

**New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation Archive  
Oral History Collection**

**Interviewee: Joe Stern**

**003.PPF.083**

**Interviewers: Rachel Carrico**

**Date: September 1, 2017**

**Location: Joe's home, 1038 Adams St. New Orleans, LA**

JS - Hi, all right. This is September 21, 2017, and my name's Joseph M. Stern, or Joe Stern, as I prefer. I was born in Cleveland, Ohio on July 11, 1942.

RC – Great. And your current position with --

JS – Oh yeah, I'm a long-time member of the Prince of Wales Social Aid and Pleasure Club, and I'm currently President.

RC – Great. And how many years have you been with the club? You said long-time member, do you know, do you remember how many years?

JS – Yeah: twenty-nine.

RC – All right!

JS – Although two years I was out of town, and two other years I didn't parade.

RC – Uh-huh.

JS – But I've always, I've been a member since 1988.

RC – All right, and can you tell me the story of, just of joining the organization?

JS – Sure. After I moved to New Orleans, about 1980, about 1982, I moved into a neighborhood that's known in that neighborhood as the Twelfth Ward, which runs from Louisiana and Napoleon, Tchoupitoulas, to, mostly to Magazine, even though, like the neighborhood, the original Twelfth Ward actually goes all the way to Broad, where all those wards meet up.

RC – Oh, mmhmm. [00:01:32]

JS – And then I started meeting a lot of people who lived in the neighborhood, and made some friends, and was hanging out at a couple of bar rooms, and in, and this is how I know the date, and you can check, it might be a year off for all I know. But Owen

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Haynes, who was from the Twelfth Ward, was elected King of Zulu. So, he wanted the Prince of Wales to parade in the Zulu parade, like, because that's his roots and that's where he came from. So, at that time, the club had been inactive for, probably since the mid-1980s, like three or four years, maybe even six years. I know that famous movie by Les Blank, *Always for Pleasure*, there's an interview with two people who were in the Prince of Wales.

RC – What year is that movie?

JS – That movie is '77, '78, maybe.

RC – Ok. So they were active in the late '70s.

JS – Yeah, they were active until, I know, '79, '80.

RC – Ok.

JS – And then they became inactive for a few years. I don't know how many. But they were gonna organize, and get back together. And a few months before – I had never been to a second line before, and a few months before, a long-time member, who had once been Grand Marshall of a club, had been murdered. And they had, and he was like, somebody who was close to a family I'm close to, he was part of that family. So I – so they had a second line for him, and I went out there and I did that, and I had, like, a totally life-changing experience, I guess you'd say, it was like – and this was back in the time when you could just throw a second line for somebody, all you needed was a band.

RC – Right.

JS – You didn't need police, and you didn't need this, and you didn't need all of that.

RC – Right. [00:03:35]

JS – This was, like, '84, '85. No, this must have been '87. Whatever. So, when the, and the club started getting back together, I knew most of the people who were on, who were in it. They were, you know, not most, but a number of them, cause they all hung out in this barroom called Morris' [?], which is now a, what do you call 'em, condos. [laughs] On the corner of Tchoupitoulas and General Taylor. But at one time it was a bar room, it

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had a few rooms for rent upstairs, and a kitchen, and a – it was run by a man named Morris. It was called Iglidonia's, actually, for years and years. And a big mistake that the Prince of Wales made was not buying that building when we had a chance. Cause they'd have sold it to us, cause they had a long time, been out in that neighborhood, and knew a lot of the people. And somebody actually advised, said, 'You guys need to maybe not parade one year and buy this place.'

RC – Use your money to do that instead.

JS – Right. Well we could have probably done both, actually.

RC – Cool.

JS – So, anyhow, when they said, the club is gonna get back together to parade in the Zulu parade with Owen, so they started, you know, getting together, and I said, 'Well, hey, can I join?' And they said, 'Sure!' So I joined. [laughter] You know, and I did, and like, so what happened was we paraded, and it was the year it was brutally cold for Mardi Gras. It probably didn't get, I know it didn't get above forty. I mean, cause we paraded in tuxedos and then everybody bought long johns, and drank plenty of wine. But it was still really cold. And we really kind of stole the parade, cause we were out there, and we had a band, and we were doing it right, and everybody else was so cold. [00:05:36]

RC – Do you at all remember who the band was?

JS – Honestly, no.

RC – Yeah.

JS – Honestly no. But everybody had such a good time, they decided that they might as well keep the club going, cause they had like thir - twenty, about twenty-five people do it.

RC – Wow.

JS – Ok. So they kept the club going, and we had a parade in August. We used to parade in August. August 12 is really our anniversary.

RC – Oh really --

JS – Yeah.

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RC -- and when did it change to October?

JS – Well, it changed to, first it changed to – it was in August, and then everybody said, ‘Oh, man, August is too hot.’ So we changed to the second Sunday, we were second Sunday in August, we changed to second Sunday in September. This was before the Young Men had their anniversary parade, that two-hour parade that they have? So that Sunday was open.

RC – Oh, the YMO.

JS – The YMO.

