

Retyped

Russell: Ready to go.

Allen: First thing we usually ask is your name--your full name.

Bocage: Peter Edwin Bocage--Bocage in French, you know.

Allen: Bocage in English.

Bocage: In English, yeah.

Allen: Uh-huh. And, ah, when were you born, and where?

Bocage: Eh---July 31, 1887.

Allen: And what street . . . ?

Russell: On this side of the river, or over there?

Bocage; Algiers--right here in Algiers, yeah.

Allen: Uh-huh. Exactly what part of Algiers? You know the part?

Bocage: Right up here, about 2 or 3 blocks, up there on ah--Brooklyn and ah, I think it was Ptolemy Street, you know.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: My grandfather, at that time, had one of those farms, like, you know--truck farms, like.

Allen: Uh-huh, I see. Speaking of your grandfather--did he play music?

Bocage: No, no.

Allen: Anybody ah. . . ?

Bocage: My father played.

Allen: Your father?

Bocage: Yeah, he played for several years when he was living. In those days, they used to use four pieces, you know--a bass violin, a guitar, and a violin and a trumpet -- and play a whole ball, you know?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: They didn't have no big bands like we have today, you know.

Allen: What did--instrument did he . . . ?

Bocage: He was a guitar player--guitar.

Allen: He was a guitar player. And, do you remember any of the fellows he played with?

Bocage: Well, yeah--they all dead now. There's ah--the violinist, he was ah, was my first teacher--his name was DeFuentes; and the bass violin player was Jim Donsore and the . . .

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Bocage: <sup>t</sup> player was Manetta--Manuel Manetta's uncle.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Russell: Was that Norm?

Bocage: Norm Manetta, yes--that's right.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: That was a four-piece combination.

Allen: And your teacher--his full name; do you remember?

Bocage: Henry DeFuentes.

Allen: Henry DeFuentes.

Bocage: DeFuentes, yeah.

Allen: Huh. That sounds like Spanish, or something.

Bocage: That is, yeah see?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: He first taught me violin, you know. And then I had a--after he got through, I had a Frenchman from over in the city, used to come over and give me lessons. When I was a kid, then--I was around about in my teens, then, you know--fourteen, fifteen, like that. When I got about--well, seventeen, I started to playing professionally, you know?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: Played in bands, dances, <sup>✓</sup> doing somethin' or other.

Allen: What was this teacher's name from across the river--the Frenchman?

Bocage: Well I forgot; I know it was Ferdinand, but I can't think of his last name, you know, this Frenchman--he was from France, you understand. I have a manuscript there that he wrote; I think his name is on it--I'll show it to you before you go.

Allen: Oh--I would like very much to see it. I know you've got a fine collection of things; you showed me some of your pictures.

Bocage: Uh-huh. Quite a bit of pictures, yeah.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: Well, I played the violin, maybe, up until about ah--around 1918 I started to playing brass, you know.

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Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: But in all the former years, I played nothing but the violin, you understand.

Russell: That's all, until 1918?

Bocage: Yeah, with--when I was with Bunk [Johnson] and them--yeah, in that band yeah. And . . .

Russell: Have you ever played anything else--guitar, bass, or . . . ?

Bocage: Well, I played ah--we had ah--we played at the St. Charles; and we had a four-piece combination there, and I played the banjo--mandolin, you know? And, we had a violin, piano, drums and mandolin. [Armand J.] Piron, you know and [Louis] Cottrell was on drums--old man Cottrell, you know.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: And a fellow--he died in Chicago..called him Frank Ahaynow [Boards, 1917].

Russell: Oh, yeah.

Bocage: He was piano player--you might of saw him around Chicago.

Russell: No, I've heard of him.

Bocage: Yeah, well, he died up there. Well, we played our whole season, you know--in the Italian Garden, in the St. Charles, you know?

Allen: What was Frankie Haynia's last name, exactly--how do you pronounce that--Haynia?

Bocage: Ahaynou--that what we used to call him--Frank Ahaynou; I don't know how he spelt it though, you . . .

Russell: I have it on some music; Piron published some of his music for him.

Bocage: Yes, uh-huh, yeah.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Russell: That would be right, then, no doubt.

Bocage: Uh-huh. That's what we used to call him.

Allen: I see. Who did you play your first job with?

Bocage: Oh, I started to playing with this ah, this combination with my daddy and them, you know.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: Had them ole' four-piece, and then we started playing over in the city, see? Ya understand--playing round--round Storyville, they had ah, dance halls back there, you

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Bogage: remember that--and we used to use--one time they cut out the brass, you see?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bogage: And just used strings. So then, I played back there awhile, you know? And then, eventually, I started playing with the bands like Superior Band, you know, and different bands like that, you know, and . . . .

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bogage: And Piron, you know. And then, finally, I started playing brass. And then we stayed out to Spanish Fort for Tranchina out there ten years on that job, you know?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bogage: Had a great, big restaurant out at Spanish Fort out there. Well, that was the Piron band, see. We started with a string aggregation and we wound up with eight-piece orchestra (laughs).

Russell: Oh, yeah.

Bogage: After then, we went to New York and recorded for the Victor, Okeh, and the Columbia.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bogage: And we played ah, Roseland Ballroom. . eight-piece band, you know--that's the pictures I showed you; you remember them pictures?

Collins: Oh, yes.

Bogage: And we came back, and we went back out there again. While we was away, Celestine was out there with Ridgley and them, you know. So, when we came back, the people wanted us back, so we went back on that job again. And when he closed up out there, then we went up in Metairie for old man Dominick Tranchina, then--at the Beverly Gardens. . we played there for him and then we went to the Victory Inn--I don't know if you remember, Dick--you might have been too young for that.

Russell: No, I don't remember it, either.

Bogage: But ah--that Victory Inn was the time they had that great killing scrape there between the friends there--they was gamblers, you know. A fellow up on Broadway there--but they got in a humbug some way. All friends, but they wound up murdering one another, you know. Some was from St. Louis, and some was from Detroit, you know--but they actually had a \$100,000 bankroll in that house--yes, indeed. When we played there, we had a six-piece

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Bocage: combination there. Was plenty of money in those days; we used to make high as twenty, thirty dollars a-piece, just collections. And we was getting sixty-some dollars a week salary, you know. Oh, them guys, money was like water with them, you know.

Russell: Uh-huh, oh, yeah--gamblers.

Bocage: And then ah, old man Tranchina opened another place in Metairie. It's a church now--great, big place there on the highway. They converted it into a church. And we stayed there a while. Then we went to Suburban Gardens, for Jack Shean (✓ sp.) -- we worked there a couple of years.

Russell: That was all with Piron?

Bocage: Yeah, all with Piron--yeah. And ah, finally Louie [Armstrong] came down at Suburban Gardens--well, we was to go back in there, but we had a kind of a misunderstanding between old man Tranchina and Piron, and we didn't go, so they sent and got Louie in that job, see. That's when Louie came from Chicago, and went in the Suburban Gardens, see. And . . .

Russell: I was wondering about when you--how--did you tell how old when you started in music, on violin--taking lessons?

Bocage: Yes; I was about twelve.

Russell: About twelve, . . .

Bocage: About twelve, yeah; in about--oh, in about four years, I was gone, I was playing.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: Yes, I was ah--in fact, I was just fast, you know, [ ] , you know. -

Allen: How did your father play, and those fellows he played with--what style did they play?

Bocage: Well, they played that old-time; ah--you see, in those days, they had, they had music that was--mostly looked like manuscript, but they called it "German" music, you know, and they used to come from the old country, you know.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: And they--that's what they played. And they had a set of books they called "Manhattan Books"--dance books, you know. Well, they had quadrilles, they had mazurkas, and they had waltzes, and they had lancers and varieties, and all that type of music they played those days, you see? Well, they didn't play no jazz, you know what I mean, they---. Now, old man Manetta, he was a fine--oh, a ace trumpet player, in fact--no jazz, strictly a mu--, strictly music, you

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Bocage: understand. And that's what they played, see. But this jazz business--I didn't start to playing that until I got mixed up with Bunk [Johnson] and them fellows, you know, and, and playing'round, 'round them places--and that come in right after [Buddy] Bolden, you see; and the Imperial Band--Manet-----Perez, and those fellows, they had started to playing; well, that's how jazz came in. And, then all those other boys--take these white boys like Sharkey [Bonano], and [Kid] Rena [sic!]--well, they come after that. Well, they picked up right from that and just went right along with it, you see. 62151

Allen: Who do you think was the ~~finest~~ <sup>finest</sup> band to ever play any jazz or ragtime?

Bocage: Well, I attribute it to Bolden, you know; I mean, cause--the simple fact, the way that thing come about - - you see, Bolden was a fellow, he didn't know a note big as this house you understand what I mean; and whatever they played, they caught [learned by hearing] or made up, you see? Say - - they made their own music, and they played it their own way, you understand? So that's the way jazz started, you understand? --just through the feeling of the man, you understand? -- just his, his improvisation [improvisation], you see. And then the surroundings--the surroundings at that time was mostly people of--oh, you might say of a fast type, you know - - exciting, you understand? And those old blues and all that stuff, you know just came in there, you see. And eventually the jazz business started to going, you see. But, the old-time musicians, they didn't play nothing but music you know . . .

Allen: By the way, I better explain to you--we have a paper, you know, that we'll sign and you sign. Now you can put any restrictions on anything, and if you want to say anything, you know

Bocage: Well, I don't want to say anything that's detrimental to anybody, you know what I mean.

Allen: (j) (j) (j) and hold it back--you can hold it back for ten years or twenty years or . . .

Bocage: Yeah.

Russell: No need to knock anybody, but sometime, you know, you might say something you don't want repeated.

Bocage: No, no--but, that's facts what I'm - - you see, that's the facts, what I'm telling you; I could back that up, because ah

Allen: Yeah, that's right.

" -- you take lot of those fellows. they were routine players and that's where jazz

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Bocage: came from, ya understand. That's where jazz came from--from the foutine men ya understand--the men that didn't know nothin' about music. They just made up their own ideas. They didn't know nothin' about phrasing, nothing in music--no thoughts at all about music. Just go ahead and play, that's all, ya understand. That's how jazz come about.

Allen: And they were mixed up with this fast life, huh?

Bocage: Oh, yeah. Those days, man, things was wide open. New Orleans was--they'd have "hunky-tunks" and all, ya understand, all that all the lowest types of, ya understand what I mean, those places, ya know--roustabouts off the river and all that sort of stuff, ya know.

Russell: When did you heard Bolden? You say you heard him?

Bocage: I heard him once, yes. I was a kid. I must--I was just fixing to start out, you know, a young man; I was just fixing to go out and start playin' and he played over here once and I heard him play. Well, like I told ya, he died a young man, ya know. He wasn't old, he was . . .

Russell: You remember about what year that was?

Peter Bocage: Well, that was around I might say, around 1906 or '07, round in there somewhere, round in there, yeah.

Russell: When were you born? I forgot . . .

Bocage: '87.

Russell: '87.

Bocage: 1887, yeah.

Russell: You would have been almost . . .

Bocage: Oh, I was round in my teens, then, see?

Russell: Be around 15 or 18.

Bocage: Now he was a fine looking fellow and a healthy looking fellow, but

the life, ya understand what I mean, That fast life just broke him all up. So many of 'em do the same thing, you know.

Russell: Can you remember how he sounded? How he played?

