

MANUEL MELLO--SUMMARY  
Reel I---retyped  
August 3, 1959

Present: Richard B. Allen  
Paul R. Crawford  
Place: 1025 Bartholomew  
Street (Mello's home) 1

Manuel J. Mello was born on Bartholomew Street, near Burgundy Street, two blocks from present address, on June 4, 1887. His father played a harmonica around the house, but there were no real musicians in the family in that generation. Some of the tunes his father played on the harmonica were: "Swanee River," "I Only Just Wanted to Know," [check this] "Widow Sunny," "Six Little Angels"--Leonce and Manuel [and or on?] guitar and string bass used to play some of these old tunes. Jack Laine would make all kinds of faces when they played them. Martin Kirsch, sitting beside Mello, would be laughing. "This stuff they play now, what they call jazz . . . is as far away from jazz as the moon is from the city of New Orleans."

Mello had three brothers. Leonce played trombone, string bass, guitar, and mandolin. Henry, the second youngest to Manuel, played guitar. Sanford, "Sam," the youngest, who played with Alfred "Pansy" Laine for a while, played trap drums. Leonce was about five years younger than Manuel. Sanford was born in 1903, the year their father died. Henry was two years younger than Manuel. Sam is still alive, but Henry and Leonce are both dead. Henry died about two years after Leonce.

Leonce studied music "with his ears." Whatever he put his hands on and wanted to play, he played. If he heard a piece, he could come home and play it. He learned from listening to colored bands. He could have gone with Ted Lewis, but he refused to dress up, wouldn't wear a frock coat, white suit, or tuxedo. But you couldn't beat him in music. "You want to see how good a musician is, put him in a funeral where he's going to play on the beat." Had a hard lip, like Manuel. Leonce died in 1954, and Henry died in 1956. Manuel hasn't touched his trumpet since Leonce died. When he needs to use

a trumpet, he borrows one from his brother-in-law or "The other fellow down below." His own trumpet tuned the way it was the last job he played with Leonce, a reception three years before Leonce died. [Some technical details here - also shows real feeling of his loss at Leonce's death]

Leonce never changed the slide in his trombone; he could play in any key, sharps or flats, without changing the slide. In the old days trombonists would change slides to play in different keys.

The "Souchon Brigade" turns out to attend Negro funerals; but when the white men, who are as good or better musicians than the Negroes, die, they never show up. When Papa Celestin died, all the "jazz outfit" [New Orleans Jazz Club ?] marched in his funeral procession. But the real old-time musicians, like William "Humpback" Gallaty, Leonce Mello, Martin Kirsch, Alcide "Yellow" Nunez--they just died and got buried.

Musicians of this generation will never--"and you can take that from me as an authority"--play music as it was played in the old days. They used to have to play according to the program, which would contain twelve, fourteen, or sixteen different types of dances: mazurkas, lancers, schottisches, waltzes, minuets, varieties, etc. When they played at a ball in the old days, the dancing was nice to look at. "Hook" Laine [same as Alfred "Pansy" Laine] and Manuel were coming from a meeting one night, passed a dance at St. Ferdinand and Royal Streets. Two policemen, Lt. Red Hill and Louie Kendricks, were watching. Louie said he was learning how to dance. Red said, "You don't have to know how to dance to dance that dance; all you got to do is get up and shake your tail . . . ." You never used to see that kind of dancing, carrying on, except after 12 o'clock, when the rough gang would come in at certain places,

like the Perfect Union Hall, on Rampart Street, which has burned down; back of the Unexpected Hall, on Dumaine Street; and the Tonti, but not as much as there. [Bat Steckler locates the Unexpected Rifle Club on Claiborne between Mandeville and Marigny, Reel I, June 15, 1959, page 15.]

Used to have prize waltz contests, would chalk their heels, about eight or ten fellows on the floor. If they put their heels down, the mark stayed there; had to dance on their toes all the time. "Now, it's a flat foot dance like the niggers used to dance in the old days."

"In my band . . . if I led, let Martin Kirsch do the dirty work, or Yellow Nunez. If Martin Kirsch led, he let me do the dirty work on the trumpet. And, we had certain parts there that was just nice work, nice execution for the trumpet." The way these boys today play is "usurpation of music." Every man is trying to outdo every other man. They never did this in the old days. They used mutes on fiddles. They don't observe the signs in music, never play pianissimo, always play double forte: "It doesn't matter if they've got one 'P' on the staff or two 'P's, . . . they're looking at two 'F's.' Papa Laine will tell you, you could hear their feet on the floor, they played so softly."

