Doc Paulin Brass Band on parade at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, 1978. (l to r): Dwight Miller, tenor sax; Dwayne Paulin, tuba; Darryl Walker, trombone; Michael White, clarinet; Ricky Paulin, snare drum. Photo by Harriet Blum.

Special Autobiographical Issue
Michael G. White: “Dr. Michael White: The Doc Paulin Years (1975-79)”
Donald M. Marquis: “My Life in Jazz”
Charles and Judy Piper: “Passport to History”
Plus
Edward Allan Faine: “Al Hirt at the White House”

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On a hot Sunday afternoon in May 2005 I drove across the Mississippi River from New Orleans to the neighboring community of Marrero, in search of the Macedonia Baptist Church. I soon found myself alone on a quiet street, parked in front of the small brick structure. Focusing on the church brought me back exactly thirty years earlier, when this was the scene of my first professional music job – as the clarinetist in Doc Paulin’s Brass Band. There it all was before my eyes: well dressed church members lining up in the street; someone carrying a blue and yellow banner with the church’s name; a few majestic elders perched on the backs of convertibles; and neatly groomed, well-behaved children looking like miniatures of the adults in black suits and white dresses. There I was – in the center of a dozen musicians, with a clarinet in my hand and a nervous feeling in my gut…

How on earth did I get hired for this in the first place? My three and a half years of private clarinet lessons and playing in the St. Augustine High School Marching 100 had only trained me to read music and play from written scores – not to develop and improvise my own ideas. It all started with a curious interest in traditional jazz during college. Becoming a Spanish Education major should have meant an end to my music playing days, but there was just this drive inside of me that wouldn’t let the clarinet become a dust collector. One day during a conversation with some Xavier University band members, music major Alton “Big Al” Carson mentioned his playing tuba with a brass band on weekends. I told him that if they ever needed a clarinetist to call me. Of course they never would.

A few weeks later I ran into Big Al with that brass band at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. He introduced me to this old man with a trumpet in his hand: “Doc, this is the clarinet player I told you about.” The old man looked at me, frowned and grumbled. Then a surprisingly thick French Creole voice came from his smooth, very dark mahogany-colored face: “Youngsters. Y’all ain’t no good. … If I call you for a job, will you show up?” “Yes sir.” “Will you dress right, in black pants, a solid black tie and a white band cap?” “Yes sir.” “Will you play this music right? This is jazz, it ain’t no rock & roll, ya know.” “I’ll try.” “No you won’t! Y’all youngsters ain’t no good. All y’all do is mess up.” He let out a Creole-sounding laugh. “Well anyhow, give me your number.”

Two weeks later I answered the phone to hear Doc Paulin’s unmistakable voice say: “Look, White, I got a lil ‘to do’ for you there … a church parade over the river a week from Sunday. Be at my house at 9 a.m., you have my address on Seventh Street. That’s black pants, a clean white shirt, clean black shoes, solid black tie – none of them polka dots - and a white band cap. Ya got dat? I hope you ain’t one of dem humbug fellas.” I could hardly wait for the days to pass. I bought a band cap and solid black tie. My mother cleaned and pressed a white shirt to the point of perfection. I polished my black shoes to a spit shine.

That Sunday I arrived at Doc’s house very early and was invited in by a small boy who resembled the old man. A few minutes later Doc came from the back and without saying a word, looked me up and down several times. He smiled and uttered, “Humh,” and handed me a blue hatband with the letters “DOC PAULIN” in white. “Put that on your hat.” Then he began to talk endlessly about music, musicians, youngsters, and the old days. I just sat and listened until a knock on the door took his attention. As other musicians gathered outside the house, each one got the same military inspection that I got. He complained about one guy’s not quite solid tie; another one’s dirty shoes; and another’s wrinkled shirt. We loaded into three cars and made the short trip to the...
church. We were standing in front of Macedonia with church members in line in front of and behind us. Then a few trumpet notes came from behind me, followed by a drum roll to begin the music and the church’s anniversary parade. “…But wait a minute. What song are we about to do? What key is it in? What do I play?” Too late. A thunderous “BOOM, BOOM, BOOM” from the bass drum introduced the hymn “Lord, Lord, Lord You Sure Been Good to Me.” From the first notes the music was an exciting mix of melody, improvisation, and driving rhythm that made the church members strut ever so gracefully along to the music. I remember just trying to place a few good screaming high notes in empty spaces. After an hour and a half of parading around the neighborhood and my skating through up-tempo hymns, the parade ended. We went back to New Orleans and Doc quietly slipped everyone a folded hand of cash. I went home feeling a sense of accomplishment for having played a professional music job in spite of not really knowing what I was doing. Doc would probably never call me again, but at least it did happen this one time.

There was no way of knowing then what would be the significance of that Sunday afternoon church parade in May 1975. I had embarked on a path that would forever direct my life toward a long and rewarding career in jazz. It was the start of an informal apprenticeship in traditional jazz that had been standard for New Orleans musicians since the earliest days. I was about to be submerged in a decades-old tradition that was at the core of one of the most rich and unique subcultures in the United States. It was the start of a very different kind of education, unlike any that I received in formal schooling; one that would teach me about the meaning of community, heritage, tradition, black history, values, spirituality, identity, and life. It was also the beginning of my becoming an eye-witness to and participant in a transitional period in the history of New Orleans music: the last years that authentic traditional-style jazz served a vital and functional role in the African American community as the dominant music of brass bands in social club parades, church processions, and jazz funerals.

These were the days before the Dirty...
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Dozen and Rebirth and the explosion of modern-style brass bands that gained momentum during the 1980s. Back then black community functions almost existed in a vacuum, isolated from much of New Orleans and not well known or publicized outside of the neighborhoods in which they took place. Though brass bands did play for events in the mainstream population, the unique African American community processions that used them were part of a subculture far removed from the more widely known aspects of local culture, like Mardi Gras, Bourbon Street, jazzfest, tourism, and more commercial versions of jazz. Despite the popularity of rhythm & blues, funk, and more modern musical styles; the attraction of contemporary pop culture and fashion, and the common discarding of anything perceived as “old,” the traditional jazz style as played by Buddy Bolden, King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, and all the great brass bands of yesteryear still dominated black community processions. It was the only music played on the streets back then – performed, sponsored, and followed by people of all ages and levels.

By the 1970s there was a sense that the real glory days of black social aid & pleasure clubs and benevolent organizations, their functions and relevance (as a means of obtaining insurance and as vital self help groups) had long been in decline. There were only about a dozen clubs that still paraded regularly and sponsored jazz funerals for deceased members. Among the half-dozen active brass bands, the oldest two - Eureka and Onward - were rarely parading because of having members who had either died, retired, or were playing less demanding jobs. Dejan’s Olympia Brass Band was the most popular group in the city due to its high visibility in the growing tourist industry. The Olympia was also popular in black community functions, but its increasing concessions to the more lucrative outside world led to changes of look, sound, style, and repertoire that would greatly affect the brass bands of the future. Other bands like Herman Sherman’s Young Tuxedo and Floyd Ankle’s Majestic Brass Band also played in many community functions.

Though black brass bands had always played for white events, large scale interest and commercial opportunities had eluded the traditional ten-member brass bands throughout much of jazz history. When scores of New Orleans area musicians and small dance ensembles migrated and popularized jazz nationally through performances and recordings during the nineteen teens and twenties, the brass bands and their unique local functions largely remained a community thing. Having limited commercial appeal and outside interference, the brass band tradition was left alone to slowly evolve on its own terms.

Larger attention for local brass bands can be traced to the 1940s “revival” of outside interest in early New Orleans jazz, which eventually led to the first ever recordings of a regularly working brass band, the Eureka, in 1951. Brass band recording was slow in coming, but it did increase during the 1960s at the same time that they began to be used in the more commercial world of conventions, tourism, sports events, and music festivals.

Despite many changes resulting from contemporary inner-city life, the remaining social clubs, brass bands, and neighborhoods still viewed the parades as a necessary way of self expression, bonding, celebrating family, having a good time, and resisting the problems of a modern world by retreating into a local spiritual dimension of hope, freedom, and both individual and collective exaltation. At the center of the uptown community scene was Ernest “Doc” Paulin, a trumpet player and brass band leader active since the late 1920s. Like many early jazz legends, Paulin came to New Orleans from a neighboring rural area. He was born on June 22, 1907, in New Roads, Louisiana. Music became a natural early interest for the young boy, whose father, Orville Paulin played the accordion. An uncle, Edgar Peters, was a trombonist and bandleader who gave young Paulin his first horn. Eventually Peters let his nephew play in his brass and dance bands. At the age of eleven Paulin moved to...
New Orleans and eventually started his own band. He played in several small French Quarter clubs near Rampart Street in the popular Tango Belt area. After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, Paulin, like many other local black veterans, further developed his skills at the Grunewald School of Music. An obscure 1961 recording with clarinetist Emile Barnes reveals that Paulin had the kind of rich, unique tone, phrasing, and style that – with a little better luck – could have propelled him to legendary cult-hero status among throngs of traditional jazz fans around the world, as it did with a few of his contemporaries during and since the revival of interest in New Orleans jazz that began in the 1940s.

In 1949 Paulin married Betty White and moved to a Seventh Street home in the heart of the uptown neighborhood of jazz legends like Buddy Bolden and Kid Ory. This was also just a couple of blocks from where many social club parades started. He and his wife had and raised three daughters and ten sons in that house. As a bandleader, house painter, or the head of his own political assistance organization, the Property Owners’ Voters League (P.O.V.L.), Paulin developed and employed a sharp wit and keen business savvy in order to achieve the ultimate objective of supporting his family. He became infamous among musicians as one of the last non-union band leaders. On many occasions he would say, “What do I want to join dat union for? You gotta pay dem people dues and all kinds of money every time you play a job. Dey don’t get you any work. Dey don’t do anything for the musician but take his money. I can’t do dat. I got thirteen churin to feed. Ain’t dat right?”

Since he could charge less for his band than the current musicians’ union scale, and because of his reputation for good music and punctuality, Doc Paulin’s Brass Band remained a popular fixture in jazz-related community activities for many decades. Paying considerably less than what union musicians made meant that he had a high rate of turnover in personnel. Despite the constant flow of musicians who quit, joined the musicians’ union, or were fired, Paulin always maintained a good ten to eleven member band known for its full driving sound and repertoire of traditional jazz standards. Doc Paulin’s band usually consisted of a combination of older brass band veterans, rhythm & blues horn players, and young alumni of the city’s numerous popular high school marching bands.

That group at the May 1975 church parade was a typical mix of older and younger players. I was twenty years old when I played that first job. In my age group were Darryl Walker on trombone, “Big Al” Carson on tuba, Darryl Spencer on trumpet, and Doc’s son Aaron on snare drum. In addition to Doc, there was another older trumpet player, Eddie Richardson (b. 1903), who had played and recorded with the Eureka Brass Band and other groups. Among the middle-aged musicians was Simon Broom on trombone. I stood between tenor saxophonists Curtis Mitchell and Joe Tillman, both of whom had recorded and played in the 1950s with legendary rhythm & blues stars like Guitar Slim, Joe Turner, Little Richard, Ray Charles, and Lloyd Price. Other middle-aged saxophone players who floated in and out of Doc’s band over the years, like Frank Moten and Leroy “Batman” Rankin, had also been active with early rhythm & blues legends. Before, during, and after my tenure in Doc Paulin’s band, scores of other young musicians who went on to have long-term careers in traditional and modern jazz had their earliest professional adult jobs with him, including Walter Payton, Freddie Lonzo, Edgar Smith, Joseph Saulsbury, Gregg Stafford, Donald Harrison, Joseph Torregano, Mark Brooks, and Anthony “Tuba Fats” Lacen. Paulin took great pride in boasting, “All dem fellas got their start with me.”

Doc Paulin exemplified and tried to instill the highest musical and professional standards of the jazz tradition. Though he was often critical of politicians and preachers, who he called “chicken eaters,” he could out talk and out preach many of them. Some of his comical Saturday neighborhood barbershop debates have become legendary. While most of the musicians
(and some of his children, who heard him daily) tried to avoid his constant discourse, to me he was a living history book to be treasured and enjoyed. I would arrive very early at his house before every job just to sit silently in his front room and hear his thick Creole accent ramble on about the music business, politics, ministers, early jazz, survival, race, education, hard work, the old days, life, and other musicians. I learned almost as much from these usually private sessions as I did from playing in the band. I found him to be fascinating, paternal, educational, critical, and comical all at the same time. He loved to criticize the younger generation of schooled musicians and those playing modern jazz styles in traditional music: “What dey wanna make all dem notes for? Dat don't go in this music. They go to dem school(s) and learn all dem notes and ain’t sayin’ nothing. Dey can’t play no melodies and don’t know no songs. Well what’s the point in goin’ to dem schools if they ain’t teachin’ you the right thing? Den dey go and play in dem Mardi Gras parades every night in da school bands and don’t get paid. I’m trying to pay people and they talk about me. Now dat don’t make no sense. Ain’t dat right?”

Like my own father, Doc Paulin was a disciplined “old time black man,” one who knew how to do carpentry, plumbing, electrician work, and anything else needed to survive in a tough world. On numerous occasions during music jobs and my pre-gig listening sessions, he revealed cunning instincts and survival skills that he used to support his large family. “When I used to paint houses everyone wanted me to use the most expensive paint, but didn’t wanna pay me much of nothing. I’d go out and get the cheapest paint and put it in clean Sherwin Williams cans that I kept. They’d see me with those cans and be satisfied. I’d make my money and go on ‘bout my business. I had thirteen churin to feed. Ain’t dat right?” I remember one local election day when we marched up a street parading with one political candidate while Doc’s political organization, P.O.V.L., was on the other corner holding signs and handing out leaflets for the opposition candidate. Though he wasn’t running for office, Doc Paulin came out the winner that election day.

Interestingly, he named his brass band “Doc Paulin’s Dixieland Jazz Band,” which was prominently displayed on the bass drum along with his phone number. The post Civil Rights climate of the mid 70s was a time when some older musicians and younger ones, like myself, openly expressed resentment at the term “Dixieland” in reference to black traditional jazz. In addition to its negative historical racial implications, “Dixieland” implied a white imitation of jazz. It was commonly understood and defined as such in early jazz history. It also conjured up images of plastic hats, garter belts worn on the sleeve, striped vests, corny behavior, funny band names, and a fast, loud, bland sound that was a far cry from the more socially driven and spiritually powerful original black jazz of the brass and dance bands that evolved from the days of Buddy Bolden and King Oliver.

Over the years I heard older musicians debate among themselves about using the term. Some accepted the label and others did not. Some saw it as an insulting attempt to steal or cover up original black jazz and others used the term as did many modern jazz musicians, writers, music publishers, and record companies, as a catch-all phrase for any jazz style before swing and bebop. In interviews a few noted older musicians like clarinetists George Lewis and Paul Barnes had openly attempted to explain the differences between original black New Orleans jazz and “Dixieland,” but many (at least publically) remained silent, noting: “Well, they call us worse things than that. Why create problems for yourself and not get work?” Doc Paulin didn’t worry about labels or sometimes being called an “Uncle Tom.” I heard him debate one musician and say, “What do I care about what they call it? Dem people say “Dixieland.” De point is, I’m tryin’ to make some money and go ‘bout my business. I got thirteen churin to feed. Ain’t dat right?”

