

Tulane Talking to New Orleans Project  
Joe Stern interviewed by Julie Schwartzwald  
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Transcribed by Julie Schwartzwald

(0:04)

JUS Alright so first off I just want to know a little bit of basic information about you, so if you can start off, just give me your full name and any nicknames you may have or anything like that.

JOS Oh okay. My name is Joseph Stern, Joseph Michael Stern. Most people just call me Joe. In some parts of the city, I'm known as White Boy Joe.

JUS Why do you have that name?

JOS Well I got that name when I first started hanging out in the 12<sup>th</sup> ward where the— not at the Rock Bottom but actually at a bar on up the street called Morris's. There was about five or six people named Joe that hung out there so everytime somebody would holler "Joe," everybody would turn around, so people just got different names, and White Boy Joe seemed fitting. Since it was obvious which one.

JUS Yeah. Where were you born?

JOS Cleveland, Ohio.

JUS And what was your date of birth?

JOS July 11, 1942.

JUS Mmkay. What places other than Cleveland and here have you lived?

JOS Columbus, Ohio; Long Beach, California; San Francisco, California; Oakland, California; and I stayed in Stockton for three months; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Chicago, Illinois.

JUS Wow, what got you traveling around so much?

JOS It's what people did in the '60s.

JUS Yeah.

JOS I mean, yeah, I got involved doing political work so some of the moves were for that, some of the moves were—I went to school in Columbus—and I got my first teaching job in Southern California, and I went back to Columbus. It was 1970, so I decided I didn't want to be in graduate school anymore.

JUS Right.

JOS I wanted to be in San Francisco.

JUS Can you tell me about your parents their names, where they were from, what they did for a living?

JOS Well my mother's name was Ruth Davidson Stern, she was from Cleveland. My father was Milton Stern, he was from Cleveland too. My mother's parents were from Germany, Hungary, Hungary. My father's parents were from Germany, near Hamburg. And my father was a steel salesman; my mother did clerical work the few years she worked—mostly she was a housewife.

JUS Mmhm. What kind of relationship did you have with your parents?

JOS Not that good.

JUS Yeah. Why's that?

JOS Huh? I— My father was a German. I don't know, you're German, so maybe you understand. He was just kind of harsh. I don't know. I guess everybody has problems with their parents. It was nothing, I don't think, any worse than a lot of people but I just, I was just born rebellious, I guess. I guess that was a lot to do with it. I was the oldest.

JUS How many brothers and sisters did you have?

JOS I have one sister and one brother.

JUS And what were there names?

JOS Are.

JUS I'm sorry?

JOS What *are* their names.

JUS Yeah, I'm sorry.

JOS My brother's name is Barry, and my sister's name is SueAnn.

JUS And where do they live?

JOS My brother lives in Boise; my sister is actually back in Cleveland now.

JUS Are you close with them?

JOS Not, I'm not really close with my family.

JUS Yeah.

JOS Actually. I'm closer to my, I'm actually closer to my stepdaughters and their kids, and my son, we're not quite as close. That's— he lives in California, so.

JUS Okay.

JOS But we're okay. I mean I speak to him, I mean we speak, we're friendly

JUS Right.

JOS But.

JUS Not close.

JOS Not close, I wouldn't call it close.

JUS Are you married?

JOS No, not now.

JUS So can you tell me a little about your son and your stepdaughters? Names, and what they're interested in.

JOS Oh, well my son is, his name is Aaron.

JUS Mmhm

JOS He has two um daughters and a wife, he has a wife and two daughters.

JUS Mmhm

JOS That's one of them right there (points to a photograph on side table). The short one. That's Alexie. He works, he lives in Mill Valley, he's in, into sports but he rides, riding— riding bicycles, he's into bicycle racing. And he and his wife work for a financial planner. They have two children; Alexie is nine, the oldest, and Mikayla's the youngest (stands up to find a picture)

(5:13)

JUS Is that their artwork up there?

JOS Oh, uhh, that's mostly my oldest.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS That's Maegan. Except for the stuff on the top, which is my youngest.

JUS That's very nice.

JOS Okay, so he lives there, and then I have two daughters, step-daughters—they're like daughters to me.

JUS Mhm.

JOS And one is Luquetia, and she lives in New Orleans East.

JUS Mhm.

JOS And she has two children, Maegan and Miguel. And my other stepdaughter Deleya, lives across the river and she's married and she has one child, Gabriella.

JUS Mhm.

JOS That's her, that's the two of them (points to a picture) right there.

JUS Cute. Can you tell me a little about your ex-wife?

JOS Well I have several, and I really—

JUS Okay.

JOS They're not— it's nothing really interesting or—

JUS I can tell, alright. Okay umm let's see I'm gonna try to get some more background. How would you categorize yourself or classify yourself ethnically or religiously or would you—

JOS Well I'm an atheist.

JUS Okay.

JOS Okay. My father was a German Jew; my mother was a Hungarian Jew.

JUS Mhm.

JOS But my brother did one of those genetics things, and unlike I guess a lot of people, I have one paternal ancestor from 40,000 years ago who was, I'm genetically related from 40,000 years ago to 95 percent of American Indians, which probably means that my, one of my female ancestors was raped by one of somebody's marauders from the steps of Asia. But, yes. My brother's into doing all of this family tree stuff.

JUS Genealogy?

JOS Yeah, he's actually traced, he's actually got a whole thing back to about 1700.

JUS Yeah.

JOS And he found a family history that I think my grandfather's brother wrote about the family, his side of the family, which starts in the early 1700s somewhere near Hamburg.

JUS That's awesome.

JOS Yeah, it's in German though, so I have to get it translated.

JUS Mhmm. Yeah, so did you grow up Jewish? Was that a big part of your childhood? Or—

JOS It was really big. My father was into temple and all that so I learned how to read Hebrew and I was conf— bar mitzvah'd and confirmed but about when I was about 15 or so. I mean, I just stopped believing and I don't believe in God or a superior being.

JUS How'd that go over with your parents?

JOS I don't think they ever really quite understood or knew.

JUS Right, yeah. Definitely.

JOS I mean, it's not something you know you really talk about.

JUS Yeah.

JOS They knew I wasn't particularly religious.

JUS Yeah. Umm so...

JOS As far as being quote, un-quote Jewish, I'm, the whole Zionist and Israeli thing is something I'm I'm I mean I've never really supported Israel or Zionists.

JUS Mhmm.

JOS Zionism especially as a philosophy, so.

JUS Mhmm. What about your education? Where did you go to school, where did you study, any— what did you enjoy learning about as a kid?

JOS As a kid? Mmm. I don't think I enjoyed much of any studying when I was a kid. I read a lot; I read a lot of mystery stories. I still read mystery stories. I got into listening to jazz when I was a teenager.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS I lived in Cleveland, which was a Northeastern city on the Chittlin Circuit and there was a jazz club called Leo's Casino, and I had a group of friends uh we used to go down there uh as long as we didn't try to drink we were fine. We used to go in and listen to the music. This was in the late '50s.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS When rock'n'roll, rhythm & blues was just getting popular, but I was really into, I was really in that way into jazz a lot earlier than a lot of people. My father was a Louis Armstrong, liked Louis Armstrong, and, what's her name, Ella Fitzgerald.

