



# Bunk Johnson.

## Information

Number 7

The Swedish Bunk Johnson Society

Spring 1996

### EDITORIAL

It is hard to imagine a future annual meeting that will be more rewarding than this year's. Claes has written a comment on it elsewhere. Here we will only say that the discussions on formalia and the economic situation showed that we could permit some donations this year too. The Executive Committee was allowed to make the decision. Rest assured that we will donate whatever amount we can afford to a cause that will put the money to the best possible use for New Orleans music.

Even mouldy figs can go with the times. Surfing on the Internet can be quite fruitful even for a Bunk fan. We will publish interesting addresses (URL) to web pages as we come across them and beg you to e-mail us such addresses you find. We will also publish members' e-mail addresses. In a weak moment *Anders Alm* said that he was going to look into the possibilities of creating a home page for Bunk and the society. We hope to be able to report progress in next issue.

*Mike Hazeldine* came up with an attractive idea the day after the meeting when we were philosophically sharing a bottle of Sunday afternoon wine. He suggested that a group from the society could make a trip to New York/Orleans/Iberia. The Bunk Tracker Trip, sort of. Mike volunteered to take the group directly to all the interesting places. I suppose we have all had the experience of standing at the corner of Powell and Bush in SF and wondering "Now, where was the Hangover Club?", staring at all buildings to be sure to have seen it. I know I have! Now, with Mike that wouldn't be so. He'd know and he'd share with us! And with group rates the costs would be feasible. If you

would be interested in taking part of such a learning experience, contact us before midsummer. The "offer" is limited to a group of 12 persons. The trip would take off around early October 1996.

Hakan.Hakansson@mbox200.swipnet.se

### PRES' RELEASE

(Words from our president)

We celebrated our 10th Annual Meeting in the Society in January this year. It was a most successful event. More about that you'll find in another place in this magazine.

I just want to take the opportunity to say very much welcome to our new members of the *International Board*, *Hal Smith*, the eminent drummer and researcher from San Diego and to *Louise Lince*, the eminent banjo player and publisher of the equally eminent magazine *NEW ORLEANS MUSIC*, to which you should more or less feel obliged to be a subscriber, if you are a member of this Society.

As usual you'll also find a transcription in this issue. By our master-transcriber *Tom Pauli*, who is becoming more and more of a real big shot in this special field. I do get a lot of letters and other messages from members world-wide (from others too) and the first thing they praise in this magazine is Tom's efforts. So we will really try to take care of his unique and genuine talents. This time he has taken up "*Porto Rico*", from the fabulous New York Session, March 10, 1945, just prior to the Boston-debacle. This very tune was unissued until some years ago when *MOSAIC Records* published the complete Blue Note recordings of Sidney Bechet. It had been stored at the company for all those years, and not even Harold Drob, nor a lot of other Bunk-researchers had heard it before it was released on *Mosaic*. There was a rumour



that a take of "*Basin Street Blues*" was recorded at the same time, but according to the master discographer *Michel Cuscuna*, that tune was never recorded. **Porto Rico** was composed by the legendary Ford Dabney in 1910, and according to Bill Russell, Bunk tried to include it on the very first recording session at Grunewalds piano store in New Orleans June 10, 1942. At the time of those immortal *Jazz Man* recordings. The reason why it wasn't included at that time was that George Lewis, Jim Crow (Robinson) and the others didn't know the tune. (They didn't know *Moose March*, either, although they recorded it - and it became a masterpiece, indeed.). But here you have **Porto Rico**, the trumpet part, as played by Bunk Johnson in New York, March 10, 1945 on Blue Note. Enjoy yourself.

Among the supplements this time you'll find something extremely unusual and interesting. On four occasions, *December 15, 22, 29, 1992* and on *January 5, 1993*, there were 30 minutes radioprograms on *BBC in London "Bill & Bunk"*. The programs were made by *Mike Pointon* and *Ray Smith*, both members of this society. Copies on cassettes of those very very interesting programmes have been circulating among the "worst" Bunk-freaks, but the availability has been limited so to speak. With the kindest permission of the copyright-owner Mike Pointon, and with a lot of help from *Floyd Levin* who has transcribed the radioprograms, we can now publish them for the first time to the readers of *Bunk.Johnson.Information*. We think this is an event of the highest importance and we cannot enough express our gratitude to those who made this possible. *Many Many Thanks, all of you!!*

At last I will again stress that this newsletter is open for all of you. You are very welcome to contribute with what ever you'll find important. We will also try to keep some space for free advertisement, books, records, instruments etc.

So if you have anything to tell - please do not hesitate to get in contact with us. Meanwhile we wish you all a hot and jazzy spring and summer. (CR)

### **A BRIEF REPORT FROM THE 10th ANNUAL MEETING.**

by Claes Ringqvist

On Saturday January 20 this year we gathered for the *10th Annual Meeting of the Swedish Bunk Johnson Society*. As I have told you before, we started very modest in 1987, with 8 members present at the home of our distinguished member and quiz-leader Åke Sahlberg. Through the years the member-directory has grown bigger and for some years we have had to hire a bigger place for these meetings. And for the last three meetings we have used a very good hall in the "Vasastan" district of Stockholm, just a few blocks from where *Spencer Willtams* lived during his years in Sweden.

I would like to stress that these annual meetings are open to every member of the society, including those in the International Board. This time four distinguished international members had responded to our collective invitation, *William F. Wagner* (or "Brother Bill" as he likes to be called), from Lexington, KY, who was our Guest of Honor, *Mike Hazeldine* and *Ruth Phillips* from London, UK, and *Brian Wood*, Walmer, Kent, UK. And moreover we had some fifty domestic members and some guests. So we were quite a bunch.

*Brian Wood* then gave an excellent speech on the topic "*Go Home Dirty Bopper*" alluding Bruce Turners altosax playing in the Humphrey Lyttleton band in the 50:s, when the mouldy figs thought Humph had gone far too modern and blamed Bruce for that. The aim of the talk was also a kick in the ass of those too singleminded and who think there's no jazz outside the Bunk Johnson-George Lewis-Ken Colyer.- etc-etc.



link. The message was that you *definitively* can be a devoted Bunk Johnson lover AND *Charles Mingus-Charlie Parker-Miles Davis-Dupree Bolton-Sonny Clark-Herbie Nichols* freak. Brian used a very delightful English so we non-englishmen had to go for the dictionary every now and then.

