



Bunk Johnson. **Information**

Number 31, 2009

The Swedish Bunk Johnson Society



Brother Bill with Jennie, Russell and Lenore
Chicago 2006

Bunk Johnson Information is an international newsletter
for members of the Swedish Bunk Johnson Society

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EDITORIAL

1. Changes in the society that will be implemented as from NOW.

The Swedish Bunk Johnson Society has now existed for more than 20 years with today more than 170 members living all over the world. In July 2008 the Executive Committee met to discuss the future of the society. Our conclusion was to carry on with some changes in the policy of the society.

The annual meeting has this far taken place in Stockholm in early January, as close as possible to Bunk's Birthday on December 27. One problem with the annual meeting in January is that the weather of Stockholm is not exactly like the weather of Louisiana. Stockholm in January is quite dull: dark, cold, rainy or full of snow and Bunk definitely would have disliked that. We therefore decided to let the annual meeting take place later in the year when Stockholm is a much friendlier town. And if possible combine the meeting with the visit of someone of interest for the society.

We will continue to release two yearly issues of Bunk. Johnson. Information. Mike Hazeldine has generously offered to act as a co-editor, an offer we most gratefully accept. As you probably know Mike is already the number one contributor to our magazine with all the interesting and unique material about Bunk. By mistake the last issue was printed with only the first two pages in the traditional yellow color. Anyhow we found the mistake to be a successful one, so we will continue with only the first two pages in yellow and the rest in white.

Only members in Sweden pay a membership fee of SEK 250 (about Euro 25, USD 30 or GBP 20). A considerable part of the membership fee is used to finance the printing and distribution of Bunk. Johnson. Information. If a member living outside Sweden would like to contribute to the economy of the society by donating for instance Euro 10, USD 10 or GBP 5, we gladly accept that. If you think it is too risky to just send a bill by ordinary mail, contact P-O Karlström (per-olof.karlstrom@globalnet.net) for methods of donating. Finally we decided that if a member living in Sweden has not paid the membership fee within the stipulated period of paying, the membership is lost for that year without a reminder.

The Executive Committee

2. We publish an interesting letter from our member Jack Stanley. About the missing tape, Mike Dine says that Tom Stagg has the master tape in New Orleans.
3. Finally, let me point out that almost all of the letters reproduced here were edited in Mike's Bunk book. Here all the letters are totally unedited and several origins are shown for the first time.

Editor

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30th June, 2008

Dear Hakan,

Thank you for the latest Bunk Johnson Information. I found of particular interest the article about Dink Johnson, which I originally read in 'The Record Change' nearly 62 years ago. It was of even greater interest, as I was probably the last person to record Dink.

The taping took place at Dink's house in Santa Barbara, California on November 12, 1950. I had only recently moved to the Los Angeles area to work in radio, and having heard that Dink was living in Santa Barbara, drove up one day and found his house quite easily by asking people. Dink's lady answered the door and said he was out, but would be home shortly. She permitted me to set up my recorder and mike on Dink's old upright piano in the parlour of his small home.

Sure enough, Dink arrived about ten minutes later, and was happy to record. Owning a set of the Lomax Library of Congress Jelly Roll sides, I suggested a couple of the tunes that Jelly had played and sung on them, such as: 'Animule Ball' and 'Pretty Baby'. Dink liked that idea, and said he'd add some other tunes he liked playing. The recording went smoothly, without interruption; after which I recorded a short interview with Dink.

When I left the U.S. for England in the middle sixties, I took the Dink tapes with me, along with the Bunk tapes, that, as you know, I recorded in 1947. I turned the tapes over to a group of enthusiasts in London, who had the NoLa record label, and they released the Dink recordings as NoLa LP12. The NoLa people, as you may read on the photocopy of the LP notes, included sound engineer Charlie Crump, Tom Stagg, Mike Dine and Alan Ward. I have been trying to get in touch with one, or more of them, but thus far, have not succeeded. One of them may still have the master for the LP, though I doubt if a CD has been released. As Mike Dine is a BJS member, he might be the logical one to contact if any members are interested in getting the recording. (I myself, own only one copy,)

Incidentally, my new poetry book, 'Reckoning' has just been published. It contains (among 64 poems), a half dozen 'tribute' poems to famous jazz greats, including Bunk. The jazz poems are getting a warm reception at poetry readings I have been doing.

Best wishes to all BJS members, and personal regards,


Jack Stanley

cc: Claes Ringqvist

ENCLOSED: DUB OF NoLa 12.

Bunk Johnson.

William Frederick Wagner

Born: Canton, MO, 13 September 1916; died Chicago, Ill, 31 October 2008.

William Wagner was the youngest of four brothers of whom Russell Wagner (aka. Bill Russell, 1905-1992) was the most famous. Like two of his older brothers, Homer (1903-1976) and Russell, William was attracted to chemistry and after graduating from the University of Chicago in 1939 and the University of Illinois in 1947, went on to enjoy a distinguished academic career as Professor of Chemistry at the University of Lexington.

Although Bill Russell had a close relationship with Homer in the 1940s (Homer built Bill's first recording machine), it was the younger William who showed the most interest in Bill's jazz activities and, later in life, was the most supportive. Never attempting to rival Bill Russell, William was happy to be referred to as "Brother Bill" for the past 20 years or more.

William got to know many of the Chicago jazz musicians from the end of the 1930s. He also photographed a number of them for publication in *Jazzmen*. As a student he saw Johnny Dodds perform in the University lecture theatre and, on a family holiday in the summer of 1940, he met Bunk Johnson in New Iberia – two years before Bill Russell! In 1944 he accompanied Bill to New Orleans to record the legendary 12" 78 recordings for American Music. William operated the "back-up" recording machine, which occasionally provided the master copy. Bunk was often temperamental that week (drinking, and not even showing up for one session when Kid Shots replaced him), and it was William's diplomacy which often diffused potential problems.

I first met "Brother Bill" (BB) in 1988 when he accompanied Bill to Ascona and over the next few years I saw them together on many occasions. He understood his brother's eccentricities and, for instance, tried to reason with Bill why he needed twenty electric shavers that he had been buying in charity shops over the years. "You've got to have spares" complained Bill, "sort out the best three and maybe I can sell

the rest!" BB understood the situation, and with a knowing smile, quietly packed away the surplus shavers. Despite his general grumpiness, Bill was appreciative of his younger brothers help. It has never been really not been appreciated how much effort that how many hours that Brother Bill put into organising Bill's collection and providing help in him in completing Bill's unfinished projects.

After Bill's death, BB drove to New Orleans every September and October to spend time with Barry Martyn and me. His friendship, kindness and generosity were overwhelming and it was always interesting to see the respect that everyone had for him, from musicians and fans to the curators and academics at the Historic New Orleans Collection. BB's generosity and real interest in jazz and the work his brother pioneered was demonstrated when he invited me to meet his family in Chicago. He and his wife Jean entertained Ruth and I at their home where we met two of his three children, Russell and Jennie, Bill's nephew and niece.

After I had mentioned how much the Swedish Bunk Johnson Society would welcome him at their annual conference, he immediately asked me to arrange the visit to the 1996 conference. A few weeks before he was due to leave the USA, he rang me. He was concerned if he should wear an Evening Suit at the conference? Happily, I was able to reassure him that his presence, whatever he wore, would be welcome.