JUS Did you go to college?

JOS Yeah, I have a master's degree in English.

JUS Where'd you go?

JOS I went to Ohio State for a while, then I graduated from Cleveland State, then I got my master's from Ohio State. And I actually went back for one more quarter to start on my PhD but unfortunately back in those days they didn't have groovy majors like American Studies.

(10:29)

JUS Yeah.

JOS Or I might have actually gotten my PhD in something.

JUS Yeah.

JOS But I like I was saying I decided I wanted to go back to California in the beginning of graduate school 1970s, not something anybody sane really wanted to do.

JUS What were some significant events in your life—either personal events, or uhh civic events, anything that happened when you were growing up, I know you were around in the '60s with the Vietnam War and all that stuff, did— how did those kinds of things affect you?

JOS Oh I was a, I'm, I'm a political activist.

JUS Right.

JOS I have been—

JUS Yeah.

JOS Since the first time I—well—when I grew up it was the late '40s and early '50s so I was very conscious of Nazism and Germany and all of that, and then not so much I guess the start of the civil rights movement sort of in the '50s I don't think I was particularly. I was sort of unconsciously conscious I guess you could say like being a, listening to jazz and listening to rock'n'roll and summers I got jobs where I, after high school you know between—

JUS Mmhm

JOS --in the summer. Or I worked in— my father would give me these jobs in factories, where the majority of the workers were black, but there wasn't really a civil rights movement that I was that conscious of til like in the early '60s. There was a free speech movement and I think one of the things that radicalized me the most, since I was kind of like, since i was in— I don't know if you've ever studied the free speech movement in Berkeley?

JUS Mmhm, yeah.

JOS Okay, well. Before there was a free speech movement at Berkeley, there was a very less sign—less important, maybe—free speech incident at Ohio State when I was a freshman. Was it, involved what's his name? Louse! Philip Abbot Louse was a member at that time of the socialist workers' party who later became a right-wing radio commentator who was related to... who was related to the Louses in, oh, Time magazine?

JUS Mmhm.

JOS And a guy named Burton. And he was, there were with the socialist workers' party and they were coming down. He was an anti-House Un-American Activities...

JUS Mmhmm.

JOS ...lecturer. And if they had had the lecture I probably wouldn't have even heard about it or gone to it, but they stopped 'em from lecturing. So there was a huge like protest about and I just started hanging around and met some people, and that kind of got me a little more politically conscious.

JUS Mhmm.

JOS Then of course there was the civil rights movement I wasn't real super active in that but I was starting in '65 really active in the anti-war movement. To some extent, sort of the civil rights, and then—especially when I got to California in '67—my first teaching job, CalState Long Beach. There was... I mean, California was very hot back then.

JUS Yeah.

JOS I guess everyth— everywhere was, was very hot but California especially struggling against the war, the struggle for I mean there was all kinds of stuff going on.

JUS Right

JOS So, I bec— yeah, I became a political organizer, a Marxist-Leninist.

JUS How'd you end up in New Orleans?

JOS I ended up in New Orleans uhh I came down here to work with a political organization, a Marxist-Leninist organization. We had been in Chicago, and some of us came down here. Couple of people are still here, and still friends of mine. And I work, and I work with, there's, I mean, I, people I've known 30 years, over 30 years.

JUS What year exactly was it that you moved down here?

JOS I moved here in '80, 1980.

JUS Are there are any particular hobbies or skills or talents you have outside of—

JOS Second lining? Oh. Yeah I've been into taking photographs, and I'm also into I've gotten into gardening a little bit, bonsai trees, and I've got some plants in the backyard I've been fiddling around with. So those are— and then my grandchildren are kind of like.

JUS Yeah. Alright, can you tell me a little bit about Sweet Home New Orleans, and what's that all about, and your involvement in it?

JOS Oh, Sweet Home New Orleans is an organization that started after the hurricane, and the flood. You have to always remember to make people understand that it was a flood and not a hurricane.

(15:40)

JUS Yeah.

JOS With I think it was I think Jordan Hirsch who's the director now and Ben Jaffe from Preservation Hall and they started a New Orleans renew our music and the New Orleans musicians' hurricane relief fund and then they decided well you know they started another organization that eventually became Sweet Home when Benjie dropped out because he's running Preservation Hall and all that. But, the main purpose of the organization, it evolves over time, but it was originally to sus— to help musicians and Mardi Gras Indians and people in social aid and pleasure clubs to come back to New Orleans, come home. Rebuild a house, get musical instruments if they were musicians, just in general help them financially and also with other kinds assistance if it was available.



JUS Mmhm.

JOS So we tried to be a clearing house, you know. We tried to give financial assistance, and those are the main— and the main things, and I can't, you know, and I don't. They've just published an annual report where they've got all the facts and all the statistics with information, but I've, they've, I think we've given out over two million dollars and, you know, it's like one of those agencies. We're really— most of the money goes to the clients. I mean, we just have an office, you know; we don't— our salaries are— we're really underpaid. I know I'm underpaid

JUS Yeah. How'd you originally get involved with them?

JOS Well I knew, I knew, I knew, I know Benjie. Benjie's a good friend of mine, and uhh, I'm not sure exactly. Oh, I guess Jordan came to, I think Jordan might have come to a coalition meeting, and I met him through there. But I was working, and I was getting ready to retire from the state because I was getting to be 66, 65 whatever. I didn't want to keep working fulltime, so I thought, with my social security, I could, I could work part-time and not have to work full-time.

JUS Yeah.

JOS So I talked to him about the possibility of working for them, and originally they sorta wanted me as a liason between the second line clubs and Mardi Gras Indians because my activity, the people I know. Uhh... and then one of the case managers left to take another job, so they needed a case manager, and since I seemed like I knew what I was doing because of my experiences and, and stuff, they took me on as a case manager where I actually saw clients and see clients.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS --interview them, find out their situations and uhh try to find ways to assist them.

JUS What had you been doing for the state before that?

JOS The last time around wa— I worked, I worked Medicaid.

JUS Okay, what other jobs have you held?

JOS But in New Orleans, or around the world?

JUS Both.

JOS Well, I worked for years off-and-on as an off-set pressman.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS Which was just a trade that I learned because of it's political... back in the '60s and '70s before they had fast Xerox machines and the internet, uhh every left movement needed it's off-set pressman, it's printers, so I learned the trade and worked at it. And the other thing that I've mainly done off-and-on is worked as an instructor of English at kind of a college level, which I do now as you know.

JUS Well, what classes do you teach?

JOS I teach freshman composition mostly, and this semester I'm teaching technical writing.

JUS Mmhm. Okay, where did you go during Katrina?