For *Mike Hazeldine* this was his third visit to the Bunk Meeting. And his lectures are the real highlights of the evening. This time he started to talk some about Bunk's Decca sessions in November 1945 in New York. The Company still have some of those tapes not issued. I didn't get how many minutes all together but I don't think they were too many. And on the request Decca said that they very well could think about selling them. When coming to the price they said 15 000 dollars!!!! Fifteen thousands of mighty green dollars!!! When you think about that Bunk himself got 60 dollars for the entire session - and the sidemen 30 dollars a piece. And today, 15 000!! Ridiculous, eh?????

As everybody might know by now Mike and Barry Martyn are very much involved with the project of writing the *Book on Bunk*. Mike was in New Orleans for eight weeks in the autumn 1995 for research, and he is going back this year too. He showed us the outlines for the book and it was very very impressing. I think we can expect something extraordinary - a labour of love, indeed.

Then our Guest of Honour, *William F Wagner*, brother of our great hero *Bill Russell* (1905-1992) went to the rostrum. He is a retired professor of chemistry at the University of Lexington, KY, and he said he was used to talk to students who couldn't sit listening without falling asleep. But we could assure him that if it really was so, this was definitively quite another type of audience. William had scheduled for a short talk on his *Brother Bill from the period before he met Bunk*. And he had told me he wanted to talk for 15 minutes or so and then answer questions if there

would be any. William gave us the most wonderful lecture on his dear brother (11 years his senior) and then he went on talking on "*Bill & Bunk, and vice versa*" for another 45 minutes. It sure was a highlight. 55 persons dead silent (I couldn't think that possible) - you could have heard a needle drop. A very personal approach to this complicated topic. Bill and Bunk, two very odd persons, very much unlike, but who had very much in common as well. William rounded up his speech by giving every present member an original ticket to the Styvesant Casino in New York, on the New Years Eve 1945. *What a souvenir!!!!*

We also had a bolding quiz - produced and led by Åke Sahlberg, with a lot of music illustrations. The winning team, led by *Nils Gunnar Anderby* won a bottle of Four Roses, Bunk's favourite booze. The winners generously shared the contents with other, less successful, teams. We also listened to a lot of live music, performed by some of the members, led by *Christer Fellers* (member of the Executive Committee) on trumpet. On the scene you could also find the drummers *Sven Stahlberg* and *Per Oldaeus*, bass player *Kulan Rehman*, banjoman *Klas Lagerberg*, *Antonia Benson* and *Tom Paull* on piano, *Bomull Behmer*, *Arne Högsander* and *Anders Alm* on clarinet and *Fredrik John* and *Bob McAlister* on trombone. The music was very much appreciated.

I will also take the opportunity to congratulate our wizards in the kitchen, *Sven Stahlberg* and *Anders Alm*, who supplied us with the most delicious cajun-food you could ever find. You couldn't find better even at Proudhommes joint on Chartres Street in N 'Awlins.

Editor's note: Due to incomprehensible computer troubles, this edition is not as nicely edited as it deserves to be. However, we didn't want to delay publication, so we hope for your tolerance.



### PORTO RICO

Tom Pauli's comments on his transcription of Bunk Johnson's recording of Porto Rico

Bunk recorded Porto Rico together with his old Eagle Band fellows from 1912: Sidney Bechet and Pops Foster. (The other musicians in the Eagle Band were Frankie Duson, Tubby Hall and Cliff Stones; the other musicians on the record 33 years later are Sandy Williams, Mainzie Johnson and Cliff (sic) Jackson.) It was made in New York City on Saturday March 10, 1945 - exactly three weeks after the Statiras session. Owing to a defect on the original matrix, parts of the bars 43 and 44 are dropped out. I have, however, transcribed these bars as if the defect had not existed.

The verse (in minor, choruses A1 and A2, bars 4 - 36) is played as a rumba and is preceded by a typical rumba introduction on piano by Cliff Jackson (bars 1 - 4). The refrain (in major, choruses B1 - B6, bars 37 - 132) is played in ordinary jazz time. The number is played rather straight until Sandy Williams and Sidney Bechet take their solos. Then Bunk leads the last two ensemble choruses B5 and B6 (bars 101 - 132) with interesting and typical improvisations, which we will look upon a little closer while referring back to my three earlier transcriptions in this paper.

In bar 102 Bunk plays still another variant of what I have called "Bunk's Honeysuckle Rose Phrase" (cf. Careless Love, bar 90 and Ex 6 - 9). Immediately after that, in the bars 103 - 104, we have again an allusion on Strutting With Some Barbecue (cf. Tiger Rag, bars 188 - 189). The phrase in bar 114 is exactly the same as that in Careless Love, bar 126, but in a different key. If we transpose this phrase to B flat major and then look at the phrase from the end of bar 124 to the beginning of the bar 126 in Tiger Rag, we will see that they have the first seven notes in common, i.e. the tone sequence c sharp - d - f - g - a flat - g - f.

In bars 120 and 122 - 123 of Porto Rico we have

phrases built on the tone sequence e flat - f - g - a flat - g. If we transpose all this to G major, we will find such a phrase in Careless Love, bar 124.

In bars 110 - 111 of Porto Rico we have a phrase built on the tone sequence e flat - f - (downwards to) b - c - a flat. Transposed to G major we find such a phrase in Careless Love (bars 124 - 125) and to D major in Franklin Street Blues (bars 6 - 7, 10 - 11 and many very similar but not identical cases).

Notice the similarities between the concluding phrases in Porto Rico (bars 130 - 132) and Careless Love (bars 132 - 136).

As for Bunk's standard phrases it is worth noticing that he used them in the same way in different and even distantly related keys. This fact indicates that they were not mechanically determined by such outer physiological factors as motorics and fingering, as is often the case with other improvisers. Instead they seem to have been entirely psychologically determined and thus an important part of his musical character.

#### Correction:

Bunk Information #5 (Spring 1995), page 5, column 1, last sentence in first paragraph:

reads: Immediately after that, in the bars 189 - 190, Bunk quotes...

should read: Immediately after that, in the bars 188 - 189, Bunk quotes...

### REMINISCENSES from the BAY-DAYS

By Hal Smith

In the late 1970:s, I lived in the San Francisco Bay Area, where I was privileged to work with many of **Bunk Johnson's** musical associates. I played jobs with *Turk Murphy*, *Burt Bales*, *Ellis Horne* and *Squire Girsback* and was able to meet *Clancy Hayes*, *Pat Patton* and *Bill Dart*. With the benefit of hindsight, I wish I could have done extensive interviews with all of them, especially regarding their association with Bunk. It is too late for that of course, but I did manage to find



out a few things that will be of interest to the readers of *BUNK. JOHNSON. INFORMATION*.

