Also present: Richard B. Allen, Marjorie T. Zander.

The interviewee's name is Alvin Elmore Alcorn, Sr.

Alcorn identifies some of the personnel on the Don Albert band recording of "Rockin' and Swingin'," recorded in 1936, according to INDEX TO JAZZ by Orin Blackstone, on Vocalion. Herbert Hall was a member of the band. Louis Cottrell [, Jr.] played the tenor sax solo; Hiram Harding took the growl trumpet solo, as he took all growl solos (He used a rubber plunger when he growled.); Billy Douglas played the other trumpet solo; he thinks William [or James ?] "Geechee" Robinson, trombonist, wrote the arrangement. [Compare Jazz Directory.] Alcorn says the personnel on all the Albert records was the same, as the band made only the four records [eight sides] at the one session.

The vocalist on "True Blue Lou" was Merle Turner, who was later with Erskine Hawkins. Billy Douglas took the trumpet solos. Alcorn tells of a cutting contest Douglas and Charlie Shavers had in New York in later years; he says Douglas was a "bad" man [meaning good trumpet player]. Alcorn played lead trumpet in the band. Jimmy Johnson, the bassist, had once been with Buddy Bolden; Alcorn says Johnson was a good bass player, a fine musician, and that he played bowed bass or "picked" bass, but not slap bass.
Alcorn identifies a "mystery" record as being "My Josephine," by Papa Celestin's band; he identifies the alto sax obbligato behind the vocal as Paul Barnes, and comments that he was fast on his instrument. Alcorn never worked with Celestin's big band; he began playing with him in later years, when Celestin began playing Dixieland. Celestin got Alcorn to replace him sometimes when the job at the Paddock [Lounge, New Orleans] wore him down, and Alcorn says Celestin did not want to come back to the job, but he would occasionally. The proprietors of the Paddock kept Celestin's job open for him, and would use the two trumpets when Celestin did appear, keeping Alcorn on the job, too. RBA comments that the Paddock job needs two trumpet players; Alcorn says some nights they need five. He says it is not necessary for a job to be so hard.

Alcorn identifies the Don Albert recording, "You Don't Love Me" and says it was their theme song. Lloyd Glenn was on piano; Alcorn later worked with Glenn in recording for "The Benny Goodman Story" [movie], with Red Callender [bass] and others, [i.e., with Kid Ory's band] on the West Coast. Alcorn says sax music in bands was written fast [i.e., many notes], and that, in fact, everybody played fast. RBA asks if the lead trumpet parts were high, and Alcorn says they were up to F above the staff. He adds that he made that note in one of [Kid] Ory's records, "Shine." He says that Ory does not have a
great range but has a big tone. Alcorn points out the cup mute trumpet "interlude" on "You Don't Love Me" as being his solo.

In response to RBA's question, Alcorn says the men in the band wrote the arrangements: Herbert Hall, Billy Douglas, Geechee Robinson, Lloyd Glenn and Phil Tiller, a saxophonist, who had been with the band before the recording session and who sent them arrangements. He says the band never bought any arrangements.

Alcorn identifies Lloyd Glenn as pianist on "The Sheik;" he identifies Cottrell as the clarinetist, Herbert Hall as the baritone sax and Hiram Harding as the growl trumpet. He is not sure who made the arrangement; it was Herbert Hall or Phil Tiller.

Henry "Nick" Turner was the valve trombonist in the band, and also played tuba. Billy Douglas arranged "True Blue Lou" and "You Don't Love Me." The band also had arrangements by Al Freeman, [AF?] pianist with the band before Glenn; Alcorn says he was a fine pianist and arranger, and had been with [Sidney] Desvignes' band at one time; Freeman was from Columbus, Ohio. Desvignes had several out-of-town musicians.

Alcorn tells RBA that he has a solo on "Deep Blue Melody," a slow tune; RBA had said he never got that record. Alcorn says it is on the style of [Duke] Ellington. RBA mentions that he has never heard "[On The] Sunny Side of the Street" or "Liza," and Alcorn says
Billy Douglas took the solo on the former and arranged the latter.

Alcorn was born September 7, 1912, between 6th and 7th streets in the 2800 block of Magnolia street, which "we call the Garden District" directly across from [Thomy] Lafon School; the area is the site of a housing project now. All his family were musical; "all my days I remember musicians rehearsing in the house, you see."

His brothers played with bands. Alcorn's teacher, George McCullum, Jr., and his brother, Oliver Alcorn [and others] had a band which rehearsed on Monday nights when the [older ?] men were not working; the rehearsal moved about each week, to the houses of various members, but they mostly rehearsed at Alcorn's. His grandfather, Sandolf Butts, played guitar and violin, but Alcorn doesn't remember what style or type music he played. His uncle, "Knottsy" Butts, played melophone with George McCullum, Sr.'s brass band. In those days, McCullum, Sr.'s band was considered a good brass band; it was in the days of the old Excelsior [Brass] Band. Those bands played parades and dances, and most of their work was for funerals. [It was] "mostly a walking band."