JOS During Katrina... I left here with a good friend of mine in my, in my daughter's car—my youngest daughter's car—cause she left with her sister.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS And I lived in, I was living in Broadmoor in a basement apartment I still remember my daughter wanted a wanted to put a bunch of her clothes—my daughter is very clothes conscious, she has all these clothes, I don't even know where she got 'em. She was like a sophomore in college. I said "No, don't worry about it, they're on the bed; if we get that much water, it won't make any difference anyhow." And, that Sunday morning I went and picked up a friend of mine, took us a long time to get out of town because... Why, I'd picked him up but then I had a slow leak in one of my tires, so rather than take a chance I had to go and try to get a plug put in it?

(20:42)

JUS Mmhm.

JOS And I was over on St... that area of St. Claude and Desire, I don't know if you've ever been over there...

JUS Right, yeah, yeah.

JOS ...but they got that, they still, it's still there, that tire shop.

JUS Yeah.

JOS A New Orleans tradition. And, we waited and we finally got a plug and we spent the first night in a motel room outside of Kent, Mississippi, but it—it was very weird because it was me and a friend of mine, this older guy, and, we wanted to stay the next night and the guy wouldn't let us have the room, and we suspect he thought we were gay, and didn't. And, an

Indian national, oh, you know, motel keeper. And I can't imagine any other reason why he wouldn't just let us stay in the room.

JUS Exactly.

JOS So. But I didn't want to stay there anyhow. I wanted to, one of my good f— one of my best friends was in, a former club member, Joe Williams, hurt his back few years ago. He worked as a mover for one of the movi— Mayflower moving company and then North American, I guess. He hurt his back; he couldn't work anymore. So after the hurricane, he just stayed, his family had land in Livingston, Mississippi, which is like is 30, 35 miles northwest of Jackson.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS So he just bought a trailer, big trailer. Oh, no, actually that's where I went for Gustav. For Katrina he was up there and I would... I went up there but he didn't have a trailer up there at that time; he was still living in New Orleans. We all stayed in his sister's house. And it was very weird, it was cuz, uhh, cuz we were drinking corn liquor. And then, that night, the second night, which would have been Sunday, Monday night, was when the hurr— the storm got up there, and it was really bad. It was like hurricane-force winds, all the lights went out, it was raining. It was like a bad, bad storm; it was a hurricane storm. But we were, there was about 17 of us in this house.

JUS Wow.

JOS A little three-bedroom house in Mississippi. Then, the next day, I went to, cause of the guy I was with had to go up to Detroit. He was supposed to have this medical procedure done. He was scheduled to do it like Monday or Tuesday at Methodist Hospital and he, he needed to go, once he realized we couldn't go back home. So yeah, so we left the next morning, cause he was kind of freaked out by the whole set— the whole place up there, and it was really, it was really uncomfortable, it was just a b... uhh we went to Raine Mississippi... Raine, Louisiana which is... We just go east; it's just before we get to Monroe. If we go east, if we go west on 40, I guess it would be. We found a motel room to stay at the... That's when we found out what had happened, cuz we were watching... We were staying in a motel cuz he was going to decide what to do about having this procedure done. He had some kind of growth swelling in his... not serious, but it was...

JUS Yeah.

JOS ...it was very weird, because it was that low air pressure, the hurricane, that was really making his head really hurt.

JUS Right

JOS So we were trying to decide, you know, I guess, get ready to go back home and we st... And we were watching TV, and then we realized we were looking at this thing about to flood, and then... So we ended up having to stay there a few days. It was kind of interesting and kind of strange, because there were people from all over New Orleans in this little motel, and Raine was just in the middle of nowhere. I don't even know where it is. It's just, uh, it's 20 or 30 miles east of Monroe. It's just a little town; yeah it's just a little Louisiana redneck town.

JUS Uh-huh. But it was interesting, because there were people from all... there were people... There were people from Chalmette, there were people from New Orleans, African-American and white, we were there... It was kind of interesting, because we were... everybody was watching the thing on TV. This was when people first realized what the fuck was going on. So it was kind of a friendship, comradeship. Then our money started getting funny cuz we were staying in a motel. I took Bill to Monroe and he flew to Detroit. And then I... Somebody called me and I got a place to stay in Baton Rouge.

JUS Mmhm

JOS And so I ended up staying with a professor of, uhh, anthropology in Baton Rouge. And older man, retired... not retired. He was older, he was in his mid-seventies, but he was still teaching full time.

(25:36)

JUS Wow.

JOS And he had a, he had a really nice house in the university section of Baton Rouge.

JUS Yeah.

JOS And his, his wife hated hot weather, so she went up to Maine every... So it was just he and I, and I had this gu—I had a nice guest room. It was really, it was nice. And then we, well, it was...

JUS I mean, considering...

JOS Yeah, considering everything. And then, uh, for a couple of weeks, I went to uhh let's see, a couple of weeks— My daughter was going to school in LA at the time, to CalState LA. And she, she ended up in Atlanta with her sister.

JUS Right

JOS And then they finally found their mother cuz she was, she was, she's an X-Ray tech

JUS Mmhm

JOS And uhh she was working at Methodist Hospital, and she ended up being evacuated finally to San Antonio. And then they hooked up, then she flew to Atlanta. So she wanted out of Atlanta; she wanted to go to California, cuz she was trying to get ready for school, and trying to keep from freaking out, I guess. She flew to Oakland and I drove her car out to Oakland...

JUS Mmhm

JOS ... and then we drove down to LA, and I flew back to Baton Rouge.

JUS Yeah

JOS And since I worked for the state at the time, I was being paid, okay. And it turned out, actually, it turned out good, because, for some reason, when we were out in California, like... like we couldn't get any help in Baton Rouge. She was getting help in Atlanta. The closer you were to New Orleans, the harder it was to get help. The Red Cross didn't give people anything, any help, in Baton Rouge until... I'm trying to keep my dates... But like, sometime in the middle of October.

JUS Right.

JOS Whereas early in— this was like in the middle of September, about the 10th of September by the time I got out to Oakland. And I picked my daughter up... She was staying at her girlfriend's house, and I picked her up and—at four o'clock—and by five o'clock, I had a car from the Red Cross and a motel room to stay in for a few days, until we wanted to, until we were ready to drive to LA.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS And we also called FEMA there, and that was one of the reasons I believe we had no trouble from FEMA, cuz we just called. I still remember there was a woman I talked to was from Puerto Rico, but she handled our case, and I had no problem. I got all of the stuff from FEMA that I was supposed to get, I guess. Because I, I'd lost everything, 90—well not everything—99 percent of my stuff, I lost.

JUS Did you stay in LA til you came back?

JOS Wha— oh no, no, no. I just, I just— so we drove back to LA, and she got in her, in her dorm, in her dorm.