Sadly Jean died in 1999. BB is survived by his three children (Jennie, Lenore and Russell) and three grandchildren. Jennie is a noted violinist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Lenore, retired from a medical career, is a free lance violinist and Russell has an international reputation in restoring cellos – Bill Russell's influence lives on! "Brother Bill" will be remembered as a good friend to jazz and jazz lovers, and we send our deepest condolences to his family.

Mike Hazeldine

A TRUMPET AROUND THE CORNER

The Story of New Orleans Jazz

by Samuel Charters

University Press of Mississippi 2008

380pages including index.

This is the story of our beloved music from its conception some time around the beginning of the 20th century and on to the present. Charters takes us from that beginning through its development into the full flowering of the twenties and partial neglect in the thirties into the second wave of revival and on until today. His ambition is to cover it all and to give a fair picture of two traditions that existed side by side, the African American with its Caribbean influences and the European American heritage which in Charters view principally found its form from Italian and Sicilian retentions in the musical vocabulary. This thesis, that there were parallel styles also gives him an opportunity to avoid the common and tiresome debate about who stole from whom.

In alternating chapters we are given the story of the pioneers and how they came to spread their music across the United States. For quite some time now the emphasis has been on the black musicians and the greats have with reason become known to us all. Here is the chance to make room for some new gods in each private Pantheon, and to names like Oliver, Keppard, Morton, Armstrong and Bechet add those of Larry Shields, Eddie Edwards, Leon Roppolo, Sidney Brown, Ray Lopez and not least that of Papa Jack Laine, the white bandleader and entrepreneur who in this history is depicted as perhaps the most important person of all in the growth and development of jazz. Charters conclusions are well presented, and regardless of the amount of knowledge we carry to this book I can promise much information that is new or given new interpretation.

There can be no doubt about the fact that the music and the importance of The Original Dixieland Jazz Band and The New Orleans Rhythm Kings have been unfairly neglected by earlier chroniclers and that many other white practitioners are virtually unknown today. We should remember, though, that it was not always so. During the first tumultuous decades it was the black musicians who were relegated backstage. When the scales tipped the other way, it led to unfortunate partisanship. It is hard to forget (or forgive) Turk Murphy calling the music of NORK "shallow". If I may be permitted a personal reflection I would make the point to the members of

our society that if we spend our time bemoaning the fact that some jazz writers dismiss Bunk Johnson's music without even listening to it then we perhaps owe it to the white pioneers, not least the ODJB, to listen to their recordings with open mind. There are some delightful surprises here!

Not least valuable in this book is how Charters consistently uses recordings and reports in rewarding detail about what we hear. It could almost be said that a distinguishing feature of this book is that you cannot read it very long without wanting to put it down – to listen to the music.

And you'll get more than just a close-up of the music scene. As you read you'll get a generous description of the New Orleans that existed before the beginning of jazz, with much detail and some angles that you will not encounter in other books about jazz. Other subjects covered are how the name "jazz" appeared, about early writings on jazz up to and including the book "Jazzmen", about musical praxis in composition and copyrighting. And Charters does not play down the racism that was an ugly feature of the society that saw jazz born, even if he doesn't give it a major part in the narrative.

Among the things that I found fascinating was the author's account of how the pioneers used the word "Blues" as a general term with a broader definition than I had understood it to have. There is also an explanation of the availability of musical instruments in late 19th century New Orleans that seems to me to be more plausible than the prevailing. And look out for facts about the origin of music funerals for the common man!

A few words about the literary style of this book. Charters knows a lot about persons and localities in New Orleans from the time he lived in the city in the 1950s and he is not an author who is afraid to let himself into the story with memories of conversations with musicians or with a report on the current, pre-Katrina, state of some landmark. As anyone who has read his many earlier books will know, he really knows how to write, and his careful poet's prose is effective and evocative, but is never allowed to get in the way of the subject. An aspect of his professionalism is that all the facts that are deemed worthy of inclusion are in the main text, and not relegated to endnotes. The endnotes in this book just give the source of information.*

There is danger in mastery of style though. It is easier to be persuaded by the man of words than the mere enumerator of facts, and this leads me into the sad duty to point to some passages in the text

where the information is wrong. These really should be corrected in future editions of the book. Some others have been brought out in other reviews of this book and I will add a few points that I feel should be made.

In the illustrating photos the captions are not always correct. The photo of New Orleans Rhythm Kings has the saxophonist given as Jack Pettis, when it is in fact Volly deFaut. The "unknown" banjoist in Piron's Orchestra is John Marrero and Leon, not Louis, Prima can be seen in the Sharkey-Prima Band.

Buddy Bolden is born 1877 in one instance and 1868 in another. In many cases that type of mistake is cleared up if you keep on reading, but others may need to be corrected. Bass player Al Morgan is said to have played in Cab Calloway's band 1936-1939, when his tenure was really from 1932 through 1936, and Mary Lou Williams was never the regular piano player in John Kirby's band. I do not feel that it is very useful to hunt for typos or misspellings, but one instance may not be so easily detected, and I suspect that the musician concerned would have wanted it corrected. Drummer Jack Laine had a son, Alfred, who played cornet in his father's band from an early age. He was nick-named "Baby" or (according to both Doc Souchon and George Brunis) "Pantsy" for still wearing short pants. In this book he is Alfred "Pansy" Laine.

There are many instances here when Charters presents facts or opinions that I have been surprised by, and in a few cases felt rather upset about. It is my guess that many readers will feel the same way, but we should remember that Samuel Charters knew many of the musicians personally and that he has been in the picture for over fifty years by now. It might be a useful approach not to immediately reject any ideas that do not fit into the opinions that we have formed for ourselves over the years.

Having said that, I shall raise two points where I feel Charters can mislead, and where I do not hear what Charters suggests.

First: in the pages concerning Armand J. Piron's Orchestra Charters writes enthusiastically of the recordings from 1923-24 that give us a chance to hear a high-class Creole Orchestra. But Charters states that there are two arrangements (one of them "Mama's Gone Goodbye") where we can hear violin duets by Piron and Peter Bocage. I am quite convinced that there are no moment of two violins on these recordings. What we hear is Piron's violin and Lorenzo Tio's clarinet in intertwined parts!

Those of you who feel cheated of the

romantic notion of two violins in an early recording of New Orleans music might lend an ear to Jelly Roll Morton's 1926 recording of "Someday Sweetheart".

A second point arises when Charters discusses the last recording session by King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. That he attributes it to Gennett when it was made for Paramount may be a small thing, but as he goes on to comment in detail about the masterful playing of Armstrong on the two takes of "Southern Stomps", it soon becomes clear that the tune he describes must be "Mabel's Dream" (also recorded in two takes on this session). In fact, Armstrong is virtually inaudible here – it is Oliver we hear from beginning to end. I can only surmise that Charters wrote about these recordings from memory, and may have been misled by the recording the band made for Okeh of the same tune. There Armstrong's exuberant second part dominates in duet with Oliver!

The examples above should in no way lead anyone to conclude that this is not an essential book, which gives us many new insights. If it is a sad fact of nature that no book can make man wise, this book will at least leave him much better informed.

What about Bunk? I imagine that the members of the SBJS will want to know how our hero fares in this narrative. Well, to Charters Bunk was born in 1890 (or possibly 1889) and there's an end to it. In no way does he intimate that there should be any doubt concerning this, and it is naturally his right to have that opinion. But if that is his right I consider it my privilege not to be totally convinced. And it is always a good thing to remember that chronology is not the same thing as specific weight.