Bocage: Oh yeah, he was powerful, ya know he had a plenty power, ya know, see. He had a good style, ya know, in blues and all that stuff. But far as anything else there was nothin' to it, ya know. Just like all those other boys. Now, Buddy Petit was a good man, too--jazz. Rena

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Bocage: was another good man. They had good potentialities, but they never did develop them, ya understand? They never did study, ya see. They had the lip and everything. They'd 'a made fine musicians if they'd 'a studied but they just went on playing--that's all, see. And made money, ya understand. That's all they wanted, see. That's all they was, see.

Allen: What about Bolden? Did anybody-- does anybody who made records or who's around today play anything like him?

Bocage: Well, uh, I dunno, it's practically--you take certain types. Now, you take Bolden and, say, Freddy Keppard. Now he died in Chicago. They were most on the same style. They was powerful trumpet players and they mostly--well the improvisations is always gonna be a little different, ya know. No two men alike, ya understand. But it's the similarity there, ya understand what I mean--between them. The style was just a forceful trumpet playing, ya understand, just strong and came out

Russell: How did Joe Oliver compare?

Bocage: Well, Joe, Joe was good, too--Joe was very good; I played with him a lot, too. Well, Joe was powerful; he didn't too much of a tone, but he was good for jazz, because he could make all that ah--he could make it go like a dog, and all that, you understand--all that "wa-wa" stuff, and that--he'd make all that on the horn, you know. And he was strong, you know; he was a big fellow--he was big as you. Ya know, you saw him, huh?

Russell: No.

Bocage: You never did see him?

Russell: Seen pictures of him--several pictures.

Bocage: Yeah, he was a great big fellow; I got a picture of him there.

Allen: He's as big as Bill, huh?

Bocage: Oh, Lord, yeah; he was a heavy fellow--he'd have weighed about 200 see?--he was a big man, you understand?

Allen: Not as big as me, though?

Bocage: Not fat like you. (laughter) But he was all right; Joe was a nice fellow, you know, and . . .

Russell: Yeah.

Bocage: He ah, played quite a bit of trumpet; he made quite a bit in Chicago, too. He



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Bocage: brought Louie up there, you know?

Russell: Uh-huh.

Bocage: Yeah, he was the one brought Louie up there.

Allen: What about, say "Wooden Joe" [Nicholas], as compared with Bolden?

Bocage: Well, ah--well, that's different altogether; he never made the hit that these men made, you know; Joe was mostly local stuff--he never went anywhere, in the way of speaking, you know.

Allen: I just wondered if he played as loud as Bolden---Joe?

Bocage: Well--oh, they could all play loud, far as blasting is concerned, you understand; I mean, all them guys could play loud--that was they--that was their type, you know?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: Blow--just haul off and blow, that's all.

Allen: What about fingering--did Bolden have fast fingering, or any tricks?

Bocage: Well, it's the style they played, you understand.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: Course, fingering goes a long way, you know what I mean.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: You take ah, fingering--if you compare a man with fingering, well you - - you take a man play, like "Tico Tico", things like that--well, that's out of the question, you understand. But, playing jazz--you'll notice that very few of them fellows that played that kind of jazz did any fast fingering--see, it was mostly improvisation that was lento [slow] and loud, and--but nothing too fancy, you understand what I mean? It was just a different improvisation altogether.

Allen: Yeah. I just wondered how he bent his tone, or if he used half-valving?

Bocage: Oh, he just blowed, man, you understand; he had a record for that. I tell you what it was--they had a park they called the Johnson Park, you see?

Russell: Yeah

Bocage: And then, the Lincoln Park. Well, they was about, oh, two blocks apart, you see? Well, Bolden would be playing at the Johnson Park, and Robichaux' band or some other band was at Lincoln Park, see? Well, Bolden, he'd get to the side of the sidewalk

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Bocage: through that window so the people at the Lincoln Park could hear him, you know?

[From ear-witnesses or hearsay, or from Jazzmen?]

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: And they'd all come over by Bolden, (laughs). That was something, else yeah.

Allen: Yeah.

Bocage: So you know they was loud blowers, eh?

Russell & Allen: Yeah.

Allen: Who was in the band when you heard 'em? Did you know any of the guys?

Bocage: Well, ah, I played with some of the men that he had, after he died. I'll tell you how that come about: he had the Bolden band--now he had ah, he had a fellow called Frank Lewis playing clarinet; and he had Brock Mumford on guitar; and he had a fellow they call Bob Lyons playing bass; and he was on trumpet; and I think it was Dee Dee Chandler, or one of those old drummers, was playing with him; and [Willie] Cornish was playing trombone--that's the finest band he had, see? (phone rings)

Russell: You want to stop and answer the phone, it's all right.

Bocage: No, they'll answer it downstairs. So, later on, a fellow by the name of Frankie Duson--a trombone player--he started to playing with him, see? That's just before Bolden died, see? --was before he went in--got sick, in other words, Well, after Bolden left out, then Frankie took the band over--this Duson fellow, the trombone player--and he called it the Eagle Band, see? Well, I played with the, with the Eagle Band, with Duson, because he's from over this side of the river, you see, and he knew me as a kid, you know? Well, I played with some of Bolden's old men in that band, see, 'cause he practically kept the same fellows, but just him and I was different, you see.

Russell: You played the violin?

Bocage: Yeah, violin--that's it, yeah. We played--we used to play at the old Masonic Hall there, you know, and play excursion trips, and play all these dances and things around uptown there, you know?

Allen: Who played cornet?

Bocage: Well, ah--a fellow by the name of Edward Clem.

Allen: Uh-huh.

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Bocage: At that time. And then later on Bunk went with the Eagle Band, too. Now the funny thing about Bunk--when he was with us downtown with the Superior Band, he didn't drink--he didn't have no bad habits at all.

Russell: Yeah.

Bocage: And when he went uptown with the Eagle Band, they ruint him. He started to drinking, and just went all to pieces, you know? --- just ruint hisself. Just show you, a different environment, you understand?

Allen: Uh-huh. When he was with the Superior, was he a good reader?

Bocage: Yeah, Bunk can read; he was a good reader; yes, he could read. Sure, we used to play all that old [Scott] Joplin music, you know.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: "Frog Legs [Rag]" and "Chrysanthemum [Rag]" and all that; we had the little "Red Books"---you saw those, Bill.

Russell: Yeah, sure, I know them.

Bocage: Well, we used to play all that, yeah--he read plenty .

Russell: How did Bunk play in those days? I heard him in the late years, and I never knew him before.

Bocage: Yeah. Well, he was always a nice, soft trumpet player, you know, he never was a blaster, you know.

Russell: He didn't blast.

Bocage: No, no.

Russell: All mellow.

Bocage: And he had a very nice style, you know; he was - - you see, in those days, we played mostly this - - all that music was played in a slow tempo, you understand?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: And look like he just had the right touch to play that type of music, you understand? It was a "slur" style, like, you know - like "Frog Legs"<sup>[by James Scott]</sup> and all those old numbers--Joplin music, you know? And Bunk was - - look like he was just cut out to play that type of music. Course, he couldn't play that vicious type if he wanted to--it was just him; it was just his style, within him, to play that way, you know? And we used to play that music to perfection,

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Bocage: you know what I mean?

Russell: Yeah.

Bocage: Yeah, he had it, really had it down.

Allen: Would he fake at all?

Bocage: No---yeah---oh, yes, he could fake.

Allen: No, but I mean on the Joplin numbers?

Bocage: No, no--he had---we had the music; we had music for all that stuff, see? ---yeah, we had all kinds of music; we used to use plenty music in those days.

Allen: Did you help Bunk much with his reading?

Bocage: Yes, I helped him some--sure; but he could read when I first met him, you know?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: Yes, he had some schooling, you understand. He wasn't like them other fellows; he knew what he going about, you understand.

Russell: Ah, some of those Joplin rags one in sharp keys . . .

Bocage: Yeah, yeah.

Russell: Would they have to use an "A" clarinet on those, or what did they do?

Bocage: No, we ah--well, the fellows we had those days, like ["Big-Eye"] Louls [Nelson], he played a "C" clarinet, you see?

Russell: Oh, yes.

Bocage: Well, he played off the violin part, see.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: But, ah . . .

Russell: What kind of a part did he play -- almost like you violin part?

Bocage: No, he would, he would play, he would play--he would get the lead, and then he make his own improvisions as he caught, you understand?

Russell: Do variations.

Bocage: Yeah, his variation his own--his own ideas, you see. But, he would ah--after he would play it awhile, he'd get the melody, you see, and he knew just how the tune went; and then, naturally, being gifted, in that type of playing, you know, he knew just what to put in there, you see. Now, now this [Lorenzo] Tio [Jr.], since you spoke about the "A" clarinet . . .

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Russell: I wanted to ask you about him.

Bocage: Is that right? Yeah--now he, he used to take a "B-[flat]" clarinet, and play the "A" parts and everything, cause he knew the transposition, you see?

Allen: Which Tio was this?

Bocage: Lorenzo.

Allen: That's old man, or the young fellow?

Bocage: No, the young fellow--oh, they were all great, all three of them; his daddy was a clarinet, his uncle was a clarinet player, see, and he was the youngest. Well, he took a "B" clarinet, and he played everything, because he knew the transposition, you see. And he was all musician, though, you see. He went to Chicago and them fellows up there, like Quelay (✓ sp.), them fellows, was using "A" and "B" clarinet--when he set down and played with that "B" clarinet, they wondered how he was doing it, you understand? Well, he had studied the transposition, you see. And it's nothing to it, if you know it--course, if you don't try to do it, well, it's hard, you understand. If you take you take a "A" clarinet, if a piece is wrote in "G", you understand? ---he play in two flats, you see? Now, you take a "B" clarinet, and you play in three sharps, you see? In other words, you put it down a half-tone, see?

Russell: Yeah.

Bocage: You see the idea?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: But, he studied that, you know, and them fellows ✓ in Chicago, they was depending on two clarinets and he take one clarinet and do all--do the same work, see? So, you see, it's complicated when you get into music, you understand what I mean. You see a guy blowing, and he's - - of course, jazz is nice, and everything, but if you get away from jazz and you go to talk about musicians, then that's another thing, you see. Now he could play jazz, too. And he could play anything that you put up there in front of him, see?

Allen: Would you call him a real barrelhouse musician? If he wanted to . . . ?

Bocage: No, no--no barrelhouse. He had a nice style of playing, and he just played according to his, his ideas, you see? But, he could play like "High Society", and make all those, and he was gifted--he could fake, and he knowed the chords and everything. You see, that's what it takes. And he . . . [compare records]

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Allen: He wouldn't get gut--bucket, though?

Peter Bocage: Huh?

Allen: He wouldn't get gut--bucket?

Bocage: Well, yeah; what you call gut-bucket, you understand, was the tune; the gut-bucket is the tune you play--it ain't the man; it's the tune, it's the piece you're playing that makes it gut-bucket, you see. Course, some guys play gut-bucket because they can't play otherwise, you see. Now Johnny Dodds was a pretty good clarinet player, in his style, you know--he played well, you see? Now, you might call him gut-bucket, see. But a man like Tio, you couldn't call him gut-bucket, because he's a scholar, you understand? See, that makes a big difference. [internal inconsistency]

Allen: Yes.