**TURK MURPHY:** " I don't know why anyone would think that Bunk deliberately dropped out of the ensembles. Some people think that he did that to create some kind of musical texture or that it was some kind of New Orleans tradition. I sat next to him. I *know* why he dropped out. *He was adjusting his false teeth!*"

Turk also told me that he wrote his arrangement of "*Maryland My Maryland*" with Bunk and Mutt Carey in mind. The descending melody line in the second strain was written with half notes (for Mutt), then triplets (for Bunk) on the repeat. Also, Turk's arrangement of "*All the Girls go Crazy*" was based on the way Bunk played the tune with the *Yerba Buena Jazz Band*. The band's recording for Sonic Arts label ("*A Natural High*", made in 1979) features Chris Tyle playing a very Bunk-like part.

While I never asked Ellis Horne anything particular about Bunk, he did offer an interesting insight regarding his musical tastes at the time he played with Bunk: "I always had thought we (The Yerba Buena Jazz Band) were on the right track. Then, one night, Papa Mutt Carey and the Kid Ory rhythm section sat in with us at the Dawn Club. That really changed my way of thinking!" (Ellis confirmed the "rhythm section" personnel as Buster Wilson, Bud Scott, Ed Garland and Minor Hall ). Surely this experience would have been fresh in his mind when he played jobs soon after with Bunk.

*Burt Bales* was outspoken in his support of Bunk's musical mind. (Ken Mills has written about this in his liner notes for a Burt Bales CD on the GHB label). But my conversations with Burt centered on a couple of the lighter points of Bunk's residency in San Francisco. "He stayed at our apartment for awhile. And he really had a thing for my wife, Jeanne. Many times, after we

went to bed, we could hear Bunk's voice coming from the living room, where he slept. He'd say 'JEEE-E-E-ANE!!! (Burt imitated a falsetto voice here), 'JEE-E-E-ANE!!!. I'd say 'Shut up Bunk!! Go back to sleep!!! (Burt laughed for quite awhile in reminiscing about this frequent exchange)

Bunk and Burt exchanged correspondance and Christmas cards in the war years and Burt also sent cartons of Kool cigarettes to Bunk when he returned to New Iberia (photocopies documenting these exchanges have been sent to the *Swedish Bunk Johnson Society*. The copies were made from original letters and cards loaned to this writer by Burt).

A discussion about New Orleans food led Burt to mention that Bunk liked to cook while he stayed at the Bales' apartment. Naturally, one of the dishes he made was *red beans and rice*, but with a variation: "He liked to make it with *pinto beans and cloves*"

It was easy to figure out how much esteem Burt Bales had for Bunk. Only three framed photographs adorned Burt's living room wall: *Benny Strickler, Paul Lingle and Bunk Johnson*.

Fortunately, there are still some great musicians living in San Francisco who worked with Bunk Johnson. *Bob Helm, Bill Bardin and Bob Mtelke* all have stories to tell of Bunk and his music. I intend to ask these gentlemen about their time with Bunk Johnson the next time I get to the Bay Area.

Until then, I hope the readers of *BUNK. JOHNSON. INFORMATION* have enjoyed these brief vignettes of Bunk in San Francisco.  
New Orleans, April, 1996

Hal Smith



## DILL PICKLES

° Nils-Gunnar Anderby has made us aware that the discography "Gospel Records 1943-1962 A Black Music Discography Vol 2 L to Z" by Cedric J. Hayes and Robert Laughton (Record Information Services) p. 558 lists:

Sister Lottie Peavey, c. 1944 (no other details)

When I Move To The Sky, Jazette 1010

Nobody's Fault But Mine, Jazette 1010

It is not very risky to presume that these are the recordings with Bunk. When I asked Mike about this he pointed out that Sister Lottie Peaway (correct spelling) wasn't a professional singer, just a soloist with the choir of Emanuel Church of Christ in God on Post Street. She sang several times with Bunk at the C.I.O Sunday afternoon sessions.

° In a recent announcement, the Los Angeles Jazz Society named our member *Floyd Levin*, jazz journalist-historian as the 1996 recipient of their annual *Leonard Feather Jazz Communicator Award*.

° The enormous project THE JAZZ DISCOGRAPHY by *Tom Lord*, has now arrived at Vol. 13 (*Meade Lux Lewis to Steve Masakowski*). This work improves for each volume published. And the author keeps on thanking the Swedish Bunk Johnson Society in his forward, like he has done in previous volumes. This "encyclopedia" is scheduled for 25 volumes plus supplementum.

° After a very long (too long??) delay Vol 5 of "JAZZ RECORDS 1942-80" is published by *Jazz-Media* in Copenhagen, Denmark. There has been a gap for many years as Vol 6 (entirely on Ellington) was issued at the Duke Ellington Conference in Copenhagen in 1992. But unless the publisher will keep a little faster tempo in issuing we will not survive to see the day when this serie will be complete. But we must admit this is a *first class discography* and our only objection is the somewhat irregular publishing.

° The same Publishing Company is also responsible for the publishing of *Bill Russell's life-work "Mr Jelly Lord - a Scrapbook"*. Already years delayed we really hope that the publisher *Karl Emil Knudsen*, a distinguished member of this society, will have the possibilities to launch it within this year.

° Again we highly recommend a membership of "FRIENDS OF THE ARCHIVE" e.g. Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane University. Write to *Alma Williams*, Hogan Jazz Archive, Howard-Tilton Memorial Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118, USA. She will give you more information (and also send you the magazine "THE ARCHIVIST" twice a year). Don't forget to tell her you are a member of the Society.

° The magazine "*The Second Line*" published by the NEW ORLEANS JAZZ CLUB is a bit irregular published. Recently Volume XLVI, 1994 was issued, with a lot of very interesting articles. Join the Club and you'll get a subscription. The New Orleans Jazz Club, Suite 265, 828 Royal Street, New Orleans, LA 70116, USA, Annual fee: 20 dollars.

° On *Jazzology Press* there is a brand new publication: **MUGGSY SPANIER: The Lonesome Road** by *Bert Whyatt*. We think this is an extremely good book - highly recommended.