For a young musician, being in Doc
Paulin’s band was like going to school. It was a unique way of gaining authentic, hands-on experience that could only happen in New Orleans. Where else could you be a jazz musician for years and never play a solo? No one played solos. Every song was done in the New Orleans ensemble improvisation style: with three-part trumpet melody or lead lines; trombones that played sliding tailgate and punctuating rhythmic figures; saxophones that played rhythmic riffs; and with the drums and tuba expounding on their characteristic driving syncopated pulses. The clarinet was free to soar above the ensemble, filling in empty spaces, playing high note harmony to the melody, or dancing and weaving in response to the trumpets’ lead. At times one or two horns would rest for a chorus and one horn might improvise freely over a quieter ensemble; but at no time did they all stop and allow only one instrument to play a solo with the rhythm section, as is the common practice today.

To survive in Doc Paulin’s band was almost like being in the army. You had to be disciplined and tough. You were thrown into a situation in which you had to learn how to listen, improvise, and contribute by following the basic role of your instrument. You had to develop a strong body and lips to endure the long hot, sometimes grueling six-plus hour social club parades.

Doc was very proud and adamant about not only the look and punctuality of his band, but also its sound and repertoire. He made sure that each musician “held up his end,” or they wouldn’t be hired again. The older, more experienced musicians were usually more than willing to help us younger ones in terms of learning songs and what types of things to play. The broad and powerful clarinet sound that I have today is not as much the result of listening to recordings of early masters like Johnny Dodds, Sidney Bechet, Edmond Hall, and George Lewis (which didn’t come until much later), as it is of having to focus on sound to stay in the band. One day after my second or third job Doc looked at me and shook his head in disapproval: “You too light on dat clarinet there, White. I got to hear you.” I talked to older players and listened to the only brass band record that I had, the Young Tuxedo’s Jazz Begins, to hear how clarinetist John Casimir was able to cut through the louder brass and drums. These methods, along with getting a more open mouthpiece and stiffer reeds solved the volume problem, and I soon secured my place as a key member of the Doc Paulin Brass Band.

Over the next several years I played dozens and dozens of “to do’s” (mostly parades and funerals) with Doc’s band – over one hundred sixty jobs in all. We performed all over New Orleans and in surrounding areas like Metairie, Marrero, Gretna, and Kenner. We also had work in small rural areas like Westwego, Waggaman, Hahnville, and Independence, Louisiana.

Like other brass bands had done throughout most of the 20th century, Doc’s group featured a repertoire of songs commonly played in traditional jazz: marches (like “Panama”); hymns (like “Bye and Bye,” “Lord, Lord, Lord,” “Just A Closer Walk With Thee,” “As I Walk Through the Streets of The City,” “Just A Little While to Stay Here,” “Down By the Riverside,” and “When the Saints Go Marching In”); blues songs (like “St. Louis Blues,” “Wooopin’ Blues,” and “Joe Avery’s Second Line”); and jazz standards and old pop songs (like “Tulane Swing,” “Margie,” “Bourbon Street Parade,” “Paul Barbarin’s Second Line,” “Baby Face,” “Let Me Call You Sweetheart,” “Down By the Zoo,” and “Bye Bye Blackbird”). All of the songs were played in a characteristic swinging medium up-tempo - perfect for New Orleans “second line” dancing. The only exceptions were during the early part of jazz funerals, when hymns like “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” “Closer Walk,” and “Old Rugged Cross” were played in the standard slow dirge tempo.

Unless one was part of that subculture, it is hard to understand the power and impact that traditional jazz still had in black New Orleans during the mid 1970s. Though many, especially outside of New Orleans, erroneously viewed...
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traditional jazz as irrelevant “old people’s music,” “primitive and archaic jazz,” “white music,” or music played by “toming” blacks to satisfy stereotyped white perceptions, the great majority of Doc Paulin’s work was in black community parades, funerals, and other events. Far removed from the atmosphere of nightclubs, tourism, and the French Quarter, the brass bands remained largely a black music played by and for black people. Among the many ironies surrounding these decades-old traditions is the fact that these processions were the most widely attended and socially relevant traditional jazz events in the world. In both uptown and downtown African American New Orleans neighborhoods the authentic traditional jazz style was accepted and danced to by countless thousands of all ages and levels, from the oldest of the old to the hippest of the hip. Doc’s reputation for having uniform band appearance, charging lower prices, being punctual, and providing good jazz that remained strong from start to finish assured that his band was among the most visible and popular groups hired by community organizations that held events. As a result we regularly played for nearly every black social aid & pleasure club, benevolent organization, and fraternal group parade, including the Elks, Eastern Stars, Odd Fellows, Young and True Friends, Young Men Olympian, Prince of Wales, Zulu Club, Money Wasters, Scene Boosters, Lady Zulus, Jolly Bunch, and 6th Ward High Steppers.

The many social aid & pleasure club parades that Doc’s band played constituted the most interesting and eye-opening work that we did. It was there that I was first exposed to the purpose and meaning of jazz, as well as to its unique social significance in New Orleans. The parades were the ultimate expression of living community folk culture. As they passed through neighborhoods and different sections of town, you could see and feel that the exciting brass band music was an extension of the lives and spirit of the people - their appearance, dancing, humor, speech, laughter, mannerisms, experiences, hopes, joy, and sorrow, all converted into hot, expressive, rhythmic jazz.

Although the social club parade season ran from late August into early November, there were occasional community parades year round. A club’s annual parade was regularly held on a Sunday. It began in the late morning or early afternoon, and usually lasted around six hours. Uptown club parades started either at the intersection of Jackson Avenue and Simon Bolivar Avenue or a little further uptown at Washington Avenue and LaSalle Street, close to Doc’s house. Downtown parades often left from Claiborne and St. Bernard Avenues or in the Treme section.

Very different from the better known Mardi Gras parades, black social club parades had no floats, masks, throws, cars, high school bands, or largely passive onlookers. The first thing you saw in the parade was men in street clothes carrying the club’s banner, the American flag, and the Louisiana State flag. Then came the main body of the parade: divisions of club members walking or dancing in front of and behind one or more brass bands. Large parades could have many divisions and up to five bands. Club members wore elaborate, boldly colored outfits with matching hats and shoes, and they often carried decorated ornaments like umbrellas, handkerchiefs, fans, and baskets. The brass bands wore black and white with white band caps, though some groups were starting to use band t-shirts.

From the first beat of the bass drum, dozens of people would begin to appear from nowhere and follow the parade in the streets and along sidewalks, dancing and cheering the whole time. As the crowd grew larger and the music and dancing increased in intensity, the entire scene seemed to transform into a spiritual dimension in which there was total freedom, a uniting of souls, and a constant reinterpretation of normal earthly reality. It was impossible to see more than a fraction of the endless variations of the West African-derived “second line” dance. Individual and collective movements were as common and fleeting as the constant ripples of waves in the ocean.
Among the sea of gyrating black bodies that surrounded the band and club, there would be dancers everywhere: on top of cars, belly down in the street, on porches, swinging from telephone poles, on the rails of bridges, on rooftops, and some on the backs of others. They jumped, twisted, shook wildly, as individuals or as impromptu couples or groups that constantly formed and reformed. Some dancers would get “possessed by the spirit” and move their bodies in ways that looked supernatural. At slow periods and stops along the parade route, club members and “second liners” sometimes formed small circle dances. The entire scene seemed like a contemporary, mobile version of the famous nineteenth-century Congo Square dances. Though many viewed the social club parades as a unique “New Orleans thing,” I later learned that several West African nations maintain centuries-old traditions of similar massive social processions – complete with bands (though the music and instrumentation are very different), umbrellas, handkerchiefs, boldly colored outfits, and second lining crowds of followers.

The music and dance not only inspired each other, but at times it seemed as if they switched roles. I remember many times when song titles, structure, and keys became almost insignificant, as the dancers seemed to take control of the sound and spirit of the band. It was frightening to see before your eyes a magical transformation in which notes seemed to leap from your instrument and freely take gyrating human form; or to feel dancers key on you and have their movements suddenly draw exciting new sounds and phrases from your instrument that came through you, but not from you. There was a feeling in those social club parades that everyone was free and equal to openly be and express themselves with acceptance from those around you without the normal societal limitations and judgments. Common social dividers seemed to temporarily disappear as young and old, middle class and poor, dark and light skinned, educated and illiterate, physically handicapped, well dressed and ragged, mentally challenged, gay, beautiful and unattractive – all seemed to rise to a level of royalty and nobility. Over the years I developed a number of friendships with club members, other musicians, and “second liners” who followed Doc’s band or liked my clarinet sound in particular. There was a sense that we were all family, uniquely bonded by our special spiritual music and ancestral tradition.

When swept up in the magic spell of social club parades, things like ninety-plus degrees of humid heat, blisters, feet burning through the soles of your shoes, soaking wet clothes, sore lips, bloody clarinet reeds, and hours of walking and hard blowing seemed minor – until later that evening. The parades made stops at houses, bars, or housing project apartments where club and band members were given refreshments and got a few minutes of rest. The climatic end of the parades (a stop at a designated location and final rousing song) sometimes occurred miles from the starting point, on the other side of town. Band and club members usually had rides back to their cars. Dozens of “second liners” – now with no hot music, thus being out of the trance - were angry that they had to walk all the way back the same distance that they had just danced.

My early interests in jazz while in college brought me to attend a few well publicized jazz funerals for deceased musicians, like trombonist Jim Robinson’s in May 1976. While they were fascinating and the music was beautiful, in some ways those funerals were spectacles, interrupted by photographers, television cameras, and irreverent people just looking for a free show and a good time. The first funerals I actually played in were with Doc Paulin’s band. Though we played many small, unpublicized funerals for deceased social club, benevolent society, and fraternal organization members in New Orleans, some of the most powerful and beautiful ones were held in small rural communities outside of the city. Sometime in the fall of 1976 Doc called and said, “White, I got a lil ‘to do.’ One of dem funerals out of town. Be at my house at eight a.m. next
Saturday morning.

The service turned out to be for a deceased member of the old Odd Fellows fraternal organization in Hahnville, Louisiana, about thirty miles upriver from New Orleans. Against a backdrop of the Mississippi River levee and quiet rural surroundings, the ceremony seemed to take place in an earlier era in history. There were only about one hundred people in attendance, including family, organization members, and friends. We waited outside a small church on River Road until the doors opened, a coffin was rolled out, and two dozen uniformed Odd Fellows quickly lined up in front of the hearse. The appearance and movements of the society members were something I had not seen before or since. The men’s and women’s divisions stood erect in perfect order, giving the appearance of a small military unit. Most of the members were older and looked different from my family and other black people back home. Their uniforms were very striking navy blue with gold buttons and bright yellow shoulder nests. They wore regal-looking Napoleonic bicorn hats with white plumes on top. Resting on their shoulders were shiny, unsheathed militia-type swords.

Leading the procession was the society’s grand marshal, whose serious, stone-faced expression made him look like a cross between Marcus Garvey and a Chinese Terracotta soldier statue. He was a medium-built, older man with rich, dark, sculpted features, thick horn-rimmed glasses, and dyed black hair. He motioned for the procession to begin. We lined up behind the grand marshal, followed by the organization, hearse, family, and friends. Our snare drummer began a slow, mournful cadence and we walked up River Road for a short distance before Doc signaled a few notes of “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” We played the hymn in slow dirge tempo. After months of practicing along with recordings of the Eureka and Young Tuxedo Brass Bands playing dirges, I came to understand the clarinet’s role in the funeral ceremony. Doc’s trumpet sang out the slow, sad melody with the power of a preacher delivering a sermon, while the other horns gave harmonic and rhythmic support and congregational “amens.” The tuba moaned long, deep melancholy tones. The clarinet functioned like a grieving widow, playing wailing high note harmonies, singing out rhythmic figures, and providing extended weeping and screaming fills in the empty spaces.

After a few blocks we reached the cemetery and opened up into lines of two as the rest of the procession passed through to a dirge version of “Just a Closer Walk with Thee.” Following a few final words, the preacher concluded the service, and the grand marshal signaled for us to begin the up-tempo music. We marched back down River Road playing a spirited version of “When the Saints Go Marching In.” The organization members did a proud graceful strut, and some of the family joined in with reserved, but happy steps. The grand marshal did a strange dance that was soulful and stiff at the same time. He never changed the emotionless look on his face. Now, some thirty-five years later, I can still see his exotic mannerisms and movements. The funeral was a proper tribute to and send-off for the deceased. Though the sadness of his death was highlighted, it ended happily and optimistically because there was the feeling that he was now truly free and gone to the eternal reward in union with the Creator. Of the dozens of jazz funerals I have played in over the years, that first one was the most beautiful, powerful, and memorable. I later realized that that funeral was among the last wave of ceremonies that maintained the look, sound, processional order, and dignity that had been their original intent.

In addition to social club parades, funerals, and church parades, Doc Paulin had a variety of other kinds of jobs in New Orleans and surrounding areas. Every year we played for the annual Odd Fellows Founders Day celebration in Hahnville, held on the Sunday of Mother’s Day. After the parade we played in the stands of a gymnasium during their barbecue. This was an important job for Doc, one that he had done continuously since the
1930s. We also played regularly for a few white organizations, like the St. Patrick’s Day Parade in Metairie. Doc’s band was filmed at that parade, in connection with Les Blank’s classic 1978 documentary on New Orleans culture, *Always for Pleasure*. This is the first time that I can be seen and heard playing clarinet on film. There is also a candid shot of me during a break in the parade indulging in another favorite local tradition – eating a plate of red beans.

A big job for Doc was playing on Mardi Gras Day for the white uptown marching group, the Corner Club. This was another long-term job that he had played every year since the 1940s. The march began at seven in the morning at club headquarters on Annunciation Street and went right into the most crowded and popular areas for locals to enjoy Carnival - along St Charles Avenue and down Canal Street. Although it was just the Corner Club and Doc’s brass band (operating as one unit), this was quite a contrast from the non Mardi Gras-related black neighborhood social club parades. The Corner Club is one of several walking clubs that marches partly along the same crowded streets as the biggest parades, like Rex, Zulu, and the lengthy truck parades. The group’s three dozen or so members dressed in specially made shiny outfits of different colors that depicted various characters, like pirates, conquistadors, or most often just Mardi Gras revelers. They also wore matching sequined capes, head pieces, and tennis shoes. Most club members carried beads, flowers, doubloons, and other “throws,” which they tossed out or handed to the cheering crowd.

These club members danced in front of and behind the band with more sedate and tame movements, which were very different from the “second line” seen in black social club parades. While the massive crowds that were waiting for a long full day of parades did cheer and move to the music, no one followed our little procession, and no one ever seemed to become spirit-possessed. After leaving the thick crowds of Mardi Gras, the Corner Club meandered through uptown streets before finally ending at Audubon Park. That Mardi Gras Day parade, labeled “the death march” by band members, would last a grueling nine hours. It was the longest and toughest of all of Doc Paulin’s jobs. Some of the younger members would be worn out halfway through. They would drag their feet, hold their instruments downward, and play with only the weakest sound. Although he was between sixty-eight and seventy years old during the time I played that parade with him, Doc always completed the Corner Club march without ever showing signs of being tired. He walked erectly all the way and held his horn straight out when he played. His trumpet lead sang out as strongly at the end as in the beginning. At the end he would look at some of the younger members
who were buckling over from exhaustion, and would just shake his head, laugh, and say, “Dem youngsters ain’t no good.”