Another thing: It may not be exactly in the frame for my review of this book, but I feel that it would be wrong not to recommend – and recommend strongly – the chronicle Charters wrote about New Orleans after Katrina. The title is "New Orleans. Playing a Jazz Chorus" and it was issued 2006. Here you get a firsthand perspective from the ground about how the ordinary citizens of the city try to find their way back to their lives and the community that had existed before the Hurricane. Charters also finds space for his own thoughts about music and heritage, and a chapter of conversation with the drummer Johnny Vidacovich is illuminating and memorable. I am told that this latter book will be issued in Swedish this spring. We can only hope that "A Trumpet Around The Corner" will also be

made available in this manner.

In conclusion: If you have decided to read only one book about New Orleans jazz my strong recommendation to you is that you reconsider. Other people have written, and will write, about this subject with broader or narrower scope, and we can listen to their opinions as we listen to various members of an orchestra. The two books by Sam Charters that I have written about above should definitely be read by all people with an interest in this music and both show the deep love and

understanding he has for the subject. I cannot imagine that you would want to be without them.

Nils Gunnar Anderby

*It is wicked and wrong to include facts in notes that are relegated at the end of a book or a chapter. If the author feels that he wants to include information but does not want to break the flow of the narrative, then that information belongs in a note at the bottom of the relevant page – a footnote.

MEET A PROMINENT MEMBER

BO SCHERMAN



Bo Scherman with Louis Armstrong (photo – Leif Wigh)

In almost every issue of Bunk. Johnson. Information you can read an ad for Jazz & Blues Skivfynd - the only shop in Sweden 100 % specialized in jazz, blues and gospel. Owner of the shop is Bo Scherman, a long time jazz fan with a special place for the traditional New Orleans style in his heart. Bo bought the shop in January 1988 after working in the jazz department of a record store for some years and before that in the advertising and graphic businesses. Buying the store was to fulfill an old dream - to work with his number one interests: jazz, blues and gospel music. Today the shop on Scheelegatan is closed but Bo still continues his business from his home as you can see by the ad.

"My interest in music started very early" Bo

says. "My mother was musically gifted, often singing at home, listening to music on the radio and on the record player. My father had less musical talent but a very good sense of rhythm. They had no special interest in jazz but listened to all kinds of music from the pop tunes of those days to classical music so that was what I heard as a small boy."

The family had a piano and Bo started to play by ear when he was around four years old. Then a couple of piano teachers succeeded in killing his interest and he stopped playing the piano at the age of nine. Two years later Bo's interest in jazz was awakened by a classmate, Kjell Söderberg and his older sister. And Bo soon found his musical heroes: Bunk Johnson, Sidney Bechet, Louis Armstrong, Jelly-Roll Morton, King Oliver, Johnny Dodds and all the rest of the great New Orleans musicians. Especially Dodds' playing fascinated Bo so much that he tried to learn the clarinet.

"Maybe I wanted to be too good too fast, so I lost my patience and let the clarinet go after some years" Bo says. "But of course I continued to listen to jazz and my interest got even deeper when in my new school I made friends with the jazz fans trumpeter Eddie Bruhner and multi instrumentalist Kjell Westling. Still it was the old New Orleans style I found most fascinating. In the early 1960's however my jazz interest broadened as I became member of Club 78, a society devoted to the classic jazz of the 1920's, 1930's and 1940's."

At Club 78 Bo learned to appreciate the music of Luis Russell, Duke Ellington and many

others from the swing era. At the club's weekly meetings, still going on, there is always a jazz quiz and that fascinated Bo. To identify different musicians and their musical personalities Bo found most developing and soon became the quiz star of Club 78. From there the step was not far to quizzes on the national level arranged by the Swedish National Jazz Society which led to quizzes on the European level arranged by EBU, the European Broadcasting Union. And this way Bo finally became the jazz quiz master of Europe in 1986.

Back in the 1960's and early 1970's Bo attended jazz seminars by the French jazz critic Hugues Panassié who became Bo's mentor even if he didn't always share Panassié's opinions. Panassié for instance severely criticized Bunk whom Bo always has regarded highly. And Bo sometimes found Panassié's views about jazz and its musicians too narrow-minded. But they agreed on many points, and the charismatic Panassié was very important for Bo's musical development, especially the ability to really listen to the music in depth.

Bo spent a lot of time in France in the early 1960's and in 1964 met Mezz Mezzrow in Paris. So when Mezz later the same year came to Stockholm, Bo, Christer Fellers, Orange Kellin, Göran Söderwall and some other guys got the opportunity to interview him. Mezz turned out to be a very interesting person – intelligent and charming, far from the negative picture we often get. "He may have been a technically limited clarinet player" Bo says, "but his ability to inspire and engage other musicians cannot be questioned."

In 1968 Bo made his first trip to New York. The public interest in jazz was rather low at that time but Bo anyhow listened to a lot of jazz music and met many musicians, some of them becoming long term friends, for instance the great Benny Carter. In 1972, 1973 and 1974, Bo returned to New York where the jazz scene had dramatically changed to the better. George Wein had moved his Newport Jazz Festival to the city and jazz could be heard all over the town. Listening to the musicians in their native environment gave an extra dimension to the music, quite different from festival scenes in Europe. In New York Bo also got to know Jack Armitage from London, who became one of his best and most influential jazz friends, and the British jazz critic Albert McCarthy, who even invited him to several recording sessions he produced with swing era veterans. Another new acquaintance and long term friend from one of those New York trips is the Swedish jazz photographer Anita Westin.

In 1974 George Wein started the jazz festival in Nice that Bo visited every year from the start to 1983. The Nice festival offered the best of American and European jazz in the lovely French Mediterranean milieu.

In 1979 Bo made his first trip to New Orleans. The circumstances could have been better: Bo had recently started a new job that he didn't quite like and the weather in New Orleans was lousy so he couldn't fully appreciate the Crescent City. But one memory from that first visit still makes him happy – the original cast of *One Mo' Time* at Toulouse Theatre with Vernel Bagneris, Topsy Chapman, Thais Clark and Sylvia Williams on the stage and the Swedish New Orleanians Orange Kellin and Lars Edegran in the pit band. The next year he saw *One Mo' Time* in both New York and Europe although the European version was not the original cast.

In 1984 *One Mo' Time* returned to Europe, this time with almost all the original cast including Sylvia Williams. And in Stockholm it suddenly happened – Sylvia and Bo became a couple. At first by distance with Bo visiting Sylvia in New Orleans and then Sylvia moving to Stockholm to live with Bo. But life in Stockholm turned out to be rather tough for an American actress and singer. To find a way of living in a new country is not easy. Sylvia struggled with the Swedish language, got some singing engagements in Europe and even got parts in a couple of plays in Sweden but finally decided to return to New Orleans where she passed away in 2001.