JUS Mmhm

JOS She stayed in her dorm room. I don't even remember. No, I don't even really remember. I do know shortly thereafter she got pregnant, married

and pregnant. Married first, and pregnant. So I'm not sure exactly. She must have been in her dorm or in her apartment. I really don't remember, now that I think. But I stayed for a couple of days, and then I flew back to Baton Rouge. We were being paid by the state—they kept paying us—so I wanted to make sure I was in Louisiana when they wanted us to go back to work. So finally they put us back to work. I think it was October 1st, maybe? Working in the Medicaid, the special Medicaid office, cause they were trying to make sure that everybody, I don't know. I don't even know what they were trying to do. They were trying to keep track of people; I'm not sure. And I hated Baton Rouge, so as soon as I could, I kept pressing them to come back.

JUS Yeah.

JOS So I came back around the end of October. I had been back a few times; managed to salvage a few things.

JUS In your opinion, how well is the city recovering?

JOS Well, in some aspects, it's recovering we— fairly well. In other aspects, of course, I mean, you're asking that of a Marxist.

JUS Right.

JOS I mean, it was business as usual under capitalism.

(30:27)

JUS Yeah

JOS It's, it's a mess, really. I mean, it's like— I mean, that guy Blakely who just came out to— you followed that?

JUS No, it sounds vaguely familiar.

JOS You know who Blakely is? He was a, the, recovery czar. And he was this guy who had this reputation for being, I don't know exactly what his thing is, but I know he was involved uhh with rebuilding Oakland after the hurricane—after the earthquake—so he's kind of, I guess he's an urban planner, super-educator, I don't know who he is, you know. But Nagin hired him and he came here and he was supposed to organize things and or he was going to be the recovery czar he was going organize everything that needed to be organized and get done and all cranes in the sky. He really didn't do very much, because you've got an incompetent mayor, you've got an ignorant citizenry who keeps electing the wrong people. I mean, look at this guy Jindal. Nagin got re-elected. So you've got really— the federal government first you had the Bush administration that didn't want to help us because we had a Democratic government so they helped Mississippi way more per capita than they thought about helping us. Then all the racism because of the population

of New Orleans, being like 65, 70 percent African American at the time. Then we elected a Republican governor when a Democratic president got in, and this, like you know, this, for example, the whole thing with Charity Hospital. Anybody with half a mind knows that the only way to proceed is to rebuild Charity Hospital.

JUS Right.

JOS You know, you can rebuild it to a modern hospital. You don't need one that big, so you can always build residences for interns or something upstairs, or whatever, at the fraction of the cost, without destroying a thriving neighborhood that basically rebuilt itself. And you've got all this politics played, because that's very valuable property. That's what that's all about, who's gonna get that property. I mean, that's like, it's a landmark building from the '30s. It's an art deco building. It's like asking, asking people in New York to tear down the Empire State Building because it's too old.

JUS Right.

JOS They were built the same year.

JUS Yeah.

JOS So. And then, everything, you know... As far as the recovery goes, you know, the federal government screwed people over, the insurance companies screwed people over, everything that's been done—or most everything that's been done—has been done by the people of New Orleans and all the volunteer people and all the contributions from people all over the world. As far as the insurance companies, that Road Home program was a total disaster. You know, where large slices of money, of the money, went to people administrating the program who weren't even from here. I know lots of people who didn't get help. I mean, just the way everything was organized. People didn't get help cuz the houses, the title's still in the name of their grandparents who have been dead for 40 years.

JUS Mhm.

JOS You know, that's how poor people are. I mean, who cares about this raggedy rundown house, right? But no, I can't prove it's mine, it was my grandmother's. And no, I never did a secession, because you have to go to a lawyer, and it's \$400. I never had \$400. So, you know, people—people did what they had to do, as much as they could. And, so.

JUS What do you see that remains to be done?

JOS Well, you, you really need to reopen Charity Hospital. It needs some kind of hospital. It doesn't have to be a full hospital, but they need something in St. Bernard Parish too, in Chalmette, they need a hospital of some

kind in the East. I don't know. They're still fixing all the streets. What needs to be done? I don't know. Those are some main things that need to be done. I mean, a lot of it is tied into the economy and everything else.

JUS Alright. Before I start asking you about Prince of Wales, I just want to know if there are any other organizations, that you're involved with other than Sweet Home and Prince of Wales at this point.

JOS Organizations? Well, I, no. I mean, I, I work politically with people, but I'm not an active member of an organization. But I do, I am a skeleton man. I mask with the skeleton men with Monk Boudreaux and the Golden Eagles on Mardi Gras. But that's not...

(35:48)

JUS So how long have you been involved with Prince of Wales?

JOS Twenty years. Twenty-one years.

JUS Alright, what's your role in the organization?

JOS I'm, right now, I'm secretary. Financial secretary, actually.

JUS What other roles have you held in the organization?

JOS Mostly I've been financial secretary. But I was president for a couple years after Katrina.

JUS Alright. Why did you join? How did you get involved?

JOS Oh. I joined— Well, why did I, I joined— The first second line I ever went to was a funeral for someone who was kind of like family of mine, L'il Leroy Kelly. And he had, he was, he was murdered. I had a, he was a grand marshal for the Prince of Wales. And even though the club wasn't active at that time, they still had a funeral for him, a parade, second line funeral. And that was the first second line I'd ever gone to. No, actually, it was the second, but it was the first with a brass band.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS And I really, it was wild to me. It was really magnificent. I mean, the music and the dancing and everything like that. It was something that I really enjoyed. I mean, I didn't, you know, in spite of the fact, it was something that I really felt akin to, I guess you could say. It satisfied me spiritually. And then, I guess a year or two after that, uhh a man named Owen Haines, who was from the 12th ward, was elected king of Zulu, and he had been in Prince of Wales when he was younger, and he wanted the club to march in Zulu, because he was king of Zulu. So the club got together. I was hang... at this time, I was hanging out in a neighborhood that's called the 12th ward by the people who live there.



JUS Right.

JOS The dirty dozen. Which is a neighborhood that's basically between Tchoupitoulas and I guess you could say Chestnut over there. But mostly Magazine, between Louisiana and Napoleon, between Magazine and Tchoupitoulas. And then there's these people from the 13th ward too who started to go back and forth. But that was more like the Neville Brothers and the Wild Tchoupitoulas uhh up there, and that's between Napoleon and Jefferson, but the same general area. But people, you know. But I was hanging out there, and I had a lot of friends in the neighborhood, so, and that's where I hung out, at the, at the, at the, that was their bar. There was a barroom. You know where the gas station is on Peniston and Magazine, across the street from there, there was a barroom called Dos Hermanos, two brothers.

JUS Mhm.

JOS And now I think it sells imported furniture, baby clothes, or something. But, we used to hang out in that bar, we used to hang out in a barroom that is now a condo on the corner of General Taylor and Tchoupitoulas called Ingodonios, but it was originally Ingodonios, but it was called Morris's at that time. And uh, so I know a lot of people, and they were getting together having meetings, so I asked if I could join. I asked a really good friend of mine. His name was Isadore, Isadore Booker. So, he's like a brother. And he just said, he, yeah, he said, "Sure." He said he'd bring it to the club, and people said, "Sure." So I joined, uhh, we paraded on that Mardi Gras. We rented tuxedos. I still, I still remember it was like one of the coldest Mardi Gras ever; it didn't get over 40.

