Lindsay on violin and a little fellow named Jack "Pie Eater" [Williams] on cornet; they didn't have a clarinet. The violin was the lead instrument. Tom took Herbert's place. Sam Morgan was playing in a hall across the river--Jack "Pie Eater" got sick and Sam went over there in his place. When Jack got better they fired him. That is why he made the band up [as?] Sam Morgan's Band. Tom was the first one who started them to crossing the lake. Sometimes Tom would

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take two trumpets to help him out, as he couldn't get a clarinet player over there. At Mobile, Morgan's band was nice then. Tom used to play everywhere--all around Morgan City to Lafayette, Beaumont. They would have a hotel in Beaumont where they would play that night, and then they would take a train to Port Arthur, for 35 cents. They would play the next night in Port Arthur; then they would come back to Beaumont and play that night.

Buddy Bolden's band was about the best band when Tom was growing up. Buddy's band was a ragtime [i.e., jazz] band, with the blues and everything. He was loud; you could hear him at 4 o'clock in the morning across the river in Algiers. He played like he didn't care; he could hit the notes, but Tom never saw him read a piece of music. One time Tom went to see him play at the Odd Fellows Hall. With Bolden there were [Willie] Cornish and Bob Lyons. That was the first time Tom^e had been close to them when they were playing. After that he (Bolden) went crazy. Buddy used to play similar things to what Tom's band played, [such as] "If You Don't Shake, You Don't Get No Cake". Bands would "catch" the "ratty" tunes from one another. To start a band the leader would stomp the ground one time to tell the members to get ready; then the leader would stomp three times and start playing where the fourth [beat] would come. To stop the band the leader would stomp once at the beginning of the last chorus. All the bands would do that, including Bolden's. The leader would do that when he was sitting down. He [Buddy] would never bother with [written] music--routine [fake] all the time. Buddy played mostly all blues. Sometimes about 12 o'clock they would play a schottische, in some halls. For the whites they would play lancers, which were something like the quadrilles. After the schottische sometimes they would play varieties, which is a long thing made up of waltzes and all kind of time [signatures].

Tom played lots of blues in his band, too. He would get his music from Leo Feist so that he would have new numbers which they would hear and start playing. Tom was the first who played with Charlie Love [?] when the Navy first came here, in the first building they had a dance for the soldiers [sailors?] where they played that night.

In Algiers, Tom lived on Soxes Lane; the whole area belongs to the Navy now. The Lane was about 3 miles long. They didn't have any halls there. The halls were all in Algiers. They would give picnics under the oak trees--both white and colored--on Sunday night. Sometimes there would be a brass band for the picnics. Norm Manetta, Dorsey, a big fellow had a big band, Peter Bocage's father was playing guitar with Dorsey's band. There was a band which would come to [Soxes] Lane and [?]. They had a big platform for the band for the Sunday picnic. The band started playing about 4 o'clock and would play until 12. Fess and Dorsey were young men then, but they had a fine band; they were all good musicians. They used to play nothing but [written] music--two cornets, trombone, clarinet, violin. All the fellows were Creole and knew music. Sometimes the band had ten pieces. They had drums [by that time?]. They used the guitar; there was not a banjo. [Louis?] Cottrell was the "onliest" one who started to using the banjo. "They found that it was much louder; taken the head off...."

END OF REEL II

September 25, 1959

The Elmira Pleasure Ground was in Algiers. It had a little fence around it, and was behind the S[outhern] P[acific] Railroad station. Tom was back there peeking through the fence, listening to the band, and a policeman hit him on his back end. The people were dancing to the band. Everywhere Tom heard a band he would try to go and hear the music.

Once you learn the scales and have an ear for the music, you can learn any type of instrument. No one taught Tom the cornet. He just bought the cornet and picked it up, once he learned the scale.

Tom went to the rehearsal with the Eureka Brass Band. The fellows were having trouble with the first trumpet. Tom liked it at first--the solo trumpet is so high that you have to make G and A, etc. above the staff. For first trumpet, you have to stay right in the staff, but it is a different tone; Tom was playing under the other fellow. Playing first means you are playing the melody.

The bands learned the high notes from Louis Armstrong; he brought that in. They used to make G above the staff; for example, in a brass band when you are "going out" [i.e., finishing a tune], you would make high C.