People say they can lay in bed and let music lull them to sleep. Not Mello: he listens for the "rotten notes" they make. [2:35. Meaning of this passage not too clear. 2:38] They used to have dances fairly regularly about twice a week at the Nemo Club, at Congress and Burgundy Streets. He and Leonce used to come in from their job and lie down, could hear the band from the Nemo, used to listen for rotten notes. Henry "Kid" Rena's band used to come there, and some other band--that was a smelling band [refers to Rena's or the other band?]. Leonce could "smell" the rotten notes.

Leonce and Manuel also played at the Nemo Club.

Mello believes Lawrence Welk has "a dissension" in his band. He put "half a million more strings in there," and in the trumpet section, instead of having two solos and two firsts, he has them all playing solo, which is wrong in a band of that size.

Mello heard John Batiste "Bat" Steckler, the oldest trumpet player in the city right now. M.M. used to do a little reporting for "International Jazz." [no doubt the National Jazz Foundation] B.S. used to rehearse on Wednesday nights on Bartholomew near Dauphine. M.M.'s father was a good friend of Johnny Schenck. Bat Steckler could put his horn in C, in sharps, and play in flats, or put his horn in flats and play in sharps. Never had a slide; had two crooks, A crook and B flat. The A would throw his horn in sharps. It was over sixty years ago, but Mello can still see the four of them sitting there (he used to watch them rehearse): Albert Six, bass (used to call them [engelbasses ?]), Johnny Weinmunson [check Steckler, Reel I--Is this same person as Bermason (sp.?) p. 13?], guitar, Johnny Schenck, fiddler, Bat Steckler, cornet. First string band Mello knows of that had a blowing instrument in it. Bat used to be a bricklayer by day, musician by night. Mello likes to go and visit with Bat because they played a lot together "in the swamp" [meaning?]. He is the last of the old timers and next to him is Mello. Bat played ragtime, [which has the tempo increased as to jazz ?]. After jazz came out, they played it because the Negroes played it. At that time there were only two dance bands: Imperial Orchestra and the Superior Orchestra and the Onward Brass Band and the Excelsior Brass Band were "the marching bands for funerals and stuff." This was back in 1904, 1905 and 1906. "Then all these other fellows started taking up music and the bands split up and that's the way it was." Leonce used to go and steal the Negroes' music and come

back and play it on the mandolin. After Leonce had practiced it about twice, he would play it at a dance.

Leonce first played the mandolin, then guitar, then string bass, and then slide trombone. Mello has played with some good trombone players: Eddie Benton [check spelling. See obituary.] and Eddie Riley. He played with Bill "Humpback" Gallaty who was not much of a slide man but a good tenor (valve) trombone player.

The basic part in music in the band is in the bass [sic] section--trombone, guitar, bass and drums, because cornet and clarinet are just the lead instruments. Leonce was the first to play string bass tuned to B natural--with a drum stick used as a pick.

Father Reuther was Manuel Mello's teacher. He was a German. This was at Holy Cross College. A lot of Germans were with Bat Steckler. Steckler was the only Frenchman [see Steckler Reel ?]. When he started playing--"We called it a G, D and C Band"--there were four or five pieces, and they could play but Mello couldn't, because he could read, but he couldn't fake, as they did. But after running through a piece once or twice, they could play it. Leonce "stole" "Nigger" Zolly Ford's [spelling?] music at the circus: "Dying Rag" and "Honky-Tonky Monkey Rag," and "Good-time Mama Rag." When you play now, you play several sets, and take a ten-minute break. He doesn't play that kind of job any more. [Musicians did not play as much in Mello's time.]

Mello can't drink because of his stomach.

Mello's first job playing professionally was for the Green Roof Social Club on Marais and Bartholomew Streets. [Note that Mello has photo of this.] William Schenck was the proprietor of the Saloon and of the Green Roof, too. For this job, Mello got \$2.00 for 4 hours. The band was Weinmunson's. That was in 1903.

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Steckler's band disbanded at the time of the Spanish American War and never reorganized. There was the Oramos Band, which was three pieces: guitar, bass, and violin.

END OF REEL I

Oramus' [He spells it out, but is probably Oramous. Soards, 1908 has both James and Joseph.] Band was the only other string band at that particular time that was playing. They had three pieces. They played by ear. The players: Jim Oramous played bass, Joseph Oramous, "better known as <sup>Soy Soy</sup> ~~Sox Sox~~," played guitar, and Joe Gausephol played fiddle.