There was one job we had during Carnival season for an exclusive white Mardi Gras ball at the Municipal Auditorium. That was a very strange gig for a black band, because even in the mid-1970s many such organizations strictly excluded minority participation in their clubs and balls. Even the main bands that played for dancing and the pageantry had to be all white. We played out in the hallway area as members and guests came in. I remember our getting some unpleasant looks and a guy giving Doc instructions in a rough tone of voice. Then we waited a few hours before making a quick march around the main ballroom. This was a venture into another kind of New Orleans subculture and “tradition” that most people never get to experience. Once again my clarinet had allowed me to witness the last remnants of an earlier place and time. In 1978 Ernest “Dutch” Morial became the city’s first black mayor, forcing some clubs to change their racist policies, since the mayor had historically been an official part of the pageantry.

Another regular and different type of job for Doc Paulin was the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, where I first met him. Every year Doc’s band played one of the mock social club parades at the Fairgrounds Racetrack. Along with us would be a small contingent of selected members from one of the social clubs. We paraded around the infield of the track for about an hour. The music was the same as we always played, but the dancing crowd that followed was mostly white, including many enthusiastic European jazz fans who were as excited about the music as any black “second liners” in the neighborhoods. In 1978 Doc Paulin’s band was featured on the jazz festival poster, t-shirt, and program book. I remember

Doc Paulin’s Brass Band at Jazzfest 1977 (l to r): Dwight Miller, tenor sax; Schexnider, baritone sax; Doc Paulin, trumpet; Dwayne Paulin, tuba; Darryl Walker, trombone; Michael White, clarinet. Photo © by Syndey Byrd.
feeling proud to see myself in profile just to the right of a colorfully outfitted member of the Scene Boosters Club.

The local tourism and convention industry continued to grow in the 1960s and 70s, and began to use New Orleans’ unique culture and traditions as a drawing card. This led to new creative and more commercial uses for brass bands. Marching conventioneers into and out of meetings, greetings at the airport, parades in hotel ballrooms, leading in flaming after-dinner desserts, playing for professional sports events, etc. provided steady work for several brass bands. Louisiana’s Right to Work Law, passed in 1976, meant that non-union bands like Doc Paulin’s could now play in the previously union-only major downtown hotels. We did occasionally play for large hotel events, but never as much as those bands that conceded to the expectations of the commercial tourist world – which resulted in a reduced band size and limited repertoire, with flashy, loud-colored uniforms and clownish behavior.

Though his need to earn a living and support a large family probably did yield some concessions, Paulin didn’t let new work opportunities override his values and standards in presenting good music from a full brass band that was properly attired. It didn’t matter to Doc Paulin whether we played for the most exclusive white organizations or in the poorest black neighborhoods; his music, professionalism, and demeanor remained the same. Like many jazzmen of earlier generations, he viewed music as an uplifting profession in which one’s reputation and playing were not only a calling card for more work, but a great source of personal pride. In our pre-gig conversations he used to say, “I don’t see how dem fellas use all dem outlaw names for their bands. You gotta use your own name. I use my name, Doc Paulin, and everybody knows who I am. Dey play dem jobs with all dem funny clothes. You can’t just go out there any kinda way. You are a musician. It doesn’t matter where you play. You are representing yourself, so you have to do it the right way. Ain’t dat right?”

In addition to brass band work, Doc occasionally played at senior citizens dances and parties. For those jobs he used a smaller “sit-down band” with himself on trumpet, me on clarinet, and a trombone, tenor saxophone, bass or tuba, drum set, and a banjo or guitar. Most of the musicians were his regular brass band players, except for the older string players, like John L. Jones and Sylvester Handy (brother
of famous saxophonist Captain John Handy). I remember the first of such jobs at a senior citizens center on Ursuline Street. It was a very different sound and way of playing from being in the brass band. We did some of the same songs as in parades, but there were also pieces done at different tempos and with different chord structures, like “I’m Confessin’ That I Love You,” “Ciribiribin,” “Basin Street Blues,” “I Double Dare You,” and a few old waltzes. After a couple of melody choruses the horns took turns doing solos. At first, playing solos was strange and a bit uncomfortable for me. However, I did enjoy being able to play at a softer volume and explore the lower register of the clarinet, which would never work in the brass band. At one point Doc surprised me by grabbing a microphone and singing the tune “All of Me” in a thick, Armstrong-like gravelly voice. Throughout the evening he sang other songs like “Let Me Call You Sweetheart” and “The Sheik of Araby.” The elderly couples did a number of once popular old dances, none of which was as loose, individual, or creative as the “second line.” They laughed and moved to the music all evening in the same way most of them had probably done in the old dance halls of their youth.

Though Doc Paulin had become like a second father to me and I never intended to leave his band, the Creator had other plans for my life in jazz. My tenure in Doc’s band had lasted for four years. During that time I had played many jobs and had learned things about jazz, New Orleans, the music business, and life that would remain with me forever. I had found a deeper connection to my people, city, and family heritage. My mother had told me about some of our relatives, like Papa John Joseph, Willie Joseph, and Earl Fouche, who had all been early generation jazz musicians. Doc knew them, and they were occasionally part of our discussions.

One Sunday in May 1979 we played our usual anniversary parade for the Mount Moriah Baptist Church, uptown near the river on Millaudon Street. This turned out to be a life-changing day that would signal my last months with Doc. Mount Moriah was gospel legend Mahalia Jackson’s childhood church. Playing in that event always conjured up a special feeling of an earlier time in the rural-like neighborhood - a time that Mahalia had recalled, when the exciting music of parading brass bands and early jazz inspired and influenced her singing. On that particular day it felt as if the spirit of Mahalia was hovering over the parade. Doc had two brass bands this time, and all of that beautiful music seemed to bring a look of hope and renewed life to the faces of the church members and the hundreds of people following along or watching from windows, stoops, and doorways.

The hour and a half long parade had been especially powerful and uplifting. It left me with a spiritual high. Rather than going home, I made an unplanned stop at a record store not far from Mount Moriah. As I looked through the record bins my eyes soon landed on an album cover that had a large picture of an old black man holding a clarinet. The title above the photo said, Jazz at Preservation Hall: The George Lewis Band of New Orleans. The record cost much of what I had just earned in the parade, and George Lewis’s name was only vaguely familiar, so I put it down and kept looking around. But something just kept calling me back to that album and the old man on the cover. I picked the record up again and stared at the photo, which seemed to speak to me: “Buy this record, son. Buy it.”

That night I put the record on, and from the first note my life was forever changed. Somehow it seemed that those exciting and beautiful hymns, blues, folk songs, and marches defined in sound everything it felt like to be from New Orleans. The driving rhythms and ensemble conversations were like magic and left me shaking and feeling faint. Most captivating of all was the sound of George Lewis’s sweet, soulful, lyrical clarinet. On each song Lewis’s singing phrases seemed to tell the story of his life, of the lives of his people, and strangely, of my life. It seemed that my whole existence had been in darkness and now a light suddenly
came on. I listened to that record for hours and hours and played along with it as best as I could. That recording seemed to bring an even greater spiritual understanding to all that I had seen and experienced in the brass band. It made New Orleans become much clearer in a way that is hard to verbalize. It also planted seeds that made me want to learn more about the history of this powerful music and the special souls who made it.

By the late 1970s it was becoming apparent that several changes were in the wind. Folk-based music like New Orleans style jazz is a functional expression of contemporary community life, and it cannot exist in a vacuum. There had always been changes in the sound of local jazz, which absorbed outside musical influences from swing, modern jazz, and rhythm & blues, yet the overall sound of brass bands had retained the same dominant traditional character throughout most of the 20th century. The middle and late 1970s turned out to be a transition period, after which the look, sound, and feel of brass bands and the parade traditions around them would forever be radically different. As the brass bands continued to function in social club parades, older players steadily disappeared, and a younger generation of musicians increasingly introduced new concepts that would soon end the reign of authentic traditional jazz and replace it with a new revolutionary modern brass band style. This change did not happen overnight, but was gradual.

On the classic 1958 recording of the Young Tuxedo Brass Band, *Jazz Begins*, details like John Brunious, Sr.’s blaring high note bebop trumpet phrases and the inclusion of a rhythm & blues hit, “Feels So Good,” were stylistic departures, but they did not alter the dominant traditional brass band sound. During my time in Doc Paulin’s band, more and more changes of sound, look, and attitude began to appear on the streets. Many of the departures from tradition began with Dejan’s Olympia Brass Band. As the most popular and visible of all brass bands during the late 1960s into the 90s, the Olympia became a major catalyst for change. The Olympia had an unprecedented success for a New Orleans brass band. They were in television commercials. They played at nationally televised sports events. They played major conventions and concert halls, were featured in movies, recorded several times and had their records played over the radio, did international tours, and even played at the White House.

Though they remained the most popular group for jazz funerals, a full schedule of outside jobs meant that the Olympia performed less and less in social club parades. Their success in the commercial tourist world and emerging role as performers at concerts and stage shows constantly challenged old brass band standards and values. As a result, the Olympia became the first to appear in t-shirts, wear pins on their hats, and use flashier-colored uniforms. They were also responsible for reducing the standard size of traditional brass bands from 10-12 pieces to 7 or 8; and they further altered the traditional brass band sound when they introduced singing into the previously all-instrumental performances. Though technically led by saxophonist Harold Dejan, the Olympia’s musical and business direction was in the hands of the assistant leader, rhythm & blues trumpeter Milton Batiste. The younger man, less familiar and concerned with traditional jazz repertoire and style, began to feature a number of rhythm & blues songs, which he sometimes sang, like the Professor Longhair classic “Go to the Mardi Gras” and the Smokey Johnson hit “It Ain’t My Fault.” Batiste also usually played the tambourine at the same time as trumpet, adding to the different flavor of the Olympia’s sound.

At the 1980 funeral for Professor Longhair, I was playing a dirge with the Young Tuxedo as the body was exiting the Majestic Funeral Home on Dryades Street. Suddenly the Olympia, led by Batiste, rudely cut in with an up-tempo version of “Go to the Mardi Gras” and began marching down the street followed by a throng of “second liners.” That was the beginning of what has now become standard in today’s funerals - bands playing fast songs and non-hymns before the body is released, or “cut
The dye had been cast for new groups to form and mimic the Olympia, or to consider the concept of changing or shaping a brass band to fit their own needs, desires, musical tastes, and abilities. The Majestic Brass Band, a non-union group consisting of several ex-Paulin members and other younger players, became popular on the streets and began to play contemporary pop songs like the 1970s Loggins & Messina hit “Your Mamma Don’t Dance and Your Daddy Don’t Rock and Roll” with rhythm & blues-style horn riffs and solos. The first radically innovative new group, young trumpeter Leroy Jones’s Hurricane Brass Band - formed in 1974 from the first generation of Danny Barker’s youth group, the Fairview Brass Band – began appearing in social club parades more frequently. They wore t-shirts, blue jeans, and no hats. Jones’s band developed a repertoire of songs that featured unified swing-style horn section riffs playing under his blaring bebop style trumpet lead and solos, which seemed to herald the dawn of a new era. Olympia Brass Band tuba player Anthony “Tuba Fats” Lacen developed another very influential change. Sometimes when Doc Paulin’s band came to a rest stop, the groups ahead of us would already be there getting refreshments. Lacen and his tuba were too large to fit comfortably into the chaos of the crowded small bars and homes. Staying outside with the riled-up “second liners,” he began to play a two bar solo tuba riff over and over, to which the crowd played percussion and danced. Other musicians eventually joined in, and the hip, modern-sounding riff became the basis for several songs. Lacen had already been modifying the tuba style from a two-beat approach to a smoother four-beat rhythm. He once told me that he was trying to sound like a string bass for when the Olympia band played concerts and small band jobs. With these actions Lacen pioneered a new style, which brought the tuba to a more prominent role as a lead and solo instrument. His innovative tuba style is the original model for the driving lead bass sound commonly heard in dozens of contemporary brass bands.

In 1977 we started to hear talk on the street of a new group called the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, which was causing quite a stir by wearing street clothes and playing a completely new style unlike any other brass band. Eventually I encountered them at a club parade. Their sound was tight and organized. Their tempos were very fast. Their songs and style were a mixture of older and original songs that blended modern jazz, rhythm & blues, brass bands, Mardi Gras Indian chants, and school marching band influences. At first they received mixed reviews in the community. Some found the Dirty Dozen’s pace too fast for “second line” dancing. But The Dozen captured the voice and spirit of a new generation in a way that none of the conventional brass bands could have.

Many traditional bands had settled into a static repertoire of limited songs that were basically played the same way time after time. The Dirty Dozen was fresh, hot, young, and exciting. The group’s obvious rebellion against tradition expressed the sentiments of a post Civil Rights Era generation challenging established values and seeking change. This was the evolution of the brass band: an update of tradition with a contemporary sound and attitude. No matter how some may have felt about it, the Dirty Dozen gained widespread acceptance among the throngs of young “second liners” and social club members. Soon they got swept up in the larger outside arena of touring, stage shows, major label recording, television appearances, and international success. The Dirty Dozen and their influence were here to stay, and the New Orleans brass band tradition was forever changed.

The harsh realities of inner-city life, which included such diverse factors as the struggle for upward mobility, a failing educational system, an influx of drugs and guns, and increasing crime would also affect local traditions in the late 1970s. The great majority of social club members, musicians, and “second liners” were peaceful and honest people who
attended parades to greet friends, bond socially with others, participate in tradition, or just have a good time. However, the freedom and openness created by massive mobile crowds also attracted a small criminal-minded element which used the cover provided by the music and thousands of cheering dancers to commit a variety of crimes – from theft and assault to drug dealing and murder. For some reason the usually limited parade-related violence seemed to escalate during the 1979 season. In one club parade there were several shootings that happened near Doc Paulin’s band. I remember hearing “pop, pop, pop” and seeing people running, ducking, falling, screaming, and stampeding to get out of the way. I remember seeing one man who had been shot being carried by two men who dropped him inside the door of a nearby hospital. I could never forget the small red hole in the center of his white t-shirt or his pained facial expression. Later that evening the man died, and I struggled with serious questions as to how something so positive and uplifting as a community parade could become the background for such tragedy and disrespect.

By the summer of 1979 I had graduated from Xavier University, received a master’s degree from Tulane University, and was working on a doctorate there in Spanish. I saw my few monthly musical engagements with Doc as a pleasant change and relief from my demanding studies. Though I didn’t see the connection then, an important part of my jazz education resulted “accidentally” from my graduate school experiences at Tulane. Not only did I develop research, lecture, and writing skills in the Spanish department that would become part of my jazz world later on, but also I took advantage of the many resources at Tulane’s Jazz Archive and from its curator, Dick Allen. Allen knew a lot about jazz history and recordings. He was a friend to scores of living jazz pioneers, some of whom he introduced me to. At the archive I was able to hear hard-to-find recordings, listen to dozens of interviews, read jazz books, and find out more about obscure clarinet players and bands. The more I learned about New Orleans jazz, the more I became obsessed with wanting to learn more and play more.