RC – Uh huh. [00:06:38]

JS – And then, it wasn’t that, it wasn’t that strict, there weren’t that many clubs parading, for that time? Three or four years later, it had blown up, and lots and lots of clubs were parading. But at that time, there were open dates, so it wasn’t that hard.

RC – Right.

JS – So we paraded then for a while. And then somehow, then we were parading another time, and we got bumped because of the Young men, there was a hurricane threat, so they had to postpone theirs, and then they let them bump us. They, you can’t do that kind of thing anymore, but they did that. And then somehow, I don’t know, a few years later, we ended up, cause that’s an anniversary date for us, too, so we ended up on the second Sunday in October. And that’s been our date since the early ‘90s.

RC – Mmhhh, cool. And then, when, at what point did you become President?

JS – Oh, that was, I – so anyhow, the club stayed together, and the next year we paraded with Zulu again. That was a whole story in itself. But, cause when we got there; they invited us to parade, and when we got there, they didn’t have a band for us, and then they wanted us to parade with a high school band. I mean, this is like six o’clock in the morning, we had rented tuxedos for this and everything. So we said, you know, ‘No no no, uh-uh.’ And then one of the guys, like the Big Shot, or one of the officers, the Governor, I can’t remember who, he said, ‘Well, if you want to do this, you’ve got to put

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up something.’ And so I replied to him that, ‘You asked us here, we didn’t ask to be in this, you asked us. We have our own parade; we don’t need to be in this. So we can go home.’ [laughs] You know, it’s still seven o’clock Mardi Gras day! So they let us parade with another club that had a band, but we haven’t been invited back since. [laughter] But I mean, no, you know, I loved everybody, I’m cool with everybody, but that was just – so then, the man who was President was a man named Jimmy Parker, who was President for years and years and years. Like, he was --

RC – That’s in the Prince of Wales.

JS – Yeah, he had been in Prince of Wales from a little boy. And he had been President for a long, long time. And then he, since he found out I had, was a college teacher, he made me financial secretary. [Carrico laughs] So I was financial secretary for years and years. Financial sec – in our club, financial secretary counts the money, and then the Treasurer takes care of the money. So you have checks. Checks and balances.

RC – I see, I see. That’s smart. [00:09:44]

JS – So I was financial secretary up until Katrina.

RC – Mmhmm.

JS – And then after Katrina, I came back, there was about five of us that came back, that were in town. So we actually had the first real second line after Katrina, and we had it in December, I think it was December 19, by the time we got it organized. It was like Junior, Walter, Alvin, me, Lil Bro, and my granddaughter. Might have been somebody else. Oh, and Stanley Gordon was supposed to do it, but he was having – he had health problems, just before the parade, and he couldn’t parade. So we had that parade. And then so, and then some more people came back, and we were kinda, we were keeping the club together, and I had written us a grant to get us a new banner, cause we had lost our banner in the, in Katrina. So they just, they made me President.

RC – Wow.

JS – And then, for a year or two, and then another – Alvin, Alvin Epps, he had been Vice President, so I backed off and said, ‘You know, Alvin should be President, because he

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was Vice President.' So he became Vice President for a while, and then I got elected President again, and I've been President since. He was President about five years, and then I got elected President, three years ago. [laughs] Three, four years, three years I think, yeah.

RC – And I didn't ask before, what brought you to New Orleans initially?

JS – Oh, I actually came down here because I was working with, everybody knows Malcolm Suber, he's one of the leaders in the Take 'Em Down --

RC – Right.

JS - -- movement.

RC – Yeah.

JS – Well, I came down here to work politically with him, in an organization, another organization that we were both in.

RC – What was that organization?

JS – It was a communist organization.

RC – Uh huh, uh huh. [00:11:58]

JS – [laughs] A Marxist, Leninist organization.

RC – And then, I'll ask about this --

JS – Yeah, so that's why I came down here.

RC – Ok! Ok, great. And so, the Prince of Wales was founded in 1928, as far as, if I'm not --

JS – '28.

RC - -- mistaken, right?

JS – Exactly.

RC – Coming up on your, what would that be --

JS – Ninetieth.

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RC - -- anniversary?

JS – Yeah. Our ninetieth is gonna be the same year the city celebrates the three hundredth.

RC – Interesting!

JS – So, you can let the city know, we’re coming – and the Jazz and Heritage Foundation, we’re coming for some money --

RC – [laughs] Sure.

JS – -- cause we want to throw down. [00:12:36]

RC – [laughing] You should! You should get it. And so, I wanted to ask about the story of the name, you know, I’ve heard and read that there are maybe at least two origin stories of the name; I wonder if there’s an official one?

JS – No, there’s no official one; I, you know, as, I hold myself – I could have done something about that in away, because even in the late, in the middle ‘90s, one of the original members was still alive.

RC – Wow.