JUS Wow.

JOS I mean, it was really cold.

JUS That sounds awful.

JOS Yeah. We were drinking wine, yeah, we had tuxedos on and thermal underwear but it was so cold. It was interesting because it was so cold. And we were, you know, there was a band, so we were dancing. We were lit up. We kind of like stole the show. People kept saying, like, "Boy, you guys were great." And then, people enjoyed it so much that the club decided to keep going, and uhh, actually, I think there's only one guy in the club that was still, that's still active that was, that did this parade, did that parade.

(40:22)

JUS Yeah.

JOS And that's Tri Henry Williams. But the club kept going. We paraded ourself in August. We used to parade in August. Dead of August, and then, then we paraded again at Zulu, and that turned out to be kind of ugly, because Uptown-Downtown kind of thing. But for whatever reason, they did, first they, first they didn't wanna hire, they didn't wanna stop, hire. We rented tuxedos, we got there at 5 30 in the morning, and when we got there, they told us that we were supposed to march behind a high school marching band. And we told them we were going home, because we didn't come out here to march behind no high school marching band. We're a second line club. And I still remember, he was like an officer at Zulu at the time, and he told us that, you know, if you want to be in the Zulu parade, you have to contribute. And our attitude was, we, you know, you invited us.

JUS Yeah.

JOS We got our own parade. We don't need to be in your eff—ing parade.

JUS Yeah.

JOS So the finally, they got us, they put us with another second line club, and we marched with a brass band. But then after that, there... you know, there was about... there was a number of people—some of em are still around, but nobody's still active in the club. Uhhh, a number of them have died too. But, the club kept going. Uhhh, I kind of like—after they knew I had some education—they made me financial secretary. Which all I do—all I really do—is, is keep track of the money. I don't touch the money.

JUS Right.

JOS The treasurer has the money. But I just count it. I don't even, you know, I just mark down what people write, so I keep track of everything that's paid in, everything that's paid out.

JUS So what would you say the club's purpose is, its values and goals? That's kind of broad.

JOS Well, I mean, the purpose of a social aid and pleasure club is mostly to be... I mean, you know the whole history of them, right? Do, do you want me to, I mean—

JUS Yeah.

JOS Well, I mean—

JUS You don't have to go too far in to depth.

JOS Yeah, I mean—

JUS A little summary about what—

JOS A lot, you know, I mean, why you can trace some of the roots of the processional aspect and the dressing up and the musical aspects back to Africa.

JUS Right.

JOS The social aid and pleasure club institutions got their start after the second World War—after the Civil War—when black people couldn't get insurance, through regular insurance companies. So they would form these clubs, so, and they were basically social clubs, clubs to aid people, and clubs for pleasure. So the aid consisted of, like when someone was in the hospital, you know, they might pay their rent. They were, they helped much more financially then they— I mean it's prohibited these days.

JUS Yeah.

JOS The clubs were often... in that time, they were neighborhood clubs, they were also by occupation. And, they, all the clubs would have an annual parade as well as the other activities that they did. They would, they would do like things like take train rides to places and have picnics, or they would have athletic—you know, baseball games—dances, much more social activities, I guess, than the clubs have today.

JUS Mmhm. What kind of social aid does Prince of Wales engage in today? Do y'all do anything in terms of social aid?

JOS Well, financially we don't do a whole lot. I mean, if somebody's in the hospital, we might send them a basket or fruit, or something, I mean.

JUS Right.

JOS And, I guess in a really bad situation, we—the club just doesn't have any money. We spend all our money on the parade

JUS Yeah.

JOS But I mean, we are involved in several things, through, some through the coalition—second line coalition—but we, we just had a Silence is Violence march through our historic neighborhood. And we've done some things with the coalition like children's Christmas stuff, the picnic that they have every Memorial Day. We need to actually. And then, I guess, like a lot of the, a lot of the stuff is, I mean, we could do things like maybe sponsor a children's sports team or something like that. But I think that the thing we do with the children that's most, is the children that come and parade with us.

JUS Yeah.

JOS You know?

JUS Mhm.

JOS And just become part of the culture, even whether they only parade once, like my daughter, my daughter. Well, that's my granddaughter right there parading [points to a picture], that's Maegan. And she never really, never really liked it. She did it three years, one, two, three years. Four years. She never really liked it. She did it because that little girl's my heart.

(45:42)

JUS Yeah.

JOS We're very close, and—

JUS She's a cutie

JOS Mmm. I think she, I kept telling her, "You don't have to do it if you really didn't want to," but I think she wanted to cause she knew I wanted her to do it.

JUS Yeah.

JOS So she did it, but the older she got, the less she enjoyed it. So finally I just said, "I'm not paying for you anymore." "You don't really enjoy it." But, she's fine, she's fine with that. But you know, you get to meet other adults, and they're like family. You get a sense of community that's hard to get.

JUS Yeah.

JOS Even especially these days. I mean, that's one of the worst aspects of Katrina. And even before Katrina. I mean, ever since crack, crack-cocaine, the whole neighborhood thing is really... I mean, it's a whole long involved process. You have your gentrification in your neighborhoods, like that whole cali... you know, that whole, uhh, home ownership when everyone was investing in homes, ownership, uhh, you know, people were gentrifying neighborhoods, and so all, a lot of things have destroyed the old neighborhoods. I mean, there really aren't too many neighborhoods left in New Orleans, so this is one of the few social fabrics left.

JUS Mhm.

JOS You know. I'm sure that, you know, it's not unlike things that have happened in other cities.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS But, but this is the only, you know, the Mardi Gras Indians and the second line clubs at least hold people together in a kind of culture, an identification and a culture. And I think that's important for the kids, you know. My little cousin, parades with us. His been parading for a few years. And then he got involved in uhh Derrick Tabb's Roots of Music.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS And he became a good enough snare drummer so that he got into St. Aug Marching 100, into St. Aug, so that's been really, really good for him, because he could have just...

JUS Yeah.

JOS You know what I mean? It was, it's an, it's an option. It's an important option for kids. It gives them a sense of community that, that is harder to find than ever. It was, it was—

JUS Yeah. What did you think of this year's parade? How did the parade go?

JOS Oh it went really great. It went really good. It was one of the best parades that I rem... well, that I remember, It was one of the best parades. I had as much fun this year as I've ever had, I think. I had a really good time. And everybody did. It was, and it was, it was nice. The band, have to give The Stooges credit; they really played great.

JUS Yeah. What makes for a good parade?

JOS Just the music, the energy. I mean, it's just, even and the day wasn't all that great weather-wise, I mean...

JUS Yes.

JOS ...we were waiting for it to rain all day. Maybe even that had part of that, "we're doing this."