Tom wasn't born as far down the river as the Cut Off [La.]. There were dances down there; a hall was located in the back of the place [bar rooms]. Tom used to play down there. Coming this way from the Cut Off there was Pickles [sp?] Garden, which was a big pavillion. To get there you would take the stern-wheeler boat from Canal Street about 7 o'clock and you would arrive about 9 or 10 o'clock at the pavillion. That was the only amusement place there was in that time. The boat was like an excursion--just like taking the L. & N. Railroad at 7 in the morning, an extra train with ten coaches, to go out to Bay St. Louis, Pass Christian. That was in the summer time.

Jimmie Noone came from down around the "Cut Off"; he was born and raised down there. Tom knew Jimmie when he was a little boy. Jimmie had a clarinet and was a "head" player. Tom played once with them; Jimmie was learning just like Tom was then. After Jimmie went away, Tom never saw him again. Jimmie went to Chicago. Pill [Coycault], a cripple fellow, was from down there; he used to play clarinet. He was on this side of the river, around Violet, Louisiana.

Ralph Collins heard that Jimmie [Noone] was a relative of Freddy Keppard. WR asks if Keppard married Jimmie's sister. Tom doesn't know about this relationship.

When Freddy Keppard and Eddie [Vinson] left to go to Chicago, he left from Tom's room at his house. Tom was rooming with Eddie. Tom was single then. Freddy was playing every night in the District and would come there to sleep--in Soxes Lane across the river. That is where Eddie, the trombone player, was living with Tom across the river. Jimmy Palao "Spriggs" taught Tom how to play [violin]. Jimmy Palao went to Chicago and sent for Freddy, who in turn sent for Eddie. George Baquet also went away "in them times," too. Joe Oliver, cornet, left at that time also. All of them left a couple of years apart. ✓
Joe was leader of the Onward Brass Band. Joe was a good reader. Freddy Keppard played by head when he was here; he learned [how to read] when he played up there. Tom was the only "parlor man". You could tell who was playing by hearing them, rather than just by seeing them; they all seemed to have their own tone. For example, when you hear Louis Armstrong you know who it is. Arnold Metoyer played like him [?], but he is dead now. Charlie Love played just like Arnold Metoyer; Love has his tone. Those are the only two men that Tom hears that are together [similar or the same?]. Tom used to play with him [Metoyer?], too. Manuel Perez was loud and rough, but he could read. Perez used

to have the Golden Rule Band together with the clarinet player, [Alphonse] Picou, who used to play in the District.

Tom used to know Frankie Duson; he played ragtime [i.e. by ear], and he could play; he had curly hair. He played key [valve] before he got the slide trombone. He was a rough fellow. He had Frankie Duson's band, his own band, but he used to play with most of the fellows.

In Algiers there were halls such as the Odd Fellows Hall, [Ladies of] Hopes Hall on Homer and Verret [streets]. Tom thinks the Odd Fellows Hall, near Newton [Street], burned down. There was also the Eagle Eye Hall, which was a little place over the bar room. It was torn down to build the bridge. Tom played all those places. Manuel "Fess" [Manetta] tells about a district in Algiers around Brooklyn Street near the levee, where the Ping Pong was located. Every Saturday night the people would go down there; it was a bar room. It was a sort of little red light district. There was a fellow there playing piano all night. Gussie Neal [or O'Neill], a big, stout dark fellow who is dead now, was a pretty good piano man--routine [i.e., by ear]. Neal played at the Ping Pong. Routine means you made it up, played by ear. Whenever you played slow, that was called the Slow Drag. The one-step and the two-step are about the same thing; it depended on the way you danced; it would be in the same tempo. Waltzes were more popular with old timers.

Tom never worked in the District when it was here on Basin Street and Iberville; he only worked for Billy Phillips when Jimmy "Spriggs" [Palao] was playing and would get sick. Then Tom would go and play on violin. Jimmy Palao was raised by his grandmother, Mrs. Spriggs, and he also was called Spriggs, but Palao was his real name. Tom used to go to Jimmy's grandmother's to get his lessons. Jimmy didn't have any brothers or sisters who played music. Jimmy had a son, Joe

Palao, who plays trumpet, and who has worked for Blandin's Funeral Home ever since he was a boy; he lives on St. Peter in the middle of the block [900 block?].

The bands in the District were composed of three or four pieces, including cornet. Sometimes Tom would go on the excursion boat in someone's place when they got sick.