Mello used to play every Saturday night but they didn't get too much, sometimes \$2.00 or \$2.50, but they treated you like human beings: let you eat and drink. Arthur Trasierra [Soards, 1905], who is the sexton now at St. Vincent de Paul cemetery [present residence-- 1410 Desire Street] used to play guitar. The Glebers had a wedding anniversary so Trasierra got the musicians together: Joe Gausephol on trombone, Mello played cornet, Joe Husson [Soards, 1905--carpenter] played fiddle, Trasierra played guitar, and Jim Oramous played bass. This was around 1904 or 1905.

Jack Laine says he was active then but Mello never heard him. If he did he had a marching band, rather than a jazz band or ragtime band. Later on, around 1909, he had a band: The nucleus included Jack Laine on trap drums, Willie Guitar played bass, Lawrence Veca played cornet, Achille Baquet played clarinet, and either Bill Gallaty or Eddie Wending played valve trombone. They had dissension in their band and they had a ["razoo" ?] and busted up. Mello was playing with Johnny Fischer at that time and Johnny [Bowman ?]. [Bowman ?] had four men: Eddie Edwards on guitar, Johnny [Bowman ?] on bass, Gussie Mueller on clarinet and Mello played cornet. He has pictures of the Fischer men; all of the group are dead with the exception of Richie Brunies. Manuel Mello led Fischer's band, which broke up on a Crockett dance or parade. This was Davy

Crockett Volunteer Fire [Brigade, or Department ?] over in Gretna. That is when Mello left Fischer. So he played with Jack Laine. Laine's band broke up at Crockett after burying a Crockett man.

Mello used to play for the [Junior Artists ?] and they wanted the old time dancing music. Then the [Junior Artists ?] hired Nick LaRocca who [thought, or was told ?] they should play modern music; they played that modern dance but that was the last dance they played for the [Junior Artists ?]. Leonce and Mello formed their own band and they were going strong; but Mello made sugar. He had been running sugar houses since 1900 or 1901. Music couldn't be depended upon, although they made good money. Prohibition and [reproduced] sound killed music. The movies got sound and at dances they started using juke boxes. Radio did not affect the musicians a whole lot.

Mello does not approve of certain bands, but he can't say anything because those people who are making the records; four-fifths of them are made by colored people and "they are far away from authentic jazz as the moon is from the city of New Orleans." [cf. Reel I, p. 1.]

Authentic jazz was "that one beat" and now it has been increased. When Mello was playing you never went above the staff. If you went above the staff you got the violin player and the clarinet to do the work. The melody is not there any more; they call it "Dixieland" but it's only racket now. "Original jazz is slower than this Dixieland music." [Hedges on demonstrating.] Ragtime which was before that was practically the same thing but maybe a change in the beat; it depends on the piece you're playing. Ragtime was not written music; it was all ear music. The ragtime bands had five or six men.



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There were only two colored bands that were playing dance music that Mello knows of: the Imperial [Orchestra] and the Superior [Orchestra]. The Onward [Brass Band] and the Excelsior [Brass Band] were marching bands. They had very few white bands; above Canal Street they had Fischer and below Canal Street there was Jack Laine, the Reliance Band. There were a couple of pickup bands: Jake Stevens who played cornet would make up a band temporarily.

Emile "Beans" Christian is probably in his forties, Mello thinks. [Fantastic statement! Forty years ago he was playing in England with the ODJB--RBA.] He was the only man with Jack Laine who walked up and down Rampart Street half a dozen times to get a pair of white shoes; he had a long foot. Mello hasn't seen "Beans" for a long time or Frank and Charlie [Christian]. "Beans" and Mello both play blowing horns with false teeth. Mama Laine knows a lot about "Beans" Christian.

RBA says that Eddie Edwards, Tony Sbarbaro and Tony Parenti are in New York and Sbarbaro comes back every once in a while. MM says ~~XXX~~ that Gus Mueller is out on the [West] Coast, Ray Lopez, or Gus Mueller really liked Sharkey. He thinks Johnny [Bownam ?] is dead.