One day I heard the sound of a brass band playing near the Tulane student center and approached it to see the Young Tuxedo with some of the younger musicians I had befriended, like Gregory Stafford and Joseph Torresano. They introduced me to the band leader, Herman Sherman, who invited me to sit in the next time they came to campus, which I did. Another time, near the end of a long, difficult linguistics class, I thought my mind was slipping when a beautiful funeral dirge came to my ears. After the class I followed the sound, only to discover the Eureka Brass Band outside of the Newcomb Chapel, playing a funeral for a Tulane professor. By that time I knew that the Eureka had been the standard bearer for traditional brass bands since the 1920s. I knew that they had been the first regular brass band to record. I had practiced along with their records. My mother had told me stories about seeing the Humphrey brothers playing in their uptown neighborhood in the 1930s and 40s. And now, here before my eyes were these jazz legends and newfound heroes of mine, Percy and Willie Humphrey, Louis Nelson, Jerome Greene, Emmanuel Paul, George “Kid Sheik” Colar, and Cie Frazier. I never heard any live band play so beautifully. They did several old dirges using written scores, which had been pasted onto cardboard. That turned out to be the very last jazz funeral played by the old Eureka Brass Band, and likely the last one in which an authentic band used written scores to play dirges. I had witnessed the end of another era of New Orleans musical traditions.

In the end, it was a combination of the desire to play in small “sit-down bands” with some of the dozens of remaining older musicians (who were all union members), my disgust over increasing parade violence, and the feeling that I was ready to embark on another phase of life and music that led to the tough decision to quit Doc Paulin’s band and join the musicians’ union. Doc took the news as a kind of betrayal: “Go ‘head. I guess you gonna be one of dem dirty fellas now.” I said, “I’m not like that Doc.”
kind of fussed angrily: “You **better** be like that if you wanna make it out there. This is a dirty business. Ain’t dat right?” Then he laughed and frowned at the same time. For four years he had been my teacher, mentor, and guide. At that point it was uncertain if I would ever play again or have any kind of career in jazz. But I had “graduated” from the “Doc Paulin School,” and was leaving with the best hands-on education and preparation in traditional jazz, local culture, and life that a young upstart musician could get.

Though we didn’t talk for nearly a year, Doc Paulin and I had become family. Our mutual respect would bring us together many more times over the years. In 1980 I advised Alden Ashforth and David Wyckoff on the best of Doc’s songs to record on an album that they were doing for Smithsonian/Folkways records. Though I wouldn’t be on the recording, it would be an important historical document that needed to be the best that it could. By that time, Doc was using more of his sons, who, along with him made up seventy percent of the band. In addition to Aaron on bass drum, Rickey on snare drum (he later switched to clarinet), and Dwayne on tuba (he later switched to trombone), who all were regular members when I left, he was now using Scott on trombone, Roderick on tenor saxophone, and Phillip on trumpet. I would see Doc and talk to him every year at jazzfest. In between I sometimes called him and we would talk like in old times. Whenever he saw anything about me in the press or on television he would call and proudly give his stamp of approval: “White, I see dat you’re doing all kinds of things now. You’re all right there. You always was a smart fella. How you get all that going on? You must be one of dem crooked fellas now.” Then he would let out his characteristic Creole laugh. “You’re doin’ all right there.”

Though age and the growing popularity of younger non-union, modern-style brass bands lessened some of his work for social clubs, Doc continued to play many of his regular jobs and parade into the mid 1990s. He was featured on the 1996 recording by his sons’ new group, *The Paulin Brothers Jazz Band: The Tradition Continues*. Doc Paulin’s last public performance was at the 2004 New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival when he was the city’s oldest active jazz musician at the age of 97. The last two times I saw Doc were in 2007 at events given in his honor. One was a special concert at the Contemporary Arts Center, where several of us Paulin Band alumni played with his sons’ brass band and told stories about Doc’s unique personality and sense of humor. Later that summer he was given a 100th birthday party by his family. Several of us played with the Paulin Brothers as a large crowd of his family, friends, musicians, and long-time clients, like members of the Corner Club, were in attendance. Doc’s strong body had held up well, but his memory had faded in recent years, and he had settled into a pleasant meditative state of consciousness. That day he didn’t talk, but hummed happily with a pleasant smile on his face.

Then in November of 2007 one of Doc’s sons called to say the he had died quietly in his sleep. A few days later I found myself standing at the corner of Washington Avenue and Lasalle Street – the spot where many of our parades had begun. It all looked so familiar, but yet was very strange. There were about sixteen musicians dressed in black suits and hats that read DOC PAULIN. It seemed like a homecoming, but Doc’s smile, his preaching, and his singing trumpet were loudly absent. The neighborhood that for decades had normally been crawling with people waiting to “second line” was empty, quiet, and barren. In 2005, flooding associated with Hurricane Katrina had devastated the area, leaving blocks of ruined and abandoned homes, wrecked businesses and churches, and empty shells of the Magnolia Housing Project.

As the band struck up a tune and walked toward St. Katherine Drexel (formerly Holy Ghost) Church on Louisiana Avenue, the instruments echoed loudly through the empty streets and abandoned buildings. Doc’s services drew a large crowd and about two dozen musicians, who all dressed appropriately and played in a traditional manner. The funeral had an air of dignity that is rarely seen today and
would have made Doc very proud. The slow hymns played on the way to nearby St. Vincent’s Cemetery sang out ever so sweetly – resonating through the hollowed-out buildings and seeming to highlight the loss of Doc Paulin and the end of an era in New Orleans music. The final uptempo songs at the conclusion of the service brought the usual joy at the thought of Doc’s being at eternal peace, but they also seemed to optimistically signal that what he created would live on through his sons and all the musicians that he had touched.

Many solely credit Danny Barker for spearheading the explosion of new brass bands that took place during the 1980s and led to today’s active scene. In 1970 Barker’s noble attempts to keep the jazz tradition alive and help young kids to learn about their heritage resulted in his forming the Fairview Baptist Church Christian Brass Band. The first generation of the band consisted of teenagers, like Leroy Jones, Gregg Stafford, and Lucien Barbarin, who all became important players on the New Orleans scene. As they got older and sought more professional gigs, Jones formed the Hurricane Brass Band, some members of which went on to form the Dirty Dozen in 1977. The Dozen was a major influence on the Rebirth Brass Band, founded in the early 80s. Those two groups shaped the modern brass band sound and inspired the formation and style of dozens of contemporary brass bands today. At the same time that I was with Doc Paulin, I also played with the second generation of the Fairview on weekends in the French Market for tips, and for a few other events, from 1976-79. These were the only two ways that many inexperienced young musicians got a chance to play and develop in the 1970s.

Though he is sometimes overlooked, the legacy of Doc Paulin in New Orleans music and culture is profound and immeasurable. The contributions of Danny Barker are great and cannot be denied, but it was Doc Paulin who sought out, trained, developed, and employed scores of younger players for several decades. Many of the musicians who started with Doc have filled the ranks of several current brass bands; while others have gone on to successful careers in traditional jazz and other styles. The Paulin Brothers Jazz Band remains a popular and active group that now includes some third generation Paulins and blends the contemporary brass band sound with the flavor of the more traditional style of jazz.

After joining the musicians’ union in 1979 I entered another level of experiences, apprenticeship, and development. I began to play with several other brass bands and small jazz combos. I still played in many jazz funerals and church parades, but most of my “second line” days were over. The result of my spiritual experience with that first George Lewis record led to a continuation of my “schooling” in New Orleans jazz through a long-term association with dozens of still active contemporaries of Lewis and Doc who were born between the late 1890s and 1910, like Chester Zardis, Percy Humphrey, George “Kid Sheik” Colar, Danny Barker, Louis Nelson, “Kid Thomas” Valentine, Sweet Emma Barrett, Cie Frazier, Louis Barbarin, Willie Humphrey, Emmanuel Sayles, Emmanuel Paul, Narvin Kimball, Ernest “Kid” Milton, Milford Dolliole, Harold Dejan, Jeanette Kimball, Sadie Goodson, Raymond Burke, Joseph Thomas, Paul Barnes, Preston Jackson, Worthia Thomas, and several others. These musicians became my friends, mentors, teachers, and eventual band mates on hundreds of jobs over the next several years. Each one of them, like Doc Paulin, would endow me with a part of their spirit and being that remains a motivating factor in my life to this day.

The very fulfilling and rewarding life in jazz that I have had for over thirty-five years has continued to teach and challenge me. It has forced me to keep growing, and made me more appreciative each day of the blessings and gifts that God has bestowed on me. The experience of knowing Doc Paulin and working under his wisdom and guidance during those years provided a strong foundation without which there would have been little to build upon. Because of him I got to experience jazz in its
natural environment, among people who not only understood the music and lived the music, but also were the music.

My success as a musician and band leader have been due in part to my years in Doc Paulin’s band and from being able to constantly draw from a wealth of lessons learned from that experience. The old man was so tough and strong-willed that it seemed like he would never die. And in a way he didn’t. Every time one of today’s more traditionally oriented brass bands strikes up a tune, every time his sons and grandsons play, whenever musicians are influenced by those who he influenced, and whenever I play my clarinet, Doc Paulin lives through his legacy.

In 2008 I released the cd Blue Crescent, a recording of mostly my original songs that is both a nostalgic look back and an attempt to contribute to New Orleans jazz with new songs based on traditional jazz principles and inspiration from life’s experiences. On it is a song dedicated to Doc’s memory, “King of the Second Line.” It sums up his unique presence, trumpet playing, and leadership during those many years when he could be regarded as a “king” of community brass band processions:

KING OF THE SECOND LINE

Boy he sure played fine each and everytime
He’s the King of the Second Line
He played so good each day in his special way
He’s the King of the Second Line

And when he blew the crowd sure grew
And they danced and jumped for hours all in time
He made his trumpet say each and every day
I’m the King of the Second Line

He played for many years through many funeral tears
He’s the King of the Second Line
His big fat trumpet sound rang for miles around
He’s the King of the Second Line

He played the blues and marches too
And he taught many young ones just like me and you
On his departure day the Heavens made a way
For the King of the Second Line

I was born on May 4, 1933, in Goshen, Indiana, a small town near the Michigan border and about halfway between Chicago and Toledo. It is an area with many resort lakes, and Bix Beiderbecke played at some of those places in the 1920s, which was, of course, before my time.

My grandfather, August “Gus” Marquis (pronounced Markee) was a builder and master craftsman. He made violins and had a small group that played for friends and family. My Dad, Wilfred “Bill” Marquis recalled rolling up the rugs in the living room of the house for dancing. Many years later I discovered a four foot high victrola with records of the Five Pennies led by Red Nichols, so I guess there was a connection to the music that many years ago. That house is still in the family, and my sister Shirley Marquis Swartz still lives there. It has been home for nearly 100 years.

Shirley is a year-and-a-half older than me, and she was pretty and hip. In the 1940s she got me listening to bands like Stan Kenton and Woody Herman. About 1947 or so, I borrowed a book from the Goshen College Library titled *Shining Trumpets* by Rudi Blesh. I learned who King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, and other pioneers were, and I subscribed to a record club, Jazz Panorama, and began buying some historical items. I found out later it was a “pirate” label.

Around that time my neighbor, Roger Stemen, who was aware of my interest, called and said, “I just bought a 78 of Louis Armstrong. You should come over and listen to it.” I listened and became hooked. One of my early kicks was buying “Satchmo at Symphony Hall” and enjoying the music, plus Louis talking between sets and introducing the sidemen, i.e., Jack Teagarden, Fatha Hines, Barney Bigard, Sid Catlett, Arvell Shaw, and vocalist Velma Middleton. My folks had a “rec room” in the basement, and within a short time a bunch of us were playing poker, drinking a beer or two (before our legal age), and listening to Louis.

In my senior year in high school (1951), I was “shot down” by my mother, Mary Ellen, because our class got nailed for “substituting beer for soft drinks at our annual class picnic.” Louis was going to appear at the Blue Note in Chicago, and I wanted to go, but was told, “No.” A friend, two years older, Harry Miller, whom my mother respected, talked her into letting me go. “I will watch out for him,” Harry promised. We went, and between sets I wandered back to a long hallway. There was a big black man standing there, and I was about to return to the table when he said, “Do you want to talk to Louis?” I did, and entered his dressing room. I saw my hero dabbing his lips and holding his horn. I was a bit perplexed, but asked, “How are you coming with your book?” He was writing his autobiography. “How did you know I was writing a book?” And a conversation began. I do not remember what we talked about, only that it was just Louis and me. He called each of his sidemen in and introduced us. Later, his wife Lucille stopped by, and he said, “Lucille, this is one of the cats.” Being called a cat by Louis was something else. Before time to get back to the stage, the club...
photographer came by. I asked if we could get a picture. We did. I asked him if I owed him anything, and he said, “No, I will just take it off my income tax.”

On returning to the table, I was asked, “Where in the hell have you been?” “Talking to Louis.” “Sure you were.” A little later the photographer dropped off the picture of me and Louis. “If you buy me a beer, I will introduce you to my friend Louis.” That was one of the biggest thrills in my life. The signed picture hangs on my wall, and Harry Miller and I stay in touch to this day. For Louis to have fifteen minutes to spend with a high school kid says a lot about the man. He spent time with kings, the Pope, millionaires, etc., but he also had time for me.

Shortly thereafter, I was in the Navy, stationed in Boston during the Korean Police Action. I saw Louis at George Wein’s Storyville, and he re-signed the picture. I was stationed on an ice-breaker, the USS Atka out of Boston, until mid 1953. We spent a lot of time in the Arctic and North Atlantic, but while in port we got to know the Boston Jazz scene. The Copley Plaza Hotel had two night clubs – Storyville and Mahogany Hall, run by Mr. Wein. One night I saw Sidney Bechet. Between sets, his break was in the basement. I talked to him as he smoked a cigarette and signed his autograph. Years later I realized why he moved to France. No dressing room for him in the States. I also met Muggsy Spanier there and began a Christmas-card friendship with him and his wife Ruth that lasted many years.

On Massachusetts Avenue was a night club named the Savoy. I mastered the subway system and spent many nights there. I got to

With Louis Armstrong at Blue Note in Chicago, 1952. Just graduated from high school.
spend time with Pops Foster, Freddie Moore, Vic Dickenson, Wilber and Sidney De Paris, and others. One night Paul Barbarin and his band from New Orleans appeared there, and I got their autographs, little realizing that ten years later they would become my close friends in New Orleans. Down the street was a joint called the Hi Hat. I spent time with Slim Gaillard (the vout oroonie man); also some time with Josh White, who introduced me to a drink – scotch and milk!

On September 7, 1955, I was discharged; got home to Goshen the next morning, threw my sea bag in my closet and walked a few blocks to Goshen College to begin the next four years of my life. At the time, I thought I would get my degree and go to law school. In a short time, I wrote an assigned essay, and my English professor, Dr. John Fisher, called me in and said, “You have writing talent. Why not get your degree in English and think about law later?”

While at Goshen College, I lived with my folks nearby on Gra-Roy Drive. I got back with old friends from high school days and, of course, my family. An old pal, Bill Sheffer and I caught Louis Armstrong again. One day at a resort in Michigan we talked to Velma Middleton at the bar. She put her name on the back of Bill’s driver’s license and said, “If you are ever arrested in Gary, show them this.” Later, we caught Louis at the Notre Dame Field House. When he walked on the stage, the place erupted like a football game. He had not even played a note! I guess I saw Louis a few other times, but nothing like at the Blue Note.

I had become a corresponding member of the New Orleans Jazz Club around 1950, and I renewed my membership. Every Sunday night, their WWL radio broadcast was available in Goshen, and a number of Goshen Jazz lovers dug it. I also began receiving the New Orleans Jazz Club’s Second Line magazine. I suppose around this time I learned of the New Orleans musicians who were still doing things. George Lewis was one. I bought an album – “Bunk Johnson: The Last Testament of a Great New Orleans Jazzman.” I can say it is one of my favorite recordings to this day.