Bocage: It's just like anything else--now, you take a boy, or a child that comes up in a bad environment, and hear him speak, and then get a cot--another child that's raised in a school or something--in a good environment--well, it's the same as musicians. If a guy comes up playing a horn, and he never had no tuition at all, you wouldn't expect him to play like a man that's been taught, you understand what I mean? It's a different feeling and everything there, you see? And 'cause the man that's polished is bound to be different from the man that's in the rough, understand? --isn't that a fact? [And so creativity?]

Allen: Certainly.

Bocage: Why, sho', absolutely--that's all that is. And that's all the difference in gut-bucket; it's just getting a gut-bucket man and a gut-bucket tune, and you got gut-bucket, you see. But, the other man would play the same thing, but it wouldn't be exactly, because they--it's two different men there, see? --there's two different thoughts, two different feelings, you understand? One guy can't play bad if he wanted, 'cause he learnt right, see? the other guy can't play right because he can't, he don't know what he's doing; he's just blowing, that's all, you see? That's the whole thing in a nutshell, right there, you see?

Russell: I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about the Tio family? Lorenzo married your sister.

Bocage: Yes.

Russell: Do they have any relatives living?

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Bocage: Yes, his ah--he got some relatives downtown; his mother just died sometime ago.

Russell: Is that right?

Bocage: But he's got some nieces and--live downtown there.

Allen: Are their names Tio?

Bocage: Yeah--no, they're married, you know. He's got a brother that's living, is a Tio, but he's not a musician--no.

Allen: We'd like to locate him.

Russell: We'd like to find him and talk to him. Maybe he would remember about his father and ah, all.

Bocage: Well, I could tell you about the father; the . . .

Russell: If you could, that'd be wonderful.

Bocage: The old man, he's Luis Tio [eldest] -- he was the first--oldest brother--well, he studied in Mexico, see?

Russell: Were they Mexican, or just studied there?

Bocage: Well, they, I wouldn't say they were Mexicans, but they had some Spanish blood in them, you understand what I mean? It's just like me--you wouldn't call me a Frenchman, but I got French blood in me, you understand what I mean? My grandfather was from France, and my grandmother was from Haiti, you see. Well, that was the beginning of my family here, see?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: So we mixed up. But, he [Luis] studied in Mexico, you see, and that's why he was such a great musician. Now, he taught the other brother, [Lorenzo, Sr.], see? And the other brother, he come out great, too, 'cause his brother taught him, see? Well, he traveled on the road with all those shows, those Nashville students [Fisk U. ?] and all them old-time . .

Russell: Was that Luis?

Bocage: Ah, it's Lorenzo.

Russell: The older Lorenzo.

Bocage: Yeah, yeah--well, the old man traveled, too, about when he got old he had to cut it out.

Russell: Yes.

Bocage: Well, he was a fine director, too, and everything; he could direct a symphony ✓ .

Retyped

Russell: Luis was the one they called "Papa"?

Bocage: No, "Papa" ---- yeah, that's right.

Russell: Luis was "Papa".

Bocage: Yeah, yeah.

Russell: And he was the oldest one?

Bocage: Yeah, that's right. Lorenzo was this boy's daddy, and he was Lorenzo, Jr., see?

Russell & Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: You want to see his picture?

Russell: Yeah, yeah.

Allen: I'd like to.

Bocage: Not the old man, but I mean the boy.

Russell: Yes.

Bocage: They was fine-looking people.

Collins: Nice picture.

Bocage: Yeah--that's the band we was in New York with.

Russell: These pictures were taken in New York, then?

Bocage: Yeah, in the lobby; we was playing the shows there.

Allen: The Strand, New York.

Bocage: Yeah, that's him there, see?

Russell: Yeah

Bocage: This is Louie Cottrell, you know?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Russell: Yeah, his son, ✓ I know him.

Bocage: That's his father.

Russell: Richard Alexis told me he was raised over in . . .

Bocage: Bilo--uh, Bay St. Louis.

Russell: Bay St. Louis, over that way.

Bocage: Yeah, uh-huh.

Russell: And he said that the Tios lived over there for awhile.

Bocage: Yeah, they did--yeah.



Retyped

Russell: I didn't know that at all--I'm surprised.

Bocage: Uh-huh.

Russell: They didn't come from there, though, then, do you think?

Bocage: No, they went over there for a while, you know, but they right here from the city.

Russell: Yeah.

Allen: Say ah--- [Louie] Warnicke didn't play clarinet at the time?

Bocage: No, he was playing saxophone.

Allen: Only.

Bocage: Alto. But he played clarinet; he taught him, in other words.

Allen: Tio taught him? And, who's the sousaphone player?

Bocage: Uh, this fellow here; he's in New York now. He's a British subject; A. Seguirre is his name.

(or Segura)

Allen: A. Seguirre?

Bocage: Yeah. This is Johnny Lindsay; he played trombone.

Allen: Uh-huh

(End of Spool)

Russell: I knew him.

Bocage: He died in Chicago. That's Steve Lewis.

Allen: And--is that your brother?

Bocage: That's my brother Charlie. That's me there, you see. That's the same band.

Now here's the--here's the Creole Serenaders in the Absinthe House. We stayed two years on WWL with that band.

Allen: Now we have a violin player here and a trumpet player.

Bocage: That's me.

Russell: That's you.

Allen: That's both. You're both.

Bocage: That's my brother there. He's in California now. He's a sousaphone player.

Allen: What is his name?

Bocage: Henry.

Allen: And that's [Louie] Warnicke?

[From British Honduras (Belize)]

John Seguirre

Retyped

Bocage: That's Warnicke, yeah.

Allen: And this? [the piano player]

Bocage: That's Joe Newman, that's playin'--he playin' with Basie now. That's daddy, Dwight Newman.

Allen: And the drummer?

Bocage: Henry Martin.

Allen: Uh-huh

Bocage: And that's Charlie, my brother there. That's the Old Absinthe House. See that rail. You been in there, ain't you?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: See that old rail and everything. We stayed there for three years in that job. There was dancing there then, you know.

Allen: Uh-huh. Who replaced you in the Old Absinthe House?

Bocage: Now let's see, I think after we left there, they cut the dancing out. I disremember.

Allen: And who was there before you?

Bocage: I think the Melon Pickers played in there awhile. [See Raymond Burke]

Allen: Oh yeah, who was there before you? Do you remember?

Bocage: Well, it was a jitney dance before we went in there.

Allen: Oh, I thought maybe that was when the Original Dixieland Jazz Band came in.

Bocage: No.

Allen: Oh, that's a nice picture [Superior Band] [presumably Photo in 'Jazzmen' and Rose & Serchan

Bocage: That's--Mr. Russell gave me that.

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Allen: Uh-huh. Oh, I see. And it says "Leader" on your cap. What does that mean?

Bocage: Well, I was the leader.

Allen: Yeah, but I mean I'm-trying to get at what's the difference between leader and manager?

Bocage: Oh, the manager was the fellow, he took care of the jobs, you know.

Russell: The business part--collected the money, huh?

Bocage: Yeah, the business.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: I run the band when they was on the stand, see.

Retyped

Allen: Well, who picked . . . ?

Russell: Did you stomp off? How did you start the band? Just start playing, or . . . ?

Bocage: Do this way [taps foot] --- that's the way we did those days.

Russell: The violin player always did that.

Bocage: Yeah, always stop and start the band. And I selected whatever the band would or play.

Russell: Yeah.

Allen: And none of the others have anything on their caps but "Superior Orch."?

Bocage: That's right, yeah---"Superior Band".

Allen: Oh, I see.

Bocage: How old you think I was then?

Allen: Let's see--that would be 1910 or so, and you were born in 1887--twenty three?

Bocage: No, I was about twenty one when that was taken.

Allen: Twenty one.

Bocage: Sure.

Russell: Twenty one.

Allen: So that would be ah . . . .

Bocage: You can see I look like a kid there (laughs).

Allen: Uh-huh.

W. Russell: 1908, maybe--along in there.

Bocage: Yeah, around 1908 and '09.

Allen: Gee, that clarinet looks funny, doesn't it, now?

Russell: Little short . . . .

Bocage: Yeah, that's a little "C" clarinet, see? Now, this is Marrero here; that's John Marrero's daddy -- Lawrence Marrero [his father].

Russell: Yeah, we know Lawrence.

Bocage: Yeah; that's his daddy.

Allen: How come they call him Morand? I never could figure that out, could you?

Bocage: Billy Mora--they used to say Morand 'cause they couldn't say Marrero, you know?

Allen: Yeah.

Retyped

Bocage: Some would say Morand, you understand--Billy Marrero was his name, see?

Russell: Yeah.

Bocage: Now here's a - - show you. Now this is that - - that's that Tranchina Restaurant there, see? That's the stand.

Allen: Now who is the banjo player there?

Bocage: That's Marrero--John Marrero; he got killed in the city of New York.

Allen: Otherwise, it's the same band as the record.

Bocage: But he was supposed to be with us, you understand, on that New York trip; we was getting ready to go away then, see? But Charlie [Bocage] could sing, and he couldn't sing, see--he didn't know how to sing, so we took Charlie.

Russell: Oh, while I think of it--did they use vibraphone, or marimba; or what did they use?

Bocage: I, ah used . . .

Russell: Xylophone.

Bocage: I used to play that.

Russell: That's what I wanted to ask you about, when you played that.

Allen: Now, that's not a xylophone.

Russell: When did you start on that ah?

Bocage: It's a xylophone, yeah.

Allen: Well, what are those tubes?

Bocage: It's got . . .

Russell: Resonaters.

Bocage: Resonaters, yeah.

Allen: Uh-huh,

Bocage: That's all it is to it. It's not a marimba, you know; that is the new style. That's the old . . .

Russell: When did you take that up?

Bocage: Just out there; Mr. Tranchina liked it and he say he was going to buy one--that thing cost 300 and something dollars, too. So, I knew the chords on the piano, you see, and that thing is just like a piano, you see? If you know chords on the piano . . .

Retyped

Allen: Uh-huh

Russell: Did you use two mallets, or four, like some of them?

Bocage: I could use three.

Russell: Three.

Bocage: Hit the chords, yeah.

Allen: Says "Sosa [Photographer]; Spanish Fort, New Orleans; 8-'22".

Bocage: Uh-huh.

Allen: That must be when they took the picture.

Bocage: Yeah

Allen: Now ah--let me see--who played the tambourine?

Bocage: What?

Allen: You can see a tambourine right in front of the drum.

Bocage: Yeah, drum used that with the drum.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: That's Tio; there's Steve.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: Now here's one where I was playing trombone there. (laughs)

Allen: Uh-huh.

Russell: Oh, that's right, trombone.

Allen: Let me read this; it says: "Dance by Piron's Novelty Orchestra every night at Tranchina's Restaurant, Spanish Fort".

Bocage: Uh-huh. Now, you know where that was taken at?

Allen: Where?

Bocage: Up in Maison Blanche--we was playing a demonstration up there.

Allen: Oh, I see--it says: "Maison Blanche presents, for the pleasure of their patrons, Piron's Jazz and . . . ."

END OF REEL I, Jan. 29, 1959

PETER BOCAGE

Retyped

Bocage: [Looking at picture] Mr. Russell recognizes him.

Russell: I'll bet I don't, either.

Bocage: I'll bet you recognize him--that drummer there.

Russell: Bill Matthews.

Allen: Ah, man. That's right.

Russell: Saw him last night.

Allen: You dog. It says . . .

Bocage: Bill, he was playing drums with us then.