Mello's preference on drums was Fischer's drummer, Rod Bridges, who killed himself. Mello taught Monk Hazel's daddy how to play the bass drum. Johnny Fischer was a good clarinet player and a real good fiddle player. Schilling was playing string bass. He had the string bass Leonce bought from Henry Brunies that had "two big gold roses on each side the bass on the top." At that time Schilling lived on Toledano and Annunciation Streets. George Schilling has a son playing saxophone now. If Mello had to pick musicians, Jack Laine on trap drums, Leonce Mello on trombone, Martin "Spots" Kirsch on clarinet, Alex [Buzzita ?] on guitar, and Martin Abraham

[Chink Martin], on bass, and Mello playing cornet; that would be a real line up. Mello would like to see Monk Hazel. He had to go all over town to get Monk's daddy a cap. He never could get a uniform coat, so he wore a blue coat. Martin Kirsch was a good clarinet player; he played the clarinet like it should be played, "not a whole lot of pig under the gate stuff." Gus Zimmermann did not want to play with Martin Kirsch because Martin Kirsch did not know how to play a clarinet as good as he should. He had a 13-key Mehillion [sp.?] clarinet, which was red and which is a whole lot different from an 18-key Buffet. Jack Laine asked Mello to help Martin Kirsch out, which he did. Mello had Leonce on guitar, he thinks; Chink Martin on bass; Martin Kirsch on clarinet; and himself on cornet. He had been using Yellow Nunez a lot, but took Kirsch on at Suburban Park. Jack Laine gave Kirsch the name "Spots." Finally with Mello's help Martin Kirsch was able to buy a good clarinet at Grunewald's [Music House] for \$60. After that Martin got good. The only trouble was that when Leonce was playing with them and they'd start on "Cher Mo' L'ami Toi," "Widow [Dunn]," "I Only Just Wanted to Know," and others like that, Martin would break up laughing, couldn't play. Papa Laine would sit there with a long face. Martin joined the Fire Department after World War I and stayed there a long time [until he died?]. His brother Bob [Kirsch] was a trombone player. He was good but he played more solo trombone than anything else. Couldn't get him to understand that a slide trombone is to vamp, not to blow. That's the trouble with lots of musicians. Henry Brunies used to "blow like a son of a bugger and holler like the devil"--played solo all the time. Slide trombone is after-beat music, not on the beat.

Mello likes to hear a good band play. Some young kids are trying to get a band together; Mello hopes to give them some instruction in jazz, when he gets to feeling better. Alfred "Hook" "Pansy" Laine's grandson is going to take up trumpet, and use "Hook's" horn, but he isn't old enough yet. Pansy Laine blew his brains out [i.e. ruptured blood vessels in his brain] because he didn't know how to blow a horn right. If a man's face puffs out when he's blowing, he doesn't know how to blow. Of course, nowadays they don't have to last like they used to, now they have so many rests. In the old days, you put your horn up to your mouth and kept it there. Martin Kirsch or Mello carried the lead. They had no saxophone then. Later on, got Abbie Brunies with them. Mello taught Abbie a lot. Martin Kirsch was great on the lead. Sat there, solemn as a judge. Never laughed or joked except when they put crazy stuff in. He used to get the tone out of the horn. "That's the main thing on playing music." Everything should be clear.

Mello used to speak three languages, used to speak good ~~XXXXXXXX~~ French and Spanish. Now he speaks very little Spanish. Is a "Cayoodle"--means half-and-half, anything. His mother was of German descent. Her parents were from Hanover, Germany. Father's parents were from Leonce, France. Mello learned to speak Spanish when working in a sugar house in Oriente Province, Cuba. Had to learn fast, in order to make himself understood by workmen who spoke no English.

Most of the songs Mello knew when he was growing up were American. Nysucuabs okatubg <sup>?? [hands on wrong keys of typewriter?]</sup> by ear often got melodies half-right and half-wrong. Earliest songs Mello can remember: "Josephine, My Jo," the first song he learned on trumpet; "American March"; "Under the Double Eagle"; ©1894 "Under Arms," used to play the ["Pullman Porters Parade" ?] at a march [tempo]. Had a good repertoire; didn't have to repeat until

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they had played about six hours.

Mello was in Johnny Fischer's seven-piece orchestra. They decided to organiza a brass band, call it Fischer's Military Band, but it wasn't really military.

END OF REEL II

NOTES:

Eddie Riley

Two Deichmanns (their father played violin) all dead.

Charlie--violin and cornet; Freddie--clarinet. Bennie played

trombone but not with them--too young. [BENNIE younger or other Deichmanns? A brother too?  
Same as BENNY Deichman?]

Rod Bridges on trap.

Brass band lasted until about 1909.

[1910?] Marzloff, Philip F.--finisher--r. 3629 Constance.

guitar wasn't in brass band [paperhanger]

1911: Marslow, Philip--lab--r. 3617 Constance.