Tom played several times on teh boat, SS Capitol, with [Oscar "Papa"] Celestin. Joe Howard and Peter Bocage also played on the boat then, with Fate Marable, but it wasn't Fate's band that Tom played with. Celestin used to sing "Marie Laveau". Celestin played first cornet and Tom played second. Tom knew how to play either first or second.

Tom knew Bunk Johnson when he [Bunk] lived up at the corner, upstairs, on that [?] side of the bar room on Burgundy. WR took a picture of the house. Bunk used to drive a cotton float with mules. He was blowing and got famous there then, and got his own band after he became good. He was considered pretty good in those days. He was a normal [range] trumpet player. Louis Armstrong was the one to introduce high notes. Someone told WR that Kid Rena used to play high note, but he was a younger man, too. Rena wasn't much of a reader. They all played in their head, routine. Joe Johnson played nice; he played with different bands uptown. There was a gang uptown and another gang downtown. Jack Carey's band was uptown. The music was the same uptown and downtown; they played the same way.

John Pendleton was a (trombone player rather than cornet, Tom thinks) cornet player, too; he was a reading musician. Pendleton used to play with [John] Robichaux sometimes.

Edward Clem had one eye and was a nice player, too. He was a routine player. Buddy Bolden was ratty and put in his own ideas, but Clem read some too, Tom thinks. Clem was a pretty good cornet player.

Ned was a big, brown-skin fellow, but Tom has sort of "misplaced" him. WR thinks Ned played cornet, perhaps with the Eagle Band.

The old Perseverance Hall in Algiers moved to Home Street. There is also a Perserverance Hall here which [is owned by?] a society made up of French people [i.e., Creoles of color].

One night Tom and Fess Manetta of Mooney [Martin] were talking to WR about a girl named Rose who used to shake like jelly on a plate. Tom doesn't remember her. Ralph Collins asks about the girls who used to kick for hams. Tom explains that the girls would kick to see who could kick the highest, and the one who kicked the highest would be given a ham.

Joe Lizard ^{LAZARD?} [sp?] was the leader of the Algiers Pacific Band.
[Compare with Tom Albert, reel II, p. 2]

Norm Manetta used to lead the Onward Brass Band. Old man [George] Moret and Norm Manetta were in that together. They both played cornet. The Onward was about the best band they had.

Charlie Devore, the young sailor [from Minneapolis, Minnesota], got the mute [a Conn pear-shaped metal mute, such as used also by King Oliver] that Tom had used. The fellows all used mutes; most of them used derbys or plug hats as far back as Tom can remember. The rubber plunger was later. It is necessary to blow harder when you use a mute, and you have to blow with "slight"--that is, get the feel of it.

END OF REEL III

September 25, 1959

TOM ALBERT
Reel I [of 4]--Summary--Retype
May 7, 1962

1

Others present: Richard B. Allen, Marjorie T. Zander.

Thomas Albert's home is at 635 Burgundy. Leonard "Loochie" Albert is Tom's oldest son. He goes by the name of Albert Johnson. After the depression, he was Tom's trombone player for four or five years when Jules Barnes left. Barnes played with Tom when they would go to Morgan City, Jeanerette and Lafayette. Tom was about 16 years old when Loochie was born. Loochie is about 63 now. He hasn't played music for a while; he belongs to the church now. Loochie's son played trombone on the boat with somebody called "Red" who played cornet (not "Red" Allen). It was probably "Red" Rousseau, who is about 30 and came after "Red" Allen. Mr. Allen used to see Rousseau play in parades. He played bebop.

Mr. Allen asks Tom about why he fired Jules Barnes. Tom says he was playing in Thibodaux, La. His boss offered to loan him his new Model "T" Ford. After they finished playing, they brought the car home. Tom told Barnes to make two trips with the car and get some tires and "get straight," one trip for him and one trip for Albert. After he made the two trips, [unintelligible]. That's why Tom fired him. Barnes went on to Alexandria [La.] where he died. Tom saw him there when he was playing a parade with the Eureka [Brass Band]. They left New Orleans about 12:00 on the I[llinois] C[entral] R[ailroad] and got into Alexandria about 6:00 A.M. They were playing for the Odd