JUS It started to rain outside Commander's, right?

JOS A little bit later than that, yeah, I remember it started drizzling while we left, when we got onto Tchoupitoulas right at the end. And maybe that had part, part of, part of it "We're out here anyhow," you know? "We're going to have our fun regardless." I guess, you know, you know, a lot of the people. We had some new people. It was the biggest parade we've had since I started.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS That first year or two, there was a lot of people that came back, because it was really inexpensive. We just rented tuxedos, the bands weren't that... the police... I think, when we first started parading, I don't even know if the police charged for a permit or it was two-hundred-fifty dollars, so, bands were like six, seven-hundred dollars.

JUS How much does it cost now?

JOS Well the police are twenty-one hundred, the band's twenty-five. I don't know. But, it was just, it was really just really a really great parade. It was just a lot of fun, and a good time.

JUS Yeah. Do you dance during the parade?

JOS Yeah!

JUS How'd you, how'd you learn to dance? Learn from someone or just by doing—

JOS Just by doing it. [Coughs] 'Scuse me.

JUS ...your costume or suit this year, your suit this year?

JOS I'm sorry.

JUS Can you tell me about your suit this year?

(50:27)

JOS The colors?

JUS Mmhm.

JOS Well the colors were peach and olive.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS We, we're, we call ourselves... We say that we're a voting club. Some clubs are kind of like, somebody runs them, and they kind of have, decide whatever, but we have a, so people come and suggest colors. The original suggestion was peach and green, but I kept saying, "I don't have an objection to the colors but I have an objection to the, just, they're too springy. We need, we need something besides the green." So we ended up with olive, and when somebody said, "olive," everybody said, "yeahhh."

JUS Yeah.

JOS But actually though, the women's was the apricot, it was a little redder.

JUS Right.

JOS And ours was peach, peach and olive. So, it's really easy to buy those cheap suits in any different color.

JUS Yeah.

JOS And then we— olive is a fairly common color, for hats and shoes, so we didn't have that much trouble with that, you know. So then, you know, we had to buy ribbon, we had to buy fabric for the streamers, we had to have the feathers dyed, and that's all, all of that cost a lot of money. The feathers themselves, we spent two-thousand dollars on feathers.

JUS That's a lot of money.

JOS Mmhm

JUS How much are membership dues? How does that work?

JOS Well, you, we pay, you, we changed things sometimes, from year to year, but right now, it's fifty dollars to join, and then dues are a hundred dollars a month from the twenty-five dollars in December, which we mainly use to have a Christmas party, and then from January to September, they're a hundred dollars. But, most of that money goes toward your cos... It's kind of like holding money for you, so when we go to buy the stuff...

JUS It's already there.

JOS ...the money is there. We get twenty-five-hundred dollars for parading at the Jazz Fest, so that money, we use for the band. And then, uhh, we get money, but it's starting to be less every year. We get money from Sweet Home. Last year, they gave a thousand; this year, they're giving seven hundred. We get money from the Norman Dixon fund. Last year they were giving fifteen hundred; this year, they're giving, they're, they're only giving seven. So a lot of those deep pockets because of the economy and because, you know, every year it's a year after Katrina so, we're less important as other tragedies happen. The Norman Dixon fund, actually, helped people with, uhh, with money to help pay for the police before the hurricane.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS And Jazz Fest, a lot of people don't like the fact that Shell took over, but since Shell took over, we get twenty-five-hundred dollars; before that, Jazz Fest used to pay us a thousand dollars to parade. So, as much as some of the corporateness of the Jazz Fest that I don't like, I mean, it's nice having that money a lot. So, I mean, I know they're gonna bring in some of those big-money acts, but I wish they would bring in more big-money jazz acts, instead of rock-and-roll acts.

JUS Yeah.

JOS What can I say.

JUS So, what are y'all, what do y'all do between the parade and Mardi Gras?

JOS We don't, between the parade, after the parade, everybody, you know, it gets really, really intense. I mean, in general, everybody in our club gets along pretty good, I mean, we have like, we have open enrollment now, so if people want to come in, they'll come to a meeting, and if people don't have a particular objection to them, which we, I've never remembered, we never have had. We've had objections to people coming back, sometimes if they were kind of humbuggish people, people who like starting arguments and stuff all the time. But in general, you know, we pretty much let everybody, anybody who wants to come in, as long as they've got the money. Now that's the thing. It's fifty dollars to get in, and it's a hundred dollars dues, and if you decided at a certain point, you don't want to do it or you can't do it or you don't like us, you don't get your money back.

JUS Right.

JOS So you got to kind of commit, and people know in advance.

JUS Yeah□

JOS Uhh, but the money, you know, most of the, but you get the money back. And then we do other things. We do the functions to raise money, we do, and we spend money on other stuff too. And we socialize sometimes; we go to other clubs' dances, we have a Christmas party, but we haven't met. We had a couple of quick meetings; we're going to have a meeting. One meeting in November, for new members, and to talk about a few things, and then we'll start meeting in December. We'll have one meeting where we plan, we, we decide what we're going to do for the Christmas party. Then we'll have the Christmas party. Then we'll start in January.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS So, there was a point when we used to have, well, I mean, this was years ago, ten—around twelve, fifteen—years ago... We, uhh, we always, we used to have a Mardi Gras dance. We used to have it Friday night of the Zulu ball.

(55:55)

JUS Mmhm.

JOS And it was fairly successful. I mean, all things considered.

JUS Yeah.



JOS And I guess we could do that now, but we really don't start organizing and planning until January, so, uhh, once we get started... I mean, we hang out... We sort of hang out. People who... There are people like me, who love going to parades and go to every parade every Sunday. And then there are some members of our club who really, they just love to parade for themselves, and they might go to one or two parades, but they don't go out there every Sunday.

JUS Mmhm

JOS So the people who like, you know, go out every Sunday, uhh, you know, we get together, we go out, we do different things. We just had this little gig at Voodoo. So four or five people went over to Voodoo and hung out together. So we do things, we meet at second line parades, those kinds of things. We'll have the Christmas party. Then in January, we'll start meeting. We decide on our colors, we decide on, you know, different things. We start collecting money, we decide what we're going to for funds since to raise money, we need to elect new officers, new candidates for different stuff, we'll do that.

JUS Mmhm. You plan on parading next year?

JOS As they say in New Orleans, if the Lord spare me.

JUS Hahah. Is there anything you'd like to see done differently in the parade next year, as opposed to this year?

JOS In terms of the parade itself?

JUS Mmhm.

JOS No, no. I mean, it was a great parade. It was good. It was good. We got done on time. I guess we were, we ran, I guess we, I think we wasted a little bit too much time at Commander's Palace, which made us change our route and go up Tchoupitoulas toward the... But in general, I mean, it was a really great parade. I wouldn't change too much.

JUS Yeahh. I just have a few basic questions about the parade itself. Can you tell me the difference between the men's activities and the women's activities?

JOS We really don't, didn't have any this year.