1911: Picolo, Vincent, oyster opener, r. 924 N. Villere

1909: Bridges, Rodden, glazier, 913 N. Lopez  
Bridges, Roy H., peddler, 420 First

Dec. 1959, New Orleans Telephone Directory: Deichmann, Chas. E.  
Amer. Bk. Bl., TU 5517

[George "Happy"] Schilling [Sr.] took up playing the trombone.

[cf. 13A]

The line-up in Fischer's Military Band the first time they played: Joe Altobello on tuba, Vincent [Pecora or Decora ?] on baritone, Henny Brunies and Georgie Brunies on alto horns, Eddie Riley and George Schilling on trombone, Johnny Fischer on clarinet, Monk Hazel's father on bass drum, Rodney Bridges on snare drum, Richie Brunies and Mello carried the lead with two horns. "Ten men"--[but lists eleven]. Ten men was standard for brass bands, sometimes twelve. Fischer's band lasted until about 1909. When they went over the lake, after Mello started leading Jack Laine's band, they used to take fifteen or eighteen men.

Jack Laine's band played all the funerals for the Davy Crockett Fire Company across the river in Gretna, Louisiana. Fischer didn't play funeral processions. When Mello played for funerals with Jack Laine's band, he used to stand behind a tombstone and play "taps." They would play "Nearer My God to Thee," just the first part, taking the body from the house to the hearse, from the hearse to the church, from the church to the hearse, and from the hearse to the burying.

Didn't play picnics with a brass band; had a dance band at picnics. The orchestra played for picnics, lawn parties in the [Irish] Channel. It was rough there. The only place he can remember where they never had a fight was the Pleasant Pleasure Club, on Pleasant Street. He played there quite a long time with Johnny Fischer. But they used to have some real battles at the lawn parties,

when "them Irishmen would get happy with juice." When they played at the Bucket of Blood, at Adele and Rousseau [Streets] they used to get their money before the job started, because the bartender and the chairman of the arrangements committee were gone when they broke up/ Liable to be hit in the head with a bung starter. [a what?]

He played every hall or dance place in Gretna. The first time "Glow Worm" was played for dancing was at [Orleans ?] Hall, in Gretna, Louisiana, for the Bachelor [Girls ?].

At lawn parties in the Channel, they would spread a tarpaulin on the ground, in a lot beside a house. Band stand would be at one end, bar room at the other. Would start about eight o'clock at night, be going good and loud by 10:30, fighting and such. The gang on the outside of the fence would be hollering. Never saw a policeman around. Later a law was passed requiring a policeman at all these dances.

Heart the word ragtime when he first started playing music. Jazz came later. It was an increase on some pieces, a decrease on the others. Had to have men who knew how to play their parts. Either the clarinet or the cornet would carry the lead. On certain parts the trombone would come in with a solo; the cornet player would stay within the staff, but he really played. Heard the word "jazz" applied to music three or four years before the big storm [1915]. The word "jazz" is an interpretation of something that sounds very immoral in proper English.

There was a place called the "Belly Rub" [unintelligible].

A "potato man" was a fellow who had a potato in his horn, so he couldn't make any noise. One "good brother" took ten men over the river, but only six of them could blow. Somebody caught on. There was no parade.

Jack Laine was suffering with his back one time. Mello got "Mama" to fix it up with Sloan's Liniment. He started to play a parade in Algiers for the Southern Pacific that afternoon, but after one block he was knocked out, Mello had to get Alonzo Crumby over to take the bass drum.

Mello says he never heard of the "New Orleans drop." A spasm band is a bass, violin, and guitar. The fiddle player doesn't know too much about the fiddis; the guitar player doesn't know how to tune up the guitar; the bass player plays anything comes into his head.

In the days when Mello started out, the kinds of entertainments people had were: lawn parties, surprise parties, dances, weddings, anniversaries, picnics. After the lay-out was finished, they would go to serenade somebody at night. If somebody wanted to do a serenade now, they would be charged with disturbing the peace. A well-organized band, playing pianissimo, in the small hours of the morning, sounds great.

Answering PRC, MM says clarinet plays harmony with cornet, but changes up a little and makes the variations.



Mello hasn't seen Harry Shields for so long he wouldn't know him. Hasn't seen Joe Loyacano either. RBA says Loyacano is quite sick; Jazz Club and Tony Almarico are about to have a benefit for him. Mello tells story here about Joe "Hook" Loyacano having a Roman nose, and "Hook" Laine having a Jerusalem nose. The argument came up one night when Joe Loyacano was playing trombone, Mello playing cornet, Pansy Laine playing drums.