TOM ALBERT
Reel I [of 4] -- Summary -- Retype
May 7, 1962

2

Fellows. Tom traveled all around with the Eureka--Bay St. Louis [Miss.], Lafayette, [La.]. Loochie also played with the Eureka at the same time as Tom did. Then they got "Red [Clark, tb], [Willie] Cornish [tb.] who died, and then [Albert] Warmer [tb.], who was there when Tom left. "Red" might have taken Cornish's place. Someone named Young played trombone too. "Red" started playing tuba when [?] Verret died. Loochie wasn't a regular member. John Casimir was on [Eb] clarinet, Jimmy "The Hog" Mukes was on drums, [Christopher] "Black Happy" [Goldston] played snare drums. Remus "[Brown] Happy" Matthews played with the Eureka before Tom. Buddy [?] played alto; Willie Wilson, the leader, Al[cide] Landry, and Tom played trumpet. Johnny Wilson, Willie's brother, played baritone. Tom wasn't in the band with Man Creole Cato or Willie Parker. They used to rehearse the band on Treme, between St. Ann and Dumaine streets. Willie Parker was the one who made the band up, there on Treme, and then they got rid of him. Tom went to a rehearsal and stayed with them until he quit. This was after the depression. The last place Tom played was at the shrimp factory at St. Bernard [Avenue or Parish?]. Casimir, Loochie, and "R. T." on bass were playing with him then. Tom decided he was too old to play anymore after that. He's going on 85 now. [Therefore Loochie is about 68 years old.]

TOM ALBERT
Reel I [of 4]--Summary--Retype
May 7, 1962

3

Tom says he was the first one to take Sam Morgan to Bay St. Louis and Pass Christian. Sometimes, when Tom finished playing with some band on the lake, he would catch a train and go to Pass Christian and play with Johnny Handy's father, [John Handy, Sr.]. They played around Gulf Port, Biloxi, Moss Point--everywhere.

One of the first ragtime bands Tom played with was Johnny Gould's, who played violin, [Henry] Ford on bass, Albert Mitchell on guitar, and "Big Eye" Louis [Nelson] on clarinet. "Bossy" Ford also played violin with them for a while. [Check "La Nouvelle Orleans" p. 133, and Emile Barnes Reel ?] They used to play at Delacroix Island and all around there. They were older than Buddy Bolden. Tom remembers Buddy Bolden, [Willie] Cornish, Bob Lyons who played bass, a "brockly-faced" man [Brock Mumford] who played guitar [?]. Tom also helped out [when they started] with [Kid] Howard, Emile [Barnes] and Israel Gorman, who played clarinet. Later, Tom says he doesn't remember Brock Mumford, but does know Lorenzo Staulz, who used to play with Jack Carey. He thinks [Louis] Cottrell [Sr.] (probably not Cottrell--RBA) ^[Why? RBA, Ford, 1962] played with Buddy Bolden for awhile. Bolden never used a violin, but he had a clarinet. Tom thinks old man Tio might have played clarinet and certainly Wade Whaley played clarinet for Bolden. Wade played with Frankie Duson[[trombone], who also played with Bolden, as did Yank Johnson. Yank played trombone

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with Tom's band too. Yank's brother, Buddy Johnson, played trombone with the Onward [Brass Band].

Tom helped out Sam Morgan's band and Chris Kelly's band. Sam never played with Tom, but his brother, Isaiah Morgan, did when Tom needed a second cornet with Johnny Handy [Sr.?] at Pass Christian. Isaiah got famous and played around Mobile and went on to the top. Tom played a couple of jobs with ["Papa"] Celestin too. A man named Polk played trombone with the Eureka. The first time Tom went across the lake, someone else named Polk, a trombone player, asked him if he wanted to play across the lake and he said he would. [Cf. John Handy (Jr.), Reel ?] He was playing with Handy's father. Sometimes, Tom would shay over there two or three days. Tom thought Johnny Handy [Jr.] was too good to stay over there so he brought him back over here and they lived together. Johnny Handy played a good clarinet before he started on saxophone. Johnny's father played guitar and his brother, Sylvester Handy, plays bass. Tom used Albert Gabriel from Algiers on clarinet, and later Israel [Gorman], before Johnny Handy came. Joe Lizard [sp?] had a Tuxedo Brass Band in Algiers.

End of Reel I

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Also present: Richard B. Allen, Marjorie T. Zander.

Johnny Gould had the first string "ragtime" [i.e., jazz] band Tom ever heard. Then came the Tuxedo [band], Manuel Perez, Norm[an] Manetta, who was Manuel Manetta's uncle. Tom bought Norm's horn when he died. That was the first horn he ever had. At first, Tom played guitar, but it was too slow, so he bought a violin. He took lessons with Jimmy Palao ("Spriggs"), who took lessons [simultaneously] from some professor of the pit orchestra at the Old French Opera House. When the violin got too slow, i.e., business was slow, Tom picked up the cornet by himself. Tom had just picked up guitar playing around in the streets. He started playing in bands with the violin and led bands on violin. Nobody gave him lessons on the cornet; he knew the music and just had to get the scales and the tone. He used to listen to Albert Mitchell to tune the guitar.