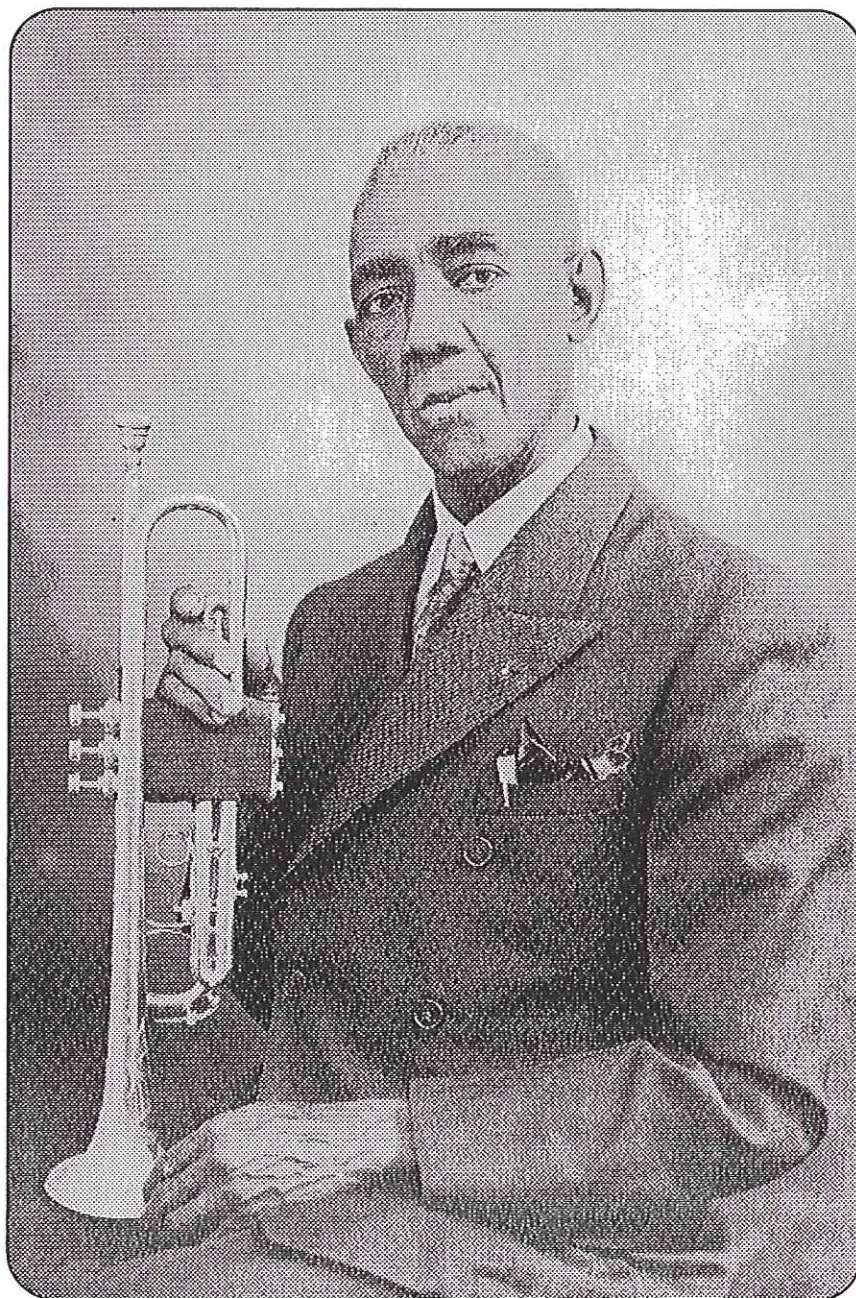
"My relation with Sylvia is one of highlights of my life" Bo says. "We got many fine years together and the New Orleans she showed me is a lovely town, quite different from the one I first saw in 1979."

"After many years in the record business I still love music" Bo finally says. "Many colleagues in this business have lost their interest in music but I have definitively not. I still like listening to both live and recorded music – Bo's private record collection consists of around 15 000 LPs, CDs and 78's – as well as meeting friends interested in music. I also still enjoy working with discographies and jazz history, really research and digging deep. And I still contribute to OrkesterJournalen, the Swedish jazz journal founded already in 1933, even if not to the same extent as in the 1980's when I had a part time job there as co-editor. And my number one musical interest is still the traditional New Orleans style even if I today appreciate all the jazz styles that have kept their links to the original African-American roots."

P-O Karlström

Bunk Johnson.

BUNK'S *Comeback*



*A selection of
press cuttings,
letters
quotations and
other ephemera
reporting
on Bunk's return
to the music scene.
1938-1942*

**PART ONE
1938-9**

Note: The letters are part of the William Russell Collection at the Williams Research Center, New Orleans and may not be reproduced without the permission of the Historic New Orleans Collection. Other items are from Mike Hazeldine's Collection or in the public domain.

One of the earliest references to Bunk Johnson appeared in the British dance band magazine *Ballroom and Band* (March 1935). Preston Jackson was commissioned to write a couple of articles on his recollections of early jazz and the current American music scene.

WAY DOWN YONDER

PRESTON JACKSON

the famous trombone player, well-known through his records with Louis Armstrong's Orchestra, talks about the old days in New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS has often been called the birthplace of jazz, and rightly so, for it was there that the first real jazz band was formed, and there too that many of the greatest jazz musicians were born. It is these facts that make me proud of being a New Orleans man.

One of my earliest musical memories of New Orleans was the occasion on which I first heard Louis Armstrong. That was right back in 1913 when both he and I were at school. At that time I was attending Thorny Lafon School, while Louis was at another school in the city. He was playing cornet in the school band and it was this band that was invited to come out and play at the dedication of Thorny Lafon playground.

Louis was playing more jazz then than the average fellow is now. You couldn't help noticing him. There was something about him and his playing that was out of the ordinary. Everyone had their eyes on Louis, he was so wonderful. I remember that the band played "My Maryland," in which Louis took a cornet obligato that set the people on fire. There was also another outstanding boy in the band by the name of Henry Rena. He was good, but he was not a Louis.

Louis was a nice fellow in those days, and he still is to-day. What I like about him most is the fact that his head is still the same size. His success has gone to his heart; not to his head.

However, to return to New Orleans in those early days. There were a whole lot of good cornet players around at that time, some of the best being Buddy Petite, Joe (King) Oliver, Mutt Darey, Celestin, and a fellow called Bunk. Louis often spoke of Bunk as being a wizard and claims that he got a lot of ideas from him.

I did not see Louis again until 1920, though I heard a lot of him, and of Henry Rena. Buddy Petite was holding his own, too, but his reputation was bad. He would take three or four gigs for the same night and not play any of them or send anybody in his place. Naturally in time most people refused to hire him.

People in New Orleans believe in advertising. Every Sunday you could see four or five bands advertising different dances and balls. These bands would meet at certain corners, usually ones where there was a saloon; then the fun would begin. The best band got the best jobs, a fact that made competition keen. They would tie a rope to the trucks or waggon, and if it got too hot they just had to stay there and take it. I have seen Joe Oliver chase another band all over the town, while sometimes a band would have to jump out of its waggon and hide in a house from the pursuing outfit. Louis was so feared that no cornet player wanted to meet him in these bucking or cutting contests as they were called. You could hear all the hot music you wanted in those days. When a musician or someone prominent died, a band would be hired to play hymns at the funeral, but as soon as the body was buried and the band got out into the street again they would start up a song called "He Rambled Round the Town Until the Butcher Cut Him Down."

Joe Oliver left New Orleans in 1918 and came to Chicago to play at the Dreamland Cafe. Just across the street at the De Luxe Cafe was another boy from Louisiana—Freddie Kepard. They were shooting at one another all night!

When Joe left New Orleans Louis took his place in Edward Ory's Band. Believe me, Joe wasn't missed. All I could hear then was "You ought to hear Louis now." Then, in 1920 or 1921, Joe sent for Louis to play in his band at the Lincoln Gardens in Chicago. Jimmy Noone was there then, with Braud, Duke Ellington's bass player; and so was the first band to leave New Orleans, in 1911.