Bud Loyacano, who is old and ill, married Happy Rapp's wife.

✓ Happy Rapp used to be chief of fire department over in Gretna.

Johnny Bertucci is an old-timer, but Mello doesn't know where he is now. Abbie Brunies is a good trumpet player, because he wouldn't try to exceed his limits. Richie was the best cornet player. [RBA says that he's been sick. Lives up on Carrollton near St. Charles] Mello called him "Head." He was always saying, "Poor me."

Used to carry ten men in parades, including two trumpets, all playing forte until the chorus, when they came down to piano, then back up to forte. Made more noise than some of the college bands now. Never heard such "country-fried" (or countrified?) music in all his life as in some of these college bands. Holy Cross has a good band, better than when he was there. They have better playing conditions.

Mello played with Johnny Bertucci and with Johnny Sparicio too. Bertucci had a steady line-up for a while. He had dissension in

his band. Also played with Austin and Angelo Pellegrini. Austin played fiddle; Angelo played guitar. Played with them down at Buras, Louisiana. They had just a pick-up band.

"Ricky Tom" was really named Sammy Ricks. He was a circus trombone player, a good 6/8 man. If you lent him a horn, he would hock it. He came here with some show, in around 1906. Could fake or read. A circus man has to be a good musician.

Lou Rose had a Negro show Jack Laine's band used to ballyhoo for. Lou Rose wanted regular circus music, no fancy stuff, just 6/8 stuff. Leonce Mello and Martin Kirsch borrowed the Negroes' music, the "Dying Rag," "Good Time Mama," "Honky Tonky Monkey Rag."

Leonce and Manuel Mello composed "Tiger Rag." They were playing a picnic at Elmira Pleasure Grounds. Nobody in the band could write or arrange music. Leonce and Manuel composed the piece, the band played it. Then Martin Kirsch decided he would quit and get something to eat; he was hungry. Went to Kramer's, on the street below Elmira Pleasure Grounds, and had a meatball sandwich. [You could get all kinds of sandwiches at Kramer's on a Sunday.] Papa Laine suggested that they call the new piece "Meat Balls." Nick LaRocca took the first and second part, went up to New York, had it arranged, put that "Hold that Tiger" business in the back [i.e., added the part with the tiger roar]. The Mellos never had it arranged or copyrighted, but they were playing that piece when Nick LaRocca was running around in shorts, three-cornered pants.

The Mellos also composed "Praline," which was named for Martin Abraham eating pralines. Leonce composed the "Barrelhouse Blues" and a number called "Reuben, I'm Walking," that used to go good over in Gretna, Louisiana.

Eddie Edwards ought to have known "Tiger Rag" had been played before Nick LaRocca, because he played it with the Mellos. He was playing guitar at that time. He was a good fiddle player, too. A lot of bass players used to get tired of carrying the big instrument around, switch to something smaller, and finally to a trombone.

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Leonce composed ["Tinincy Baby" ?]. Manuel Perez, who's now dead, told him that was "the most best nigger piece that I ever did hear." The Mellios used to have a three-piece band, composed of cornet, guitar, and bass; "The Brother Band." They'd play for old timers who wanted waltzes, mazurkas, schottisches, and the like. About eleven o'clock they'd play the lancers, which had five parts, with only three instruments.

The blues came in around 1906. W. C. Handy composed "St. Louis Blues," which has never been played right, but Alphonse Picou, not Buddy Bolden, composed "High Society." [Picou claims only the traditional clarinet part.] Mello has played the blues, but with much more variet than they use today.

Boogie woogie is the "old time colored dance." It has the same tempo, method of playing, and rhythm as was played at the Ladies Independence Benevolent Association Hall [1118 Elmira Avenue (Algiers), Soards', 1905], a colored meeting hall where they had dances every Saturday night and really "put it on."

Leonce had a quicker ear than Manuel. He could hear a piece once and play it without making too many "humbugs," while Manuel would have to listen two or three times. Leonce used to go to some of the colored joints where they thought he was a professor. There he heard the Imperial and Superior, "the only two bands that would really [played ?]." Edmond Souchon named the men at Tom Anderson's: a bass, a violin, a guitar, and a valve trombone. Leonce used to listen to all those fellows. [Henry "Red" Allen [Sr. or Jr. ?]

wanted him to teach his trombone player how to play music. Manuel Perez's wife said that he "sure knew Leonce." Mello played a funeral for Jack Laine where the band consisted of: "Wire-faced Dago" Alessandro [sp.?] on tuba, his son, Manuel "Little Wire-face" Alessandro on alto with rotary valves, "Dago horn" [Italian-made instruments often had rotary valves]; [ ?] Brock [sp.?] on baritone; Joe Castro on alto; and Leonce on trombone. They "tore them up going to where the fellow was laid out," played, "Nearer, My God, To Thee" when he was brought out. Leonce could play opera, although he couldn't read music.