When he played guitar, he used his fingers to pick. Some people pick with one finger but Tom used all of them. He could second with his thumb.

Miss Zander asks what kind of music people played in those days. Tom says any thing you'd hear, "ragtime." They called written music "parlor" music. The people did not want written music, but he could only read. When everyone started to read, they ran to Tom to learn the division, half notes, whole notes, the scale, etc., all of which

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you have to know. Tom knew all that and that's why he could learn the cornet by himself. He bought a cornet method book and went on from there. He played with Professor [Hulett, Euilhet] once or twice. Louis Cottrell [Sr.] used to play drums with him [Prof. Hulett?]. Hulett lived in the French section downtown at that time. Tom took two lessons on clarinet with Willie [E.] Humphrey [the elder], but he put it down again. Willie Humphrey had two ^[Louis and Willie] sons, Willie [J.] and Percy Humphrey.

Tom says he played a few jobs with Lorenzo Tio [Sr.?] when he needed a replacement. This Tio played violin, he thinks. [!]

Tom remembers the Spanish-American War. He was playing guitar then. He marched with a parade that left City Park and went on Esplanade to a ship waiting at the river. Tom was only 16 at the time and living in Algiers. He wanted to go with them but he was too young. They had a colored brass band in the parade. They didn't mix up the bands racially then except that some Negroes that looked white played with white bands, like Manuel Manetta's brother, Jean [contradiction here] and old man Hulett who played cornet.

Mr. Allen asks if Tom ever saw a flag-pole raising with a band. Tom says he was playing in Reggio, they had a "pot-go" shoot [corruption of poteau, Fr., possible?], i.e., they would have something like a decoy on a pole and people would take shots at it. Tom never

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played while the flag was being raised or lowered, though. [Above par. unclear.]

When Tom had his band, "Kid" Albert's band, the blowing instruments might take down for a few bars and rest for awhile. They didn't have much singing at that time. When Tom was playing with Johnny Gould, they didn't even use drums. Drums came in after the big storm [i.e., Sept. 1915] [Cf. photographs]. They didn't use saxophones then. They used an alto, also called a "peck" horn, and the key [valve] trombone, no slide trombone. The first slide trombone Tom remembers was Fess Manetta's uncle's, "Deuce" [Manetta]. Tom was playing violin then. Tom was the first one to take Fess and Peter [Bocage] on a job. Tom would play cornet, and in case his lips swelled, Peter could play cornet and Tom violin.

Tom thinks "Skeeter" played guitar with him for awhile. He didn't have any drums in this band. "Bo Bo" played left-handed violin. When Tom started playing violin, he took Bo Bo's job in a little band in Algiers. Edmond Payton [sp?] played guitar in this band. Tom knew Eddie Atkins who played trombone. Eddie played in brass bands and different bands in town like Jack Carey and Jack's brother Mutt [Carey]. Tom played a few jobs with Jack Carey too on the Algiers side [of the river].

When Tom played on Delacroix [island], the people liked different

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numbers like lancers, mazurkas, waltzes, "a little rough stuff," and two steps. They liked Spanish numbers. Tom hums "La Paloma" which Johnny Gould used to play for them. The Cajuns liked all kinds of numbers but no mazurkas, just waltzes and two steps and sometimes the slow drag. Tom didn't have anyone in his band who sang in French to them. "Eh, La Bas" came in later. Tom heard Herb Morand's sister, Lizzie Miles, sing it. Loochie used to sing in Tom's band once in a while. When they wanted a new song, Tom would buy a piano copy, play the verse once and then just play the chorus. The big string [i.e., dance] bands play the introduction, the verse and then the chorus. Tom had four of the Scott Joplin "Red Back Book" [of Rags], the trombone part, violin, cornet, and clarinet. He loaned Chris Kelly his cornet book at the Treme market and never got it back, as Kelly died. Tom still has the violin book. Israel Gorman was the only one who could play "Frog Legs" [by James Scott]. Another piece was in four or five sharps. It was harder that "African Pas." Tom used to play all that stuff; it was the hardest music they had.