JUS Okay.

JOS In terms of organizing the parade? No, they used to be two separate clubs, before the hurricane. And then after the hurricane, at first there was only three women. It was Betty, Betty Coleman, and Phyllis, and uhh, uhh Tasha, who didn't parade this year. She, she says she's coming

back. Okay. So there weren't enough of them to do anything for themselves. They couldn't have gotten their own band or anything. So we just, it was right after the hurricane, right?

JUS Yeah.

JOS We were the first parade that came back right after. We had the first parade after the hurricane, December 2005. Then we started again for 2006, so it didn't make any sense for them to try to do something themselves, and there weren't that many men, so, I don't know if I got that... I could show you the pictures from when we paraded in the red. [points to a picture on the bookshelf]

JUS Oh, I see.

JOS But there weren't that many of us. There was, my granddaughter, there was three kids.

JUS Mmhm

JOS Four kids, maybe.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS And, so then, it, it's worked. It works sometime, it works out pretty good. But we basically do the same th... They don't have a, they don't have, they lost their banner, too. We lost our banner in the flood. And I wrote a grant to the Jazz Festival for banners for both of us, and they cut the grant, cuz they only had enough money, only had enough money to buy one banner.

JUS Mmhm

JOS So they don't have a banner. We tried to, we tried to do something. They thought that if they had a card game they'd raise enough money, but it didn't work out.

JUS Yeah.

JOS So they don't have a banner. But this is their 15th anniversary, so they prob... They might do a couple of activities on their own. They should just to raise money for the band. Like, casino bus ride or something. But in general, we just, we had one raffle and one dance this year, so everybody had the same responsibility and obligations for those.

JUS Mmhm. How do y'all pick the queen?

JOS The queen... We've just done, somebody'll come up to us and say, "Can we be your queen?" you know, and we'll say, "Sure." And then, I mean, we just started having queens, about 2000, 1999. We never had queens

before then. And if we didn't have one next year, it wouldn't bother me at all.

(1:00:46)

JOS I mean, that's, it's like, it's, it has nothing to do with the tradition or the culture. And it's more like trying to imitate Mardi Gras krewes to me, Mardi Gras parades. Some of that stuff gets really, really elaborate. That's not what it's about, to me, you know. But this year, you know, so, there was a little bit of conflict, one, a couple times because two of the women wanted to do it, and... Anyhow, this year, what we're going to do is, we're going to open it up, and anybody who wants to come can come, and then we'll vote. But we really have been lax, in terms of having them help us finance the parade, cuz all the, you know, we charge, I think we charge the queen two hundred dollars. This year, I think we're going to charge the queen two hundred or three hundred. I think they want to do three, but that's kind of high.

JUS Yeah.

JOS But we didn't charge her maids, we didn't charge the maids, fifty dollars, and then they, and then when we sold raffle books, we just gave the queen two, instead of giving the maids the books each too. So we, I mean if we're going to have them, they might as well help us finance.

JUS Yeah, right.

JOS Yeah, you know, right. Raise some of the money.

JUS Alright, what about security in the second line. I've heard that some people think that second lines aren't really safe, and other people think that they are. What do you think about that?

JOS I think they're all, I think they're safe.

JUS Mmhm.

JOS I think they're, you know, I... Most, any problems that occur—and I'm not going to say problems never occur—have nothing at all to do with the second line.

JUS Right.

JOS It has to do with uhh somebody seeing somebody who that they've, that they have a beef against anyhow. But even then, incidences are one or two a year, maybe. And I'm not even talking about a shooting or two a year, I'm talking about an incident or two a year. Like a couple of people might accid... Like somebody told me a couple weeks ago that a couple of women got into a fight, you know. And sometimes that kind of stuff will

happen, but people usually bring their, people usually go out there to have a good time.

JUS Right.

JOS And that's, and that's the only reason that people come out. I mean, sometimes people go out there to meet men. Meet and greet. But people, I mean, people go out to second line to have a good time; that's what it's about. Taking that special feeling of, of, of joy, and I call it like spontaneous joy of life that you can only get from the second line once the music starts, the people start jumping. Even like, if it's not your parade, it's fun going it, you know, and your parade, of course is really special, cuz you're out there; all these people are out there looking at you. People come up to you for, to tell you, you know, "Man, you guys look good." And we know, we always look good, if there's one thing about the Prince of Wales that we're noted for is our ability to really put the colors together and look really nice.

JUS Yeah.

JOS As you can see there's the blue from last year. [pointing at pictures around the room]

JUS Ohh.

JOS There's the red [getting up to find more pictures]. I got other pictures, too, if you want to see them.

JUS Yeah.

[walks into another room, returns with a file folder filled with pictures]

JOS The red was 2006, and this is 2007.

JUS Ohh, the blues and the purple.

JOS Yeah, the purple. It's like lavender, that's all purple.

JUS So is this your...

JOS That's my...

JUS ...granddaughter?

JOS ...granddaughter again. These are from last year, that's the purple. I don't know now, people give me these pictures [mumbling]. I got some other ones, too. [finding more pictures] Oh, the red. I lost a lot of, a lot of pictures.

JUS Yeah. What do you see as the role of the second life, the second line in the city, in terms of the city's cultural life?

JOS Well, I think us and the Indians are the city's cultural life.

JUS Yeah.

JOS You know, I think without us, you know... and the food, of course heheh. But I mean, without the music, without the Indians and, and the second lines and the music, New Orleans is just another ugly Southern town. I mean, I shouldn't say that, you know, it does have its charm, it's architecture, I mean, and the food is great, but you know, it's the people that make New Orleans so great, and it's the people that come out of this culture are the heart and soul of the city.

(1:05:39)

JUS Okay, how do you think the city could better support the second line?

JOS Well they could not charge us money. That would be a big help if they would just provide the police for free.

JUS Yeah, yeah.

JOS Like they do for s... for you know, Mardi Gras. That would be one way. I, you know, we've kind of reached a kind of understanding, or truce. The police officers that will come out to the second line, by and large, once you get rid of the ones that don't like it, you know, are out 'cause they enjoy being out there. They get to flirt, just like everybody else. So, I mean, they enjoy it. They're, you know, they're in general pretty good and pretty good people. I mean, they, you know, sometimes, if you haven't quite made it back, they'll give you an extra 10 or 15 minutes to get back, you know, if you're running late. And in general, as long as, you know, and they ignore certain kinds of things if you give them that respect.

JUS Mhm.

JOS Uhh, so I mean, in some ways, it's pretty, pretty good. I, you know, I think, it's, it's as much as any thing, the powerful people, like, in my personal opinion is that I don't think Reilly likes the culture particularly.

JUS Yeah.

JOS And I didn't think his predecessor, Eddie what's-his-name Compass liked it either. So I think a lot of the policies they created, you know... At, at one point, they st— you know, originally, the police were just there to direct traffic.

JUS Mhm.