Russell: Yeah.

Allen: Let me read this again: "Maison Blanche prespèts, for the pleasure of their patrons, [A. J.] Piron's Jazz Jam of Tranchina fame".

Bocage: That's right.

Allen: "Remember, MB always gives you the latest hits first. We gladly play all records for you." And on the piano it's got "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate" [by Piron], huh?

Bocage: Uh-huh, that's right.

Allen: Sheet music.

Bocage: Yeah

Allen: And the different instruments here--gee, there's a lot of them. There's Bill Matthews on drums . . .

Bocage: He was playing drums then; he didn't know nothing about a trombone then.

Allen: And he's got a little ole' Chinese tom . . .

Bocage: Yeah, tom-tom, yeah.

Allen: One big cymbal, it looks like--over-hang--a ratchet? It looks like?

Bocage: Yeah

Allen: Two cowbells, woodblock, snare and bass, huh?

Bocage: Now you see this fellow here . . .

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: That's--used to call him Willy; Willy Edwards is his name--he was playing trumpet with us then, see.

Allen: Uh-huh.

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Russell: Oh, do you know anything about him? Somebody mentioned him, and I never heard anything about him at all.

Bocage: I believe he's dead. He left, he went away from here; we don't know what became of him. You hear.

Russell: Was he from New Orleans?

Bocage: Yeah.

Russell: A native here?

Bocage: Yeah, that's right. He lived uptown around Jack Carey and those fellows at the time.

Russell: Did he play pretty good.

Bocage: Yeah.

Russell: Or was he rough, or how was he?

Bocage: No, he was nice; he wasn't no real hot trumpet player, but he was real---, he read pretty good and everything.

Allen: And this clarinet player?

Bocage: That's [Louie] Warnicke; you see he's got a clarinet there, now?

Allen: He's got two clarinets and a sax.

Bocage: Yeah, and a saxophone, yeah.

Russell: Uh-huh.

Allen: And this piano player?

Bocage: That's Steve Lewis.

Allen: And this violin player?

Bocage: That's Piron.

Allen: Leaning--he's leaning up against your xylophone.

Bocage: Uh-huh. Well, I'll tell you what we was doing there--Paul Whiteman came out with a-- I don't remember the name of that waltz, now--but it had a whistling part in it. And we was demonstrating that particular second, see? <sup>record [perhaps "Whispering", VIC 18690]</sup> ---that's why we was up there, see.

Allen: Who did the whistling?

Bocage: We had a fellow by the name of "Happy"---he wasn't there that day. He was a drummer, too, but he could whistle good.

Allen: Which "Happy"?

Retyped

Bocage: "Little Happy"--he was a drummer.

Allen: "Red Happy" [Bolton]?

Bocage: Yeah, "Red Happy", yeah.

Russell: It wasn't "three o'clock in the morning", was it? [check this]

Bocage: That's right, I think that's what it was; yeah, and they had that whistling in it.

Russell: Uh-huh. I don't remember the record--I remember seeing it, sometime.

Bocage: Yeah, uh-huh. Well, we was demonstrating that record, that Whiteman record, see-- with that small band.

Allen: And this was before the New York trip, or after?

Bocage: That was long before the New York trip, yeah.

Allen: Now, what size mouthpiece do you have there? It looks awfully small.

Bocage: Uh-huh. Well, I used to use about - - you see, I used to play baritone in the band, you know?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: And ah--just a idea got into my head to take the trombone, you understand? I took that thing, and--well, I knew the music already, the bass clef and everything--and in two weeks I was playing.

Allen: Huh.

Bocage: (laughs) So Bill, that was playing drums you know--so Bill said to me, said, "Say, Pete, you know something? I like that trombone. Man, if it's that easy, I'm going to learn trombone, too." (laughter)

Allen: Oh, you dog--what a dirty trick.

Bocage: So he went to - - started taking lessons with Vic Gaspard down town; and he started playing trombone. (laughter) I'm telling you, we was something then.

Allen: How did you like trombone yourself?

Bocage: I like trombone better than trumpet--it's easier.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: But after this fellow left, you see - he left, and then I say --well, Piron say, "Well, Pete, you better get back on trumpet", you see? So I put the trombone down, and went back on trumpet.



Retyped

Russell: When Edwards left?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: See, here's the King Oliver band.

Russell: Oh, yeah--nice picture. Did you ever play with George Fihle much?

Bocage: Oh, Lord, yes. I was playing with George Fihle the time all that killing was in the District, there.

Russell: Oh, at the Tuxedo.

Bocage: Yeah, at the Tuxedo; we was working there then.

Russell: About when was that? Can you remember?

Bocage: Let's see now, when was that--what year was that in now--just before they closed the District up. What year they closed it in?

Russell: Oh, they closed that around 1917 or '18, during the war. <sup>District closed</sup> [Wrong here, see newspapers]

Was it before the war, though, when they had the killing?

Bocage: Yes, yes, sure--it was before they closed the District, anyway, see.

Russell: But--whose band was that ah?

Bocage: Well, I was leading the band; [playing the lead (melody)]; [Manuel] Manetta was playing piano; and ah . . .

Russell: Remember the . . . ?

Bocage: George Fihle was playing trombone.

Russell: Who was the cornet at the ah, Tuxedo, that is?

Bocage: Ah, no--["Papa"] Celestin was playing cornet.

Russell: Celestin.

Bocage: Celestin, yeah. And old man, Luis Tio--the old man . . .

Russell: Oh, yeah

Bocage: . . . was playing clarinet. 'Cause the day--the morning of the killing --that was on a Sun, on a Sunday night, you see? ---there was four of us there playing that, 'cause they didn't use no brass that night, you see?

Russell: Oh.

Bocage: There was a violin, clarinet, piano and drum---old man [Louis] Cottrell [Sr.].

Russell: Ah---that wasn't Celestin's band, then?

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Bocage: No, no, they was, ah--they wasn't no standard band; they was just--we'd hire anybody.

Russell: You know, he had the . . .

Bocage: No, no.

Russell: He called it, his band, the Tuxedo Band all the time.

Bocage: That was. . .

Russell: He wasn't the leader then?

Bocage: That was afterwards, you know.

Allen: Who was Mg. ? [Manager]

Bocage: What?

Allen: Of the band?

Bocage: I was in charge of the band.

Allen: You were in charge of leading and managing?

Bocage: I was the leader, yeah--I was leading. Manetta and I played together a good while; he played piano and I played violin. We used to<sup>v</sup>---we played at Tom Anderson's, a good while together. We used to play "Poet and Peasant" [overture] and all that stuff.

Russell: Oh, yeah.

Bocage: Yeah. Did he ever tell you about that?

Russell: I know he used to play it on piano; I heard him play it on the piano once for us.

Bocage: Yeah, we used to play it, yeah. We knew it by heart, though. We had ah--Anderson had a nice place on Rampart St.--right where the big Woolworth is there now?

Allen & Russell: Uh-huh; oh, yeah.

Bocage: He had a beautiful club there, you know.

Russell: Did they call that "The Real Thing", or any certain name, or just Tom Anderson's?

Bocage: No, Tom Anderson's, that's all.

Russell: Tom Anderson's.

Bocage: Yeah, it was a beautiful cafe, though, he had there, yeah.

Russell: 'Cause one of the ads I--they had on there--"The Real Thing"--I didn't know if that was the name of it, or just . . .

Bocage: No, ah--that might have been just--see, he had two; he had one over on Basin . . .

Russell: Sure you're not sitting on that little picture there, was there?

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Russell: I believe you are. Oh, yes.

Allen: Yeah.

Bocage: On ah , .

Russell: Be sure you didn't mash those.

Bocage: That's Louie; yeah, I don't want to mash him up. (laughter)

Russell: When did you first know Louie Armstrong?

Bocage: Oh, I know Louie when he first started, you know. In fact, I was the one that gave Louie his job on the boat with Fate [Marable].

Russell: Oh, that's right; I heard that once.

Bocage: Yes, I gave him that job. You see, I was playing on there and they got ready to go away, you see--in May, the boat would leave and go up the country. Well, I didn't want to go away, you see. So, I'll say, I'll go back out to Spanish Fort, with Piron. And Louie then, was playing with ["Kid"] Ory; they was playing on Claiborne St.--they had a dance place back there. So, I took Fate back there and -- to see him, you know? And he decided to go. Well, you see, the way that happened--I had got the band that was the first New Orleans band the Streckfus people ever used here--all New Orleans men, see? Well, Fate and I were friends when he first came down here, see. And when he first came here, they used to have--Fate was the onliest colored boy in the band; all the rest was white boys--they only had about four or five of them in the band, see. But when they got ready to put a New Orleans band on there, well, I got -- Fate asked me to get the men for him, see? Well I, I got a ten-piece band for him, see, and I was playing trumpet--had two trumpets, you know? Had Manuel Perez and all different--lot of fellows, you know.

Russell: Manuel Perez was on the boat, too, then?

Bocage: Yeah--yeah, he--I was the one that brought him on there; uh-huh. He was a great trumpet player, too, that guy; he was wonderful. And ah--so when the boat got ready to go, in May--they wanted to go up the river, see? ---So, I say, "Well, I ain't--I'm going back at the Spanish Fort". And I took him out there, and he spoke to Louie, see? So, Louie went up; and he made about three or four trips with the band, you know?

Russell: Yeah, I know he was with him.

Bocage: Yeah, yeah And then he came back, and he worked on that club where I told you, on

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Bocage: Rampart Street, for Anderson--he worked there awhile. And, he was playing with me and Celestin in the Tuxedo Brass Band; and Joe [Oliver] sent down here for him to come to Chicago, see? And he went to Chicago; and from there on, he start to goin, you know?

Allen: One day you were telling me about a funeral . . .

Russell: Oh, excuse me, I was going to ask first about Louie, while we were on the subject.

Ah--did they use a lot of arrangements on the boat? Could Louie cut those arrangements?

Bocage: Well, I'll tell you how that was. You see, this guy is, just naturally gifted, you understand what I mean - he a fellow, if he hears anything once, that's - - he gets it in his noodle, you know. Well, everybody on the boat could read, maybe, but Louie, you see. Well, they had a fellow by the name of Joe Howard - he was playing trumpet--and he was pretty fair as a musician, you know? And Fate -- yeah, they used all stocks on there, you know?

Bocage: But he had to have a lead man with him, you see? Louie, Louie would get in there if it was the last thing he did, you understand? He was just talented like that, you see? Well, then, I suppose, going along, he learnt--picked up some of his stuff, you see? --but he stayed three seasons on there, you know, and he had to. And he was the featured man with that jazz, you know? People start to falling over themselves just to hear him play. You him him say about Bix Beiderbecke and them fellows up there? Well, that's where they got their ideas from, Louie, when he first went up there, you know? -- around Minnesota and all. I went, I made one trip up there, though.

Russell: All the way up the river?

Bocage: Yeah, all the way up to Minnesota, yeah. I had charge--see, one season Piron had the band see? And I think it was in '39. Well, he didn't want to go--you see, he had a bar-room here, on something. So, Cap[tain] called me, and asked me if I wanted to go, you understand? Well, well I went mostly to see the country, you understand; (end of spool) that's what I wanted to see--just wanted to see that part. And it's beautiful up there man; I really enjoyed it, you know. Well, after I came back then, I, I went back with my band--it was a six-piece band named Creole Serenaders. And Piron went back with his band, see? Well, I just merely went up there to see; I just wanted to see that part of the country, and I enjoyed that trip--man, it's wonderful. Well, I didn't do anything, hardly; I was fronting the band, see--directing and playing the violin, and played two or three numbers and on Sundays, they'd have

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Bocage: those all-day trips; they'd split the band up, see, on those day trips. Half of the band would play so many hours and the other half would play so many hours--I'd stay in the bunk and sleep. (laughter)

Russell: I didn't know they did that.