This was the Original Creole Jazz Band and its personnel was: Bill Johnson, bass violin; Edward Polla, violin; Cottrell, drums; E. Vincent, trombone; Freddie Kepard, cornet; and George Bakay, clarinet. I don't remember the guitar player's name. This outfit toured all the principal cities in the North and people were crazy about them, their playing being something new.

But after three or four years there were four New Orleans bands in Chicago. This started a fight between Chicago and New Orleans musicians that lasted about ten years. The New Orleans boys had everything sewed-up, but then they made the mistake of fighting amongst themselves. This was just what Chicago musicians wanted, and they cashed in on their opportunity.

But New Orleans still plays its part in jazz for you will find boys from Louisiana in every band of note. Duke Ellington has Bigard and Braud; Cab has Al Morgan; Luis Russell has Pop Foster, Albert Nichols, and Paul Barbarin; Carroll Dickerson has Kelley, Al Wynn, and myself; Mills Blue Rhythm have Henry Allen; and Noble Sissle has Bechet. These are just a few that I can think of; there are plenty more.

I could write a book on New Orleans, and New Orleans musicians, and sometime I hope to have the opportunity of telling you some more about the old days.

Perhaps, before I finish, you would like to have a little news about Chicago, for there is plenty of good music there. Earl Hines is on tour at the moment, and Carroll Dickerson is in his place at the Grand Terrace Cafe. With him he has Leon Washington, Sherod Smith, and Delbert Bright, saxes; Harry Gray, bass; Kenneth Peterson, drums; Arthur (Rip) Basset, guitar; Zinky Cohn, piano; Guy Kelley, Pearce, and Leon Scott, trumpets; and Al Wynn and myself, trombones.

Sidney Catlett is with Lyle's Band, while that other grand drummer, Zutie Singleton, has his own orchestra. Francois and His Louisianians are at Dave's Cafe, while Jimmy Noone is at the Midnight Club.

You may not be familiar with some of these boys for we don't get the chance to record in Chicago so often as in New York. But all the players I have mentioned are first-class, and there are many other good boys whose names you may not know, like Cassino Simpson, piano, and Dave Young, tenor.

The last time I recorded myself was with Half Pint Jaxon about two years ago. We made "Fifteen Cents," "Mama Don't Allow It," "Baby Hot," and some other numbers.

Jimmy Noone and Earl Hines make records, of course, though not very often, but Carroll Dickerson, whose band is wonderful—and I don't say that because I am in it—has not done so yet. Maybe he will though.

Bunk Johnson.

Louis Armstrong Orchestra's tour of the southern states in 1938 included a date at the gymnasium of the New Iberia Training School on Monday 27 September. The band had been booked to raise money for the local Board of Education. During this evening Bunk renewed his acquaintance with Louis Armstrong. Louis was glad to see him and allowed Bunk to sit on the stand with the band and 'scat' a number. When the bandbus had left, Louis (who travelled by car with future wife Alpha and 'strawboss/driver') stayed behind to talk with Bunk. Louis showed him his Selmer trumpet – gold plated and specially made for Louis as part of his advertising deal – and told of how Selmer sent him the latest trumpet every year. Bunk probably suggested how he would like to play again and Louis (the most generous of men) offered to send him one of his old trumpets. Of equal importance was the signed photograph below. This was given to Bunk that evening and confirmed Louis's admiration for him and remained one of Bunk's most treasured possessions. This endorsement was the start of Bunk's comeback.



Bunk Johnson.

Dr. Bechet – Correspondence 1939

From National Jazz Foundations "Basin Street" magazine
Vol. 2, No. 4 – New Orleans, April 1946 (Pat Spiess, Editor)

Page 3 – Jazz Flashbacks

William Russell, C.F. Ramsey, Chaz. E. Smith and a few other jazz enthusiasts decided about April 1939 that maybe if Bunk Johnson had some false teeth he might still be able to give out with some music as he did in the old days. They had found the "forgotten man" in New Iberia who with a gleam in his eye still felt he could play if he got some teeth. They mentioned the case to Sidney Bechet who was up east and he immediately recommended his brother, Dr. Leonard Bechet, a New Orleans dentist. They wrote Dr. Bechet who replied "that the work could be done, if it was a practical case, in a week's time."

A letter was sent to Bunk in New Iberia informing him of the plan to get him some "store teeth" and he replied as follows: (courtesy of Dr. Bechet) (addressed to Dr. Bechet).

4/23/39

My Dear Friend:

Only a few lines to let you hear from me and to let you know I received a letter a few days ago from my friends in New York about you taking me in charge to make me a set of teeth. Now Leonard, old boy, I'm sure you have forgotten me by now as I have been away from home so long and times has changed everything so it is pretty hard for a poor man to make a living down South. Now Leonard, I would like to know very much if you have received any mail at all from Mr. William Russell and Mr. Frederick Ramsey, or Mr. Charles Edward Smith about the job of fixing my mouth and if you hear, please let me know at once when you answer this letter. Now I was told by Mr. Ramsey in his last letter to write you and find out just when you want me to come to New Orleans. Now Dr. Bechet I am all ready to come to you at once. Just set the date, and Mr. Ramsey will send me the money for my trip, so please answer this letter at once so I can write Mr. Ramsey and let him know that I am ready to go at once. I will say excuse me. Hoping you and your dear family are enjoying the very best of health, this is from an old friend as ever,

*Sincerely yours,
Willie G. Johnson,*

Better known as Bunk the Old Superior Band Cornet Player, and the man who first asked your mother to let your kid brother, Sidney to play with him in the Old Eagle Band.

May 3, 1939

Dear Dr. Bechet,

I'm sorry I haven't been able to write you sooner about Bunk's teeth. We all think the price you name is extremely fair, and we have raised enough money to get him a set of new teeth.

Accordingly I'm enclosing a money order for \$60 in this letter made out in your name. Within the next 2 or 3 days, I'll send Bunk some money so he can get into N.Or. I know he is very anxious to get the teeth as soon as possible so he will probably come in some time pretty soon. We all certainly appreciate your share in doing this for Willie Johnson so he can get back on his feet again and earn some money playing.

Would you mind sending me a note acknowledging the receipt of the money when you get it, as I want to be sure you do, and that everything is all right.

*Very sincerely yours,
C.F. Ramsey Jr.*

New Orleans La, May 9, '39

*Mr. C.F. Ramsey Jr.
348 East 46th St.
New York City*

Dear Mr. Ramsey;

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 3rd instant and money order for \$60, for which I thank you. I am making very satisfactory progress with the dental work for Willie Johnson, all of which will be completed by Wed. of this week. When that has been done, I am sure he will again be able to resume his work as a musician.

Again thanking you and assuring you of my kindest regards, I am, Yours very truly,

Dr. L.V. Bechet

Work on Bunk's teeth was completed 5/10/39 and he left to go home to New Iberia 2 days later, where he patiently waited for Fate to call him out of hiding. (Fate being partly his 3 fairy godfathers, Smith, Ramsey and Russell). Bunk was deeply grateful to Dr. Bechet and praised his skill to all who would listen.