JS – He was a reverend. And he had a church where we, one of the things that we do is we go to church before we parade. A lot of clubs do that, I guess. But we do. And he had a church up in the Thirteenth Ward, on Soniat, I think it was. And we went to his church. And nobody thought to really ask him. You know, I mean, the name was the name. So anyhow, the story I – see, I, one of them is just something that I did just as a history-loving person, but the main man, you know who, Henry, Harry Wallace, whatever his name, he married that, you know, the Dutch and Duchess of Windsor? You know. They were bon vivants and party people and I just figured maybe he came down here or something like that, in the ‘20s, and that they named it after him cause he was partying. And then one of the other members was talking to a man who, I don’t know if he was a Prince of Wales, or he’d been around, but he was a longshoreman, and he was talking to

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him, and he said that if you look on a bottle of, is it J&B? It's a scotch. J&B? Cutty Sark? It wasn't J&B. What's another – I don't remember.

RC – I'm not a scotch drinker, I don't know.

JS – Nobody's a scotch drinker anymore, but back then, they drank scotch. Whatever it is, down at the bottom, it says, 'Blah blah blah, Prince of Wales.'

RC – Ah, a-ha.

JS – And this older man, this man, I don't even know who it was, but the member told me that the man – and he was like, at the time that he told it, this man was in his eighties.

RC – Oh, ok.

JS – Eighties, seventies, eighties.

RC – Ok. [00:15:03]

JS – And he was a longshoreman. And he said it was from being on the bottle of scotch, where it says Prince of Wales. So those are the two, and I don't know.

RC – Did you ever find any confirmation of the Prince of Wales --

JS – Well I wanted, you know, I wanted – it would take, you'd have to go back and look at the papers, the newspapers from the '20s. Look at the newspapers from the '20s, and see if, and I don't know if all that stuff – if it was computerized, it wouldn't be that hard.

RC – Some of it is.

JS – But I don't think they go that far back. So you'd have to look through the papers and see if he came down here --

RC – Right, right, right.

JS – But he did come to the United States, and he partied around, so I'm sure if he came to the United States and partied around --

RC – Chances are good.

JS – -- this is where he would come. [laughter]

RC – Yeah, totally. And so, and how many members do you all have now?



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JS – Currently?

RC – Uh huh.

JS – We have, phew – nine, I think.

RC – And that does that include the Lady Wales?

JS – No, no, Lady Wales are separate this year.

RC – When did the Lady Wales come about?

JS – I think they were two separate times.

RC – Uh huh.

JS - I think in the '70s, even – that I'm not exactly sure of, but there was a time, and it could have been in the '60s or '70s – at some point, ok, there was a Lady Wales. It was more like an auxiliary. It wasn't as much. And then the newer Lady Wales started in '95.

RC – Yeah, ok.

JS – But they've been inactive. We tried, right after Katrina, the men and women paraded together. Because there were only a few women. And that worked for a couple of years, and then it, it wasn't working that great.

RC – Better to be -- **[00:17:06]**

JS – Well, I, with the people who were involved at that particular point, yeah, it wasn't working, so. So then for a while, there wasn't any Lady Wales, and then one of the women, who's now President of the Lady Wales, Centrelle [Simmons], whose family's been in the club, for years and years, her uncles – when I joined the club, too, her uncles were in the club. So her family's been associated. She paraded with us.

RC – Mmhhh.

JS – Let her parade with us.

RC – Ok. I wondered, it sounds like the, when you were, when you joined the club when it was re-organizing in the late '80s, it was specifically geared toward parading with Zulu, first of all, and then --

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JS – We just, originally, they got together, they tried to get together – it was originally supposed to be just the one time to do with the Zulu.

RC – Uh huh.

JS – And then everybody had such a good time, and said, ‘You know, we should just keep this going again.’

RC – Yeah, yeah.

JS – It was like, I guess, I’m not that much of a student of it, but I guess sometimes, you know, the culture thrives, and then it dies down, and thrives. Some of that has to do with economic conditions. I know, like in the, like when I moved to New Orleans in 1980, I couldn’t find a place to live in New Orleans; I had to move to, I was living in Harvey. Because there were no affordable places, you know, in neighborhoods. And then after the oil bust, so I think, you know, maybe coming out of the oil bust, and people started working back again, and situations, I guess the economy had got a little better or whatever.

RC – Right. [00:18:56]

JS – So, it was not, didn’t cost crazy money to parade back then.

RC – Yeah, yeah.

JS – You know.

RC – And in the early years, what I’m wondering is in the – some of the clubs, especially the ones that were formed in the early twentieth century, in the ‘20s, like when the original Prince of Wales would have been born, there’s some clubs where it seems like explicitly parading was a part of it, but sometimes not at all, right, like just getting together as a social club, doing other things.

JS – There are, there are social clubs, social aid clubs – there are all kinds of clubs.

RC – Right.

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JS – There are travel clubs, there are Saint clubs, and there are social clubs that they may hold dances and stuff like that and raise money and then at the end of the year, they split the money up.

RC – Yeah, yeah.

JS – So there are all different types of clubs in New Orleans. Some of them parade, some of them don't.

RC – Right.

JS – In fact, there are probably way more clubs that don't parade than do.

RC – Right. Yeah, and it seems like that's probably always been true. [00:19:56]

JS – Probably.

RC – Yeah, yeah.

JS – I mean, New Or – you know, it's just in the nature of working class people to organize and form their own organizations to meet some of their own needs.

RC – Yeah.

JS – I mean, that was the original reason that social aid and pleasure clubs got together: to help each other out, as well as, just in New Orleans, they also had a parade.