Bocage: Yeah--oh, man, it was a cinch. But the trouble is, no money in the job, though; they didn't pay nothing. I enjoyed the scenery and that vacation on that boat, you know. Nights-- the nights really was fine, man.

Allen: Well, back to Armstrong--you were telling me, one day, about a funeral you were playing.?

Bocage: Yeah--well, he was playing with us then, you see. But, this funeral we had--the day he left, we had a funeral, see? And he couldn't play it, because he was leaving that afternoon. Well, he came out there on Poydras Street--way back on Poydras Street, we was--and he told us goodbye, you know. And he went on to Chicago. And ah--this looks just like him like he was then, too.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: He don't look nothing like that now, man.

Russell: Ah--that's that Okeh ad, is it, ah?

Allen: It's from Woodward Studios, ah--yes, it's an Okeh ad.

Russell: What kind of a horn did you use when you started the cornet?

Bocage: Conn---C. G. Conn.

Russell: You used ah--did you always use cornet? When did you change to trumpet? You have a trumpet now, is it?

Bocage: No, I had a trumpet all the way.

Russell: Trumpet all the time.

Bocage: Yeah, all the way, yeah. I used to like to hear this boy play; when he first started, you could see he had plenty talent, you know what I mean, 'cause . . . for instance ah, he, ah--- all the little different improvisations he would make was so pretty, you know? Like, if somebody would be singing, and he would cut in, you know, and make a little different part? --you could just naturally see the talent there, you understand. He was musically born; it was born in him, that's all there is to it, you understand? And they say he came from such a rough environment, too, you hear. But it just goes to show you--we all are put here for some purpose, uh?

Retyped

Russell: Yeah.

Bocage: There's a million dollars worth of talent there, you understand. Yeah.

Russell: Yeah, he's made a big name for himself, now.

Bocage: Oh, yes. Well, he's got it--he's got it. I looked at him the other night; now he's about fifty five now.

Russell: I believe he'll be fifty nine this year--born in 1900.

Bocage: Fifty yeah--fifty yeah.

Russell: Fifty eight now.

Bocage: I looked at him on that jam session the other night there, and he was in there--there was no use talking, that guy was in there with them guys. You understand--all them young trumpet players (laughs)--that old man was right there with them, I'll tell you. He's really wonderful.

Russell: But he's not old yet; I'd . . . (laughs).

Bocage: Huh?

Russell: He's not really old.

Bocage: No, no--not yet, you know.

Russell: He can still blow.

Bocage: Uh-huh.

Russell: You do a good job blowing, too . . .

Bocage: Yeah, I hold up pretty good.

Russell: You're working regularly almost, nowadays, with the Eureka and all.

Bocage: Yeah.

Russell: Would you . . . ?

Bocage: [Willie] Pajand's going to play again, you know?

Russell: He's going to come back now?

Bocage: He closed his barroom up, you know.

Russell: Oh, I didn't know.

Bocage: Yes, he closed it up; I heard that . . .

Russell: You won't be on the street as much . . . ?

Bocage: No--ah--well I wasn't particular [didn't care for marching] about it, you know.

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Russell: Oh, no, I know.

Bocage: No--I just go out there--I like it, you know, I like to play. But since the old lady been sick, it kinda throwed me back, you know. I'm just commencing to pick up a little now, see?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: Yeah--I was weak as a chicken there, one time, setting up with her, you know?

Russell: Who will you be playing with on Carnival Day?

Bocage: I got a eight-piece band.

Russell: Eight-piece.

Bocage: Uh-huh. I got three sax, trumpet--well, [Louis] Cottrell [Jr.], he'll be on clarinet and tenor, you see--and bass violin, drums, piano, banjo.

Russell: Good band.

Bocage: Uh-huh. See, I been playing for those people for years, you know--mostly every Carnival I play for them.

Allen: What's their name?

Bocage: Bounders.

Allen: Bounders.

Bocage: Uh-huh. You know the Luzianne Coffee people--Reily? ---well, he's chairman of that thing.

Allen: Oh, I see.

Bocage: Reily, Jr. We play--we used to play for the--mostly at the Patio [Royal], but you see, since Brennan ['s] took the Patio over, he, they couldn't get it; they don't rent that out. So, the last two years, they been at the Monteleone, see; and they use that Marine Room, or something--that big room they got there, on the Iberville side there? Beautiful place up there.

Allen: You know, we didn't get hardly anything about the brass bands yet, Bill.

Russell: Yeah--there was one other thing, though, before that. I wanted to ask about your compositions, the pieces that you wrote: "Mama's Gone Goodbye" is such a wonderful number; I wondered--did Piron really help you write those, or just publish those things?

Bocage: No, ah "Mama's Gone Goodbye" is my music and Piron's lyric, you see.

Russell: Yeah, I wondered; I thought . . .

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Bocage: Now, the "New Orleans Wiggle" and "Bouncin' Around"--that was instrumental numbers; well, that was all my music, you see--I made arrangements and everything on that, you see. That was on the Okeh; I think one number was Columbia, and one was on the Victor.

Russell: Yeah--I have those.

Bocage: "New Orleans . . ." - well, that was all my music, you know.

Russell: Real nice numbers.

Bocage: Yeah. You notice that trumpet work in there. [scats - "New Orleans Wiggle" by Piron]

Russell: Oh, yeah.

Bocage: Well ah--Clarence Williams took it, and he had a re-arrangement on it, and--had a arranger in New York to do, make it. And when it come out, he didn't give that to the trumpet, at all, he must have thought it was too hard for trumpet, or something.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: He gave that to the saxophones, and had the trumpet making something else, and it sounded altogether different, you know.

Russell: Yeah.

Bocage: Uh-huh. But he had a big--big sheet arrangement on it, you know.

Russell: Did Piron just publish the piano music, or did he have orchestrations on it . . . ?

Bocage: No, no - we didn't have no orchestrations; just piano.

Russell: Never did have orchestrations. But you had it written out in manuscript?

Bocage: Yeah. We had ah ----.

Allen: Where did you learn arranging?

Bocage: Huh?

Allen: Where did you learn arranging?

Bocage: Picked it up myself.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Russell: Somebody told me once that Steve Lewis used to do a lot of arranging for the band --- is that true?

Bocage: No, no--Steve, Steve--Steve couldn't read, even.

Russell: Is that right? I didn't know that.

Bocage: No, he couldn't read--no. He was a great talent, though, you know but he couldn't read.



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Bocage: No, he couldn't read at all.

Russell: Was Piron a pretty good musician . . .

Bocage: Yeah.

Russell: . . . or just a good businessman?

Bocage: Pretty good musician, too--pretty nice violinist, yeah.

Russell: Good one.

Bocage: Yeah--yeah. Well, he was a good businessman, too; he was very, very up on his toes, you know. But ah--he just played, that's all--he didn't worry a lot. Anything else in the band, I had to take care of, you know. Just like that demonstration we had there--that waltz? I had to make -- take the record, you see, and from the record make the parts for our band, see?

Allen: Uh-huh. I was wondering about Steve -- did he play with any other bands?

Bocage: Well, no -- he practically played with us until he died, you know; and the band broke up, then he went down here on, at Victor's [Cafe]. there on . . .

Russell: Oh, yeah - across from my place.

Bocage: And he stayed there. And that's where he lost his mind, playing on that job, by hisself, you know.

Allen: Had that automobile then.

Bocage: Yes, that Ford (laughs). That scoundrel drive that Ford, and get drunk -- well, he used to drink whiskey by the tumblerful -- take a tumblerful of whiskey and go down with it,

Russell: Drink it straight, huh?

Bocage: Yes; I never saw anything like it.

Allen: He painted that car, too, didn't he?

Bocage: I don't know what he did with it; I know the only thing, I was scared to ride with him, the way he used to drive it.

Allen: Uh.

Bocage: He was a character, though, that boy. He--he had two fine daughters, too, uptown there. But that life, it just tear him up you know, that drinking and stuff just ruint him.

Russell: Oh, I was going to ask some more about the Piron band: Johnny St. Cyr, when I was out in California to visit him--he told me he used to play with them when you were--did he play banjo, or guitar, or what?

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Bocage: Yeah--guitar.

Russell: Guitar.

Bocage: Guitar--well, Johnny played ah, played - - we played a lots together; we played with Celestin, the old Tuxedo orchestra.

Russell: That's right--yeah.

Bocage: Him and I was playing together. He was another nice guitar player, too--real nice.

Russell: He told me a story, something about that violin--some fellow came here and wanted to buy your violin.

Bocage: Yeah, yeah, I was playing at Spanish Fort then. I . . . Piron was in New York - that's right, he had went off, and I was the only--violin. A man come out there, and he set down-- you know in the restaurant over there--so, he was setting at the table, you know. So, finally, he called me over there, you see, to his table, you know. He say, "Let me look at that fiddle you got there". I said "Okay". Well, it, it was an old violin, but--it had a nice tone to it, see, but I didn't put no value on it, you know what I mean; and fifty dollars those days, looked like a whole lot of money, you know.

Russell: Yeah; that was a good violin, in those days.

Bocage: So, he said, "I'll give you fifty dollars for it". And I said, "all right". I said, "Well, I can't give it to you tonight; come back and get it some other time." So, finally, he came back, and he took it, for fifty bucks. I went and bought one for twenty (laughter). Same one I got there.

Russell: Same one you got.

Bocage: And that guy took that fiddle, and carted it off somewhere, and had it repaired, man-- it came back, and polished up; you talking about pretty. He said he just liked the sound of it, that's all. He must have been a man with plenty of money, you know--kind of--a hobby, I suppose, you know--.

Russell: Oh, I remember Professor Manetta once told, I believe, something about he borrowed a real fine violin, and thought maybe it was a "Strad", or something, and let you use it for awhile out there--do you remember that? What was that? Do you remember?

Bocage: Oh, I don't know--I kinda forgot that; that's ah---.

Russell: He thought it was a "Strad", and he loaned it to you for a few nights. . .

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Bocage: But this fiddle--this fiddle was, it was light, too, light as a feather, you know; and the neck had broke and they had another neck put into it, you know.

Russell: Oh, yeah.

Bocage: And it ah--it had a nice tone; it <sup>was</sup> really good. But I don't it was a real good make; it was an imitation, you know?

Russell: Yeah, I suppose.

Bocage: Uh-huh. But I took that fifty bucks all right (laughs). And he took the fiddle.

And he came back--well, Piron was there when he came back, you know. And he opened it up--had a beautiful case for it and everything. And Piron took it, and tried it out, you know.

I suppose he, like you say--he must of had just a lot of money, and didn't know what to do with it, you know. 'Cause that's what--mostly awful rich people used to come out to that place; it was an exclusive joint, you know--all high-class. Like Mr. Nelson Whitney and Mr. Zemurray--all them class of people; that's what used to frequent that place, you know.

Russell: I wonder if you could tell us about some of the other violin players? Everybody's always told me you're one of the very greatest.