End of Reel II

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Others present: Richard B. Allen, Marjorie T. Zander.

When Tom was playing, they didn't have many white ragtime bands; they wouldn't hire them. There was one brass band that played at Milneburg every Sunday evening. It was a regular big band and the members read. Mr. Allen asks if Tom remembers Jack "Papa" Laine's Reliance Band. He used to use Achille Baquet, Arnold Metoyer, and Dave Perkins, who played trombone with him. George Baquet and Norm Manetta, [Manuel's] uncle, who was very light too, played in white bands. Tom says there were no white bands in the streets though. At the time, Tom was going out to the lake, "Drag" [Alcide Pavageau], who plays bass, had only three pieces in his group. "Drag" was playing with "little bitty fellows" then: Willie Phillips who played cornet and was a head man. Few of them read music except Percy [Humphrey] and his brother [Willie Humphrey]. Most of the Jack Carey band was "ragtime" [i.e., jazz]. ["Big Eye"] Louis Nelson never did read. Neither did Frankie Duson, who played trombone. Buddy Johnson, Yank's [Johnson] brother, did read music; he played over the river with Joe [Lazard? Lizard?], before [Henry] Allen [Sr.] made up his band. In Lizard's band, there was Buddy Johnson, "Loochie" [Tom Albert's son], Frankie Duson, (two trombones [at one time]), George Sims on baritone, someone else named George on bass drum. It was called the Pacific [Brass Band]. Also in Lizard's band was

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Georgie Hooker, who played cornet and later baritone after he lost his lip, and Albert Gabriel. John Pendleton used to have a string band, but Tom can't remember his instrument [cornet, RBA]. He was from Bayou La Fourche. He had a couple of bands uptown and a couple here [i.e., downtown: the Golden Rule Band.

Joe Petit, Buddy Petit's ^(STEP-) father, used to play key [valve] trombone in Johnny Gould's band.

Tom told [Bill] Russell [on tape] about going into the music store on Chartres and Toulouse Streets and buying 25¢ music books. They had everything in them: waltzes, schottische. There was a book for every instrument. Tom would get four books for \$ 1.00 for cornet, violin, [probably clarinet] and trombone. They used to get piano copies there too. Then, they started buying from Werlein's.

Tom used to live on John Sock's Lane in Algiers where he first started to play with Eddie Vincent. Mr. Allen has heard Vincent on records with Freddy Keppard. TA taught EV. They made up a band with "Skeeter" and traveled all around. Then, Tom started lessons with violin and started to lead. They had a four piece band, Skeeter, Eddie Vincent, Tom and a bass player named Peter. Joe Lee [Lisle, Check sp.], who lived on Lee's Lane down near McClennonville [sp?] also played bass with them. Tom moved from there to what they called [Dublin? ~~Doubien?~~] near the waterworks. Tom came from Belle Chasse

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when he was eleven. That's where he was born. That was when they had the crevasse; the Grand Island [Isle] road was going through and the high water came, so his family moved to Sock's Lane. Mr. Allen recalls another bad crevasse about two years before depression [i.e., about 1927] around Poydras. Tom was living in the city then. He was playing out in the country with Johnny Gould and [Big Eye] Louis Nelson.

Tom wasn't in the service in World War I. He was 45 years old and called to come in and register, but at 3:00 o'clock in the morning, he heard the boat whistles blowing; the war was over. He was always too old or too young to be in the army.

The music shop on Chartres Street was between St. Louis and Toulouse streets on the woods [i.e., lake] side. There was an ice house right next to it.

Mr. Allen says he is 35. Tom says he was playing with Johnny Gould and them before Mr. Allen was born. "Fess" [Manuel Manetta] played with Johnny Gould too but after Tom did.

They just started taking solos lately. They never used to have all that singing or anything like that. When they played a number Tom would "make it in his mind," sound it off, and the others would know what he was going to play and what key. They used to play in F and in B flat. When they got music, they started playing in G and

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D. He would stomp one time to get ready, then stomp three times and everybody came in. The leader stomped once to indicate "go out." In those days, they all played together, but not everybody would play lead. There was the trombone player's part and the banjo player's part, but they just started using piano lately. There was no sax or drums either, just clarinet, violin, guitar, and bass. Mr. Allen asks if the clarinet would play through the whole number. Tom says they did variations--some would lead and could take the violin part like Pete Fountain can do today. In the old days the clarinet would keep going most of the time. The cornet player would take down and rest awhile and the trombone player too, for two or three bars, and then pick up again because there wasn't any singing. It wasn't like today when they just take a chorus [solo], even down to the drums. Violin was the big lead instrument in those days. Now the clarinet has taken charge. With rough music you can't hear the violin well. RBA says Peter Bocage is about the only violin player still playing. Tom knew his daddy who used to play guitar with [Oliver?] Dorsey in Algiers. [Norm?] Manetta played cornet; Louis Douroux [sp?] played cornet also; Dave Perkins played trombone; [Louis] Cottrell [Sr.] played drums; and Albert Gabriel played clarinet in that band.