## Press Stop

° On Thursday, April 25, 1996, The Shadows - on-the-Teche in New Iberia dedicated part of the house to the memory of Bunk Johnson. We understand that the local newspapers had been asking for anyone who knew Bunk to come forward, and to be present at the inauguration. Barry Martyn was one of the speakers. Harold Drob was invited to speak at the event, but was sadly not well enough to attend. More details will be featured in our next issue



## MEET A PROMINENT MEMBER

### HAROLD DROB

Of the Bunk Johnson researchers living today I think there are a top trio who play in a division of their own and with whom no one really can compete. And those are, by my opinion, *Mike Hazeldine*, *Paul A. Larson* and **Harold Drob**, with absolutely no grading. Two of them, Mike and Harold, are members of this Society while the third one Paul, hasn't responded to our invitations so far. We sure hope he will some day. Harold Drob's contribution to the knowledge on Bunk is perhaps surpassed only by Bill Russell. Harold is no man of big headlines: He works more in the quiet way. But he has made absolutely invaluable contributions in this very field. A native New Yorker (born January 26, 1923) he first came in contact with the music of Bunk through the *Jazz Man* recordings which he heard at the legendary *Commodore Jazz Record Shop* in NYC. He was a friend of Gene Williams, the publisher of the magazine *Jazz Information*, who introduced him. At that time he was just about to be drafted into the army and was very short of money - and since it was World War II he didn't know what would happen to him, so he hesitated to spend his last dollars on records. But when he got out of the army a couple of years later, he had some money. He heard and met Bunk at the *Styvesant Casino* in New York and he became aware of the "mess" around Bunk, who complained he couldn't play the music he wanted, and not with the musicians he preferred. In short, this was the very beginning of the project that became the classic "*The Last Testament*", Bunk's last recordings (December 1947) - and the rest is Jazz History. Harold spent some of his money on Bunk, without any conditions what-so-ever. The old trum-

peter was completely free to choose his musicians, and his repertoire. And as we all know, Bunk wanted good sight-readers. He was tired of his "emergency musicians" (as he called George Lewis and Jim Robinson! - who else but Bunk on this earth could ever get the idea to call George Lewis an emergency musician?? Nobody I am sure!!). Bunk picked up his old copy of "*Red Back Book of Quality Rags*" (published by John Stark in 1909) and then he recorded with his chosen men under the supervision of Harold Drob. A classic session that was initially bought by George Avakian and Columbia (LP) and was re-issued on CD some years ago on the Delmark label.

Harold also wrote some immortal articles in the now deceased magazine *THE RECORD CHANGER* (November and December 1952) on Bunk Johnson and "the Last Testament" - recordings. Those articles are a *must* to every Bunk fan, but very hard to get today. However, Harold has kindly given us his permission to publish those articles as supplementum in *Bunk Johnson Information*. We are most thankful to him for that and we hope to do so as soon as we can.

Harold has also been a devoted writer in *THE MISSISSIPPI RAG* - and I really hope he will go on with that. He wrote some classic articles in the end of the 70:s (in the *Rag*) about his pilgrimage to New Iberia, where he organized so that the tombstone of Bunk's grave (ordered by Bill Russell many years before, but still at the stonemasonry) at last fell onto its place. So thanks to Harold we can put flowers on the the gravestone in *St Edwards Cemetery* in New Iberia today. According to the grapevine Harold is preparing a book on his great idol, and we all wish him good luck in his research. And we sure are very anxious to have a closer look at the result some day.

(Claes Ringqvist)



✂ **FROM THE BUNK ARCHIVES**

**WHO'S WHO IN THE CRITICS ROW**

**William Russell.** An unassuming academian, who at 35 has become one of the jazz authorities. Writes authoritative articles on New Orleans jazz and Boogie Woogie piano style. Devoted to music of Armstrong, Meade Lux Lewis, Bessie Smith, Bechet and the Dodds boys. Never mentions Ellington and finds little or nothing of interest in today's swing music. Thinks big bands are "overweight". Studies jazz in an analytical manner derived from his classical background and travels considerably. Plays violin and Chinese string, gong and percussion instruments. Collects records constantly. Criticized for his narrowness of interests. But few criticize the man himself.

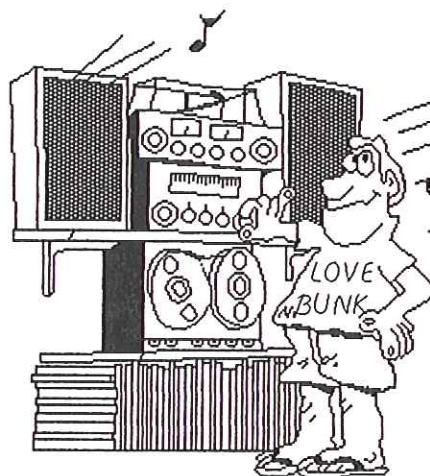
**Dave Stuart.** Unknown until a few months ago, Stuart runs the "Jazzman" Record shop in Hollywood. His story that Peck Kelley was a greatly overrated pianist brought about a terrific controversy with Hammond, Ben Pollack, Muggsy Spanier and Jack Teagarden, among others, all throwing digs at Stuart's critical ability. He's well known on the coast and popular. Won't sell commercial records in his shop. Goes for boggie piano and other piano soloists like Hines. A sensational writer *Down Beat* "discovered" him through Charlie Emge.

**Gene Williams.** Just 23, he's a Columbia U man. Got hep to jazz while there. Became so enthusiastic he started a little heptadajive sheet called *Jazz Information* which all collectors now consider their blue book. Great Armstrong fanatic; also always raving about piano solos. Very serious about the whole business. Tries to cultivate a bland, wordly expression and manner but his age gives him away. Cooks many of his

meals himself and lately has been suffering from indigestion. Like White, Williams fault is lack of experience and acquaintance with men in the business. But his spectacular single-handed fight to make *Jazz Information* a success and his whole-hearted devotedness to jazz music arouses respect of all who have met him.

From **DOWN BEAT, December 15, 1940**

**NEW BUNK RECORDS**



Not much to report this time. I guess we're all wondering when Barry Martyn is going to issue AMCD-15 "Bunk Plays Popular Songs". However, Judith Mahoney Pasternak has written a book called "Dixieland: The Birth of Jazz" (ISBN 1-56799-236-6) which includes a CD with one track by Bunk - The Entertainer. If you want to know more, check website

<http://www.webcom.com/friedman/>



Some interesting www-homepages

<http://www.bigeasy.com/jazzology.html>  
Complete Jazzology, GHB etc catalogue

<http://www.beatthief.com/greatday.html>  
Great day in Harlem

<http://thing.oit.unc.edu/>  
The 78rpm record home page

<http://www.alljazz.com/~alljazz/>  
Jazz record auctions. Your source for jazz, personality, country & western records. Auctions every two months. Over 20,000 records per year, mostly 78s and early LPs, and occasionally cylinders, CD's, sheet music, books, periodicals, discographies...