RC – Right, right, [laughter] exactly.

JS – You know. It's --

RC – Yeah. Cause it's also part of the culture here, and --

JS – Right. The music was --

RC – Lots of --

JS – Yeah.

RC – Yeah. Well I, yeah, and so one of the things that I'm really interested in, and in general, being a student of the history of this stuff, is the name, social aid and pleasure club. Maybe, especially today, outside of New Orleans, you know, people might look twice if you say that, like what, what is that? You know, what does that do? And that

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word pleasure, you know, how that has been a really motivating force along with social aid, you know --

JS – Mmhmm.

RC - -- this idea of pleasure and providing for, you know, doing whatever it is, charity or mutual aid or benevolence, that that is not separate from pleasure, necessarily?

JS – Right.

RC – And how that's, like, a very, like, you know, kind of a very natural idea here, where it might not be other places, necessarily. But I'm just wondering about --

JS – Truly not.

RC – Yeah. You know --

JS – Well, I have, like a, I went and found a copy of our original filing with the Secretary of State, or whoever you file that with, and it explains the thing: social means that you do activities together, like parties, dances, and things like that; you aid, you help each other, and then you, you know, pleasure yourself. Yeah.

RC – Yeah, yeah! [00:21:48]

JS – And in fact, like I said, when Jimmy was President, this was in the early '90s, before he retired and stuff like that, sometimes we would have meetings; for years, when we moved from Morris', we moved a block up to the Rock Bottom, and we've been in there for a long time, and then we would have a meeting, and then we would vote that the club moves to entertain itself. Which means we would go to the bar next-door, go to the bar room, and the club would buy the club members a drink.

RC – [laughs] That was an official motion?

JS – Yeah. I mean, yeah.

RC – [laughing] I love it.

JS – Because we were using club money. I mean, if we wanted to go and, you know, that's how we would meet, we always used to meet, for years, we met next door to the Rock Bottom, cause it was originally like a threplex, and then two of the apartments got

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[UNCLEAR] into the bar room. Though one of them's still like a two-bedroom, a one, two-room and a kitchen and a bathroom.

RC – Uh huh.

JS – So we used to meet in there. You know. And then we would go next door, and have a drink and hang out.

RC – Mmhmm. Yeah. So yeah. So, I'm curious, too, about, I had mentioned this before we turned the camera on, too, that I know you have other roles in the city, and the things you're doing as an educator, right --

JS – Right.

RC - -- as, activist, long-time activist, it turns out --

JS – Right.

RC - -- and organizer.

JS – Oh yeah.

RC – I know now, but I didn't know that that was like the origins of coming to the city.

JS – Oh yeah. [00:23:27]

RC – And I just wondered if you'd talk a little bit about the overlaps or connections or synergies you see between your participation and leadership in the social aid and pleasure club community and that other activity.

JS – Unfortunately, not as much as I would like.

RC – Yeah.

JS – Yeah. No, I'm a '60s person, so I've been active since I was, like, in college.

RC – Mmhmm.

JS – Politically active. So that's the reason I originally came down here. And then when I started getting involved in the culture, at the time, this was, there was not a whole lot going on politically, ok? I was with an organization called the Liberation League, with,

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under the leadership of Malcolm Suber, and Leon Waters, and the thing, we did a lot of organizing around police murders.

RC – Yeah.

JS – Because the police were much more violent, and brutal. Especially to African-Americans, but to working class people in general, back then – I’m talking about the ‘80s.

RC – Yeah, right.

JS - And then especially with the cocaine thing, it was really crazy.

RC – Right. [00:24:33]

JS – And then, and then they were involved in the original, not the original, the second move to change all the school names. That was Malcolm and Leon and the organization we were in, and that was in the early, in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s, when they were changing all the names. And I still remember that it was fine with everybody, being, changing all the McDonogh’s, and, but when they decided they were gonna change Washington, people really got very upset.

RC – Yeah, cause what were some of the previous names of the schools?

JS – Well, a lot of them were the McDonogh’s. Then of course you had Beauregard, which became, let’s see, I just forgot, we were just talking about this. Beauregard became, what’s his name, Frederick --

RC – Douglass?

JS – No, that, Nicholls became Douglass. Beauregard became, what’s his name, he was a Supreme Court Justice.

RC – I don’t know which one it is.

JS – And I was just talking about it in my class today.

RC – Oh really?

JS – Or Wednesday, yeah.

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RC – Maybe it will come to you, though.

JS – It probably will.

RC – In a few sentences or something.

JS – Right. And Beauregard, and, but a lot of McDonogh schools got changed --

RC – Uh huh.

JS - -- cause there was McDonogh 6, 7, 8, 9. All those numbers.

RC - Right.

JS – And a lot of those got changed.

RC – Mmhmm. [00:26:00]

JS – Those are a lot of the main ones, and then when Washington – but people got much more upset. But they ended up changing it anyhow, because the city, because the school board passed a law – this is one of the main reasons, one of the most important and worst things that happened after Katrina, was dismantling the public schools and destroying the teachers' union. And the other unions, the cafeteria and clerical, custodial unions; they all had a union. I don't know if it was the same, but they had unions, too. Which was the mainstay of the black middle class in New Orleans, you know, they just crushed that, they wouldn't give teachers their jobs back, when they started opening up the schools. So, I can't remember what I was saying, but anyway, they changed Washington to Drew. Oh, yeah, so what the law, the rule was that the teachers, the parents, the principal, and the students, if they got together and wanted to change the name of a school, they could.