Bocage: Well . . .

Russell: Who were some of the other good ones? Was Piron first-class?

Bocage: Well, we had several good violin players, here. In the old field ah, they had a fellow by the name of Henry Nickerson--Professor Nickerson was what they used to call him.

Russell: Oh, I've heard of him.

Bocage: You heard of him. Well---

Russell: Thought he was a piano player.

Bocage: Well, he ah--his sister was a pianist. His sister--I think she's still living now. She's up in some college, teaching up there.

Allen: Howard.

Bocage: He was fine.

Russell: Oh, yeah.

Bocage: He was really a fine musician.

Russell: He played violin, then?

Bocage: Yeah, violin, yeah. Well, he finally got fooling around. Got into that fast life, you know. He was a nice-looking boy, too--went into T. B. and died.

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Bogage: Then we had another fellow by the name of Palao, Jimmy Palao.

Russell: I've heard of him.

Bogage: Well, he was with the Creole Band, Freddy Kennard and them, what left here and went on the [West] Coast and made such a big hit, you know. [George] Baquet. Well, he died in Chicago, too. [No] Well, he was good, too. Then we had a fellow by the name of Valto. That's the old timers / , ya understand.

Russell: Yeah.

Bogage: He was nice, too. And then in the late years, we had Piron; we had a fellow by name of Bigard; and we had Paul Dominquez, ya know.

Russell: Oh yeah, I've heard of him. Never knew him.

Bogage: Never heard him. He died just about three years ago. Well, they were all pretty nice.

Allen: What about Charlie Deverges?

Bogage: Oh, he was a guitar player--mostly a teacher, yeah.

Allen: He didn't play violin?

Bogage: No, no.

Allen: Clarinet, I mean.

Bogage: He'd teach most anything, though. He, he, he--he'd teach guitar, piano or anything like that; , he was a good teacher, you know? But, he was never out in the field in the music business - you know, not like we was, playing with bands and all that . He was mostly just a teacher, you know. He taught Manetta some, you know?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bogage: Uh-huh. And Manuel and I came up together; we were kids together, you know, and he'd - - played violin and then I - - he got the piano and I took on the violin (laughs). We played a lot together.

Allen: Did you ever work with Tom Albert?

Bogage: Yeah, sure. When I first started to playing, that's the gang I started playing with - - Tom Albert, Eddie Vinson - that's the fellow used to play with that Creole band . .

Russell: On the trombone.

Bogage: Yeah, trombone - - fellow by the name of Reuhen, playing bass; and we had another

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Bocage: fellow by the name of "Skeeter" - was a little nickname, you know - playing the guitar; Tom was playing his cornet, at that time; I played the violin; and a fellow by the name of Gabriel played the clarinet. <sup>Cf Tom Albert & Mooney Martin interviews.</sup> And we went to play out on a plantation, there. It was in December, and I like to froze to death, man - went down there in a wagon; it wasn't no automobiles in them days, you know--horse and wagon. Man, it was so cold. Yeah, when I started playing, that's when I first started out, playing with them fellows there.

Collins: Which plantation would that be?

Bocage: Heh?

Collins: Which plantation?

Bocage: Down here -- you know where Aurora Garden is, down in there?

Collins: Oh, yeah.

Bocage: <sup>Used</sup> to call it Stanton Plantation, you know.

Russell: Stanton.

Bocage: 'Bout - oh, 'bout six miles, seven, eight miles down <sup>on</sup> the <sup>of the side of</sup> river <sup>east side</sup>.

Allen: Where Jimmie Noone was from.

Bocage: Right here--from right down there around -- on the other side of the river, but down around Arabi down there, you know.

Allen: Oh - oh, I thought he was from Stanton. [ask Mooney & Tom Albert]

Bocage: No, he was from the other side, on the St. Bernard side, you know.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Russell: Do you remember much about Jimmie Noone when he first started?

Bocage: Yes, yes.

Russell: Who did he study with, or anything?

Bocage: Well--you see, he picked up right around here just like [Sidney] Bechet, too,--that's how he did. Just took the clarinet, talent, you know, and started to playing -- that's all there was to it--Bechet and Jimmie Noone too. Now, there's another one - Louie Armstrong and Bechet there. Just full of talent, you understand what I mean. And never had two weeks good schooling in his whole life.

Allen: Huh.

Bocage: That's the truth.

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Russell:

[Yeah?]

Bocage: But, man, he could play that clarinet. He'd play anything, and . . . . I see him take - - we was playing on Basin Street at the ["Big] 25" [on Franklin St.] there. And one night he come there - he was nothing but a kid, you know - - and he didn't have no reed. He took a cigar box, you understand--a piece of cigar box, and shaped a reed and played all night with that thing. (laughter)

Russell: Sidney Bechet.

Bocage: Sidney Bechet - man, I say, "If this ain't something."

Russell: He's a talent, all right.

Bocage: He'd take a E-flat clarinet and play in the orchestra -- he didn't know what key he was playing in, but you couldn't lose him. That's the truth. Never saw anything like it.

Allen: What were you playing at the time, violin?

Bocage: I was playing violin.

Allen: Who else was in the band?

Bocage: At that . . . . there was old man Jean Vigne, he was the drummer --I know, you might have heard talk of him.

Russell: I've heard of him.

Bocage: Yeah, he was the drummer.

Allen: I know his granddaughter. [Evelyn Vigne]

Bocage: Joe Oliver, trumpet; Bechet, clarinet; I was on the violin; and a boy they called Walter Campbell--he died in Chicago, too--he was playing piano. Five pieces, that's what we had. Piano, drums, trumpet, violin, and clarinet.

Allen: Was this before you were in the Tuxedo, or after?

Bocage: Oh, that was - - no, that was afterwards - I think it was afterwards, yeah. But that was - - they was all right together, those clubs, you see?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: "25" was a colored place, you understand?

Allen: Uh-huh. I been there.

Bocage: Well, they was - they was at this block and Tuxedo was right in the next block, see? And the "101 Ranch" was right across the street --on Franklin St. right where Krauss [department

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Bocage: store] is now. And old [George] Fewclothes was right there where Krauss--where the big store is, Fewclothes was right there; he had a place there, see. Well, he had a band in there, too, see? Yeah, old man Fewclothes, we used to call him. He always had a big vest on, a big white vest. Man, have I told you about him?

Russell: No, not much, no.

Bocage: No, never told you about him? Well, he was a character, too, that old man. Well, he used to run those places; tell you how he used to run them; they'd have women there--they work on a commission basis, see? Drink--every drink they sold was so much for them, you see? There was, in those days, most of those ship fellows, off the ships--those sailors--and they come in with plenty of money, you know--they didn't know what to do with it. They'd come back there and dance all night, throw all their money away; and when they'd get broke, they'd throw them out, you know. And that's the way those places operated, see? And some of the women'd make plenty of money, you know? Well, you know what the band was getting? ---two dollars a night.

Allen: Uh!

Bocage: And we'd go to work at eight o'clock and work 'til four o'clock in the morning; and if the kitty was good, we'd work 'til five or six. Girls would get one of those live guys giving us ~~his~~ money, you know? Show you the difference, huh?

Allen: Well, how much would you get from a live guy?

Bocage: Oh, man, sometimes we'd pick up nice money. Well, the women would help the band, see; they'd give the band something, you know -- take some of his money and put in there. We had one of the, one fellow in the band go around and -- with the kitty, you know.

Russell: Yeah, pass it around.

Bocage: Yeah (laughs). Oh, them was some days then, man. But, you know, you could buy a loaf of bread for five cents. And you could get--take a nickel and buy two things--half of this and half of the other. So you see, two dollars in those days was actually worth eight today, now , practically speaking.

Russell: That's right.

Bocage: That's the difference, you see.

Russell: I wonder if you could tell a little bit more about Jimmie Noone? Did you ever play

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Russell: with him in a band?

Bocage: Oh, yeah, I played with him -- yes, yes, I played with Jimmie. Well, one thing about Jimmie - he was a very nice boy, you know, very nice <sup>4/1/1</sup> -- easy-going, quiet fellow; looked something like Dick--he was short and fat, you know (laughs).

Allen: Uh-huh

Russell: Was he always fat like that? I didn't know that.

Bocage: Yeah - yeah --well, he got a little fatter, you know.

Russell: Yeah, he was pretty fat when I knew him.

Bocage: Well, he was short and chunky. Now, Freddy Keppard was Jimmie's brother-in-law. He was . . . .

Russell: He married Jimmie's sister?

Bocage: Sister, yeah. And he helped Jimmie out some, too, you see.

Russell: Could Jimmie read much when he started?

Bocage: Yes -- when he first started, no, he just picked up, but he gradually pick up; <sup>all of</sup> them learned to read, gradually pick up; from playing with good men they gradually <sup>pick up</sup> ~~pick up~~ And they try, you know, and they learn, you see. But ah, he was really a fine hoy, man . He had <sup>a</sup> nice, soft style, you know.

Russell: He played real nice in Chicago; I wondered how he played down here?

Bocage: He always was the same way; he had a style of his own, you know--he didn't try to imitate nobody. Just soft--he tried to play <sup>a</sup> it clean, in other words, you understand--yeah.

Allen: On things like tonguing and fast fingering on clarinet, who was the best, down here? Just----say, to make a run, you know? On clarinet.

Bocage: Well, I'd say for mus--, musically speaking, Tio was the best out of all them, you understand.

Allen: Well, could he execute without music as good as with?

Bocage: Oh, yes, yes, sho', yes.

Allen: He could play a fast run like that?

Bocage: He was gifted, yes. Now, this fellow, Baquet, he was fine, too, you know--Georgie Baquet.

Russell: Oh, yes.



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Bocage: He was a fine clarinet player. Well, he come from the old school, too, you see.

Russell: How did [Alphonse] Picou rank with those people?

Bocage: Pretty good---pretty fair. But I don't think - course, I shouldn't say this on that tape recorder, though, because he might hear it.

Allen: No, we won't play this for anybody.

Bocage: I--he was never as brilliant as those fellows, you know what I mean.

Russell: No.

Bocage: Yeah, you know - you know, some men, they just, looks like their music is fluent with them, you understand?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: And the other guy look like he stumbles a little--you know, he's a little backwards, or something, you know.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: But, those two guys--Tio and Picou--no, not Picou, but Baquet--they were really tops, you know. They were great clarinetists, you know--without a doubt.

Russell: Ah, did you hear [Charlie] McCurdy play?

Bocage: Oh, yeah--now that was another great man, too. But, he was so soft, you understand, and he--and he was a fellow--he would set here all night long, if this was a band, and play all night, wouldn't say two words to nobody.

Russell: Oh, he was really that way? Real quiet.

Bocage: That was his make-up. Oh, he--I imagine that had something to do with his playing, you understand? He, he played just like he felt, I imagine, see? Now, you take a guy that's fiery, you understand--he's got a fiery disposition, well, if he's a musician, it'll come out that way in his acting, see? But a guy that's droll, it's the same thing, you see? Well, McCurdy was that type of a fellow, see? But for music, and knowing that clarinet, man, he was a ace. , he was a crack. Well, he traveled on the road, too, with all the shows, you know, playing all over the country with different musical acts, shows and things, you know. But he was never much of a mixer, you know -- he would set there all night. You / just say, "Charlie, what happened?" (laughs) And he'd get his little book--he had a book all the time, and a pencil; I think he kept a diary of everything he did, you know. He'd set

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Bocage: there with that little book and pencil all night. And he'd get ready to play, he'd pick up his horn . . . .