Tom knew Charlie Deverges in Algiers. He taught all kinds of instruments, but Tom never saw him as the member of a band.

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Mr. Allen asks about an early saxophone player uptown who was also a barber, but Tom doesn't recall his name [probably John Joseph. RBA]

Tom thought the "Red Books" had the hardest music. They would get piano copies and copy off of them. Sometimes, Louis Dumaine used to buy them, and would write a part, for example, for violin or cornet. That's all he needed, just one copy. If the musician knew it, the rest would catch it off of that. [They just needed the melody.]

From Dublin, Tom moved to 512 Dauphine Street. At that time he was playing with John Casimir and many others. He would use Albert Gabriel, [clarinet,] Georgie Hooker, [cornet?] and [Charlie] Love on cornet when he first came here from the country. Tom then moved to 635 Burgundy where he lives now. He did room for awhile on St. Louis Street when he was working the Crimmer Line [steamship?] on the wharf. He also trapped and toted bananas for two months, but he never worked long enough to get Social Security. Tom isn't eligible for an old age pension because he owns property.

When Tom was young, the best cornet player was Norm Manetta and George Moret and Manuel [Perez] were good too. [Alphonse] Picou played clarinet with Moret. Mr. Allen asks what made them so good. Tom says they knew the [written] music and had good range and tone.

End of Reel III

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Others present: Richard B. Allen, Marjorie F. Zander.

There was a good cornet player called "Dude," a mulatto, but Tom can't remember his other name. It wasn't "Fostaire" [Lewis] } brother}. He played brass bands and in the district a lot and was a good reader. "Fess" [Manuel Manetta] should know him; he probably played with him. Jimmy Palao used to play in the Golden Rule Band and, like Peter [Bocage], in "most all of them bands." They played downtown including the Ninth Ward; Jack Carey and them played uptown. Mr. Allen asks Tom if he knows Adolphe "Tats" Alexander, [Jr.] who plays clarinet, saxophone, and baritone, and Tats' father who used to play cornet and baritone too. Tom doesn't know him [or remember him? RBA], but he knew the two brothers, Vic Gaspard and "Oke" Gaspard. Tom thinks Vic played trombone in the Golden Rule Band and "Oke" played bass.

[George] Moret was the first leader of the Excelsior Brass Band. After him came, he thinks Manuel Perez, who played cornet. [Check!] Norm Manetta and "Deuce" Manetta, his brother, played with Moret. That's when the slide trombone came in; the rest were playing key trombone. Joe Petit played with Tom for years. His son, Buddy Petit, started playing then and "Chinee" [Abbey Foster] used to play with Chris Kelly then. Mr. Allen says "Chinee" plays drums well again, he's come back after some accident to his hand [!!!] Mr. Allen heard

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him at a party, playing with Punch [Miller] and Ernest Roubleau. They played "South of the Border" and "Yankee Doodle" and "Bucket's Got A Hole In It."

The first brass band Tom ever played with was [Henry] Allen [Sr.]'s. Their uniforms were blue shirts, white pants, and blue caps like a policeman's. Tom played alto and cornet too. He used a little bigger mouthpiece [on the alto]. They always wore blue pants for funerals. In the Eureka Brass Band, they wore black shirts and navy blue pants for a funeral[?]. Tom gave away all the funeral marches he had. [Confusing on colors above. RBA]

Now, they play all the old music over again that they played years ago. Mr. Allen says maybe they learned [some of] it from the old records. He adds at rehearsals of George Lewis's band, they used to listen to Louis Armstrong's Hot Five, and that [Kid] Howard can remember a lot of the old stuff like "Climax Rag" and "Indian Sagway." RBA continues, says he and Israel [Gorman] get together on it. Mr. Allen asks if Tom knew a Joe Lee who was a drummer. Tom thinks Joe Lee played bass. Tom played with Jimmy Mukes on drums and Joe Lizard [Lazard? sp?] in the Eureka Brass Band. In his string band he had several different drummers and [John] Handy on clarinet, Jules Barnes on trombone. He had Tom Strother [sp?] on banjo and several others. "R.T." was one of his bass players. He seldom used