RC – I see.

JS – Which is what, you know.

RC – Right.

JS – So they did, they were changing all kinds of names. But when they came to Washington, that made them upset. Ok. So, when I, actually, when I started getting more active in the social aid and pleasure club thing, there wasn't a whole lot of political

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activity going on. There hasn't been a whole lot of political activity, until the last few years.

RC – Yeah.

JS – With the Dylann, what's his name? The man who murdered those people --

RC – Roof.

JS – Dylann Roof.

RC – Right.

JS – And the election of Trump, and, yeah. New Orleans is a hard, a hard place to get people motivated politically. Partially because they can always go out, and the frustration and the rage and all that that builds up over the week from being exploited, being misused, and having to endure all the bullshit [laughs], you can go out at the second line and, you know, drink a few beers and smoke a joint and dance for four hours, and see all these people that you see every Sunday.

RC – Right. Yeah.

JS – On the other hand, I think the second line, like they used to do, like they do in South Africa, if you've ever seen some of those demonstrations from South Africa before they overthrew apartheid --

RC – Wow. [00:28:46]

JS - -- when they would use musicians and parades and marches like that, it's a powerful, powerful force. In fact, we've been lucky, in the few of the parades we've been having, a few of the demonstrations we've been having lately, we've got a couple of bands to come out and play for us --

RC – Yeah!

JS - -- and really, I think the January 20, we had a couple of bands.

RC – Yeah. I was talking to Quess Moore about that, just last night.

JS – Oh, ok.



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RC – And, yeah, he said that one of the, one of the demonstrations, I don't know which one, but there was a brass band there, and his description of it was that, you know, there were, you know, and I don't know if it was around one of the memorials specifically, but that there were people there who were white supremacists, or, you know, folks who were in favor of defending the monument --

JS – Oh, that's when they took down Beauregard, I think.

RC – Beauregard, ok. And he said that the band sort of, they didn't know what to do with it. In terms of that kind of energy in the space.

JS – Yeah, they just – yeah, I remember that, because I was there, you know, those things took an incredibly long time to do.

RC – Yeah.

JS – I mean, it was just – so we were out there for – I was out there for Davis, and I got tired of waiting, and I left. But I was out there for Beauregard, and I was not gonna leave, I said, ok, I'm gonna stay, and then, I don't know what time it was, it must have been two o'clock when they got done with their gig, it was Da Truth, the band, Da Truth, ok?

RC – Ah, uh-huh.

JS – They just came out of nowhere, up Esplanade [laughs] and boy the spirit picked up. They just started – that was great.

RC – That's cool. Yeah, I was --

JS – But whenever we can get bands to play for us, because it's a real, you know, it gives a whole rhythm and motion and enthusiasm and spirit to your demonstration --

RC – Yeah. [00:30:43]

JS – -- you know, marching down the street to that music.

RC – Yeah, yeah. I was telling him, I don't know if you've heard, in the last, I don't know, I guess year or so, whatever it was, that Allen Toussaint passed away, and I think that kind of coincided with the City Council ruling about taking down the Robert E. Lee statue, but I don't remember exactly, I know it was after Toussaint's passing, but anyway,

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the TBC, one of the bandleaders, Juicy, had started putting this, like, improvised riff in one of their songs, which was 'We're gonna name Lee Circle after Allen Toussaint.'

JS – Oh, oh yeah yeah.

RC – [laughs] He still does it; I just heard them on Wednesday, he still does it.

JS – Oh, does he?

RC – Yeah.

JS – Oh, ok. [laughs] **[00:31:28]**

RC – But yeah, so, I wonder, yeah, it's interesting to think about this idea of sort of pleasure, or the release, you know, of being something that can be, I don't know, counterproductive to political action, or that kind of political involvement, but --

JS – It can be.

RC – It can be. But also --

JS – It's just a question of making the club members and people who are involved in the culture, I think part of it, if they really understood the origins of the culture and the significance of the culture, and, you know, that at certain times, the social is more important than the pleasure --

RC – Right.

JS - -- you know, and that certain things need to happen, certain things need to change. And, you know, that's, you know, that's part of the --

RC – Yeah.

JS - -- you know, I mean, I've brought issues up to people, and I hand out fliers, and encourage people to come to demonstrations, and I call, I text a bunch of people, 'Come on down, we're taking down Robert E. Lee.' So, I mean people know that I do that stuff, and then --

RC – Sure.

JS - -- you know, they see me on TV, and [laughs] so.

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RC – Yeah. Yeah, yeah. So, I want just to switch gears a little bit – twelve minutes left in the battery. One of the things, so I’m, you know, I’m a dancer, I’m a dancer, and a dance historian, is kind of my interest.

JS – Oh, oh.

RC – And my love, it’s how I came to second lining --

JS – Oh.