I finished Goshen College in 1959 and had no idea where I was going to go or what I would do. A friend from the Navy, Ray Zunt, called me from Cleveland with an idea for a possible job. I went to Cleveland with my uncle Biscuit Garman and was interviewed at American Greetings. A week later I was hired as an idea writer for greeting cards. In a short time, I was moved up to the Hi Brow Studio. Contemporary cards were something new. They were the long, slim cards with humor. I began working with a group of about 12 people who did them. A lot of those co-workers eventually made it in TV, as writers or directors of Ziggy, Laugh-In, and Three’s Company. I wrote hundreds of cards, and the best seller was: “I think of you at night and kiss my pillow.” Inside: “Now I’m in love with my pillow.”

I saw and met some Jazz greats on Short Vincent Street, including Red Allen. The most important event in Cleveland was when the original bands from Preservation Hall came up to the Empress Room of the Tudor Arms Hotel. They were not yet under the auspices of Preservation Hall. I was there almost every night. Bands like Kid Sheik, Kid Howard, Punch Miller, and many sidemen stayed in the hotel. I brought my record player and a case of beer, and they told me about Jazz in New Orleans as of today. I learned a lot.

In the meantime, a girl I had dated at Goshen College, Jo Anne Yoder, had been given a scholarship to get her masters in Social Work at Tulane. While spending Christmas with my family in Goshen in 1961, I took Jo Anne to dinner and asked how she liked New Orleans. “I love it.” I told her that a musician, Manny Sayles, had said to me, “Don, what are doing in Cleveland? You belong in New Orleans.” I told her I was thinking about it, and she encouraged me to make the move.

I left Goshen with a one-way ticket on a bus to New Orleans with about $100 in my pocket. I had no idea what was awaiting me. I arrived on Mardi Gras weekend 1962 and knew
I was home. Jo Anne and I went to Preservation Hall, where Punch Miller was playing. Sat down on the floor in front of the band, Punch stopped playing, raised his horn and said, “You are home.” And that began my life in New Orleans.

I stayed with Jo Anne at 1217 Royal Street over Mardi Gras and learned some things about the city. In short time I learned how to pronounce street names and wonder how long my $100 would last. I moved to the corner of St. Peter and Dauphine, in a room for $10 a week. It was close to Preservation Hall, and, as I heard the music, went down there and became friends with Allan and Sandra Jaffe. I also found Dixieland Hall on 522 Bourbon and another place on St. Louis Street run by the man who began Preservation Hall, Ken Mills.

I ran into a lot of musicians I had met in Cleveland and learned some New Orleans language. For instance, “Where ya at?” I thought they were asking me where I lived. I would get a blank stare when I described my address. Another thing was, “I’m gonna pass by your house.” I said, “If you pass by, stop in.” I did not realize “passing by” meant they were going to stop in.

I had been hanging out at Buster Holmes Restaurant on the corner of Burgundy and Orleans. Buster said, “You are always welcome.” All the Black musicians hung out there: Kid Sheik, Kid Howard, Punch, Joe Watkins, Slow Drag and his wife, and many others. The musicians came in before their gigs and afterwards. Buster set up tables for them with a bottle of whiskey, water, and whatever. I regret that I did not have a tape recorder to gather what was said. I did go home and try to write down what I remembered.

I got to meet drummer Abbie “Chinee” Foster, who had been out of music for many years, but was making a comeback. He took me around the original Storyville area and knew where all of the original places were. Just as he was getting back playing, he died in a French Quarter street. Allan Jaffe and I were pallbearers at his funeral.

With a very limited income, I took a job at The Times-Picayune as a proofreader late in 1962. It was a late job – 4 pm until midnight, so it gave me time during the day to do some research. Most of those days were spent just hanging out at Jazz places. Bourbon Street had maybe ten such places. $20 would get me into all of them. Now $20 would mean one place.

In the 1960s a number of musicians from around the world came to New Orleans to play the music they loved and to learn from the old timers. Among them were Barry Martyn, Clive Wilson, Andrew Hall, Les Muscutt, Chris Burke, and others from England; Orange Kellin and Lars Edegran from Sweden; Yoshio and Keiko Toyama from Japan. Most of them stayed and made important contributions.

To get back to Bourbon Street, in the 1960s there were a number of places featuring traditional Jazz, and no T-shirt shops. Among them were the Famous Door, the Blue Angel, and the Paddock. Pete Fountain and Al Hirt had clubs. There were also some banjo joints. At some point, the Maison Bourbon opened, corner of Bourbon and St. Peter. The outside sign in very large letters said “Preservation of Jazz.” I always felt that they were trying to use the “Preservation” to compete with Preservation Hall. They did their own thing, however, and remain open today.

I hung out with and got to know a lot of New Orleans musicians and their families. They were my best friends; took me around and
made me feel at home. Among them were Frog Joseph, Kid Sheik, Kid Howard, Punch Miller, Slow Drag, George Lewis, Jim Robinson, Alvin Alcorn, and the Barbarin brothers – Paul and Louis. There were many others.

My night-time job gave me time to get around during the day. I was able to spend valuable time at the Tulane Jazz Archive and go through many oral histories. I walked through Buddy Bolden’s old neighborhood (around 2309 First Street). I was amazed to run into people who remembered Buddy, his mother, and his sister, from so many years ago. Nelson Joseph’s Shaving Parlor was still on the corner. One day, a block away, I met a lady standing by her gate. I told her what I was doing, and she said, “I preferred John Robichaux’s music, but I belonged to a young girl’s organization called the Blue Ribbon Social Club. Buddy Bolden played. They took their hats off and were very polite.” I asked her when that was, and she said, “1904, the year before I got married.” She assured me no one else was left from that club. A bit later I met Alvin Alcorn’s mother, who knew Buddy’s mother and sister. We got talking and found that she had been a member of that same club. A real thrill was getting those two ladies together after almost 70 years.

In time I wrote some record liner notes and a few articles. I began to think I would write a book about the whole history of Jazz! A man, John Bentley, moved to New Orleans from California, and we got to be friends. He was a piano player and co-editor of Jazz Report magazine. We decided we were going to collaborate on a book about New Orleans Jazz. After a while we had completed five chapters on pre-Jazz history. Next was the early days, which meant Papa Jack Laine and Buddy Bolden. For some reason he chose Laine and I chose Bolden. I did about twenty pages on Bolden, looked it over, and felt it was only what other folks had already written about him, and that was, “He blew a loud horn, drank a lot, had a lot of girl friends, and went insane.” Then a doctor pointed out to me that, “If insanity was involved, he would have been arrested.” I went to the New Orleans Police Department archives and began checking through precinct records. One day I found an arrest record for Buddy Bolden. He was a certain age and a musician. Several weeks later, and a year from the original record, he was ten years older, unemployed, and illiterate. Something happened. It was about this time I started having the idea of abandoning our original book idea and concentrating on Bolden. Fortunately, John offered his support. I must admit I had no general plan of attack and was frequently discouraged and did not work on it steadily.

In 1965 I rented my first unfurnished apartment, on the third floor of 627 Ursulines Street. At one time Pete Fountain was my landlord, at $85 a month. For a Christmas present, he gave a month’s rent free! I shipped my books and records down from Indiana and began to feel at home. In July 1966 I moved to the ground floor of an original family home built in 1910 by the Greco family. I rented from Mrs. Greco, who with her husband raised their family. The rent was $90 a month.

I left the night job at The Times-Picayune in 1973 and took a two-month sabbatical, including a month back in Goshen. My brother Tom was president of the Elkhart County Fair, the largest county fair in the state. They featured outstanding entertainment and asked if I could recommend a New Orleans group to be there in July. I did, and went up with Louis Cottrell and band: Alvin Alcorn, Frog Joseph, Louis Barbarin, Placide Adams, Walter Lewis, and vocalist Blanche Thomas. They did two sets, and then we adjourned to the Holiday Inn for a “private” party. Over 300 friends and relatives showed up. The band played until 3 am. A few cousins passed the hat with much success. Louis later told me, “That is the best gig we ever had.”

When I returned to New Orleans in August, I was approached by Jim Monaghan, Sr., owner of several French Quarter bars. He told me he had taken over a former Flamenco bar next to Preservation Hall and wanted to open a late-hour Jazz joint called “Easy Eddie’s.” “Would you be interested in being the manager?” I eagerly accepted, little knowing
what I was getting myself into. What it meant was long, all-night hours behind the bar instead of the more favorable position – in front of it.

Easy Eddie’s was a fun, popular place with very good food and a speak-easy atmosphere. Drinks were served in Mason jars. Things began to happen when the other places ended musically. A lot of musicians including Pete Fountain’s sidemen and the Preservation Hall stars sat in. The piano-playing ladies from Pat O’Brien’s took their one-hour breaks there, and they kept the cash register ringing. The place offered membership cards to musicians, which gave them half price on food and drinks. Eventually there were about 150 such cards, including one for Bette Midler.

One time stood out for me. About 4 am, I was there by myself when a couple from Texas dropped in. A bit later, Allen Toussaint came in and asked if he could play the piano. “Of course!” Half an hour later Wallace Davenport came by and went to his car to get his trumpet. Those two played until the sun came up. The Texans kept giving them $20 bills while demolishing a bottle of Johnny Walker Black. Then one night multi-instrumentalist Rahsaan Roland Kirk broke things up for a while.

Eddie’s only lasted a little over a year. Not making enough money. I think Monaghan always regretted the half-price cards. Many good memories, but few other people remember the place.

During this time I was writing for *The Second Line* and *Jazz Report*, plus some liner notes and a few things on Bolden, but was running out of inspiration. Not many things were turning up. I took a menial job at the New Orleans Public Library on Tulane Avenue, mostly to pay bills and have time to do research. And write.

Unexpectedly, the Library opened up an entire new field of research information. In the past, official city and state archival documents were “out of bounds” for researchers. When
these were given to the library, I was in on the ground floor. Marriage certificates, obits, special licenses, and most importantly, police department files on all kinds of activities. Librarian Wayne Everard, God bless him, kept me informed when anything of possible interest to me came in. Also, at this time the library began putting all New Orleans newspapers on microfilm, and I had access to the originals before they were trashed. That allowed me to amass a vast amount of material on the original printed page.

I also continued to hit the Tulane Jazz Archive. Much help from Dick Allen and sometimes Curt Jerde. I also kept interviewing old-timers and seeking out Bolden-oriented locations.

It was 1976 when the director of LSU Press called and said my book had been accepted. The work was far from over. Pages of directions on footnoting, bibliography, etc., followed, and luckily I was assigned an editor, Mary Jane DiPiero. The book, *In Search Of Buddy Bolden – First Man of Jazz*, came out in fall 1978. To see it in bookstore windows and read the generous reviews was a thrill. It won the Louisiana Literary Award for 1978!

After the book came out, I was asked by Pinchpenny Press (at my Goshen College alma mater) if I had anything they could publish. I had kept a journal of my search for Bolden, and they put it out under the title, *Finding Buddy Bolden: The Journal of a Search for the First Man of Jazz*.

I was still working at the library when the book was published, but other things occurred that would dictate the rest of my work days. I had become a regular contributor to the *Second Line*, with much encouragement from editor Myra Menville. Tragically, Myra was on her death bed, but called and sent me a cassette asking if I would take over as editor with advice and encouragement. Myra had done an outstanding job in turning the publication from a mimeographed newsletter in 1950 into a 40-plus page slick publication. I told her I would do my best.

My first issue was Spring 1979 and was dedicated to Myra. Before she passed, she saw the issue and was pleased. “Now, what can we
do for you?” she asked. The New Orleans Jazz Club had just given its original Jazz Museum materials to the Louisiana State Museum, and the position of Jazz Curator was open. “I want that job,” I replied. Two days later, Louisiana State Museum Director Bob McDonald told me, “You have a one-year Federal grant to set up the Jazz Museum for us.”

At age 45, life began for me. I was an author, an editor, and now, a curator. It was a tremendous challenge, with many frustrations and little help from within the Louisiana State Museum. The Jazz Museum collection was piled into 500 boxes (unlabeled and miscellaneous). It was on two floors of the Pontalba Building at 529 St. Ann Street. The work was mostly sorting through the 500 boxes and organizing things by category. Fortunately, the New Orleans Jazz Club had donated many storage shelf units, which were a great help.

Although the entire collection was to be housed at the Old U. S. Mint, and a major Jazz Museum exhibit had to be planned, I was left alone, and numerous delays were experienced. There was a lot of media interest, but the first opening date was put off for over a year.

The Louisiana State Museum opened up a lot of world-wide adventures for me. The first was taking Louis Armstrong’s first cornet and the bugle he learned on to Tokyo for a Satchmo Festival organized by Toshiba Ltd., and my old friend Yoshio Toyama. Following that were similar events in Australia, London, Paris, Darmstadt, Brussels, Amsterdam, Cologne, Copenhagen, Hamburg, Stockholm, and Sao Paulo. Where the instruments went, I went. The collection and myself were treated royally. It was, indeed, a kick.

Within the States, I gave talks in Chicago, Atlanta, and Lincoln Center in New York City. There were many big moments as Jazz Curator; I met people from all over the world and spent time with celebrities at the Mint. One who stands out was Clint Eastwood, to whom I gave a private tour. I was amazed at his knowledge of Jazz.

One outstanding event that the Museum was vitally involved in was the issuance by the U. S. Postal Service of a commemorative stamp for Louis Armstrong on September 1, 1995. We bombarded the Postal Service with over 40,000 signatures from about 75 countries.

On September 6, 1996, just prior to retiring from the Louisiana State Museum, another long-time wish came to fruition. With the help of many others, a memorial stone was dedicated to Buddy Bolden in Holt Cemetery, near where he was buried in 1931. A Jazz funeral was held with the Olympia Brass Band and over 2,000 in attendance. Among them was Gertrude Bolden Tucker, Buddy’s granddaughter, from Chicago. We have remained in touch since then.

I retired on November 15, 1996. There was a fun party at the Palm Court. My sister and brother-in-law from Goshen were here, plus many old friends from over the years. George Finola, Scotty Hill, Ralph Johnson, Placide
Adams, Ernie Elly, and Walter Lewis provided the music. There were folks from as far away as Denmark and Sweden. Dick Allen, Jim Sefcik, and Placide Adams had some complimentary things to say. Then, Nina Buck led a second line through the place. Blue Lu Barker joined in, although in a wheel chair.

It took a while to realize I had put my lunch bucket and alarm clock away. If you are interested in what you feel comfortable with, you never retire. I became associated with the French Quarter Festival and Satchmo Fest, and I was appointed to a number of boards in the Jazz community. I continued to hang out at places. My favorite was and is the Palm Court, which is only four blocks from my house. “Nickel-a-Dance” is a favorite event, and today much good music is on Frenchman Street instead of Bourbon.

Today I concentrate on organizing my memorabilia and placing it in the proper archive. Tulane has many linear feet about Bolden, and the Louisiana State Museum and Historic New Orleans Collection are on my “to do” list.

Nothing to do with Jazz, but I published a book about the neighborhood I grew up in (Goshen). It is titled A Nifty Place to Grow Up. I did a thing on the Marquis family first cousins and got a bunch of us together for the first time since 1940.

What does the future hold? In the works is a book, An Illustrated History of the Palm Court. In conjunction with Nina Buck, it features bands, staff, and individuals who have contributed, plus some special events and memories. LSU Press has shown interest in an autobiography. That will take some time, going back over a lot of notes, pictures, etc. For about ten years Dan Pritzker has been working on a movie tentatively titled Bolden, and I have been a consultant. It is not a documentary, nor is it exactly biographical, but one million feet of film has to be edited down to 10,000 feet, and a date of 2011 has been predicted for opening.