*New Iberia, La.
July 29, 1939*

My Dear Dr. Leonard V. Bechet:

I am writing you this letter to let you hear from me and to thank you for all that you have done for me, and your kindness will never be forgotten and I will always remember you. Now Doc, you are really great and cannot be beat and I have in my mouth a good job and every white and colored dentist that has seen my job, they all tells me that my job cannot be best and they all wants to know from me if you are a white man and this is what I tells them. Yes, you are really white in your heart. But in race

Bunk Johnson.

your are a true colored man and a great dentist. You are one of New Orleans best and all of the dentists here in this town gives you the prayer and thinks a lots of you an says too Dr. Leonard Bechet is some great

(signed) As Ever, Bunk

The rest of Bunk's history is now well known. He came out of musical hibernation and through his Eastern friends he recorded fr various companies such as Commodore, AM, Victor, etc. As for example we quote the following:

Oct. 2, 1941

Dr. Leonard Bechet:

. . . . I am writing to you Dr. to let you know that I received a letter from your brother, Sidney asking me to come to New York on the 19th of this month to play with his band. He is working for the Victor Records Co. making records. He is in need for me and depending on me coming on the 19th of this month. Sidney have arranged everything for me.

Willie Bunk Johnson

(The letter goes on to request that Dr. Bechet take the money enclosed and get Bunk a union card as there was no union in New Iberia and he had to be a Union man to join Sidney).

In Oct. 1944 the Nat. Jazz Foundation staged their 1st concert and for advertising purposes it hired a band in an open wagon

to stay out front of the local auditorium and play to people as they stood in line to buy tickets for the B. Goodman show inside – At the 2nd N.J.F. concert in 1945 John Hammond suggested that Bunk and Geo. Lewis, Jim Rob. etc. be put on stage to add to the gala show. The N.J.F. paid the union dues for the band and Bunk in one part of the show got to play with his "pupil" Louis Armstrong. As most of the boys in Johnson's Band were behind in their dues the local union ruled no dues . . . no band, hence the N.J.F. paid and settled the fuss and the show went on. – In the Spring of 1945 Sidney Bechet who was at the Savoy in Boston sent for Bunk to join him. Happy-go-lucky Bunk once more appealed to his "Jazz Foundation Friends" and received "backing" to make the trip. Slowly Bunk began for the second time to make a trip up the ladder of fame. He has had, with his same band, engagements at the Stuveysant Casino in N.Y. and because of his revival he and the Band and have received wide publicity.

Bunk claims his good health is because he eats plain food such as Beans and rice, gumbo, greens, stew, spaghetti, etc. "That's why I live so long. I eat the right kind of food, none of that fancy stuff for me."

But alas, Bunk likes his "stuff" and has sort of grown out of his custom of sticking just to plain pop. What will happen to him? The wheel of Fortune is now spinning for Bunk, "around and around she goes and where she'll stop nobody knows."

Letter to Bill Russell from Leonard Bechet – 1939

This is an additional letter not included on the above article

New Orleans La
April 11, 1939

Mr. William Russell
348 E. 46St
New York City

Dear Mr. Russell

I received your letter and wish to extend my thanks and appreciation to you and Mr Smith for the consideration

You can rest assured that I shall do all in my power to give him entire satisfaction for a perfect fit.

This work can easily be done in not more than one week. New Iberia is not very far from New Orleans; he will only have to remain in the city for this short period. Now as to the cost for

upper and lower set of false teeth. This I will do for \$60. It is not customary to give a definite estimation without the proper examination but I know Bunk has a practical case which this amount will cover to complete this work.

Write in advance just when he is coming to New Orleans.

Hopng to hear from you soon.

Give my regards to Mr. Smith and Sidney also Mr Ramsey

Sincerely yours

Dr. Leonard V. Bechet
1402 St. Bernard St

Bunk Johnson.

DR. J.H. FLINN, JR.
103 CANAL ST. * 113 ROYAL ST.

7 DENTISTS TO SERVE YOU

OUT OF TOWN PATIENTS GET 1 DAY SERVICE IN
MOST CASES

TERMS MAY BE ARRANGED, PAY IN SMALL
INSTALLMENTS, WEEKLY OR MONTHLY.

Above is the the text of a card that Bunk included
in his letter to Louis Armstrong.

Bunk wrote at the top of the letter "This is what I
really need" and beneath the card he wrote
"Louis, show this to the Boys."

Accounts due when services are rendered.

Itemized statement furnished if desired.

NEW IBERIA, LA., _____ 193_____

M. Willie Johnson

IN ACCOUNT WITH

DR. T. E. CONRAD
DENTIST

OFFICE ROOMS ABOVE
TAYLOR'S DRUG STORE

OFFICE PHONE 232

TO PROFESSIONAL SERVICES:

X Luxens Set will cost
Trubyte set, rubber
Famous set

DEBIT	CREDIT
150.00	
75.00	
50.00	

Upper & lower sets.

RECEIVED PAYMENT _____

Dr. Conrad was undoubtedly part of Dr. Flinn's dental practise.
as this is the 'estimate' was included with the letter

After Bunk had replied to Bill Russell he wrote to Louis Armstrong and Luis Russell about the promised trumpet and funds to enable him to obtain a set of teeth. The full text of the two letters (reproduced for the first time) are below.

3/1- 39

Mr. Louis Armstrong, My Dear Kind Friend.

Only a few lines again to let you and the boys hear from me. Now Louis, I am well and also my family and me. Do hope that this letter will find you and your family the same, and all of my Home Boys in the very best of health. Now Louis old Boy, I would be very glad indeed to hear from you at once. I have been looking for a long letter from you ever since the month of December or the month of January, But have not got any hearing yet from you. Now, Louis, Please write old [Bunk] at once and let him hear from you and that will make him feel real good. Now your old Boy is down and in real deep need for an upper plate and also a bottom plate and can not make money enough here to have my mouth fixed. Now, Louis, I am here only making out now for work. We have work only when the rice harvest is in and that over, things goes real dead until cane harvest which is called grinding and I drive a truck and trailer and that only pays me a \$1.75¢ a day and that do not last very long so you all know for sure just about how much money that I makes now. Louis, I made up my mind to work hard until I die as I [have] no one to tell my troubles to and my children they can not help me out in this case. I have been real down for about five years, my teeth went bad in 1934 so that was my finish playing music. I wrote Dr. Flinn some time ago to advise me about my mouth and he did. He told me that I would be able to play trumpet just the same as ever with a set of teeth which would be top plate and bottom plate and I have been trying to [save] me a \$175.00 For three years and I can not make that kind of money here, Louis, so now I am just about to give it up now and haven't got no other way to go but put my shoulder to the wheel and nose to the grinding stone and put my music ability's down for good and work. Now Louis, that trumpet that you told me you would make me a present of, please send it to me so I will have something to remember you and sooner or [later] some of my old good friends might fall in here and pick me up and put me on my feet by having my mouth fixed. So you write me, Louis, at once and let me hear from you and from all of the boys and do tell them to drop me a few lines sometimes and you tell my old friends my condition, I mean, Clarence Williams and tell Sidney Bechet. Now Louis tell Clarence to write me so I can get this address now buddy boy, do write at once.

Say Louis, by the way, I got a letter from Mr. William Russell. He told me that you all had given him some information about me and he says in his letter that they are writing a book about

Bunk Johnson.

early New Orleans music and they would like very much [to] print my picture [in] their book if I had one. So I wrote him a letter and mailed it to day telling that I do not [have] one and I am out of work so he told me in the letter if I was unable to send him one by not having any at all that they would send me the money to have one taken. Now Louis I am trying to get him to pay for six which will cost \$5.00 and I will be able to give you, Clarence, Bechet and Foster and the one for Mr. William Russell and one for me, so do try Louis and see him and ask him to pay for the six and I am out of a job now, old Pal. Please write me and let your friend Bunk hear from you as I do not blow any more. I am down in need for teeth now. I will close. Looking to hear from you soon. I remain

Sincerely yours,

Willie G. Johnson,
251, School Alley,
New Iberia La.