RC - -- was just as a dancer who moved here, and, you know, just got --

JS – Oh, ok. Why did you move away? [Carrico sighs] I know.

RC – That’s a story for when the camera’s off.

JS – I know. Life.

RC – Life. [laughs] But Prince of Wales, also, is known as a club of very good dancers, you know, people who really bring a lot of energy and footwork and commitment to that, you know, and I, so I was just wondering, like, you know, what’s behind that, like, do you, is this something you consider when bringing new members in, are there times you get together and dance, just kind of like, what’s the, I don’t know, what’s the role of dance in your life together as a club, besides just on parade day? **[00:34:00]**

JS – Oh. We don’t really, you know, you know, people who get in the club, usually somebody knows ‘em, or a couple people know ‘em. You know, and sometimes they have been in the culture for a long time. So, you know, they’ve been following, you know, since they were three years old, or something like that, their mothers paraded, or – so, they already know how to dance.

RC – Yeah.

JS – We go to parties together, we go to dances together, but I don’t think we concentrate a whole lot on dance. There’s, you know, there are some clubs that try to work out certain routines and stuff like that, they’ll walk together for a while; every time we try that it just [Carrico laughs] --

RC – But you have tried it!

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JS – Once or twice, I think, maybe. It's sort of like herding cats.

RC – Uh huh, uh huh. Yeah. [Stern laughs]

JS – That's I mean, that's what it is, you just do what you feel --

RC – Yeah.

JS - -- so it's really hard to do anything in ensemble form --

RC – Yeah --

JS - -- I mean, you might do something, like say you're coming down the street, and suddenly you turn onto Claiborne or something, everybody may get in line, and do something, maybe cross, or something like that, for a minute or two. But nobody's gonna keep that up for a long time.

RC – How about you, are you, do you like to dance?

JS – Yeah.

RC – Mmhmm, mmhmm.

JS - I love to dance. That's one of the things that really – I've always liked to dance. So it's one of the things that really encouraged me to get into it at first, to start going to second lines. Once I started going, I go --

RC – Yeah.

JS – -- I mean, for years, I didn't miss a second line. [laughs] You know, start to finish.

RC – Right, right. And like you said, yeah, in there, in the late '80s, is right when they really started, like, picking up again, more clubs forming --

JS – Right. **[00:35:56]**

RC – Yeah.

JS – And it was really, it was kind of a mixed, strange situation because at the same time when the clubs were really thriving – and we had a good time back then. I mean, clubs supported each other, so that you might go to three dances in a weekend. Right? You

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might go to a dance Friday night, you might go to a dance Saturday night, and then you might go to an early dance Sunday, like at six to ten.

RC – Mmhmm.

JS – You know. And people, you would go to, like the West Bank Steppers would have dances over at the VFW Hall, over there, and they'd have tables with all the clubs, you know? There'd be eight, ten, twelve clubs – fifteen clubs sometimes. And clubs would really, really support each other. You know. And we had a lot of fun.

RC – And that's not something you see as much. [00:36:53]

JS – Yeah, it didn't cost a whole lot of money to parade then, cause the police didn't charge that much.

RC – Right.

JS – For one. And we never spent tons of money on clothes. Then, one of the, that was the other thing that happened, some of the younger guys, in some of the clubs, it was cocaine money.

RC – Mmhmm.

JS – Right, and that's when a lot of them started buying these thousand dollar shoes, and, and, [WORD UNCLEAR] and then plumes, like, for example. Plumes were for Indians; we had, our President, Alonso, before he died, in 2002, he was President when Mr. Jimmy, Jimmy Parker, stopped being President, he became President, and he was, you know, he was, I guess, old school, whatever you want to call it, but his attitude was that plumes were for Indians. Feathers were for Indians. And second liners had umbrellas.

RC – Yeah!

JS – And, well, baskets sometimes, but we, we used to, we were really kinda known for years for our umbrellas --

RC – Yeah!

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JS - -- that we put a lot of money into, and spent a lot. A lot of ribbon, you know. And I don't know if, I don't know if you've ever seen any of the old, the umbrellas that we've done.

RC – Oh yeah, oh yeah.

JS – But they were --

RC – That was actually one of the questions that I had for you --

JS – Oh.

RC - -- was the story of the umbrellas being these, you know, signature, signature piece.

JS – That we did? Yeah, we just started getting, we just started doing. People like Alonso, Alvin was making some incredible umbrellas. Lonso, I mean, Alonso used to actually even sew his.

RC – Really.

JS – Oh yeah, he used to sew the bows on.

RC – Wow. Wow. [Stern laughs] [00:38:47]

JS – So we, you know, so – and it wasn't really until he died, and after that, after Katrina, really, but no, just right when he died, maybe, before Katrina, but mostly, that we really started getting into – and the price has gone crazy.

RC – For the feathers?

JS – For the feathers.

RC – Mm.

JS – Somebody told me that it had something to do with, you know, they used to buy 'em and somehow the Chinese cornered the market on 'em, so that, Chinese buy, cause the Chinese have done a lot of investing in Africa, ok, economic investment, as opposed to the US, who's doing a lot of military investment. But, this is a story I heard, I don't even know if it's true.