In conclusion, I must say making a career from being a Jazz fan has been a real ball!
A Passport to History
by
Charles and Judy Piper

For most people, obtaining a passport is a rather ordinary process. However, the discovery I made at the age of 40 while going through that procedure was quite extraordinary, and has led to a wealth of knowledge as well as an awareness and appreciation of my family heritage.

I was born in Chicago in the mid-1940s. While I have few memories of my Chicago childhood, I can vividly recall spending time in the backyard of my grandparents, Wendell and Isabella MacNeal, while my grandfather fed the squirrels from his hand. When I was five years old my parents made a life-altering decision and moved to a small farm in the middle of Wisconsin. I was never told and have never been able to piece together the whole story of this transforming event, but you have to wonder what two people who were born in New Orleans and Detroit, and who spent 20 years of their married life in Chicago, were thinking when they packed up and moved to a farm in an isolated rural community. During the first few years my grandparents made a number of visits to the country to see us. I can still remember the aroma of Wendell’s Prince Albert pipe tobacco. He would save pennies for me and store them in his empty tobacco pouches. As a child in the country in the 1950s, I did not realize the uniqueness of an FM antenna installed on our roof to enable my grandfather to listen to opera. I spent many hours sitting by his chair while he smoked his pipe and listened to music - sometimes he would conduct. I always knew that my mother was born in New Orleans, that she was from a large family, and that my grandfather played the violin and viola in an orchestra in that southern city, but that was the extent of my knowledge of their background. Stories of life in New Orleans or even Chicago didn’t come up when I was young (at least not in my presence). However, we ate delicacies such as red beans and rice, gumbo, and jambalaya while living in the middle of Wisconsin (which was quite unusual to say the least). The roots of these family culinary traditions only became apparent to me much later in life.

Shortly after our move to Wisconsin, my much-older siblings all married and left the area, and I basically grew up as an only child. My parents always made education a priority, and following high school I enrolled at a nearby state university. After graduating with a biology degree, I married, and my wife Judy and I moved to the state of Washington where I attended graduate school. My post-doctoral work took us to Pennsylvania, and with the birth of our daughter my wife now stayed at home. Judy had a keen interest in genealogy, and during my mother’s extended visits they would spend hours in conversation about family. My mother was always eager to share stories about her childhood and family in New Orleans and readily provided as many...
names and dates as she could recall. She also contacted one of her sisters who furnished additional names, dates, and birth locations from her family bible.

Following completion of my post-doc in 1976, I took a position in Northern Virginia. In 1979 I made my first trip to New Orleans to attend a scientific meeting. Having learned that my mother did not have a birth certificate, my wife asked me to see if I could find one during my trip. The fact that there were no birth certificates available for anyone in my family did strike her as unusual, since everyone in her family had one. The final day of my conference I made a quick trip downtown to search for my mother’s birth certificate, but was told that birth records during that time-frame (1909) were not available.

In 1980 I took a position with a pharmaceutical company located north of Chicago. After many years, we were back in the Midwest and closer to our families. In the summer of 1985, a business issue developed that resulted in my having to go to Europe. As this was my initial trip overseas, I needed a passport. I had what I thought was a birth certificate, but I discovered that it simply was a birth record from the hospital in Chicago and not an official birth certificate. Things must have been rather informal in Wisconsin when I was growing up, as my hospital birth record (with my footprints) had previously been adequate for all of my school and legal documentation. A record was requested from Cook County, and it arrived at our house shortly thereafter. Judy opened it and immediately called me at work to exclaim, “Guess what it says on your birth certificate?” I had no idea what she could be referring to. She then told me that under the race designation, both of my parents were listed as “Negro.” I was taken aback! After all, for 40 years it had been taken for granted that I was Caucasian. There was no reason to believe otherwise: my parents were fair skinned, my sister had blond hair and blue eyes, my father had blue eyes, and I have hazel eyes. I had grown up in a community of northern European descendants, and I never considered the possibility that my family was any different. So I thought that it was just a mistake and that I would go to the Cook County courthouse and have it corrected. A trip to the courthouse, however, met with bureaucratic resistance. A subsequent call to my sister yielded the answer, “I’m not going there; you need to talk with your mother.” My mother was unwilling to discuss or give me any information regarding the newly discovered data on my birth certificate, other than to say, “Daddy never wanted you to know because he felt he was held back in his work.” She wouldn’t elaborate. An incident that occurred during a 1987 visit by my nieces confirmed that my mother was adamant about not discussing any racial issues. After a period of intense questioning, she finally said, “Let bygones be bygones,” and, “I am not going to talk about this anymore.” This response was completely out of character for her, and the family was put on alert that the topic was off limits.

A new dynamic was added when Judy and I attended a Cab Calloway performance in Chicago. Although I was aware that Cab was married to my mother’s sister Nuffie, I had assumed that it was a celebrity mixed marriage. I didn’t know much about Cab’s career other than that he was an entertainer. As a child in the mid-1950s, I remember seeing the Calloway family on the television show Person to Person, hosted by Edward R. Murrow and broadcast live from Cab’s home. To me it was just another boring adult show, but now I have to chuckle to imagine what was going on in my mother’s head. It just so happened that Wendell and Isabella, who were known to folks in our little country community, were living with Nuffie and Cab at the time. Isabella had a bit of a flair for the dramatic, and it would not have been out of character for her to make an entrance on the show. Since there were only a few channels available at that time, neighbors watching TV probably would have seen her, and my mother would have had some explaining to do.

We were anxious to meet Cab and his daughter Chris, who was performing with him that evening. We gave a note to the stage manager and took our seats up front and in the
middle of the large theater. My wife started a conversation with the person sitting next to her, an elegantly dressed African-American woman, by asking, “Do you know much about Cab Calloway?” The woman replied, “Oh yes, I know him very well. My brother is married to his wife’s sister.” My wife was stunned by the answer. She immediately turned to me and said, “I think that we are sitting next to one of your relatives.” We introduced ourselves and she replied, “Oh Chuckie, we finally meet.” She told us her name (Theresa) and introduced us to her husband. I immediately recognized their names from stories I had heard from my aunt and uncle (her brother), who were close to my parents and frequent visitors to the farm. I had always assumed that my uncle was Caucasian. I was quite surprised to learn otherwise upon meeting his sister. We could hardly believe the profound coincidence of how we happened to be seated next to each other in this large auditorium. They joined us backstage with the Calloways. It was a pleasure to finally meet Cab and Chris. They were both warm and gracious and inquired about my mother. Cab remarked that he remembered playing ball with me when I was a child in Chicago.

After our meeting with Cab, Theresa kindly invited us to their home. Later that evening she made a call to my mother. The conversation started with Theresa saying, “Guess who I have sitting here in my living room. You never wanted us to meet, but we did anyway!” We talked long into the night, and my wife and I came away with a better understanding of the complexity of pre-civil rights era racial issues and the impact they had on our family. I also gained some empathy for my mother’s reticence to discuss the “whole” family story.

After my aunt died in 1992, my mother received many family photos. What a treasure trove for us. There was a photo that said, “Papa’s birthplace 1438 Euterpe St, N.O. La.,” and a picture of the house where my mother grew up at 912 N. Derbigny Street, “in center of Creole town. Papa had it nice inside.” There was a graduation photo of Wendell’s youngest brother, Arthur Clement MacNeal. We subsequently found that he graduated from Yale University, was co-editor of the Chicago Whip newspaper, and served as president of the Chicago Chapter of the NAACP from 1933 to 1937. We also found a tintype of a man named Arthur Pelleman Williams. We were uncertain at that time of his family relationship. There were pictures of Wendell at various ages. One of particular interest showed him as a dapper young man standing next to a lion sculpture. The back of the photo read, “Wendell P. MacNeal, City Park, New Orleans, La.”

My wife joined me on my next business trip to New Orleans in 1993 and began a genealogy search. With my aunt’s old photos in hand, we located the Euterpe and Derbigny Street houses and took pictures. In the New Orleans Public Library we found a death certificate for Wendell’s father, James MacNeal, and death notices for other family members. We were surprised to find my grandfather’s name
in an Index Card File (no computers as yet) linked to Samuel Charters’s 1958 book, *Jazz: New Orleans 1885-1957*. In the book we were pleased to find information about Wendell and his brother James, along with a photo of them in the John Robichaux Orchestra. Although my mother had said that Wendell played in and also led an orchestra, the name Robichaux was never mentioned. We were excited to report our findings back to her, but were disappointed when her only reaction was, “Ohhh.” In retrospect, we believe she probably didn’t want to discuss the racial composition of the orchestra. Over the next decade we began to search for information about New Orleans jazz history. We located several books that mentioned the Robichaux Orchestra and the MacNeal brothers in connection with early jazz pioneers and legends. We began to develop an appreciation of the significance of the Robichaux orchestra in the pre-jazz era.

Twelve years would pass before we returned to the “Big Easy” in March 2005. A lot had transpired since our previous visit. Our knowledge had been expanded significantly due in large part to my wife’s in-depth research. By now I was eager to learn as much as possible about my relatives. My mother had said she had family members buried in St. Louis #1, and we wanted to visit the family tomb. We knew from computer searches that the Williams Research Center had cemeteries information. The Historic New Orleans Collection contained a name index compiled from the *1981 Survey of New Orleans Cemeteries*. We were surprised to find Wendell’s father James MacNeal listed as buried in the Lafayette #2 cemetery. A map of the cemetery and a photo of the tombstone were provided, along with the names of the people buried there. This list contained nine names, and most of them were not familiar to us. We wondered who all these people were. In particular, who were Prof. P. M. Williams, Mary H. Williams, Prof. Arthur P. Williams, and Sylvanie Francoz? We began researching the Williams family line and found that they were participants in a number of historical events that took place in the Northeast United States in the early 1800s.

We had definite goals set for our most recent visit to New Orleans in April 2010.

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The Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane University was at the top of our list. We met Lynn Abbott there, and I introduced myself by saying, “Wendell MacNeal was my grandfather.” He knew immediately to whom I was referring. We said that we were interested in sharing family pictures and information about the MacNeal brothers, as well as providing biographical data for the archive. Lynn listened attentively to my story and was excited to get copies of the MacNeal family pictures. He was generous with his time and with the information in the Jazz Archive, helping us to gain a fuller appreciation of the contributions of the early jazz pioneers.

The following day we had an appointment with Al Kennedy, the author of *Chord Changes on the Chalkboard*. Several pages of his book were devoted to Arthur Williams and the MacNeal brothers, but it wasn’t clear to us if he knew that the Williams and MacNeal families were connected. Al was happy to learn of this relationship, and he was especially pleased to see the tintype photo of Arthur P. Williams, the first person featured in Chapter 1 of his book. Through Al’s research we learned of the MacNeal brothers’ teaching careers and the significance of music in New Orleans schools.

After combing through the archives at Tulane, Dillard, and the University of New Orleans, our final goal was to determine if the Lion sculpture still existed in City Park. After some time driving around, I spied it in the distance as we were about to leave the park area. We celebrated by taking a picture of me in the same pose as Wendell’s in the photo that was taken about 100 years earlier. How gratifying to find that something had not changed!

Data and information from hundreds of hours of research on the computer; numerous vital records from across the country; visits to libraries and cemeteries; trips to New Orleans, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts; along with able and enthusiastic assistance from experts in each state and conversations with new-found relatives, have provided us with a good information base. From the census we discovered that the MacNeal and Williams families lived together for a number of years on Euterpe Street. This environment was undoubtedly a key factor in the musical development of the MacNeal brothers. We are learning about the educational and political issues that my relatives in New Orleans had to live with during and after Reconstruction. We discovered documentation of the remarkable social and educational contributions of Arthur and Sylvanie Williams. We found an unexpected link to the history of Norwich and Canterbury, Connecticut, via the pre-New Orleans lives of Pelleman and Mary Harris Williams. We have been inside the home at 1438 Euterpe Street and have found the Lion in City Park! There is still much more to learn and experience. That is the curse of genealogy: the more you know, the more you want to know!

My mother died in 2006 at the age of 96. Sadly, we are certain that she never knew the extent of her rich heritage. She knew more than she revealed to us (sometimes giving vague answers but never lying), but less than we have now discovered. She came from a long line of social activists and unsung heroes who did extraordinary things. In the last years of her life dementia lowered her defenses. Four months before her death she finally revealed to us that the grammar school she attended in New Orleans (Bayou Road School) was segregated. This was as close as she ever came to categorizing her racial make-up. Since both of my siblings predeceased our mother I never heard the story of “passing” over the Wisconsin state line. If by chance you are wondering what my siblings’ birth certificates said, we were also curious and sent for them in 2002. My blond-haired, blue-eyed sister, who was born in a hospital, had our parents noted as “Black” on her birth certificate. My brother, who had a darker complexion with black hair and brown eyes, and who was born at home, had our parents noted as “White”. I am conflicted by the realization that what my parents did in leaving behind family and all that they knew in Chicago was in large part for my benefit. Their action provided me unfettered opportunities based only on ability. On the other hand, I now realize that this
move resulted in lost opportunities to know and to interact with my aunts, uncles, and cousins. Hopefully, the historical facts will be discovered, but through the passing of time and of family members, I realize I have missed many experiences - both good and bad - that can never be reconstructed.

**Biographical Information on the MacNeal Brothers and Other Family Members**

**James Williams MacNeal**, son of James MacNeal and Pellemina Williams, and brother of Wendell, was born in New Orleans on December 23, 1876. He graduated from Straight University in May, 1894. James was a charter member of the Robichaux Orchestra and also played in the Onward Brass Band. In April 1896 he was appointed a teacher at Fisk School in New Orleans, and according to city directories, he was vice principal of the school (his uncle, Arthur P. Williams, was principal) from 1900-1903. During the Spanish-American War he took a leave of absence from Fisk School, and on June 24, 1898, he joined the 9th United States Volunteer Infantry serving as Chief Musician of the Regimental Band. He returned to Fisk after the war and married Olivia M. Baquie in New Orleans on July 23, 1900. Oscar Duconge was one of their witnesses. They had one son, Alvin. When James resigned from teaching in October 1903, he started working at the Post Office. On June 3, 1908 he married Isabel Beatrice Lewis in New Orleans, and a son, Milton, was born in 1909. Milton later became a member of the McKinney’s Cotton Pickers Band in Detroit. James worked for the Post Office until he moved to Detroit around 1918. He was a pharmacist in Detroit and died there in 1946.

**Wendell Phillips MacNeal** (named after the abolitionist) was born October 7, 1878. He graduated from Straight University in May 1896 and was appointed a teacher at Fisk
School in November 1898. He was a member of Prof. W. J. Nickerson’s Orchestra, which in 1899 made a tour through the north and east, giving exhibitions in New York and other large cities. He resigned from Fisk School in 1900, and from that time until 1927 he worked for the Post Office, in addition to being a member of the Robichaux Orchestra and teaching music. He and his brother James were officers on the board of the Local Federation of Negro Musicians Union when it was formed in 1902. Wendell married Isabella Wickham on July 27, 1904. Eight children were born to this marriage, though two died in infancy. Wendell moved to Chicago in 1927 and worked for the Post Office for about 10 years. He remained in Chicago until the 1950s, when he and Isabella went to live with their youngest daughter, Zulme (Nuffie), in New York. They returned to Chicago and lived with their son Wendell Jr. Isabella died in Chicago on March 13, 1962. Wendell then went to live with his eldest daughter, Nita, in California. He died in Temple City, Los Angeles County, California, on June 19, 1971, at the age of 92.