Bands Leonce worked with that Manuel didn't include: those of Bill Gallaty; Frank and Emile "Beans" Christian, both cornet players; Domenick Barocca; Sam "Sado" <sup>Y</sup>Man~~giotta~~, the clarinet player; at the Triangle House; someone else. After he left Manuel he mainly played with Frank Christian. They had swapped--Leonce for Charlie Christian. There had been some disagreement with Jack Laine. When they traded he was told he would have two tubas, "but Charlie Christian played everything in the bass clef."

M.M. asks about Martin Abraham's whereabouts. PRC thinks Martin is playing a few spots in town, may have made a record with Raymond Burke recently. MM says Abraham has a swelled head. Played with MM when he had two pairs of shoes, one white and one black, two pairs of pants, black and white, and that was all. Had a wife with

about forty kids. Used to live up in "the jungles" on Royal Street. He was a pretty good bass player. Alex [Spazita or Bazita] [sp.?] taught Martin to play bass. When Alex [Spazita or Bazita] died Martin "didn't even pay him no mind, didn't even go see him." Alex used to live out on Moss Street, on Bayou St. John. Alex was a good guitar player.

When Jack Laine reorganized his band and Manuel Mello took over, they had Alex [Bazita or Spazita] on guitar; Chink Martin [Martin Abraham] on bass; Yellow Nunez on clarinet; Leonce Mello on trombone; Manuel on cornet; Jack Laine on trap drums. Laine had a complete set of drums at that time: single head snare drum, orchestra drum, pedals, sand block, wood block, triangle, brass cymbal, everything. That was when they organized the Reliance Band.

Last job Mello played with Jack Laine over the river, they had to kick rungs out of the chair to make drum sticks. He had nothing. A snare drum with two batter heads on it, instead of a snare head and a batter head. He would use the batter head on the snare side. When he sat down to play a job, they had to tie the bass drum to a chair so it wouldn't get away from him. [Still common with colored drummers (1961).] His traps [foot pedal] consisted of one bar with a nickel baseball on the end, and a shade spring, with an additional shade spring on the side, in case the first one let go. Pedal was home-made.

Mello says he lent Jack Laine the money to buy Martin the tuba he had.

They made good money on parades. Benny Mars [Morris?] was the man who had charge of parades, hired the bands, paid them off afterwards. Jack Laine would get about \$40 or \$45. Mello has a "little red book" with accounts--what Jack Laine used to earn. Laine and Mello used to split the leader price.

Mello loves music, but he always misses "that fellow on the side of me" [Leonce].

Eddie Benton [check sp. in obit] is a good trombone player. He works as a violin repair man at Werlein's. He played trombone with the Sonora Orchestra, with Joe Husson on fiddle and Mello, Leonce on string bass, Susu Oramous, no clarinet, "Rag[baby]" Stevens on drums. Husson was a good musician, could play in any key, although he didn't read.

Names of places where MM used to play: Mello played ever hall on this side of the river; McMahon's Funeral Parlor, on Napoleon Avenue; Odd Fellows' Hall; Athenaeum; [Stoll's ?] Hall; [Lusitanian?] Portuguese Hall; Thomann's Hall; back of [Beatty's ?]; another hall on Almonaster Street and Urquhart, a hall he thinks was called Boll Weevil Hall; [Combasses ? Hall]; the Pinks; St. Maurice Hall; the Crescent City Carnival Club.

[NOTES FROM 1910 SOARDS' DIRECTORY:

P. J. McMahon Sons, 1014 Napoleon; Thomann's Hall, 3418 Dauphine; Odd Fellows' Hall, 532 Camp, 628 Seguin; Athenaeum, 1205 St. Charles; Lusitanian Portuguese Hall, 1125 Dauphine; St. Maurice Hall, 600 St. Maurice Ave.; Majestic Hall, 2929 Magazine; Turner's Hall, 1916 Cllo.]

On the other side of the river, he played everything that had a dance floor: Crescent Park, Lee Hall, [Orleans ?] Hall, Owls' Hall, Suburban Park Race Track, [Bellgrette or 'Federal ?] Park, Elmira Pleasure Grounds, and a hall down at what they used to call "the Canal."