<http://www.tulane.edu/~lmiller/JazzHome.html>  
William Ransom Hogan Archive of New Orleans Jazz

<http://www.netspace.org/%7Ehaaus/shome.html>  
Louis Armstrong homepage

<http://www.ragtimers.org/~ragtimers/>  
Ragtime home page

<http://www.bme.jhu.edu/~jrice/cz.html>  
Cajun/Zydeco Music & Dance

<http://www.biograph.com>  
Biograph Records

Bunk Johnson Information is the newsletter for members of the Swedish Bunk Johnson Society.

Editor:  
Håkan Håkansson  
Kungsholms Strand 185  
112 48 STOCKHOLM  
+46 - 8 - 65 25 725

President and deputy editor:  
Claes Ringqvist  
Baldersvägen 14B  
852 34 SUNDSVALL  
+46 - 60 - 17 12 85

Other members of the  
Executive Committee:

P-O Karlström  
Storvretsvägen 105  
163 60 SPÅNGA  
+46 - 8 - 760 08 15

Christer Fellers  
Gransångarvägen 20  
191 55 SOLLENTUNA  
+46 - 8 - 768 41 29

BJI can also be reached on fax +46 - 8 - 650 52 25

WELCOME TO CONTACT



The mail order business  
dealing with Traditional Jazz only.  
More than 1000 different  
LPs, CDs, Cassettes, Videos & Books.

Stomp Off, Delmark, GHB  
(incl. American Music series),  
JSP, Jazz Crusade, Mardi Gras,  
504, Lake and many others.

Phone: (0)526-15352 or  
write: SURBRUNNSG 21  
S-452 37 STRÖMSTAD



The only shop in Sweden  
100% specialized in jazz,  
blues and gospel. Thou-  
sands of new and second  
hand CDs and LPs in all  
styles. Also 78s and  
jazz literature. Lots of  
BUNK and all kinds of  
New Orleans music. Send  
2 IRCs or 10:- in Swe-  
dish stamps for our  
latest mail order news  
list, where among other  
things you will find a  
special offer on the  
Storyville label.

SKIVFYND JAZZ OCH BLUES  
Box 8003, 104 20 Stock-  
holm. Street address:  
Scheelegatan 12. Tel/  
fax: 08-652 92 91.







PORTO RICO  
as played by  
BUNK JOHNSON  
March 10, 1945

Transcribed by  
Tom Pauli

Cliff Jackson  
piano intro

A1



B<sub>1</sub>

B<sub>2</sub>

B<sub>3</sub>

Sandy Williams  
trombone solo

B<sub>4</sub>

Sidney Bechet  
clarinet solo

B<sub>5</sub>

(69) - (84)

(85) - (99)



Handwritten musical notation on a single staff, measures 105-109. Includes a circled measure number 105 and a triplet annotation '3 7 3 7' above the staff.

Handwritten musical notation on a single staff, measures 110-114. Includes a circled measure number 110.

Handwritten musical notation on a single staff, measures 115-119. Includes a circled measure number 115, a circled measure number 110, and a circled measure number 115. A box labeled 'B6' is present below the staff.

Handwritten musical notation on a single staff, measures 120-124. Includes a circled measure number 115.

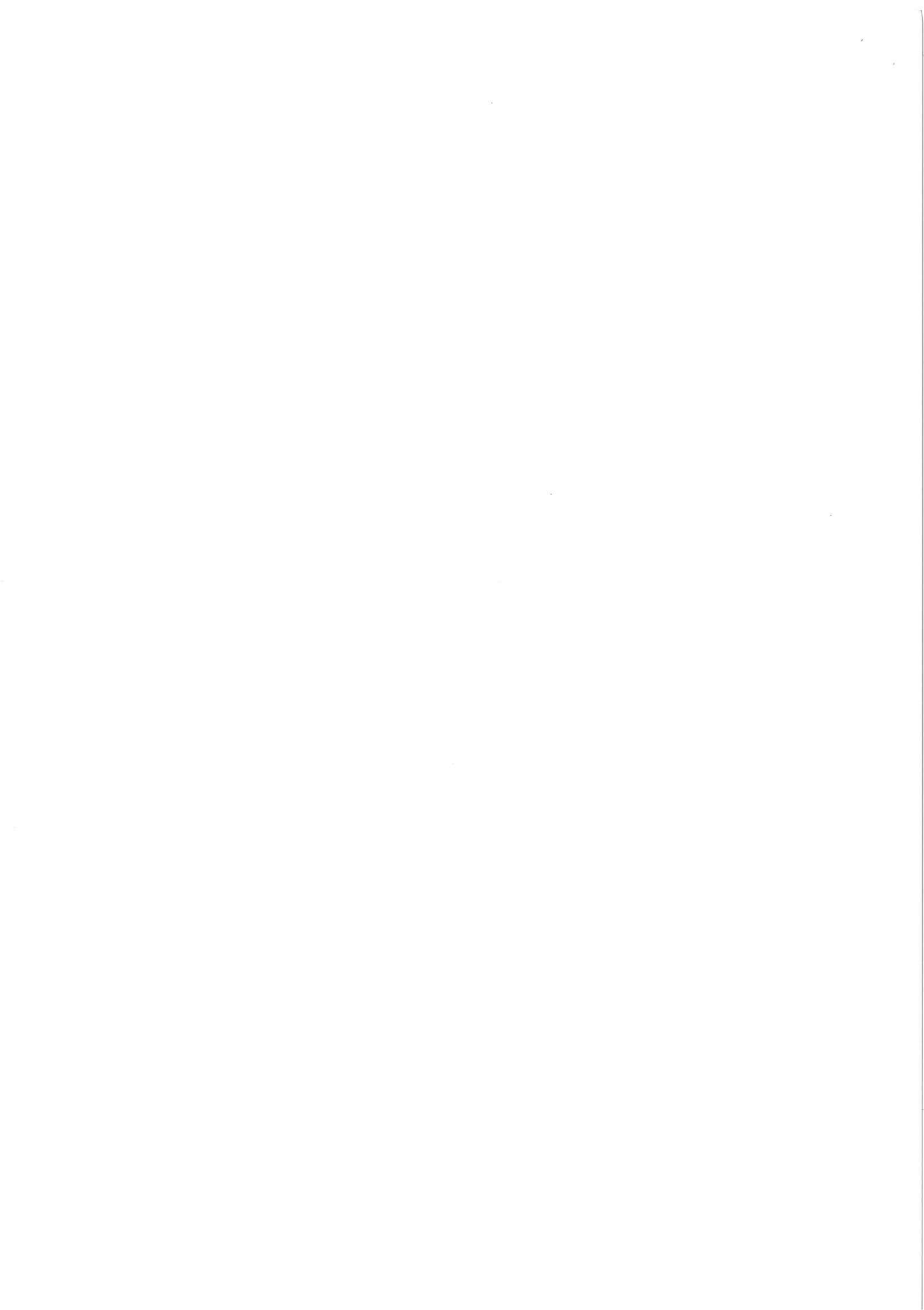
Handwritten musical notation on a single staff, measures 125-129. Includes a circled measure number 120.