RC – Right.

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JS – But that they somehow had cornered the market on these feathers, so you had to go through them, but all of a sudden the price went up like about a hundred, a hundred and fifty bucks. By the pound. So if you're buying, like, I mean, it got crazy, if you got, and we had, this is like at a time when we had the men and women together, and we had, like, twelve, fourteen people and kids. So were buying three pounds of feathers, so if you're spending, like, seven hundred and fifty dollars, and the next thing you know you're spending another six hundred bucks, that's a lot of money.

RC – Wow. When did this happen, when did the pricing --

JS – This happened 2008, '09.

RC – Ok. [00:40:21]

JS – And then, the only place to buy 'em was Jefferson Variety, and then people started buying 'em themselves, online.

RC – Mmhmm.

JS – Which is what people are doing for a lot of stuff. Ribbon, velvet, cause everything has gone crazy high, so in order to at least try to save some money. But that's when Shaka Zulu started, now he's got his own shop, and he's got feathers, and people go through him. And he gives a pretty good price.

RC – Yeah.

JS – But still, it's three hundred and seventy five dollars a pound, so, you know, even if you got eight, ten people, and you only want one fan, and a couple of kids, you're still gonna need a pound and a half, you're still gonna need five hundred bucks for the, that's just for the feathers.

RC – Yeah, yeah.

JS – And then ribbon, velvet, somebody to make 'em if you don't make your own.

RC – Yeah!

JS – So.

RC – Monk Boudreaux used to make some of your

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JS – Monk used to make all our stuff.

RC – Yeah, right? Does he still?

JS – He, no, he doesn't. Noki made our yolks last year. They didn't, they stopped wanting to – Monk was giving us a deal, too. Monk's a good friend of mine, I'm a skeleton man with Monk.

RC – Oh, you are! [00:41:34]

JS – Yeah.

RC – Huh.

JS – I mask every year, Mardi Gras, with Monk. Monk's a really good friend of mine

RC – Yeah.

JS – And that's why he was giving us a deal, ok?

RC – Ok, yeah.

JS – So it just got really, really expensive, and then a couple of our guys decided they wanted to try making them. And they actually made some that were ok; they weren't as good as Monk's. Right?

RC – Yeah.

JS – I mean, monk makes the – Monk, Kevin, Don, about the people that make the best. Kevin's incredible, his stuff is really good. I'm sorry that they stopped parading, because they used to do some really great original stuff.

RC – And who was Kevin with?

JS – He was with the Original Four.

RC – Ah, the Original Four, yeah.

JS – Yeah, I remember one year they came out with the briefcases, and [Carrico laughs] -

-

RC – Uh huh, uh huh.



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JS – I mean, they used to do really cool stuff. And he was really good, and it's been, anybody else who wanted to do the same stuff would, and people did have Kevin do their stuff, and he was really, way more expensive than monk.

RC – Yeah, yeah.

JS – He was really expensive. Monk was expensive, but Monk only does – he does the Young Men [Olympian, Jr. Benevolent Association], he did us, he does Pal and the West Bank Steppers, and then I guess he does one or two others, other clubs. If he feels like doing it. But he doesn't do anything around Mardi Gras or anything like that.

RC – Of course. He's busy sewing his own suit.

JS – Yeah, or sewing all his grandchildren's.

RC – Yeah. I have, I had one more thing I wanted to ask you about, but I have one minute left on my battery.

JS – Ok.

RC – I wonder if there's a place I could plug this in? [00:43:15]

JS – Yeah, there's a --

RC – Is there a plug right over there? Ok. So, I just wanted to hear a little more, maybe, or just a reflection on that, that first second line after Katrina.

JS – Oh.

RC – And, I don't know, just memories of that. It's, I wasn't there, it sounds like it was really powerful. This is not the right plug. It sounds like it was really powerful, and of course there was, just kind of in terms, also, of what we were talking about, with organizing, and, you know, all of the changes that were happening in the city post-Katrina, and the need to bring people together.

JS – Sure.

RC – And also to --

JS – Sure.

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RC -- stand up to the powers that be [laughs] and all of the, and all of the policies and economic decisions that were --

JS – Right.

RC -- being made behind closed doors at the time. All right, let me see.

JS – Let me run to the bathroom real quick.

RC – Yeah. How old?

JS – Then?

RC – Ah, ok, is that a little while ago?

JS – Yeah, then there – I think they’re nine and eight, maybe?

RC – Yeah. Huh. Do you have several members of your family who are involved in the club? **[00:44:51]**

JS – My grandchildren.

RC – Your grandchildren.

JS – Yeah. My youngest daughter paraded one year, I think. Is this on right?

RC – Let’s see.

JS – can you hear me?

RC – Yeah, I can hear you. The little arrows are going, so, we got you.

JS – Ok. You took a picture, the picture of that?

RC – I put the camera up towards it, so it’s on the video, yes.

JS – Oh. I got one of my granddaughter from the same year.

RC – Yeah, so that’s your grandson and your nephew?

JS – Yeah, and that’s my granddaughter. Yeah, she’s in that one, too.

RC – In the orange?

JS – In the red and yellow, yeah. That’s her right there. She paraded after Katrina, too.