Alcorn says that when his brother [Oliver] played with the Excelsior Brass Band, it seemed that there was a funeral every day for months during one period, and that almost every funeral had a band. His brother played alto sax (now plays tenor) with that band, and the years were around 1928 and 1929. Alcorn says saxophones came into
use in New Orleans bands earlier than that, that Louis Warnicke, who played with [A. J.] Piron's band, was one of the first men around to have an alto sax. His brother started playing C-melody sax. Oliver, now in Chicago, still plays, but not regularly. Alcorn's younger brother, Seymour, plays string bass and is in Los Angeles. The brother younger than Oliver [oldest ?] started [and quit ?] on sax; the youngest boy Seymour, started on trumpet, but didn't do much with it. There were five boys and four girls in the family; the girls played piano, but not professionally.

Alvin Alcorn began playing about 1928 or 1929; he did not try to take a job until he had been studying with McCullum almost a year; he studied from method books, no jazz. Alcorn says McCullum taught everything right, and as a matter of fact, was one of the finest trumpet players he ever heard in his life. McCullum was not real hot, but he had a beautiful tone, very good range and was an excellent reader. McCullum made a few trips out of New Orleans and could have made more; Alcorn says there were no bands then that McCullum couldn't have joined, as far as ability was concerned. Alcorn, like everyone else, "second-lined" in those days, but he rode the advertising trucks on jobs his brother had, and knew all the musicians before he could play. The difference, musically, between funerals in earlier years and those of today was that then the bands played more from written
music, although they might play a march from memory now and then.

Alcorn mentions having seen Manuel Perez, Peter Bocage, Kid Rena and Lee Collins playing in marching bands. He never saw Buddy Petit or Punch [Miller] playing funerals, but he would see Punch on "advertisements" [i.e., jobs]. The clarinetists who played funerals were Lorenzo Tio [Jr.] with the Excelsior, Joe Watson with Celestin's Tuxedo Band (which was usually led by Eddie Jackson, tuba player), Willie Humphrey, when the steamer Capitol, on which he played, was in town, George Lewis, Zeb [Lenoir (sp?)], and Georgie Boyd, who used to play mostly on advertising [jobs]. Alcorn says this town [New Orleans] was noted for clarinet players in those days; "all the guys played clarinet." Alcorn says Lorenzo Tio was one of the finest clarinetist "in the street or off the street." Alcorn says the length of funerals has not changed, that the most time consumed is still waiting at the church for the service to end. Alcorn agrees that the length of funerals is traditional, that the societies which have funerals with music have been in existence for 75 or 100 years, that old-time societies in Algiers, like the Eagle Eye, are still going strong.

RBA says the first time he ever heard Alcorn was playing in [Henry] "Old Man" Allen [Sr.]'s brass band; Alcorn says he worked a lot with Allen, that he was a member of the band. Alcorn explains to
RBA that when a man begins playing with a brass band and continued to play most of that band's jobs over a period of time, he is then considered a member of the band, and is expected to play with the band of which he is a member, although he might have another offer of a job for the same time his band is to play.

End of Reel I
Also present: Richard B. Allen, Marjorie T. Zander.

Alcorn concludes his explanation of the way a person becomes a member of a brass band, saying that one is not elected, does not hold a contract—when a man plays jobs with a particular band over an indefinite length of time, his membership becomes a matter of fact, and when he leaves the band, he just tells the leader he is going with "so and so" and is no longer considered a member.

Alcorn's first brass band job was with the Excelsior Brass Band; George McCullum [Jr., his teacher] could not get off from his day job, so he sent Alcorn in his place. The personnel that day: Alcorn, Manuel Perez and Peter Bocage (leader), trumpets; Buddy Johnson and Harrison Barnes, trombones; Henry Martin, bass drum—(Alcorn does not remember the snare drummer.); Henry Bocage (brother of Peter), [brass] bass; Joe Payen (business manager, who also got most of the jobs for the band), melophone; Vic Gaspard, baritone horn (who sometimes played trombone); his brother [Oliver Alcorn] (who played alto saxophone from his proper part and was a member of the band) was out of town that day.

In answer to a question, Alcorn says he worked some with Remus ["Happy" Matthews], brother of Bill Matthews. Alcorn says Bill was playing trombone with the George McCullum [Sr., brass ??] band at the time Alcorn began playing with brass bands, which was 1929, 1930. In answer to another question, Alcorn says he was not afraid when he
played his first brass band job; he says he had studied method books, like Arban's, and knew how to read well, and the band played mostly [written] music. He did not have any trouble with marching, either, as he was schooled on that, too. (There follows a short discussion of how the bass drummer beats off for a funeral march, what foot the bandsmen step out on, and what foot comes at the beginning of each measure.) Alcorn says there are not many 6/8 marches played now, but that they (with John [Casimir]'s band) play a lot of 6/8 marches for marching groups [drill teams] such as the ones with the Patriarchs and the Odd Fellows. Alcorn says the [pleasure] clubs want mostly blues and things like that, things not stiff like a 6/8 march. MTZ asks about drill groups, and Alcorn says that they are groups [within larger organizations] which present little special drills while parading [like the Army's close order drill--PRC]; Alcorn says there used to be a lot of them when the 10th of May parades were still being held; the Young Men's Olympians still have drill groups. RBA says he guesses Eddie Dawson drills with them [Y. M. Olympians]; Alcorn says he is a colonel in that organization. There were many such drill groups.

The first dance band Alcorn ever played with was a group of his own. In later years, he joined the Sunny South Syncopaters.

End of Reel II