JOS And when I first started going, there was hardly any police. Like I said, it was two-hundred-and-fifty dollars or something. Uhh, but the increase in violence that came out of the whole cocaine, crack-cocaine era, from the late '80s to the early '90s, ... I mean, in some ways, even though I kind of have an anti—in some ways, it's good that they're out there. I have a problem with the, the one thing I have a problem with is the horses and the way they use the horses.

JUS Yeah.

JOS Cause they use the horses to herd people. And that's their role. The role of the horses is to be able to observe what's going on on the fringes of the parade, and stay on the fringes of the damn parade. You know? I mean, that's theoretically what they say, while the horses, if something goes down—and it always goes down, any shooting that I've ever heard about or, you know, at a second line (and there's only been about five incidences that were even close to a second line in the 20 years that I've been going) have been four or five blocks away from the second line, have nothing to do with the second line. So if the, if the police on the horses are out there on the fringes so they can observe and watch that kind of stuff, then get on the fringes and quit using the horses to drive us. That's the one thing about it that I don't like, that they kind of use it as a way to push the parade, push the parade. We know, we do this, this is what we do. We know how to do it. We'll be back at five o'clock like we supposed to; we be good. You know, but don't use the... Because a lot of people, a lot of people are afraid of horses, a lot of people don't like horses. And it's really changed... And they're, but they're, and... But they really are good with them; been doing it for years and they do it at Mardi Gras, and they do know—that's one thing about the New Orleans police, whatever else you say about them, is in terms of working with people in party situations and controlling people, they really are good at that. But this is the one thing. And it's changed the dynamic, cuz it used to be the best place to be at the second line was behind the band if you weren't parading. Behind the behind the band or right next the club that's parading, right next to the band, and because of the way that they've jammed those horses, people are starting to be so... it's thicker on the sides, so it's harder to move, you know. People get jammed up, in the narrow, the smaller streets.

JUS Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JOS And then people start going in the front and everything like that or they get behind the horses, so I would, I would be glad if they really insist on having the horses, I think they should, they should have a car in front of the horses and make the horses be at least a block behind the parade.

JUS Yeah.

JOS And that's the one, that, that and taking the fees away would be the two things that I would think. Other than that, I mean, they do a good job. I mean, I ain't, I ain't got too much of complaints about 'em.

JUS You going to parade this Sunday?

JOS I am.

JUS Where is that?

JOS Sudan, downtown.

JUS Sudan, okay.

JOS Yeah, there's been actually, there've been at least two, I think maybe three that aren't parading this year.

(1:10:38)

JUS Why's that?

JOS One of the clubs, a couple of the women quit, and a couple of the people have health problems, even though they're relatively young women. Another one of the clubs was never more than three people, so I guess it just got to be too much for 'em. And then the third I'm not sure; I haven't heard exactly why they're not, but I have a feeling, since they haven't come to Sweet Home for their money, and I haven't seen any route sheets. I have the funny feeling, I have the feeling that they're not gonna parade.

JUS Mm.

JOS And that's another women's club that has only paraded since the hurricane. But there are a number of clubs, some that, some old clubs that want to come back, and some new clubs that are, those dates will fill up. It's just a shame that they blocked those dates out, and kept people who wanted to parade from parading. Because that's what happened last Sunday, and I think the second Sunday in December there's not going to be a parade, and there may not be a parade— I guess next week there's not going to be a parade. This used to be prime. You know, I mean, November is really the, I mean, October is good. We used to— the first year we paraded, we paraded in August. The club used to originally parade in August. People say it's hotter, and it may be, but I really think those people are spoiled by air conditioning.

JUS Yeah.

JOS You know, and then there's a football team here, the Saints and all that, you know, but that doesn't have anything to do with August. But we used to parade the second Sunday in August.

JUS Yeah.

JOS And we did it once, and people said, “Ehhh, we want the September.” Somehow, I think we got, we got bumped one time because of a hurricane threat or something?

JUS Mmhm.

JOS And we ended up, we ended up with October, and we really like the second Sunday in October. It’s nice, yeah. Usually it’s, it’s... October is usually the driest months in, yeah, in New Orleans.

JUS Right. I think that answers most of my questions, is there anything else you want to share?

JOS No, I’m talked out.

JUS Okay, alright.

JUS Alright, so I’m wondering what it’s like for you to be one of the only white guys in the second line?

JOS Oh. Actually, as far as I know, these didn’t come out, these just didn’t transfer right, I’m sure the originals... that’s another picture of my granddaughter. I was actually the person who integrated the social aid and pleasure club second line. I was the first person of non-African American, as far as I know, to do it.

JUS How was that?

JOS People pretty much, pretty much accepted me. I haven’t really had any trouble. I remember the first year when I did the one at the Zulu parade, people were astounded.

JUS Yeah.

JOS Yeah. But, you know, people are really accepting of it. You know, it’s like if you like their culture, if you love their culture, the people—especially the people who are part of the culture—that’s what they care about.

JUS Yeah.

JOS Now when you go to a parade, you see— when I first used to go to parades in the early ’90s, except for a photographer or two occasionally, I was the only white person out there. But I always used to go, I always used to go with club members. I never... A couple of times I got a couple of little youngsters might have said something, but in general, in general, I never had any problems with that. People are really open to it, you know, as long as you can, you know, as long as you don’t make a fool out



of yourself. As long as you go out there—I mean, I’m not the world’s greatest dancer, but I have fun, and I get a lot of respect for being in the culture for so long. You know, as long as you know, you’re part of the thing, it’s just like you know we have a woman who dresses like a man.

JUS Mmhm, yeah.

JOS You know? There are other clubs who might have somebody who’s gay in ‘em, you know. As long, you know, as long as you love it. As long, is how, you know, as long as people love the culture, it’s hard to—

JUS Yeah, it’s hard to argue with that.

(1:15:25)

JOS Yeah, but you know I was, I was acc... I was, because, for me, I already knew a lot of the people who were in the club, and they already knew me, so it was like, “Yeah sure, yeah, you wanna do it? Sure, why not?” Uhh, you know, and then the next person I know who did it was Davis Brogan. You know who he is? He’s a musician? He did a one year with a club called the Furious Five. In fact, they paraded with us. But then they went back to the Young Men. They were a division of the Young Men. One year they were out, uhh, but they went to the Young Men, but the Young Men wouldn’t let him be in it because he was white, cuz the Young Men won’t let women or whites in. We let, we let people in as long as they’re—

JUS Interested in the culture.

JOS --as long as they’re interested. And we get along.

JUS Alright, well—

JOS Okay. That’s my granddaughter, that’s her, that’s her.

JUS Yeah.

JOS Mmhm, that’s her when she was like four, I guess. I had to rescue this film, these pictures from the hurricane. This is one of my favorite pictures of her. She looks so old there.

JUS Yeah, she does.

JOS I think she was five or six.

JUS She looks like she could be 17, with that face.

JOS Heheh, I know, with that face. I didn’t realize I had all these great pictures. Oh, are you still tap...?

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(1:17:12)

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