3-1-39

Mr. Luis Russell. My dear kind Friend.

Only a few lines to let you hear from me. Now this is from Bunk. I am well and also my Family and we do wish that these few lines will find you in the best of health.

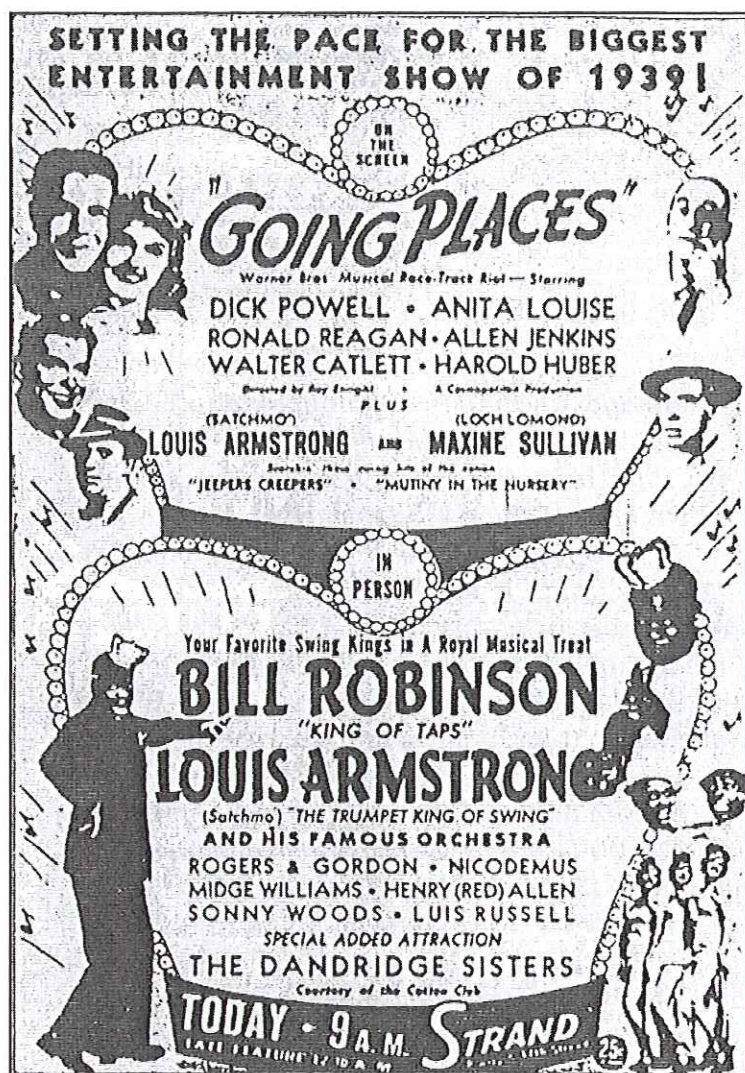
Now, Mr. Russell, I am writing you and I would like very much to get you to help me in this tight fight. Now I am asking you to tell all of my friends my condition, as you do know that I am really in need for a set of teeth and a thought came to me about asking you to help me by asking my boys to get all together and put a little money down in your care every week until they would have me the price of a set of teeth. Now Mr. Russell, I really believe that [with] my old home boys and your help and all of the others real good musicians help I do know that I will be able to play trumpet again and help my self. Now Mr. Russell, I am really down and have been down since 1934 and I am asking you to attend to this as you are a [Mason logo drawn] and I am a [Mason logo] so I am leaving this little job up to you now. Start with my home boys and I do know that my boy Louis Armstrong will not turn me down, Mr. Russell. I like very much to be with you all and I do know I would be with the cream of New York City. Now you get my boy Paul [Barbarin] and Geo. Foster, also my old friend Clarence Williams, Bechet, and you write me at once and let me hear from you and tell Red Allen to please get in with you all and help me because I can really go now. I am looking to hear from you, Mr. Russell, at once and please give Clarence Williams my address. Tell him to write me so I will be able to write him. Now you all do your very best for your old uncle Bunk now. I am closing. Looking to hear from you real soon, Mr. Russell.

I am, sincerely yours,

Mr. W. G. Johnson.
251 Scholl Alley,
New Iberia, La.

P.S. I am out of work and I'm trying to get on my feet to play music again and teeth is what I need now. For a trumpet, as I told Louis, and he said that he would send me one as my trumpet got wrecked when Evan Thomas got killed in Rayne, La. I was playing with him. His band was the Black Eagle of Crowley, La. so you do your best for me, Mr. Russell and write me.

Bunk Johnson.



On January 7 1939, the film *Going Places*, starring Dick Powell and featuring Louis Armstrong and his Orchestra opened at the Strand Theatre on Broadway. Louis and Bill Robinson, along with the Dandridge sisters, were booked into the show which ran between the screenings. Bill, who was not only researching his *Jazzmen* chapter, but was also helping Paul Eduard Miller to compile an Armstrong discography, took the opportunity to speak to Louis during the long intervals between shows. Armed with a windup gramophone, Bill played a number of old records for Louis to identify his presence. He then asked about Bolden, Perez and Keppard.

Louis answered patiently but then said, "The fellow they ought to write about is Bunk. Man, what a man! They should talk about that man . . . that alone." As Louis talked about Bunk, Bill recalled "he became excited and incoherent."

"We saw him all evening this fall in New Iberia," said Louis, and added that Bunk had lost his teeth and didn't play any more. He recalled how he used to follow Bunk on parades – "he could play a funeral march that would make you cry." When asked about Bunk's style, Louis fingered the air, "His tone! His fingering! Man, what a tone he had. He used his hand like I do. Used the same kind of fingering. I might say he played a swing lead"

and Louis sang a chorus to demonstrate.

Bill wanted to know his full name. "What name do they say he has?" asked Louis. Bill was unsure – he didn't know if it was Campbell, Robinson or Johnson. "Well, it's Johnson – Bunk Johnson" said Louis, emphatically.

Other 1939 endorsements

Richard M. Jones: "Bunk played more than any one else like Buddy Bolden. There have been only three cornetists, Buddy, Bunk and Louis. Louis came right in behind after Bunk with fast fingering, runs, high notes. Louis learned all his stuff frm Bunk. He even used to whistle it before he took up cornet."

Pops Foster: "Bunk's tone was the same as Louis Armstrong's. He had the same phrasing, same fingering, exactly the same tone. He's about fifty-eight years old now."

Luis Russell: "Bunk was Louis' greatest inspiration, not King Oliver."

Clarence Williams: "Bunk was tops of them all. He could really pull a crowd."

Preston Jackson: "Bunk inspired Louis Armstrong. He had lots of execution and a certain amount of sweetness. Seemed to be kind of behind until the end of the phrase. A lazy style."

Lee Collins: "I used to follow Bunk on parades. I thought nobody in the world could play like him. I placed Bunk on a star. Played like he was missin' all the time, like Louis' early style."

Natty Dominique: "On cornet, Bunk was a tough man, very tough. Everybody looked up to Bunk. He played like Louis Armstrong."

Sidney Bechet: "Bunk was the greatest cornet that ever played. He's a fine man."

Bunk Johnson.