Handwritten musical notation on a single staff, measures 130-134. Includes a circled measure number 125 and a triplet annotation '3 7 3 7' above the staff.

Handwritten musical notation on a single staff, measures 135-139. Includes a circled measure number 130.

Handwritten musical notation on a single staff, measures 140-144. Includes a circled measure number 130 and the text 'V.P. 1992, 1996.'





**BUNK & BILL**  
(Bunk Johnson and Bill Russell)

A Transcript of the British Broadcasting Corporation's Four Original London Broadcasts on  
December 15, 22, 29, 1992 and January 5, 1993

Copyright: Mike Pointon

Record research and editing by Floyd Levin.

Bill Russell, who died on August 9, 1992, played a vital role in jazz's history. Thanks to his tenacious research and pioneer recording efforts, much of the background of New Orleans jazz is now well documented. Russell's invaluable recordings, made half a century ago, were issued on his American Music label. They were singularly responsible for launching a fervent revival of interest in pure New Orleans Jazz.

The discovery and eventual popularization of the early New Orleans trumpet star, Bunk Johnson, said to have influenced Louis Armstrong, ranks high among Bill Russell's many achievements. Johnson's career began one hundred years ago when he took his first band job in the Crescent City. He soon was playing with the legendary Buddy Bolden. During the following interview, Russell recalls the events in the early '40s when he began a series of recordings that are now considered noteworthy examples of New Orleans Jazz.

Russell's important work was accomplished during a period when Swing was in vogue and record buyers considered jazz "old fashioned." Very few jazz bands were performing. Jazz concerts, parties, and festivals had not been conceived. There were no jazz societies. Only three major record firms were in existence, and they were not recording jazz groups or reissuing earlier material held in their vaults.

This is an astonishing contrast to the current healthy world-wide traditional jazz scene that would not exist without the work of Bill Russell. He was a selfless, dedicated man who assiduously avoided publicity and submitted to few interviews. He devoted a lifetime to his inexorable quest for the true history of New Orleans Jazz.

The following is a transcript of several BBC programs based on rare interviews with Russell that were conducted by Mike Pointon and Ray Smith in New Orleans in Spring 1990. These remarkable radio programs were the result of two years of work; they are a valuable contribution to the on-going study of jazz history.



I want to express my sincere appreciation to the British Broadcasting Corporation, Mike Pointon, and Ray Smith for their permission to transcribe and publish this highly informative material. Pointon, an active participant in the British jazz scene for over 30 years, having worked with such bands as Barry Martyn and Ken Colyer and toured with New Orleans jazzmen like George Lewis and Alton Purnell. Smith, who also played with Colyer, is a distinguished pianist and a co-leader of the acclaimed London Ragtime Orchestra.

The BBS series, "Bunk and Bill," revealed fascinating details about Bunk Johnson and the early New Orleans jazz scene. This is the first time many of these facts have appeared in print.

Pointon is heard on the BBC broadcasts with taped inserts from the Russell interviews he and Ray Smith conducted a few years earlier in New Orleans. The spoken segments of the programs were interspersed with generous amounts of recorded music that captured the essence of Bunk Johnson's trumpet style. In most cases, those records are parenthetically identified to assist readers interested in locating them. Wherever possible, currently available recordings are listed.

Mike Pointon and Ray Smith have recently completed a comprehensive book about Bill Russell that will be published soon.

Bill Russell's recordings are currently being released on American Music compact discs available from GHB Jazz Foundation, 1206 Decatur Street, New Orleans, La. 70116

Floyd Levin, 1995

[Program #1] After a brief recorded interlude, the music fades...

*Michael Pointon:* Hearing such musical dinosaurs coming out of their radios must have been quite a culture shock for ears accustomed to orchestrated swing and bebop in 1943. Nevertheless, Bunk Johnson was about to inspire the New Orleans revival. And it was there, in 1990, that I met the man responsible for the veteran black trumpeter's comeback - Bill Russell.

Bunk had been a leading jazz musician in the early years of the century, but unlike many of his contemporaries, he'd never made any records. Eventually he was forced to give up the trumpet when he lost all his teeth and vanished from sight.

It was during his research for the trail-blazing book, "Jazz Men," in the late '30s, that Bill Russell first came across Bunk's name.

*Bill Russell:* At that time I'd never heard of Bunk. And in writing the New Orleans chapters [in "Jazzmen," the first jazz anthology - 1939]... Steve Smith and I were working together on that, and Steve's wife, Lee, who was a secretary and a good typist and professional secretary, did a lot of our research because I wasn't in New York then at all that fall, hardly.

And they interviewed people like Zutty Singleton and Sidney Bechet, Wellman Braud, and "Pops" Foster. There were quite a few people there in New York from New Orleans, and they were the first ones that ever told anybody about Bunk, because we'd never heard of Bunk before. It might have been somebody like Bechet who said, "Well, there are three great trumpet players in the world..." Course in New Orleans, they considered that the world. Well of course, certainly Jelly Roll Morton did. Well...King Buddy Bolden, and Bunk, and then Louis Armstrong

*MP:* Yes. Tell us about how he [Bunk] was contacted.

*BR :* Well in the first place, we couldn't find out what his right name was for sure. Some would say it was Johnson, some would say it was Campbell, and some would say it was Robinson. Everybody, usually in New York, would say his name was Bunk Johnson; like Sidney Bechet and all those people who knew him. So when I went to see Lee Collins. I called him Bunk Johnson and he (Lee did too. But I asked Lee, I said, "You're a trumpet player, can you tell us how he played? And can you describe Bunk's style, how he played an' all?" because Bunk was his favorite trumpet player. He said, "Do you have any recordings of 'Chimes Blues', have you ever heard 'Chimes Blues'?" I said, "Oh, sure." He said, "Well if you've heard that, you've heard Bunk!" [Russell sings a few notes of the "Chimes Blues" melody...] He put them [the notes] always a little behind the beat, and you knew darn well he wasn't showing off with high notes. He said, "That sounds exactly like Bunk." He said, "You wonder sometimes if he's ever going to get to the end of the phrase or the chorus - in time, he's always so far behind. But he always does."

["Chimes Blues," is heard with Louis Armstrong playing lead, then fades...]

*MP:* The young Louis Armstrong featured on "Chimes Blues," his first recorded solo with King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band in 1923. It was inevitable that Bill should go and talk to Louis.