Russell: Put his book down, then go on again.

Bocage: Don't even look at you, man. (laughs)

Allen: Did you ever hear him play "High Society", by the way?

Bocage: Yes, oh, he played, yes. Well that "High Society", that thing was published.

Allen: That clarinet part was published?

Bocage: Yeah, that was a--that was a piccolo part. In a march, you understand?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: Yeah, and, of course, Picou he said that he had composed . . . .

END OF REEL II, Jan. 29, 1959

PETER BOCAGE

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Russell: Speakin' of clarinetists--how did "Big Eye" [Louis Nelson] rank with the others?

Bocage: Well ---

Russell: / I've heard you with "Big Eye",

Bocage: Yeah, Louie, Yeah. Well, for talent, he was very talented, you know what I mean; he was one of them fellows that could play most anything--if he heard it once, he could play it, you understand. And he know chords--he was very gifted for that, and naturally that made him good, you see.

Russell: I never did know if he was much of a reader; I thought maybe he could read a little bit.

Bocage: Well, he could read a little, yes; but he wasn't much--you know, in comparison with those fellows. That - - -

Russell: [George] Baquet and [Lorenzo] Tio.

Bocage: No; those guys were taught, you see--they went through it, through the methods and everything, you see. But Louie come up a self-made man, might, you might say.

Russell: More self-made.

Bocage: He could play guitar, and he could play bass violin; he was talented, you know--gifted. In fact, he picked the clarinet up hisself, you know. But if that violin player would play that part, he could come in there; he'd have a --- he'd have a counter-melody to match with it, and he wasn't going to make no bad chords, either.

Russell: I only heard Louie on his B flat in late years. How did he sound on the C? Was he better, or about the same, or how?

Bocage: C clarinet , no about the same; well, a C is a little more brilliant, you know?

Russell: More brilliant.

Bocage: Yeah, a little brilliant--a smaller instrument, you know. But he was really a nice, nice, nice band man, too.

Russell: And comparing the clarinetists again, how did [Sidney] Bechet fit in the picture?

Bocage: Oh, he's another one that--(laughs) he played, man, you couldn't lose him.

Russell: Did he sound as good as the others, you think . . .

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Bocage: Oh, yeah, he was . . .

Russell: . . . or was he rough, or low?

Bocage: No, he was just powerful, you know--you, you heard him play that soprano [saxophone], huh?

Russell: Yes, that's what he plays now; I've never heard him much on clarinet.

Bocage: No, well he mostly plays sop---well, he had a clarinet when I was with him in Boston; he had one.

Russell: That's right; he did a little clarinet, too. [check date]

Bocage: I didn't like that set-up up there, so I came back. Uh--but he always was fiery; he's just naturally a fiery guy--it's his make-up is that way, you understand. He's just ah--he don't set still one minute, you know; there's always something looks like he's got to be doing. And when he plays, he's the same way, you understand? He's all--looks like he's fired up all the time. And he grabs that instrument, you know, and he just goes to blowing--that's all it is to it (laughs). But he was featuring "Summertime" when I was up there with him, you see.

Russell: Oh, yes.

Bocage: Well, I'll tell you about Sidney; you know, he's a he's a one-man band on anything.

Russell: That's right; I like him, but he's that way, that's all.

Bocage: Yeah--the other men--don't have to do nothing; he just wants you there, that's all, but he gonna do all the playing, you understand. That's the way he - - that's his set-up, see.

Russell: That's what Bunk [Johnson] said, too, when he was up there.

Bocage: Yeah, yeah, that's right; that's what I didn't like about the band.

Allen: Did he play the lead, and everything?

Bocage: He played everything, man; he'd make all kinds of stuff on that soprano sax. He played that "Summertime" and every time he played it, he played it different, you understand--had different ideas. But--he was just naturally full of music, you know--just a fanatic with music, you understand. Yeah, but that's one thing about him: he don't care if you don't--you can just stand up there with your horn in your hand all night, that's all. And, in other words, he wants the whole thing built around him, see. Bunk said the same thing, huh?

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Russell: Yep.

Bocage: Yeah, that's true, yeah.

Russell: In the old days, did he play the regular clarinet part, though? Was he pretty good?

Bocage: No, no--no, he always played the 'tune.

Russell: Always did.

Bocage: He was just like Louie [Armstrong].

Russell: Uh-huh.

Allen: Did he play lead in those days?

Bocage: Yeah; he played everything--lead, counter-melodies, everything. Obligatos--oh, he played anything come in his mind, you see; he was just that chock--full of music, full of ideas, you know. And he'd never get out of the key, though--that's one thing.

Russell: Did you ever hear him play trumpet? He told me once he played pretty good trumpet once--high notes and all.

Bocage: Yeah?

Russell: Did you ever hear him on trumpet?

Bocage: No, I never did hear him on trumpet. He started out right there with us; we had a place on Tulane Avenue--that is, Piron and Clarence Williams had it there, you know--but Bechet was nothing but a kid then. And ah, he was fooling with the clarinet then. So, one day he came there, and somebody had a saxophone there. Well, they didn't have any saxophones in New Orleans at the time--that was about the first saxophone he had ever seen, see? So he looked at that thing, you know, and he say, "Man, I can play this thing". Man, he (laughs) took and went to playing--just that type of boy, you know, just spunk, you know--never says "quit".

Russell: Dick, you started to ask about brass bands, and ah . . . .

Bocage: Oh, yeah--about the brass bands? What you want to know about the brass bands, Dick--about the old-time bands?

Allen: The old-time brass bands you heard when you were a kid, if you can remember.

Bocage: Well, they had the -- when I was a little boy they had the Excelsiors, and they had what they called the Old Onward band - now that was all old--time musicians, all---nothing

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Bocage: strictly but marches, you understand; no jazz no none of that. When they played, they played nothing but those marches, see. But they were all are men, you know--good men, see? Well, now, during my time, there was the [original] Tuxedo Band, and the Onward Band, and the Excelsior that came from the old Excelsior--well it was old man [George] Moret, he had the leadership. Well, after he died, then I took the leadership, see, of the Excelsior Band. Well, then, we played a lot of marches, too, and we used to mix up a little jazz in there, see? But now the brass bands of today, practically most--it seems like the public wants it, and that's what they're giving them is mostly all jazz, you see? ---outside of funeral marches, you know. And it seems, it appears to me that that's what the people want, you know what I mean? But years ago, it was different, you know--the people wanted marches, and nice and the band sounds so much nicer when you're playing good, stand and music, you know what I mean - - if you got a good set of men, you know? And you take a good say ten or twelve piece brass band, and everybody playing their parts; it's wonderful. Course, you take a jazz band now--you know what it sounds like.

Russell: Yeah.

Bocage: It's--it's just naturally a bunch of racket, that's all it is to it, you know; 'cause everybody making something different, and nobody making something alike, and it's no blending; it's just a - - it's like a dog fight, I call it, you understand, but still in all, I go out there and do it, too, you know? (laughter)

Allen: Well, when you were playing with the Excelsior, you say you mixed a little jazz in, huh?

Bocage: Yeah, we would play a little--in the younger band, see? but those old men didn't do nothing like that, you understand. No, no; they was strictly . . . .

Allen: Well, now--would you just have one guy faking on cornet, or would they all fake?

Bocage: No, jost everybody put a little improvisation in, you know--they played some kind of a little "head" piece, or a little song they knew, you know--something like that. Well, they'd play that instead of

Allen: Would it be a "dog fight" with them?

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Bocage: No, not naturally, because it was different. You see, what we got today, Dick, is altogether different from old musicians. These guys today is -- well, they are so fired-up, you understand what I mean -- they play altogether different. In other words, between this jazz and this ah, this ah new style, what we call "modern" jazz, they get that different ideas, like that [Dizzy] Gillespie style, you know--and they get all that mixed up. Now, to do that, you got to be a man like Gillespie in order to do that, you understand? But a guy that don't know what they doin', and he tries to do it, he don't do nothing but make a mess, you understand what I mean? He don't know what he's doing, but he's still always trying, you know -- he's making a lot of bad chords and a lot of bad notes and everything, and he calls it--what you call it? ---"progressive" jazz, huh?

Russell: Yeah, sounds bad.

Bocage: Yeah, well there you go see? But the older men, if they knew a piece, they'd stick mostly to the melody; and put a little improvisation in, you know, but they'd never get out of the chord, see? But now--adays, man, them chords don't count, now--understand, with some of these fellows, you know? They just as soon make anything, you understand. You know, these chords is on the line or off the line or in between the line, it's all right, man, see -- call it jazz, you see. That's their difference in ideas, you know. "Modernistic", you know, they call it--new modern, you know. Now the kid's say, "Man, you're old-fashioned" (laughs). "You're old man, you're old man; you can't do that". And he's so wrong it's pitiful, you understand.

Russell: Yeah, that's right.

Bocage: He ain't doing a thing but ruining hisself. He couldn't hold a legitimate job nowhere. If you take him away from what he's doing, what he going to do? Now, you know, when we had our band--I just wanted to show you the difference in that Piron band--"The Smart Set"--you heard of that show.

Russell: Yeah--George--was that "Georgia Smart Set" or--that a minstrel show, or carnival?

Bocage: It was--no, a musical extravaganza, you see.

Russell: Oh, more like vanderbilt.

Bocage: Yeah, this great comedian was with them--oh . . .

Allen: Steel or white or . . . ?

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Russell: Billy Crassans (check sp.) with them for a while?

Bocage: No, no, that's after Billy's time. Oh, I can't think of it--there was two brothers, though, and they were comedians--one was a straight man and the other was a comedian. Well now, I'll show you now: this show came down here; that show is rehearsed in New York, you understand what I mean? They got all their scripts--the music is arranged, the show is arranged, and they carry a director--piano player. But they use local men with him, you understand? Now, what would a numbskull do with a job like that? He's a hot jazz man, now - could you hire him to play a job like that?

Russell: No.

Bocage: Absolutely not. And we used to play that show. "Tut" Whitney--"Tut" Whitney--that's that fellow's, comedian's name. Now, those people had about forty people in that show, and I mean rehearsed to a "T", and no humbug, no play "Dinah" or whatcha-call-it sing, you know that kind of stuff like you see in these clubs, you know. I mean they put that stuff up before you there, and that director, at that piano--he's directing the show and the band, see? So, you see the difference in that--in knowing and not knowing. And we played that show year after year; they used to come right there at the Temple Theatre there.

Allen: Do you remember this hymn, "I Want To Go Where Jesus Is"?

Bocage: Uh-huh.

Allen: Now, somebody was telling me the Tuxedo used to play that.

Bocage: Oh, they play it once in a while.

Allen: Well, how would they, how would they work out a number like that? If they were going to play it be head, they . . .

Bocage: Oh, well, everybody just play to suit theirsself, that's all; whenever they say let's play that, everybody's on their own tub, you know.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: If you get in there right, it's all right; if the guy carrying the melody, he's going to carry it all right -- the other fellows might be wrong, but he's going to be right, you see?



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Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: So there you go; that's the way that works out, see? . .

Russell: When you had the Excelsior Band, what was the instrumentation? How many trumpets, how many trombones . . . ?

Bocage: Three trumpets; clarinet, see --we used the E-flat clarinet, see?

Russell: E-flat.