Dictated by Bunk, the letter is in Maude's handwriting.

251 School Alley
New Iberia, La.
Aug. 2, 1939

Mr. William Russell

Dear Sir, Your letter was received a few days ago, and I was certainly glad to hear from you to know that you are in good health. As well as myself and my family send their best regards to you and I thank you ever so much for the enclosed bills you send me, and I'm still living in hope of my getting a trumpet of some kind. Now Mr. Russell, here my idea about a trumpet. I know that Louis could have give me a trumpet of some kind as I had ask him to give me one of his old ones, and I know that he must have one that he doesn't use as he is able to get a new one ever year, and I would like for you to write him and ask him to try and send me a trumpet of some kind as I am waiting to make a start. My teeth is fine and I know that I am able to play again, so please write him and have him to write me, as I can not get to hearing from him. I wrote him in care of Joe Glaser and have never got any answer. Now that second hand trumpet, here what I located, he is still holding it for me and he want \$25.00 for it, and he will let me have it on these terms, \$15.00 down and \$10.00 in the next payment. So you can advise me at once so I will know just what to tell him. Now please let me know by return mail and be sure to write Louis and tell him let me here from him and you can send me a Down Beat. I haven't any, as you ask me did I have one. Now Mr. Russell, can you tell me what cause Paul Barbarin to be away from Louis. He is in New Iberia regular. He has a little jump up band of his own and they lay around here 3 to 4 weeks at the time, doing nothing. Now when you write Louis, tell him to send me a Derby rack and mute holder and a wa-wa mute. Tell him the whole out fit of the mute and derby lines.

I am sincerly yours,

Bunk

now here the lint about
that jazz playing
Mr. Russell King Boldon
and my self is the first
men that began playing
jazz in the City of dear
old new Orleans and his
Band made the whole of
new Orleans Real Crazy.
and running wild behind it
now that was all you could
here in new Orleans. that
King Boldon's Band, and I
was with him and that was
Bet 1895 and 1896 and did not
have any Dixie land jazz
Band in those days now
here is the Band that

was in they prime in
them days Edam Oliver
Band John Polichaux old
golden rule Bob Russell Band.
now that was all and here
is the thing that made King
Boldon Band be the first
Band that played jazz it was
Because it could not read.
at all I was the only one
in the Band that could
read, and I could take
like 500 my self so you tell
them that Bunk and King
Boldon's Band was the
first ones that started jazz
in the City or any place else
and you are able to go
now a head with your Book

Bunk Johnson.

Bunk Johnson.

FROM
Phillips Studio
NEW IBERIA, LA.

March 17th 1931

*Received of
Nellie Johnson the
sum of \$5.00 for photographs
of self.
C.L. Phillips.
Photographer*

This is the receipt for the 6 photographs Bunk received.

The published "Jazzmen" photo is on the introductory pages of this feature and the two below were taken at the same session as the suit, tie and pen in top pocket are identical.



Bunk Johnson.

This is the text of the extra letter which Bunk sent to Bill Russell on the 28th February and mailed March 1st. Dictated by Bunk, the letter is in Maude's handwriting.

251 School Alley.
New Iberia La.
Feb 28, 1939

Mr. William Russell.

Dear friend, your letter was received and was more than glad to hear from you, and the rest of the boys that I haven't seen in a number of years.

Now Mr. Russell, I takes great pleasure in writing you this letter to let you and all of my friends here from me. I am in the best of health. Hoping these few lines will find you all the same. Now Mr. Russell, a picture of mine is what you want and that is something I haven't got.

Now the last picture that I had, my oldest son in New Orleans worried me for it, until I just had to let him have it. So I haven't any at all. And I am out of work at the present time and things is real dead here in the country.

After rice and cane season is over, they ain't no money to be made and as far as music, I have been unable to play trumpet for the last five years.

Now I have been in need for a set of teeth witch would be an upper plate and a bottom portion plate. and then I will be able to help my self better.

Now Mr. Russell music has always been my biggest demand. Ever since I came out of New Orleans university up to five years ago, and failed to prepare for that day. Not thinking that my teeth going to fail some day. So I am down and would like to be pulled up by my old New Orleans home boys. So you mention this to Louis Armstrong and he was to send me a Trumpet and I haven't received any letter from him yet.

Yours truly
Willie G. Johnson
or Bunk Johnson
251 School Alley.
New Iberia La.

new Iberia La

3/24/59

②

Mr William Russell my dear kind
Friend only a few more words I
want to say to you about my
delay in sending you these
pictures and these letters now
I am pretty sure that you all
know just how every thing is
down south with the poor
colored man and in these little
country towns you don't have a
chance like the white man no
you just have to stand back
and wait until your turn
come that is just the way here so
pleas do not think hard of me
you think hard of the other
fellow and you all do your
very best for me and try and
get me on my feet once more

Bunk Johnson.

③

in like now Mr Russell here
is just what I mean when
I say the word of on my
feet I mean this I want to
become able to play trumpet
once more as I know do
much about it and I can
Realy atomp trumpet yet now
here is what it takes to
atomp trumpet that is a Real
good set of teeth and that is
just what I am in deep need
for teeth and a good trumpet
on them old Bunk can truly
go now my friend the shape
that I am in at the present
time I can not help myself
so you all can judge that now
as I said Before that this town
is very dead and it is Real
tuff on a poor man when he do

get in the shape that I am in
now Mr Russell I have the very
best of health and nothing
But good Close old Bunk is only
in need for a set of teeth and
money and a good lot now old
Boy I truly thank you for the
treat of the \$2.00 they come in
needy time I did not have an-
ything in my house or no place
else to please write me at once
and let me hear from you
and do tell my dear old pal
Chance Williams to write me
and to send me a few late
numbers of his now I can not
play them But I can think
them oh Boy that will make
me feel good any way if I

Bunk Johnson.

④
have not got no teeth I can
have some thing to look at
when I get to thinking about
the shape I am in and have no
good way to go since I lost my
teeth But work just as I could
get it some week nothing at
all and as for as the P.M.A. that do
not mean any thing to the poor
Colored man here now it is
real good for the white only
now you tell Louis to please send
me a trumpet as he told us that
he would and you all do your
best for me from a old good
Kind friend and will
all ways Be no answer me
at once sincerely yours

W. G. Johnson
257 School Alley
New Iberia La

9/17/39 251 School Alley
New Haven, Conn.
Bunk Johnson

Mr Wm Russell my dear kind friend
Just a few lines to let you here from
me and also to let you know my delay
in writing you Before now I did not
want to write you until I found
some kind of trumpet or cornet as I
miss that gold plated trumpet here
what a white fellow had for sale
and told me that he would save it
for me and let me have it for
25.00 now when I did get the money
to get that trumpet I went to him
and when I did get a chance to
see him and get it I was to late that
he had got a good price for the
trumpet with the white school
one they paid him \$35.00
Wm Russell it was a
odd Buggy and that was a new

Bunk Johnson.

gold plated trumpet and at the
music store they sell for \$90.00
So after I miss getting that good
trumpet I had to start hunting
my fare to New Orleans and
back home and I had real good
luck and made a good bargain
I got two instruments for the
\$25.00 I got a cornet and a
trumpet at my Tinker Tool
Shop on South Rampart near
Perdido St. they are second handed
cheap made instruments and I
can play real good and I am
looking to play much better
after my lil get in good shape
I will close good luck to you
and your kindness can not be
forgoten By me Sincerely Bunk