*BR:* I asked him about Bunk and I said, "We don't even know his name for sure." And I could tell Louis was already disgusted. "What did they tell you?" he said. I said, "Well, some of them say it's Johnson, some say it's Campbell, and some say it's Robinson." And he said, "Awww, it's Johnson!" He said it like he hated to talk to anybody that dumb, that would believe the other names. [laughs] I said, "Can you hum something or play something or skat something like Bunk would play?" So he [Armstrong] did a blues right away, and it sounded just like it was "Chippie" Hill - like "Lonesome, All Alone and Blue," "Chippie" would sing a phrase and then a little phrase of Louis' runs down the arpeggio at the end of it. As Bunk calls it - answering.

[Bertha "Chippie" Hill is heard, with Louis' horn answering. Okeh 8339]

Anyway, before we got through, I think he volunteered the subject, he said, "I just saw Bunk a few weeks ago!" That startled me, too. He said, "He's in New Iberia [Louisiana]. He said, "Just write, send a letter there care of the postmaster, it'll get to him."



So that night when I got home I wrote a letter to the postmaster and said, "Will you give this enclosed letter," I enclosed another letter inside the envelope, "to this colored trumpet player?" I guess everybody in town would have known Bunk. It's a fairly small town, maybe twenty thousand or so people. Within three or four days it [Bunk's reply] came back with the first letter:

*Reader's voice:*

"I'm here barely makin' out now. We have work only when the rice is harvested, and when that's over, things goes real dead until cane harvest. I drive a truck and trailer and that only pays me \$1.75 a day and that don't last very long. So ya'll know for sure just how much money that I make. Still, I made up my mind to work hard until I die. I have no one to tell my troubles to and my children, they can't help me out in this case. I've been real down for about five years. My teeth went bad in 1934, so that finished my playing music. Now I haven't got any other way to go but put my shoulder to the wheel and my nose to the grindstone and put my music down."

*BR:* This would be about February of 1939, after we got information about Bunk from New Orleans people like Sidney Bechet in New York. I was still going to hear Sidney every opportunity I got, he was playing at Nick's. One night a friend of our's from Philadelphia [was in town], a reporter on one of the leading papers, Park Breck. We told him all about Bunk. Park wrote the first article for Downbeat about Bunk. At that time we began to raise money for his dental work, to have Dr. Leonard Bechet [Sidney's brother] fix up his teeth. So one night, Park was in New York. We went down to Nick's with him, and Sidney invited Park and I to go out to his house after they finished that night. Sidney never had much income or any fancy apartment, but it wasn't down in the general plane of Harlem, it was a fairly good apartment house. He was living there with a very light-colored girl, and her mother was staying there with them too, which was surprising. But anyway, he fixed up breakfast for all of us. Meanwhile, Park started to play some records in his front room there. Sidney had a little wind-up, hand-wound, phonograph, and we were playing the Maggie Jones record, "Anybody Here Want to Try My Cabbage?" It has a whole chorus by Louis [Armstrong] on it. And when he was halfway through that chorus - Sidney was in the kitchen and could hear it out there he came in holding the skillet full of eggs that were frying. I was afraid he was going to drop them. He would lean way over to listen, to get down closer to the phonograph. The eggs didn't fall out of the skillet, but he finally said, "Now if I didn't know who that is, I would swear that has to be Bunk Johnson."

["Anybody Here Want to Try My Cabbage," with Louis, is heard [Columbia 14063-D]

So as soon as Louis had played and sung that chorus - same as Lee Collins said earlier, "If you've heard that, you've heard Bunk." So there was Sidney saying the same thing. And then he made a funny remark, I never did know for sure what he meant. At that time his brother, Dr. Leonard Bechet down here in New Orleans, was starting to work on Bunk's teeth. And he [Sidney] said, "If Bunk comes back, I know one guy who's going to be sorry." And I'm sure he meant Louis, of course. But I never knew why he made the remark, if he meant he'd be competition, or maybe that he would show people where Louis got his style or something. It was probably that, because he surely would have known that Bunk wouldn't have been a competitor of Louis'; hardly, at his age, and all. But anyway, he did make that remark - "I know one guy who's going to be sorry if Bunk comes back."

So anyway, Bunk still didn't have a trumpet. This would be in 1939, when I went to California for the World's Fair and I met Lu Watters. He had a big ten or eleven piece band that worked over in Sweet's Ballroom in Oakland about once a week. So one night; after the dance - they probably got paid \$10 or so a night, that'd be about all for a dance of that kind - Lu said [to his musicians], "I'm taking two dollars out of each of your pay." He didn't even ask them, he just took it out, he was the boss of that band. And they didn't mind it, I guess. He said, "It's to get Bunk a horn!" He gave me the twenty dollars to send to Bunk. And Bunk said he hitched a ride to New Orleans and went to a pawn shop and bought both a cornet and a trumpet. It showed he still wanted a cornet, really, but he knew everybody played trumpet. In 1941, this would be two years after he had those two bad horns, he made this record which he sent back to New York:

*Bunk's recorded voice is heard:*

"I'm very proud to send this a little message to Sidney Bechet and the whole bunch, also Louis Armstrong. Are you broke? You promised to send me a trumpet and I haven't seen that trumpet yet! But I know I'm gettin' one. I might be lucky enough to get Gabriel's trumpet. Maybe you're figurin' on borrowin' that one for me. Ask Sidney would he like to work at Pitman's Place with me where he first worked when we were playin' together in the Eagle band? 'Two-Bits' was our drummer, 'Bogus' was our piano player, I was the trumpet player and he [Bechet] was the great clarinetist on the job, and we went over big. "Ask Sidney do he still remember our old Scott Joplin music that we used to play? Tell him that I have never forgotten any of it, and I tried to give him a little specification of 'Maple Leaf Rag' on this record. But the horn that I have over here is just a little better 'n the car horn, tell him. The coffee pot is a little better, I think. [Louis,] I need me for a good trumpet, as I asked before. And if there's anything that you can do to get me one, or intercedin' or helping to get me a horn, I'd be mighty proud. I know he can help me if he want to.