Bocage: And we had a melophone, baritone, two trombones, sousaphone and two drums, see---- twelve-piece band, you understand. [No]

Russell: Yeah, were their headquarters over - - did you play most of your jobs on this side of the river?

Bocage: No, on both sides.

Russell: Both sides.

Bocage: Like that. Played all the funerals and parades and all like that--just like these band plays now.

Russell: Did they ever use saxes in those days?

Bocage: No, no -- we used the E-flat clarinet, and the melophone, see?

Russell: Melophone.

Bocage: Well, now they don't have no melophone player, you see --no alto with these bands.

Russell: Have a baritone horn?

Bocage: Oh yes, yes. Yeah, we had a baritone--two trombones, baritone, and bass, see.

Clarinet, melophone, three trumpets and two drums, see? That was the set-up. Two lead trumpets [he means solo], and one first, see?

Russell: How -- what were the jobs of the different trumpet players? I never did understand, for sure. In the three -- I mean, is one supposed to be resting, or which is the lead?

Bocage: Well--no, you see, you have two solo men; well, one of those men got to be up [playing] all the time, see? For instance: if you was playing solo with me--like I start the band off, I'm the leader, all right. Well, I play down that - - you play right along, but you rest a little while I'm playing, see; and when I get ready to rest, you come up, see, and give me a chance to rest, see? But the 1st man, he plays all the time, see; but he's playing the 1st part--it's much easier than the solo part, see? But the two solo men got to

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Bocage: work at interval, you see, to give each a chance to rest, you understand? That's the way they work it, see?

Russell: Is the solo part usually higher than the 1st part, or what?

Bocage: Well, yeah; he's playing the main, the main lead of the piece, see? Wait, I'll show you.

? : Sure.

Bocage: Some of the music there to see.

Russell: Oh, that's some of your old music . . . ?

Bocage: Yeah

Russell: I'll bring it over here. Yeah, there's a solo part; then the others 2nd and 3rd cornet. Where do they stand? I mean, as you march along, say, you're marching over towards the door . . .

Bocage: Yeah, well

Russell: You're the leader, you're the - - it's your band.

Bocage: Yeah, he stands to the right, in front of the . . .

Russell: You're on the right.

Bocage: . . . snare drum, see?

Russell: Then, the one in middle—what is he? Is he the 1st?

Bocage: Now see, that's the solo part, see?

Russell: The one in the middle.

Bocage: Yeah, he plays the 1st, yeah.

Russell: He's in the 1st. Then, the other one, on the other outside?

Bocage: He's a solo, too, see?

Russell: Another solo.

Bocage: Uh-huh.

Russell: Yeah, those are all those parts.

Bocage: Yeah, see all the different parts?

Russell: Did you all cut the names off so no other band could steal the number, or what?

Bocage: See, now this is 2nd and 3rd trumpet, see?

Allen: Uh-huh.

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Bocage: Yeah, they -- those old-timers used to do that, see?

Russell: He cut those names off the top.

Bocage: Cuts all the names off those marches, see?

Russell: Nowadays, sometime, you see, if they can't get any saxes, they'll hire four cornets, sometimes, too, you see?

Bocage: Yeah.

Russell: I've seen them. Today, they'll all four of them take down, too, at the same time and let the sax take the melody.

Bocage: Well, no, no . . .

Russell: That's not right, huh?

Bocage: That's no system, you see?

Collins: Do you know what piece this is?

Bocage: No, I don't. See, I inherited all this old music from the old-timers, you know.

Collins: Oh.

Allen: Did you play with Moret, himself?

Bocage: Yes, yes, old man George; yeah, he was leader.

Allen: And then when he retired . . .

Bocage: Well, he died; he died, you see.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Collins: Number 260.

Bocage: And I took charge of the band, see. See, this is 2nd and 3rd trumpet, see?

Allen: And they're playing the same notes--the 2nd and 3rd?

Bocage: No--no, no; that's arranged different, you see; the two solos are playing the same notes.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: And this man is playing different altogether, see? [1st cornet]

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: His notes is different. In other words, the chords, it's arranged, you see - your chords.

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Allen: Some are 6/8's and some are 2/4, I see.

Bogage: 2/4 or "[C] splits", they call them, yeah--2/4, "C-splits" [common term is "cut time"].

Russell: I wondered if they sometime had like one trumpet that was more of a high-note man, like "Kid" Rena, who didn't read, couldn't read, but he'd always fake all the time, those high notes?

Bogage: No, no, we didn't use that those days.

Russell: Play real fancy stuff.

Bogage: All you had to play was just on that card, you know--if it was a high note, play a high notes; if it was a low note, play a low note. [What about Chris Kelly's brass band?]

Russell: I thought maybe they had one sort of "hot" man, you know . . .

Bogage: No, no.

Russell: . . . he couldn't read much, but he'd always be playing a lot of fancy variations.

Bogage: No--well, some guys could improvise, you know; they'd put in hot stuff.

Russell: But they didn't regularly have a man like that in the band.

Bogage: But when you, when you played, when you played something like that [showing cornet music], you had plenty . . .

Russell: Yeah, you had plenty to do, anyway.

Bogage: . . . plenty to make without studying about high notes.

Russell: Yeah.

Collins: I see they got them . . . there, too.

Bogage: Yeah, yeah - when you played that, you understand what I mean . . . .

Collins: That's a lot of work,

Bogage: Yeah, you have plenty wind there, too, you see all them sixteenth notes there?

Collins; Oh, lot of work, boy.

Bogage: So that's the difference in the old-time musician and the young musician of today.

Allen: Did they have jazz brass bands in those days?

Bogage: Well, no; in the brass bands, they mostly used just strictly music, see?

Allen: What about the "jump up" [not playing regularly together] brass bands?

Bogage: Oh, ah, they never had no "jump up" brass bands when them bands was playing [?]. Now, in the modern times, like [Manuel] Perez -- his band, the Onward Band, and ["Papa"] Celestin's

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Bocage: [Original] Tuxedo Band, well, they started with that, playing just - - well, it wasn't quite as bad as it is today, you know; it was a little better, 'cause they used to use quite a bit more music than they use today. But now, you go out there today, you don't play no music at all, outside of funeral, funeral march, that's all.

Russell: Well, way back in the early times, did they play, coming back from the graveyard, playing faster marches, or what did they play?

Bocage: Yeah, yeah, they had marches like this.

Russell: But they didn't jazz them up?

Bocage: No.

Russell: Just played fast marches.

Bocage: Might play like "Didn't He Ramble", or something like that, you know--a head piece, you know.

Russell: They might play a head piece now and then.

Allen: Back to that business about head pieces: did the trombones ever work out little stuff by head?

Bocage: Oh, yes, that's . . .

Allen: I mean together?

Bocage: Well, you playing by head, you play whatever you want, you understand. 'Cause that's what you - - call you're on your own then, you know?

Allen: Yeah, but I mean, would they work up a duet, where they work together?

Bocage: I imagine so, yeah; if they had the idea to do it, they could do it, yeah, sure.

Allen: Uh-huh. Nowadays, you hear 'em do that riffin', a they could like Count Basie sometimes, you know, and everything.

Russell: Well, what was the system of the trombones? When they had two trombones, did they always play in harmony, or one supposed to rest most of the time?

Bocage: Well, no; you see ah, the trombones play all the time, 'cause you got 1st and 2nd trombones.

Russell: Both of them are supposed to keep up all the time?

Bocage: Yeah, 1st and 2nd, you see.

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Russell: Nowadays one . . . .

Bocage: In other words, the two horns, one's making one note and one's making the other-- makin' the chord, you see, with the bass and baritone, see? That's why it sounds so nice and full, you see?

Allen: Four parts, then . . . .

Bocage: Yeah, sure.

Allen: . . . with the bass and baritone.

Bocage: Yeah, it carried the melody, the melody and the harmony together, it make it sound none like a band, you understand?

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: But nowadays, the two trombones might be making the same thing, or one interfering with the other--he's making something that don't fit, and that makes a mess, you see? So that's where the difference is, you see? That's why the bands today don't sound like these old bands did. Now, you take this today--take a piece of music like this, and give it to some of these hot trumpet players around here, man, and they wouldn't no more play that than falling off a tree. He'd get a fit when he looked at this card, you understand. See, look all the notes on there.

Allen: It's black.

Bocage: You got a many notes there.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: Now see, that's the difference. Now when you playing from--playing your own way, playing from memory, you make what you want. But when you're playing that, you play what's on there, you understand; no matter how hard it is, you're supposed to make it, you see; that's where the trouble comes in, see.

Allen: Thirty--second note triplets, I see there.

Collins: Yeah, that's a tough one. Which band used to play these particular pieces?

Bocage: Excelsior Band.

Collins: Excelsior.

Bocage: Old Excelsior.

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Russell: You said that music there is Excelsior Band music? . You still have the library?

Bocage: Uh-huh, I have around a whole drawer full of music.

Collins: Oh, that's wonderful.

Allen: Uh-huh. We'd like to make copies of some of this sometime, and lock it up at Tulane. We'll put it in a box and lock it up, you know, in case anything happens, you know.

Bocage: You don't know the name of it, though, Dick, that's the trouble.

Russell: No.

Allen: Well, that doesn't matter, you know--just so--we could preserve it, in case anybody wants to see it in the future, you know.

Collins: You got the number on it, anyway, Peter.

Russell: How was the Henry Allen [Sr.] Band over here?

Bocage: Pretty good; that was [Henry] "Red" Allen [Jr.]'s father, you know.

Russell: Did you play with that some?

Bocage: Yes, I played a lot with him. He was an old-timer, too; he knew me when I was a kid, you know. That's Allen's daddy, you know.

Russell: Yeah.

Allen: Was he older than you?

Bocage: Oh, Lord, yeah--sure, man. Yeah--he was playing when I was in knee-pants. He was the time of Manetta's time; "Fess's" cousin - - uncle, you know--that time. He had a band over here they called Pacific Band --Manetta, yeah, had ; they had a Algiers Band Pacific Band--brass band.

Allen: Who was in the Pacific?

Bocage: Ah, all of the old-timers in there; all dead now, all those men, yeah. There was a fellow by the name of Joe Lezard; he was ah, manager and a trumpet player. Old Man Manetta was a trumpet player. George Sims was <sup>the</sup> a baritone player; Georgie Hooker was a trumpet player --oh, they had--all, all of them dead now, all those is dead. But I used to go around when I was kid and hear them rehearse, you know. (laughs)

Allen: Did they use piccolos or anything?

Bocage: No--no piccolos; clarinet, E-flat clarinet.

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Allen: No flutes in brass bands.

Bocage: No, no.

Allen: Did you ever hear a piccolo, ever, in a brass band?

Bocage: Oh, yeah, yeah, sure, sure.

Allen: Who would play the piccolo?

Bocage: We never had a piccolo player - - yeah, we had one piccolo player, yeah --fellow by the name of Bab Frank.

Allen: Uh-huh.

Bocage: He ah, he was a self-made man, too; but he could play, though. He was full of ideas, you know. Well, fellows, I suppose I've about put up as much time as I can; the old lady's starting to worry me.

Russell & Allen: Yeah, all right.

Russell: Yeah, we don't want to bother you any more; we certainly appreciate the interview. It was wonderful. There's a little sheet here we fill out, too.

Allen: All right, Bill.

END OF REEL III, Jan. 29, 1959

PETER BOCAGE