Also played parties and receptions.

Southern Park, which used to be Magnolia Gardens, was a special [picnic ?] place, out on Bayou St. John. Played there. Also at Stock's in City Park.

He says he played on every lot where they ever had a lawn party on this side of the river.

Played out of town at: Slidell, Louisiana; Biloxi and Bay St./Louis, Mississippi; Madisonville and Mandeville, Louisiana; pretty much all around.

Out-of-town jobs were a double-barrelled pain in the neck. After you got through playing you had to fight mosquitoes in the dark until train time.

Tom Brown's Band: Detective Joe Cassard, who has been dead a couple of years, the first vocalist in any band, bass; Jules Cassard, guitar; Yellow Nunez, clarinet; MM, cornet; [Tom] "Gumjaw" Brown, trombone; Rag[baby] Stevens, drums. Played at Seventh and Magazine Street, at the old Majestic Hall. Around 1904 or 1905. It was a pretty good band, but "Gumjaw" got kind of crazy; wanted to be the leader. :You never can hear of a trombone player leading a band." Mello and Yellow Nunez left. Rag[baby] Stevens left. Brown wound



up with a trombone, a guitar, and a bass player. Joe Cassard originated the police minstrels. He could sing. Last time MM saw Joe Cassard was when they buried Archbishop Shaw. [Repeats several times that Joe Cassard was the first fellow ever to sing with a band.]

Johnny [Baumann or Bolman--sp.?] played bass. For a lawn party they would have Johnny [Bauman or Bolman ?], bass; Eddie Edwards, guitar; Gussie Mueller, clarinet; MM, cornet. No trombone. Used to play with one hand, slap mosquitoes with the other. Gussie Mueller used to come out with a big white handkerchief, cover his head, neck, hang down over his ears. They played that park over at [Black Bridge ?].

[Discusses honey and health.]

MM says they never jazzed hymns or spiritual songs. They had a large enough repertoire without them. Used to play 32 dances at a six-hour ball, no repeats.

Went over the river to play a parade for the Logical Point in Algiers. Martin ["Spots"] Kirsch, Joe Castro, Leonce, and MM walked about a block away from where the band was congregating, while they were getting ready to start, and made like a German band, cornet, tuba, trombone and clarinet. [Martin Kirsch's idea.] They turned their hats backwards, got out on the corner, and played German band music. They were copying the German band that used to go around at that time. Martin Kirsch went around with his hat, and people were ready to give him money. Didn't take the money, told them they

were just doing it for fun. Papa Laine was mad, to put it mildly.

Used to play German music for the Turnverein, Turner's Hall on Clio Street, "Deutschland Uber Alles," "Ach, Du Ließer, Augustin," "Hi Li Hi Lo," "Wasser[Schimer Schmeer ?] Used to have liver sausage, limburger cheese, black bread, and French bread. MM would take liver sausage, knife, and bread up on the bandstand with him, which was upstairs. MM could speak German. "Mostly all the brewmasters from the breweries used to be tangled up in that lay-out, [now called ?] Deutsches Haus." MM called limburger "privy cheese." The war [first World War] broke this up.

Not many piano players; usually played out in the open, anyhow. In the halls, most pianos were so low you couldn't tune up with them. You never had no slide to pull out. And you couldn't transpose enough to put him natural or put you natural and him transposed or him natural and you transposed, so we did without the piano." No recording machines; no records made in the city at that time.

After World War I MM had his own band, Mello's Original [on a card he showed PRC and RBA]. Had Joe Castro on tuba, Joe Palizzi on clarinet, Emile Bullshank on drums, Pete Dintrans and MM on cornet, Leonce on trombone. Joe Castro told some people over at some club that he made more money in a week with Manuel Mello than he did with Jack Laine in a month. They were playing every night and in the day on Saturday and Sunday.

MM went back to the tropics on a good financial proposition, left Pete Dintrans in charge. Band had a dissension and disintegrated/

Leonce was playing with George Risbourg. MM didn't see too much of Leonce, because he [MM] was out of town so much. If Mello ever gets up to play in front of any crowd, particularly the gang at "that famous Jazz Club," he would like to dedicate the number to the good brothers who have played with him in the past and are now gone. The Jazz Club is a one-sided outfit. Feels he would only get himself in a jam if he went up there. "There's more big-feeling musicians up there now." Laine told Benny Mars that one cornet was enough for ten men. MM "had a lip like that table"; never got tired.

MM loves music; says you have to love it to play it.

END OF REEL IV.