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a piano but in dances on St. Charles Street [i.e., Avenue] sometimes they did if they had a piano in the house. In the Audubon Tea Room, young fellows used to come and dance, and when they used six or seven pieces, they might use a piano. At that time drums were used. He never had a regular piano player because when you traveled, you could not carry a piano with you. They traveled all over and played excursions on boats crossing the lake, and on the Tchefuncta river. Some of his men just played music; some had other jobs too. Tom used to work on the river and trap. He'd put someone in his place until he came back. He'd play in the movie in Violet, [La.].

[Finest] "Ninny" Coycault made a record when he went to Los Angeles in the twenties. [Ninny or Tom?] used to use "Pill" Coycault on clarinet a long time ago. Lawrence Marrero told Mr. Allen "Ninny" was with the Superior Band. He came to the city [from Violet.].

Johnny Lindsay used to play trombone. Mr. Allen asks how the "shank" worked to change the key; but Tom says that was on the cornet Lindsay would pull out his tuning slide. When Tom was playing, they had a short shank and a long shank on the trumpet. The trombone player would play in a different key. When Tom would play in sharps, he would have to pull out and put the long shank in. When he played F or B^b, he'd put the short shank in. Now, one shank will do. Someone like Albert Gabriel always carried two clarinets, an A and a B^b.

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Tom knew Edward Clem but only played with him once or twice in the street. He never played with "Tig" Chambers, a good cornetist; he played in uptown bands. Tom doesn't know if he was from New Orleans or not. Most of those fellows came from different parts of the [surrounding] country. Tom knew old man Lindsay, who played guitar. Johnny Lindsay played with [John] Robichaux and string bass with his father. Herbert Lindsay played violin with them too. Tom played cornet with them a few times. Jack "Pie Eater" [Williams] played with them too. Joe Payen used to play alto with Joe Lizard. Johnny Lindsay took three lessons from Tom; he could read but he wasn't sure [of his ability]. Tom joined some music club and would get two copies a month [out of the Red Books?] He played a piece of music in four flats for Johnny and he hasn't seen him since. Johnny never played trombone with his daddy. The Lindsays usually just used three or four pieces at fish fries and places like that. At a fish fry, people liked to hear slow drags, quadrilles, but few waltzes.

Dorsey [of Algiers] used to play picnics under the oaks across the river. There were white clubs that used to hire the Algerene musicians, and they would come over here and get the rest like Dave Perkins; Norm Manetta and ["Big Eye"] Louis [Nelson?] were all over in Algiers. They would have a big dance platform under the trees with tables all around, all kinds of drinks and food, and would play from

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about five P.M. to midnight. Dorsey had a big string [i.e., dance] band, sometimes with eight pieces, two cornets. "The Cutoff" is about four miles down from the Canal Street Ferry. Jimmie Noone was from around "The Cutoff." Or maybe from around Fazendeville. Sam Ross used to play cornet around "The Cutoff." Jimmie Noone played clarinet with him for awhile but left. Sam had a pick-up band; if someone got good, someone else would grab them. That's what Tom used to do, but he could always get whomever he wanted because he'd pay them.

There weren't many "jump-up" brass bands in the early days; the only ones were Joe Lizard's and the Onward; Lizard lived on Verrett Street [in Algiers]; Allen's Brass Band was later, the last of the West Side bands. Allen was not young when he formed his band; his son [Henry "Red] Sonny" [Allen, Jr.] was about 5 years old at the time [born 1908]. [Cf. Robert Goffin, La Nouvelle Orleans.] TA rehearsed with the Allen band from the beginning, although he was never a regular; TA played relief with the band, either on trumpet or on alto horn. He was a regular only in the Eureka [Brass Band]. TA says some of the "ear" bands were rougher than others; Buddy Bolden's was quite rough; TA never saw Bolden play a parade. TA says Bunk Johnson [around 1945] left his trumpet at TA's house, forgot where it was, and eventually came back for it; TA says Bunk was playing somewhere like the Municipal Auditorium. TA knew Bunk many years ago. Bunk lived

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at Toulouse and (Dauphine or Burgundy), and drove cotton floats for
a living; he was playing some then.

End of Reel IV