Various spellings of the surname have been used in published material on the MacNeal brothers. The family used McNeal until about 1900; after that, it has always been spelled MacNeal.

**Prof. P. M. Williams** (1816-1882) was Wendell’s grandfather, and husband of Mary Harris of Connecticut. Pelleman attended Amherst and Dartmouth Colleges in the early 1840s and was one of the vice presidents of the 1849 Connecticut State Convention of Colored Men. He taught African-American children in Connecticut and New York before heading to New Orleans in about 1864 to teach in schools newly established through the American Missionary Association and the Freedman’s Bureau. When Straight University (now Dillard) was formed in 1870, he was appointed principal of the Normal School. The school was burned to the ground by a mob in 1877. It was rebuilt, only to be burned again in 1891. In addition to being a well-known educator, Pelleman was a proficient vocalist and organist.

**Mary H. Williams**, Pelleman’s wife and Wendell’s grandmother, was the former Mary A. Harris. She was a student in Connecticut at the Prudence Crandall Academy, established in 1833 for “Young Ladies and Little Misses of Color” with the support of William Lloyd Garrison and other abolitionists. It was closed in 1834 due to harassment and several arson attempts. The building is now a museum and National Historic Landmark. The story of this first private academy for African-American women has been chronicled in several books, a play, and a movie. Mary subsequently became a teacher in Louisiana.

**Arthur P. Williams**, son of Pelleman and Mary, and uncle of the MacNeal brothers, was born in Norwich, Connecticut, March 1846. He came to New Orleans with his parents around 1864 and taught in schools there for nearly 50 years. For most of that time he was the principal of Fisk School, and his obituary noted that he was “probably one of the best known Negro educators in the South.” During his tenure, operettas and other musical programs were an important part of the Fisk curriculum. He was a performer and director of many concerts given during the Reconstruction Period, and he also taught piano, organ, and voice. The Fisk School was renamed for him in 1921.

**Sylvanie Francoz Williams**, Arthur’s wife was also an educator and community activist. She was the principal of the Thomy Lafon School in 1900, when it was burned during the infamous Robert Charles race riot. She served as president of the Colored Teacher’s Association, worked to improve hospitals and build playgrounds for Negros, and was also founder and president of the Phillis Wheatley Club in New Orleans. She has been referred to as an acknowledged leader and the most respected woman in the black community of New Orleans. From December 1934, when a school was named for Sylvanie, until December 1950, when the Arthur P. Williams School was discontinued, they were the only husband-and-wife teachers who had schools named for them in New Orleans.
Letters to the Editor

Regarding That Buddy Bolden Photograph...

To the editor:
I very much enjoyed the 2009 edition of The Jazz Archivist and the articles on the Bolden photograph. It was timely because I was on a Woest Fellowship going through Fred Ramsey’s papers at the Historic New Orleans Collection last summer, and I think that the original interview notes for Jazzmen (1939) do clarify why the Bolden photo has been such a puzzle.

To re-cover a lot of well-trodden ground: as printed in Jazzmen (1939), it appeared with Jimmy Johnson (the bass player) on the left. This, as we have come to know, is the wrong way round. In a New Orleans band, the bass player should be on the right. Rose and Souchon in New Orleans Jazz: A Family Album decided to reverse the image to correct this apparent mistake. The paradox then was that Johnson (bass) and the guitarist, Brock Mumford, were playing left-handed. That did not seem correct either; they were not left-handed players. Alden Ashforth cleared up some of the mystery (Annual Review of Jazz Studies No. 3) through reasoning that the clarinets are not symmetrical. The keys depressed by the players little fingers appear on different sides and at different heights. This was not reversible. Despite the poor quality of the photograph it is clear that the photograph as it first appeared in Jazzmen was a reverse image. Rose and Souchon were correct and Jimmy Johnson should have been on the right. It therefore followed that Johnson and Mumford were posing left-handed for some inexplicable reason.

In the last edition of The Jazz Archivist Gerhard Kubik’s suggestion that the photograph is a composite (a “photo montage”) created from two negatives joined together is ingenious, but I am now convinced that the photographic process itself was responsible for the reversal of the image as Justin Winston and Clive Wilson suggested.

Unfortunately, the original photograph that Willy Cornish loaned to Charles Edward Smith has vanished. However, Ramsey’s papers do reveal how the photograph was originally orientated. Ramsey had a copy of Charles Edward Smith’s notes from his interviews. Cornish had shown Smith the photograph and identified the members of the band as follows: The photo line-up: left to right. Jimmy Johnson, bass; Bubby Bolden, [sic] cornet; Jeff Mumford, guitar (sitting); Willy Cornish, key trombone; Frank Lewis, b clarinet, sitting; Willy Warner, C clarinet, standing.

Evidently, the photograph as it first appeared in Jazzmen was as it was when Willie Cornish first showed it to Charles Edward Smith. Jimmy Johnson, the bass player, was on the left. It follows that since this was a reverse image, the photographic process itself was responsible for the reversal of the image. The most likely explanation is that the Bolden band photograph was a “tintype” as Winston and Wilson suggested.

A tintype photograph is made directly onto a plate of metal (not actually tin), coated with a layer of light sensitive chemicals. There is no negative and the image appears reversed – an inevitable consequence of the process. An example of this type of photography that Brian Wood drew attention to (New Orleans Music, Vol. 9 No. 5) was a picture of Billy the Kid. He was not left-handed, but he was photographed with his gun by his left hand. It turned out this was tintype.

It seems everybody has been right. The photograph, as it appeared in Jazzmen, was as Willie Cornish had shown it to Smith. This was a reverse image produced by the tintype process. Rose and Souchon were therefore right, from the perspective of what the photographer actually saw, to reverse the image and put Jimmy Johnson on the right. This also placed Bolden’s cornet in his right hand (as Kubik said it should be), and corrected the anomalies that Ashforth had noticed with regard to the clarinets.
However, this still had Johnson and Mumford posed left-handed. The reason for this, I believe, is that this was a trick of the trade.

An experienced tintype photographer would know that the image would come out reversed. There is strong evidence to show that to “correct” this reversal of image a practice had developed to pose string players left-handed. I have included just one example but there are many tintype images of musicians posed left-handed. Note how the thicker bass strings (that should be on the top) are on the bottom. This is because the guitarist has flipped the guitar over and poses left-handed; the tintype would thus show him as a right-handed guitar player.

I had hoped that since the Bolden photograph is a tintype this would also help clear-up another issue that has dogged jazz researchers. *Jazzmen* reported that one of the venues that Bolden played was “Tintype Hall.” The most likely candidate to have imparted this information, I had thought, was Willie Cornish. Maybe Smith had misunderstood something that Cornish had said. Could it be that Cornish had told Smith that the photo had been taken in a “tintype place,” and Smith thought this was a venue: regrettably not.

Preston Jackson told the *Jazzmen* authors that Bolden “played at Tintype Hall, Liberty and Franklin. Tintype Hall is a place where all the ‘hustlers’ would be laid out when they were killed, gamblers, hard working musicians, etc.” Given that Jackson was born in 1903, he would have had absolutely no first-hand knowledge of Buddy Bolden. It is not surprising that the search for Tintype Hall has yielded nothing.

However, the fun is not over yet. I came across this little twist in the tail in Bill Russell’s papers. In a letter dated August 18, 1976, Ramsey wrote to Russell:

> I’ve made a minor discovery on the original copy neg. of the Bolden band photo. Through a high power lens, it can be seen that some one, some time, wrote either behind the print, or on a piece of paper on top of the original printing – shreds of letters & numbers can be detected. Also scratches on Mumford’s head, chin (especially.) And there appears to be a small accordion in the lap of the cl. Player, seated, front row. And some tubing that looks like tbn parts behind Brock. You’d have to see it to believe it. It does not show up on any of the reproductions. I’m going to do some research on microphotography to see if anything else comes up. Hope you can see it some day & render an opinion.

Ghostly accordions, phantom trombones, coded inscriptions, unexplained scratches; there should be enough there to keep us all going for the next seventy years if the original copy negative can be found – happy hunting!

Yours sincerely,

Vic Hobson
University of East Anglia, UK.

To the editor:

In Gerhard Kubik’s article “The Mystery of the Buddy Bolden Photograph,” he misses a crucial point about the construction of the valve-trombone and the cornet. The point is not which hand Bolden would have posed with, it is what
is the likelihood of Bolden’s cornet having been soldered together backwards?

The following points are ones that I expressed in an essay in *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz* (edited by Cooke and Horn) entitled “History, myth and legend: The problem with early jazz.”

If, in the *Jazzmen* image, we could raise Buddy Bolden’s cornet to his lips, the shepherd’s crook would be at his right cheek. This is incorrect – the shepherd’s crook comes close to the left cheek, which is the case in the “Rose/Souchon version.”

This holds true for the valve-trombone. It could have been put together backwards, but probably was not. In the *Jazzmen* image, Cornish is holding his left fingers over the valves, which is highly unconventional. Also, if he were to raise the horn to his lips, the goose neck of the bell would be on the wrong side of his neck.

If Bolden’s band were photographed in two sittings as Kubik suggests, Bolden’s horn would have had to have been soldered together backwards and Cornish would have had to have been a left-handed valve-trombonist.

Justin Winston adroitly addresses the Bolden photograph, offering a similar explanation to mine as far as the instrument construction goes. His explanation of ferrotypes appearing backwards seemed like a revelation when I read it. It would explain why the photographer may have suggested to Bolden himself (or perhaps Bolden thought of it) to hold the cornet in his right hand so that it would appear as though he were holding it in his left – a more conventional pose.

Alma Freeman’s Bolden citing is an important one and a highlight of this issue.

Thanks to the editors of *The Jazz Archivist* for a fine issue.

David Sager

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1906 newspaper advertisement for an air-ship exhibition, as well as an open-air concert, high-class vaudeville, and “dancing after” at Lincoln Park, New Orleans, a venue intimately associated with the John Robichaux Orchestra and the Buddy Bolden legend.

Clipping from the Don Marquis Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive.
Al Hirt at the White House - 1969
by
Edward Allan Faine

“Even the Secret Service was Keeping Time”

December 3, 1969
Governors Dinner

The nation’s governors and their families came to town for a daylong conference on narcotics followed by a fancy evening dinner and musicale at the White House. While the governors caucused during the day, their wives and teenage offspring attended an afternoon briefing in the East Room on dangerous substances. They learned about various harmful drugs and the ingenious methods used to smuggle them into the country. None of the teenagers – to no one’s surprise – admitted to having experimented with drugs themselves. One governor’s son said there was “a lot of glue sniffing” in his school, and he knew two kids who grew marijuana in their bedroom, but he didn’t know what they did with it. Another governor’s teenage twins remarked that some of the boys at their private school said they used drugs.1

Sensitive to charges that the Nixons fancied only traditional chamber music for their after-dinner entertainment, and given that it was a governors dinner, the White House decided to shake, rattle and roll its conservative image, and called upon trumpeter Al Hirt and his New Orleans band and the popular 5th Dimension rock ensemble to cap the evening’s festivities.2 Both groups, though Democratic leaning, were worthy of cultivation. Hirt appeared at the inaugural celebrations for John F. Kennedy in 1961, and the 5th Dimension sang at the 1968 Democratic Convention, and had been signed to perform at Hubert Humphrey’s inaugural ceremony had he won the election.

At the time, Al Hirt was one of the best-known trumpeters in the United States. His stellar resume included a string of best-selling RCA record albums that began in 1960; several pop hits including “Cotton Candy” and his signature tune “Java,” which rose to No. 3 on the Billboard charts in 1963, earning him a Grammy; numerous TV and film appearances; a sold-out Carnegie Hall concert in 1965; and a pre-game appearance at the first Super Bowl in 1967.3

Al looked and acted the part of a New Orleans hot trumpet man, rotund and bearded and full of joie de vivre. To many, after Louis Armstrong and Pete Fountain, he was the public face of New Orleans jazz. Yet, he never considered himself a jazz player, famously telling the New York Times, “I’m not a jazz trumpet… I never was a jazz trumpet. When I played in the big bands… I played first trumpet. I led the trumpet section. I never played jazz or improvised.”4 Only three months prior to his White House gig, Jumbo, as Al was called, again underlined his disclaimer as a jazz player in a Down Beat cover article:

I never knew why I was looked upon as a jazz player, because I never really considered myself one… The most I’d ever done in jazz, really, was to be a lead trumpet player in a section… I never played any jazz solos. I don’t say that I can’t – I can probably do a little of it, but I never considered it anything earth-shaking. It was always something in the vein of somebody else’s bag; you know, like I always played something that was influenced by someone else. I never was a good improviser and never blazed any trails of my own. So I never considered myself a jazz man.5

No matter how hard he tried, Al Hirt was never able to convince people he was not a jazz musician. Hirt would own up to his technical proclivities on the instrument, however. After all, he was a classically trained and well-apprenticed 1940s swing bandsman who had been awarded Playboy magazine’s top trumpet prize in 1962 and every year thereafter (for the
following fourteen years actually). True, his name seldom came up in polls or articles in the prominent jazz magazines (in a positive sense). Yet, he surrounded himself with solid musicians in the Dixieland tradition, often soloed, although many excursions would have been “routinized,” as the jazz guys of the 1920s were fond of saying. He characterized his playing as “a little bit of this and a little bit of that,” meaning the traditional Dixieland standards along with country and pop numbers. Modesty aside, Hirt, along with notables such as Pete Fountain, the Dukes of Dixieland and the then newly-formed Preservation Hall aggregation, kept the traditional jazz flame burning through the mid-decades of the twentieth century.

Trumpeter Hirt brought a quintet of Louisiana musicians with him for the evening: on saxophone, Mike Osheski, a relative newcomer, who would not pursue a career in jazz; on clarinet, a ringer, Joseph T. “Pee Wee” Spiterela, who had played off and on with Al since the early 1960s and appeared on several of the brass showman’s best albums. Pee Wee was highly regarded, often mentioned in discussions of legendary New Orleans clarinetists, but was never a household name – a consummate sideman with few album titles under his own name.

Drummer Paul Ferrara came to Hirt with solid credentials, having played with Santo Pecora, Louis Prima, and the Dukes of Dixieland. All-around keyboard man Wayne DeVillier was there that night for his organ work: to sub for the lack of bass violin, to add to the volume, and to lay down a slow funky groove for Jumbo’s horn to romanticize over.

On piano, a then little-known freelancer from New Orleans who occasionally played at Al Hirt’s Bourbon Street night club: Ellis Marsalis. Today Marsalis is 1) grand patriarch of the world’s most famous jazz family; his four jazz-playing sons are reedman Branford, trumpeter Wynton, trombonist Delfeayo, and drummer Jason; 2) a premier New Orleans jazz educator (albeit retired) with an emphasis on jazz studies; and 3) a fine modern pianist (conversant in all styles) with recordings for the Sony CBS and his own ELM labels. But, on that December night, those in the audience who glanced at their programs took little notice of the Marsalis name. Wynton at the time was only nine, and three years away from beginning his serious studies on his first trumpet, which would be given to him by - Al Hirt.6

When the Al Hirt sextet mounted the East Room stage that evening, a precedent was set. It was the first time the embryonic music first heard on the streets of New Orleans some six decades before – or at least a contemporary extension thereof – was played in the White House by a bona fide commercial Dixieland band. Bells did not peal, banners did not unfurl, clarion calls were not heard, and the headlines the next day fell silent on the historical significance. Everyone simply assumed that authentic New Orleans-style bands had played the East Room before. But they hadn’t.

