Ben Kelly was born December 25 (1880); he will be 80 years old on his next birthday. (WR says Sidney Brown told him BK is around 80.) WR says he thinks Jim Robinson was born on Christmas Day, also; BK says Robinson is younger (WR says 67 or 68 years old). BK was born on Deer Range (La.) Plantation, down the river. BK's parents didn't play music; [since] "they was Christians, church members." They sang in their church, Baptist. BK learned to play trombone [first instrument] when he was about 21 years old; he played the Elks Brass Band, taught and led by old man Jim Humphrey (who lived at Valence and Liberty [streets in N.O.]). Humphrey taught BK, Harrison Barnes, Pierre Anderson, and "all of us." BK played valve trombone.

BK doesn't remember when his brother, Chris Kelly, was born, nor when he died; Chris was a little boy when BK took up music [Chris would, therefore, have been born probably in the 1890s if his information on his birth date is correct]. Chris is buried in the Chalmette [National] Cemetery; he was in service during World War I.

The brass band BK played in played parades for the Masons; the Masons were in Woodland, which was further downriver. Magnolia Plantation was further downriver than Woodland. The band was 10 [plus 2] pieces: 3 cornets; 2 key [valve] trombones; solo alto horn; baritone horn; bass tuba; first alto; bass drum; snare drum; first tenor [horn] (which is something like a baritone). BK remembers Sunny Henry (trombone, who died recently). BK played in that band until it broke up [no date]; most of the members died or moved away. BK moved to N.O. after the big storm [hurricane] in 1915, where he has been ever since. [Therefore the band broke up before the storm? RBA] He played music once or twice in N.O., then quit altogether. He went to work for a lumber yard in the city, eventually becoming a night watchman.
BK never played slide trombone. His band always used music, which Professor Humphrey would write out on cards. [Leading by WR here: RBA]. They played marches; for funerals and statehunts they played hymns; but they played no jazz (as in New Orleans). Besides playing on Sunday, the band had the privilege of getting off work to play during the week if someone hired them for a music job. The band came to N.O. to play on Labor Day; they, and other bands, met at the Elks Place at the Basin. [Could be at the Elks on what is now Elks Place but was formerly Basin Street? RBA] The Globe Hall was on St. Peter Street, near the [Municipal] Auditorium.

BK's band played for dances, too; sometimes a string band [i.e., a dance band with stringed instruments] would play for the dances; Jim Robinson and ["Jim Little"?] played in an orchestra, a string band. The [brass] band had waltzes and jazz. BK never played in a string band. There were no string bands when BK was small; at Deer Range, string bands began after he took up music. Sidney "Jim Little" Brown, Jim Robinson and BK's brother, Chris, played in the string band. Chris took up music when he was around 20 years old [sounds confused about dates--PRC]; BK was 25 or 26 when he began trombone. [inconsistent.RBA] Chris began on trumpet; [or cornet.RBA] he played with BK's brass band. Chris was an "A-Number One reader;" [cf. Clarence Gabriel, reel II Aug. 19, 1961, p. 6 et al] he could sightread anything. Also Harrison Barnes, Pierre Anderson, and Sunny Henry (who was in BK's age group) [were sight-readers?] Professor Humphrey taught Chris, too. (WR mentions knowing Humphrey's grandsons, Percy Humphrey and Willie Humphrey the younger.) Professor Humphrey could teach any instrument. Chris rapidly learned to play; he had brains. (BK says people couldn't get into the halls--e.g., Globe or Economy Hall--when Chris Kelly was playing.) Chris came to N.O. a couple of years before BK did. Chris's day job was at the iron yard on Tchoupitoulas between St. James and Market [streets]. BK heard Chris play many times in N.O.; BK was a member of the Bulls Club, where Chris played for quite some time. Some [sometime?] members of
Chris's band: Jim Robinson; Kid Howard (who started as a drummer, but was taught to play trumpet by Chris); Norwood was the clarinet player, but he didn't become famous [i.e., didn't become very good?], so he quit playing; Chris didn't have a clarinet player after Norwood left; instruments he used: trumpet, baritone, solo alto, first alto, drum [others]. That was his brass band [in which Norwood played]; there was a clarinet player in Chris's string band; it was Sam Robinson (dead), brother of Jim Robinson.

Chris used mutes, including a rubber plunger; he didn't use mutes when he lived in the country, acquiring them after he moved to the city. He used the plunger to do what was called "preaching;" the people like it; "aw! them women'd be jumping naked in there!"

BK doesn't have a photograph of Chris. (WR says hardly anybody saved a picture of Buddy Petit, either.)

BK remembers that Chris played "Careless Love:" he also remembers that Chris composed the number.

Chris could play from music in his string band. All the bands down there [downriver--Deer Range, etc.] were taught strictly by music; they could also play jazz.

Chris's wife was living the last time BK heard from her. Chris's son is named Jack [Kelly].

BK played in Chris's brass band (the plantation brass band) but not in his string band; BK played in the brass band 7 or 8 years with Chris. BK mentions St. Sophie, where the brass band played also.

Chris, in N.O., also played at the Co-operators Hall.

Chris didn't become sick until shortly before his death; BK says he died of over-dissipation. He was not old at his death.

Chris's string [i.e., dance] band had a fairly stable personnel.

End of Reel