"I'd like to get a mouthpiece if I don't get a trumpet anyway from Louis. This is from your ol' friend Bunk Johnson as ever! And I'm 'bout the only trumpet player livin' today of that age of the ol' gang and able to play. Sidney, I can play and play well, and play all the ol' time music just what you all want. I really have what RCA wants, if I can only get there to explain it, and something to explain it with. This'll be from you friend, Bunk Johnson." [He plays Maple Leaf Rag]



*BR:* So he sent those messages, to Louis Armstrong, sent him another message, he hadn't given up on Louis giving him a horn by that time. He sent one to Luis Russell, to Herman Rosenberg... But finally we had to buy one, though - the Selmer, which, as I said, Rosenberg got for us very cheap in Cleveland. I didn't meet Bunk until 1942, and just about that time is when he got the horn. So Bunk had to get a band together. Bunk hadn't played in New Orleans for many years, although he knew hundreds of musicians around. More than anybody, I should think, because of his wonderful memory. But he didn't know just who to get, so some of us made suggestions and tried to find musicians for him to play with.

Anyway, Bunk remembered George Lewis, that he'd played with ten years before but hadn't seen him since. Jim Robinson told him where George lived, and we went down to see George and he said he'd be glad to play the date. Finally, Bunk remembered about Walter Decou. He was an old-time pianist. He'd been retired, practically, from music, but Bunk decided he go and see him and he was willing to make the date. For a drummer they finally settled on Ernest Rogers. And Bunk wanted to use a guitar rather than the banjo, although the banjo had been popular in jazz bands, not only in New Orleans but all over the country because it was a little more, you might say, dynamic instrument - louder. Guitar was rather a soft instrument, before the days of the electric guitar, which the old timers never would want to use anyway. So they first tried to get Willie Santiago, who was one of the old-time guitar players. Anyway, we never did find Willie Santiago. At the last minute, the day of the recording, George Lewis said, well, he could get his banjo player, Lawrence Marrero, so he made that date. And the bass player was Austin Young. They'd had a little rehearsal the day before, over at Walter Decou's house, which was way downtown, with Jim Robinson and George Lewis and Bunk. Only those three, what you might consider the melodic instruments, with the piano. No drums, or guitar or anything, no banjo or bass at that first rehearsal. By the way, in New Orleans, I might point out, they didn't consider what they called a "front line" and then a "rhythm section" in back of that. It was entirely foreign to the principles of New Orleans music, which was mostly ensemble. And also, they would have considered every one of those instruments a "rhythm" instrument. Bunk, when he began begging people to buy him a cornet or a trumpet, he would make this remark: "I know I can still stomp myself some trumpet." He didn't say, I can play or sing a melody on the trumpet. Although he was, of course, famous for his beautiful tone and playing the melody, as all New Orleans trumpet players had to stick right to the "lead," as they called it. But, he thought of it as a rhythmic instrument. He could "stomp himself some trumpet," he said.

The very first thing I heard Bunk play at the rehearsal was a spiritual, "Yes, Lord, I'm Crippled, I Cannot Walk." I was astonished when I first heard him. We weren't expecting a big, strong tone out of him, anyway. 'Cause we thought, well, he's an old man. [laughs] In those early days, in the 1930s and '40s, we thought any musician who was over thirty was too old to play. They were like baseball players, or rather football players, their legs go bad after they're thirty years old, and prize fighters are over, too, when they're thirty.

*MP:* What were your feelings? I mean, you just said you heard him play that number for the first time, and did you suddenly realize that all your hopes were fulfilled?

*BR:* Oh, yes! As I say, I wasn't expecting too much. Oh the night before, even, when Bunk first came to town a few nights before the recording. He stayed over at a boarding house above Mule's Saloon in the downtown St. Bernard section. And the first night that I ever heard Bunk play was there. He got out his horn just sort of to tune up. I hadn't even seen that new trumpet that we'd bought for him, the Selmer trumpet, so I was anxious to see what it looked like. I knew it'd be good, practically new. But he got it out, got it tuned up and started to play a little scale, and he sort of missed half the notes, you know, just playing real soft. He didn't want to disturb anybody. He wasn't trying to play, just to get a little sound through the instrument. I thought: Gee, I hope he can do better than that when he records.

But then at this rehearsal they started out on that, "Yes, Lord, I'm Crippled," I couldn't believe it. Bunk was so powerful, and the wonderful tone, and the quality. The way he played, I must say, I couldn't believe it. It did seem to me like it was the first time I'd really ever heard any music. [laughs]

[The music begins, and Bunk's first recording is heard, "Oh, Lord, I'm Crippled" - Jazz Man No. 1]

*BR:* He asked me when they got through what we thought, he didn't think they sounded very good. Unfortunately, it wasn't very good fidelity. Dave Stuart, who had the Jazz Man Record Shop in Hollywood, decided he would send these masters, about a dozen sides or so, including some talking sides that he made later, to Allied in Los Angeles to have them processed. But when he [Stuart] gets back to Los Angeles, he goes to Allied to hear the tests, and they said, "Oh, you wanted those, really?"

They thought it was a joke. They thought they were so badly [recorded], they thought David was showing how bad they could record here in New Orleans. David said, "It was a wonder they didn't throw them out." But they still had them there, so he had to convince them that he really was serious in wanting them. They maybe were badly recorded, but there was some very good music on them, I thought.

[Music from those records is heard, "Bunk's Blues" - Jazz Man No. 10. "Storyville Blues" and "Moose March," from this initial Johnson session, is included in the CD set "The Good Time Jazz Story" 4GTJ-4416-2]

*MP:* The real impact of those first Jazz Man records in 1942 helped ignite the revival of interest in New Orleans music, and a few months later Bunk recorded again. This time for Gene Williams.

*BR:* Gene did issue them later that winter on his Jazz Information records.

*MP:* How did you feel about that session?

*BR:* Somehow it didn't swing quite as much as the other, in part probably by not having Jim Robinson [trombone].



*MP:* Because [trombonist] Albert Warner is clearly doing brass band figures.

*BR:* Yeah, that's right. He never did much dance work. He might have played a few dances now and then, but almost entirely his only work was brass bands. And he didn't know some of the pieces so well, either. Bunk had to try to teach him some of those numbers. Bunk went for all those popular tunes, too. Not that he preferred them to other tunes, but he thought the public liked them, and he figured the musician's job was paid by the public and the musicians should play what the fans want to hear.

[Bunk's clear lead is heard on "When I Leave the World Behind" - Jazz Information Records No. 11.]

*MP:* The 1915 Irving Berlin song, "When I Leave The World Behind," which Bunk Johnson recalled playing at a New Orleans cabaret years before Bunk's best recordings were yet to come, many of them supervised by the man who was to remain his staunch friend and supporter, Bill Russell.

*Lady's voice:* And Michael Pointon continues the Bunk Johnson Story next Tuesday afternoon at 4:30, with another chance to hear that program next Thursday evening at 10:15. "Bunk & Bill" was produced by Derek Drescher, and the reader was Colin MacFarland.

**[End Program #1]**

(Continued)