Al and his combo opened their set with a rousing version of “Down by the Riverside.” The East Room crowd response was similarly upbeat, boisterous even. Hirt acknowledged the applause and said, “That was ‘Down by the Riverside.’ [Laughter] In case you didn’t recognize the melody. [More laughter] Can you hear us okay? [Even more laughter] Nobody sleeps when we play! Here’s a ballad from last year that you may remember, [the Burt Bacharach/Hal David hit] ‘This Guy’s in Love with You’ [made popular by singer Dionne Warwick, but with ‘Girl’s’ in the title].” This time it was Hirt alone, backed by drums and keyboards (Marsalis’s piano and DeVillier’s organ), rendering the hummable Warwick/Bacharach collaboration in a respectful, romantic way. The spell was abruptly broken as the combo launched into “Java,” Al’s chart-busting, Grammy-winning hit, written by fellow New Orleans musician Allen Toussaint in 1958. The Crescent City sound wrapped the room, Pee Wee’s clarinet piping on top, baritone saxophone and organ filling the bottom in traditional tailgate trombone fashion. “Java” ended on a pop and was greeted with the same enthusiasm.
Typical of a Hirt set, Al introduced another change of pace: “And now I’d like to demonstrate some of the things that you can do with this instrument. Forty years ago when I first started playing it, my father told me some things I could do with it! [Laughter] But my mother always encouraged me, so I’m still at it. And this is an old cornet solo, and it wraps up all the things like the fancy flights, and fast tonguing, double tonguing, triple tonguing, and it’s all in this one little solo called ‘The Carnival of Venice.’” Al scattered some impromptu cornet remarks before stating the familiar melody.

“Here are some variations on that melody. << Here’s another feature, some double tonguing. <<< And now some triple tonguing. <<<><< [Obligatory applause, much like accordionists receive for playing “Lady of Spain” at NASCAR speed] And now here’s the last variation, and the finale. And we try to get little special effects. I’m going to try to make you think you hear two trumpets playing. I do this by accentuating the melody notes, the C-notes, by playing them a little louder, and the notes that come in between, softer. You may get two trumpets playing. You may [Laughter].” <<<> A drum crescendo swelled amidst mounting applause as this circus-like special reached its climax. Al no doubt included this bit of musical acrobatics into his rather short set to emphasize his technical mastery of the trumpet, to remind everyone he was, as he liked to put it, a “trumpet showman,” and not a jazz player.8

Hirt began a musical arabesque that halted abruptly in a loud trumpet kiss, the
signal for the band to roar off with the standard closer, “When the Saints Go Marching In.” The East Room audience took to clapping during the ensemble playing. Each instrument soloed before the band commenced a long concluding tease that began with the usual New Orleans three-horn interlocking weave and faded into a whispering trumpet line over a steady Marsalis piano vamp, the organ picking an altogether new bass line melody, then another full ensemble blast, then the front line instruments, sequentially alternating note-by-note, playing “The Saints” melody before bringing the show to a close with the ever-so-familiar full volume Dixieland ride out. The audience stood and roared. They knew that they had just heard something special. This quintessential American tune, one that had closed a million concerts and dances for the past six decades, had finally received its first glorious presentation at the nation’s grand mansion.

And the 5th Dimension had to follow that act. To their credit, they held their own. The 5th Dimension was a most unlikely entertainment choice for the Nixon White House, not for the Democratic Party leanings so much, but… following a daylong conference on drugs! The most popular song in America that summer was their rendition of “Age of Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In,” the two tunes that book-ended the enormously popular (and controversial) Broadway hit Hair, billed as an “American tribal love/rock musical.”

The musical was actually three shows in one: a celebration of free love and hippie lifestyle; a satirical attack on the Establishment; and the story of one hippie’s decision whether to avoid the draft and flee to Canada. Hair sang the praise of everything from marijuana to masturbation and pretty much thumbed its nose at traditional values… At the end of Act 1 under dramatic lighting, a dozen members of the cast – male and female – stood totally naked in front of the audience. This was the infamous nude scene that shocked folks in America – people naked on stage! In the “let’s try anything” atmosphere of the late Sixties, however, the nudity and the musical’s rebellious themes fit with the times.

The characters in the play certainly delivered some clever lines. In discussing Vietnam, one of the characters said, “The draft is white people sending black people to fight yellow people to protect the country they stole from the red people.”

Not that the White House was totally sanguine about the matter, as 5th Dimension lead singer Marilyn McCoo recalled:

A funny thing – or strange thing – happened prior to our appearance. A White House aide sent us a questionnaire, which included a question asking if any of our lyrics referred to drugs or taking drugs. When asked for a clarification, the White House aide told us that they were interested in a particular song of ours called “Up, Up and Away.” Since cocaine was sold in “balloons” or packages, he said, was there a hidden meaning behind “Up, Up and Away”? We replied that it was just a happy song about the joys of riding in a hot air balloon.

It’s a good thing they didn’t ask if any of the songs had any connection with free love, pot smoking, draft evasion, and nudity. Moreover, and this is difficult to square in any rational way; earlier in the year, Nixon told his aide Haldeman that he wanted to take stronger action on obscenity, and that he had decided he would go to a play in New York where they take off their clothes (Hair), and get up and walk out, to dramatize his feelings.

The above aside, it is still hard to imagine the 5th Dimension being invited to the Nixon White House in any other year but Nixon’s first year in office. Confidence in Nixon had begun to wane after the “secret” bombing of Cambodia was revealed earlier in the year, as was amply demonstrated by November’s “Moratorium,” the massive Vietnam protest march in D. C. But the national polarizing angst to come had not yet settled across the land; that would come after the ground incursion into Cambodia, the Kent State student shootings, the Pentagon Papers flap, the Vietnam air war escalation, and much later, the Watergate morass. 1969 was safe for the 5th Dimension at the White House, especially for an administration in need of a hipper image.

The 5th Dimension opened their segment
with a three-song medley, “The Declaration” (actual words of the founding document preamble set to music), “A Change Is Going to Come,” and “People Got to Be Free.” The opening selections (not the closing song from Hair) caused the group some nervous moments, as singer (and Ms. McCoo’s husband) Billy Davis, Jr. recalled:

Performing that three-part song was our little protest, a political statement, if you will. If President Nixon was listening closely, he would have heard us sing that when the government becomes destructive of unalienable rights, the people have the right to institute a new government. We weren’t exactly John, Paul, George and Ringo singing, “You Say You Want a Revolution,” but we were definitely pushing the boundaries.

The weirdest thing happened when we finished “The Declaration.” The East Room fell totally silent! There was a long awkward moment as the US Governors and their wives waited to gauge President Nixon’s reaction.

I froze in my track for several seconds, waiting… waiting… until President Nixon stood up and clapped his hands. Within seconds, the East Room filled to the rafters with applause. I made eye contact with Marilyn and winked as we bowed, but let me tell you, that was the most nervous moment I’ve ever had on stage.12

The finale, of course, had to be “Age of Aquarius,” and the audience did not have to be cued by the president to react. The song and the show received high marks from the press. Isabelle Shelton of the Washington Star:

There has been nothing like last night’s whomping, stomping and ear-splitting – and highly entertaining – program for two generations since a birthday party for Duke Ellington last spring that has musicians across the country still talking…

President Nixon and most of the VIP parents last night were clapping hands and tapping feet in rhythm right along with their children as Trumpeter Al Hirt and his New Orleans Band and the Fifth Dimension (a popular rock swinging group) took turns on the podium seeing who could shake the most rafters.

Even the Secret Service was keeping time.

And Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, the last man with whom most of today’s youth would expect to find common ground, was clapping and swaying as the Fifth Dimension belted out “The Age of Aquarius” and “Let the Sunshine In,” both from the nude anti-establishment hit show, “Hair.”

Democratic Gov. Richard Hughes of New Jersey and Republican Gov.-elect Linwood Holton of Virginia further livened up the proceedings on stage, dancing with the sequin mini-skirted girl singers in the Fifth Dimension.

Hilton said he loved “the whole program, all day. It was a great day, a great family day. It’s the kind of thing that closes the gap between the two generations.”

The President tried to get daughter Tricia to join the Governors onstage, in vain, however, so he simply clapped his hands to the beat. Marie Smith of the Washington Post:

At the conclusion of the musical extravaganza, President Nixon joined the performers on the stage and said “only one other night has there been the excitement of such music in this room, and that was the great jazz of Duke Ellington. This is in the same category. That was a great night and this is a great one.” Then turning to the musicians, he said, “I hope you’ll all live as long as the Duke and be as good as he is.”

Vice President Agnew said he is both a rock and jazz buff, and he thought the program was “great.” He adds [sic], “We were shaking along with them.”

The governors, who bounced in their seats, swaying to the music, applauded President Nixon’s declaration that the Fifth Dimension “are better than their records.”13

While the musical quintet wowed the President and the East Room crowd, their appearance did not sit well with everybody, as Marilyn McCoo later recalled:

[W]e encountered some unexpected controversy afterward when we were criticized in some quarters for “selling out” or losing our “soulful edge” by singing in the Nixon White House, but we never saw it that way. Whenever the President of the United States asks you to come into the nation’s most famous residence to perform, you go. It’s like
a command performance. We were entertainers, which meant we checked our politics at the front door of the White House. If truth be told, we didn’t vote for Nixon (we came from families of lifelong Democrats) but that was beside the point.14

But they didn’t check their politics at the front door, did they? They spoke to power on the issue of civil rights in their opening medley, and didn’t shy away from singing their “anti-establishment” mega-hit “Age of Aquarius.” “Aquarius/Let the Sunshine In” won “Record of the Year” and two Grammys in 1969. In the spring of 1973, the 5th Dimension toured Turkey and Eastern Europe for the State Department. They broke up in 1975, but the original five reunited in 1990 for another seven-year run.

Six weeks after the White House gig, Al Hirt played the “National Anthem” at Super Bowl IV, the second of his five Super Bowl appearances. Eight months later Al again played for the President, this time on his home turf. Nixon flew to New Orleans for a one-day conference to argue for an orderly end to school segregation. Al and the band, with famous clarinetist Pete Fountain included, greeted Mr. Nixon at his hotel in the heart of the French Quarter. And, of course, they played “The Saints.”15

Endnotes

To be accurate, of the 23 prior Nixon social events in 1969, his first year in office, only 7 fell in the chamber music category; 7 were popular, 4 miscellaneous, and 3 jazz. It was the 7 classical chamber events (and perhaps the un-hipness of the popular events) that some people objected to.

3 Colin Escott, liner notes to Al Hirt: Greatest Hits, RCA 696-2.
6 Escott.
7 Hirt’s performance numbers and comments transcribed by the author from White House Communications Agency Sound Recordings, Tape J-147, Nixon Library, National Archives, College Park, MD.
8 Ibid.
10 Up, Up and Away, p. 114.
12 Up, Up and Away, p. 115.
13 “Governors ’Rock’ in East Room.”
14 Up, Up and Away, pp. 115-116.
Curator’s Commentary

What better way to begin this column than by announcing the addition of a new staff member to the Hogan Jazz Archive team? Alaina Hebert holds an MLIS from the University of Alabama and worked in the Special Collections division of Samford University before moving to New Orleans. She serves as Associate Curator of the graphics collection and Administrative Assistant, the position formerly held by Alma Williams Freeman, and has already become an invaluable member of the Jazz Archive team.

Along with our graduate student worker and former intern Samantha Bruner, web services specialist Neal Schexnider, and Michael Jones of the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library Administrative Office, Mrs. Hebert assisted with the preparation of this issue, and we thank them all for their respective contributions.

This issue is full of “firsts,” with the notable addition of articles by two of our oldest and best friends, Dr. Michael G. White and Donald M. Marquis, whose multi-faceted and long-standing service to New Orleans jazz is known to all of our readers. In Don’s case, his retrospective essay accompanies the donation of his very rich collection of research materials pertaining to his path-breaking monograph, In Search of Buddy Bolden; First Man of Jazz (1978). Thanks to Samantha Bruner, and with the generous assistance of The Jay Pritzker Foundation (and with special thanks to Daniel Pritzker, Buddy Bolden’s “second best” friend, after Don), these materials have been digitized and are accessible via an Archon finding aid on the Hogan Jazz Archive home page—type in “Marquis” in the finding aid search box and the files await you. We have received hits from as far away as Glasgow, Scotland, almost as soon as the materials were loaded, as well as from members of the Frank Dusen family. Ms. Bruner has also been working on digitization of correspondence and ephemera from the Nick LaRocca collection in Archon, including depositions from the litigation that followed claims on the Original Dixieland Jazz Band’s first recording in 1917 and much more. Dr. Michael White’s cover story reminds us of the resiliency of New Orleans musicians in the face of the myriad hazards that accompany life in New Orleans, and his reflections on his own experience and opinions on the cultural life of the city make for fascinating reading—insights earned by a lifelong commitment to New Orleans jazz. Like so many New Orleans culture bearers, Dr. White suffered as the result of Hurricane Katrina, but his response has been to use the power of music to fight back, and he has been a generous advocate, sharing his talent and experience with younger musicians, some of whom discovered the “tradition” in the wake of 2005’s traumatic events. This is one reason why we are optimistic for the future of New Orleans music, because we know that the people who live here will always do whatever is necessary to keep the music alive.

Sometimes, however, we get some help. The Music Rising Foundation, founded in November 2005 by producer Bob Ezrin, U2 guitarist the Edge, and Gibson Guitar CEO Henry Juszkiewicz, has just awarded one million dollars to Tulane University to develop a music curriculum focused on the music of the Gulf Coast region, with a special emphasis on New Orleans and its regional hinterland. In 2005-6 Music Rising enabled 2,400 musicians to replace musical instruments lost to Katrina and Rita in their Phase One program, which was then followed by assistance provided to churches, schools, social aid and pleasure clubs, and Mardi Gras Indian tribes. The Tulane project, which will be a consortial effort centered in Tulane’s New Orleans Gulf Coast Research Center but also including participation by Xavier University scholars such as Dr. Michael White, will run for three years and include provision of digital resources to support the curriculum, which is where the Hogan Jazz Archive will contribute. The MP3 files generated by the Grammy Foundation-sponsored oral history digital transfer project will be made available.
as open source audio files via streaming server on the internet, making the life stories of more than 600 informants accessible online for the first time. Although this project is currently in its organizational stage, we are confident that its impact in raising consciousness about music of the Gulf Coast and ensuring its long-term preservation and accessibility to all who love it, wherever they may be located, will earn new advocates for the music, as well as honoring those who have contributed to making the music in the first place. Finally, we are including thanks for a recent donation of several images from the 1920s and 1930s from Henri Schindler, the renowned Mardi Gras float designer and Carnival historian, including a picture of Black Benny Williams from the Zulu parade 1923. Now we know what Louis Armstrong’s mentor looked like…and why the police were intimidated by him. He was a charmer, to be sure. As an afterthought (as opposed to the usual first order of business approach), checks for $25 to cover Friends of the Hogan Jazz Archive annual dues would be greatly appreciated. Like New Orleans musicians, we often do what we do for love, but the money “don’t hurt,” as they say. Thanks to all, and enjoy this spectacular issue.

- Bruce Boyd Raeburn