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RC – Yeah?

JS – Mmhmm. I'm so proud of that girl.

RC –Huh. How old was she then?

JS – How old was she then. Nine.

RC – Nine. Wow. And what's her name?

JS – Maegan. But she was living in Georgia, she had just, it was, because it was so close to Christmas, there was Christmas break.

RC – Uh huh.

JS – And she was staying on the North Shore with her great-uncle's, at that time, wife, I guess you would call her. [laughs] And, what is it, she, yeah. She was even late, and was so upset, to the parade. We started at Tipitina's, and then we went to the Rock Bottom. So she didn't show up until the Rock Bottom. Mad, cause she wasn't in some of the first pictures.

RC – So yeah, ok, so, in addition to that [laughs] --

JS – Ok.

RC -- what do you remember from that day, what was it like? **[00:46:45]**

JS – You know, I, it's funny, I don't remember whole lots about the day. I could talk about organizing, doing all of that. And I remember a few things like, so anyhow, I, because I was working for the state at the time, I was a Medicaid analyst, ok? So because of that, I didn't want to leave the state, because they were paying me, and if I had to report to work, I didn't want any problems. Cause they paid us, you know, we just got, kept getting paid. So I was really lucky, I had, my evacuation was crazy, and I left with a friend of mine, in my daughter's car. Because she went to Atlanta with her sister and the kids, which was basically, my granddaughter and my grandson, ok? And I had her car, and they were in Atlanta, so I evacuated a friend of mine, and we went to this motel, you know, took a long, long time to get out of town, so we finally found a motel, just out of Jackson, I think, north of Canton.

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RC – Uh huh.

JS – Ok. And it was the last room in the motel, and it was, so the guy let us have the room, and then we wanted to stay to the next day, but I guess because he thought, he said, ‘There’s only one bed in the motel,’ in the room. ‘We don’t care,’ you know, ‘we have nowhere else to go.’ We’d been driving for nine hours. We gone two hundred miles. So, but the next day, he wouldn’t let us have the room, because I guess he thought because we slept in one bed. He was Indian [from the country of India].

RC – Uh huh.

JS – You know, so I don’t know what his problem --

RC – Presumptions.

JS – Yeah. So anyway, we were trying to go, I don’t know where the hell we were going, we were going. Ok? So I have a good friend of mine, who was a member of the club for a long, long time, Joe Williams, and was a long-time member, Alvin Epps was his nephew. They were from Lexington, Mississippi, which is probably forty-five minutes from Canton. You go north on 55 a little, and then you take this road, so we went over there. And we were in a house, the next night, the hurricane hit up there, it was really bad up there. I mean, sixty, seventy miles an hour winds, rain, in the middle, and we were in the country, in Mississippi, so, then, in a house with about twenty-five people in a two-bedroom house. There’s people sleeping, trying to sleep everywhere, but it was, you know, what it was. It was better than being where we were, we thought. So, then the next day, we went and found a motel in a city called Rayne, Louisiana. And my friend needed to go to Detroit, so a couple days later, we’d run out of money for the motel room, and we needed to do something, hung out. So I took him to Monroe, and he got a plane to Detroit, because, and somebody had called me, Helen Regis, who’s a – you know her?

**[00:50:16]**

RC – Mmhmm.

JS – Ok. She’s a sociology [*corrected: Anthropology*] professor at LSU --

RC – LSU, mmhmm.

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JS - -- who's done, who's written academic papers on social aid and pleasure clubs and second lines and parades and things like that.

RC – Yeah.

JS –She called and told me, I guess it was somebody who called me, I guess it was her, either her or Michelle Longino--

RC – Ok.

JS - -- she called and told me they got a place for me to stay in Baton Rouge. So, I went from where I was to Baton Rouge, which was kind of kick, cause I went through where what's his name grew up, what's that town where, what's his name, the piano guy. Little – and --

RC – Which one? [laughs]

JS – Which one, yeah. The one who's, there's a minister, and a, and they're all cousins. Oh, what's his name.

RC – Minister.

JS – He was from the '50s. [00:51:22]

RC – Ah.

JS – Jerry Lee Lewis!

RC – Ah, yeah, ok. Yeah, yeah, ok.

JS – Jerry Lee Lewis, and I can't remember his perverted minister cousin. And then the guy who owned a cowboy club out in Gilly? [?] They were all cousins.

RC – Ok.

JS – So I went to Baton Rouge, I stayed in Baton Rouge, and then wound up going to Cal-- Oakland, California, to take my daughter her car, cause she was going to school in LA at the time, so, I drove out there, picked her up, we went to LA, and I flew back, and stayed in Baton Rouge, and they found me a place to stay with a professor, philosophy professor at LSU. And then I finally had to go back to work, cause they had set up

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Medicaid in Baton Rouge, but I, I hated Baton Rouge, and I just wanted to come back to New Orleans. Managed to come to New Orleans every weekend when I could. So finally I came back here at the end of November. And, end of November? Must have been earlier than that. End of October. I don't know. Anyhow, given everything that had gone on, I was very concerned, and also given the political thing that was going on, you could hear, you know, the obvious racism and everything that was going on, and destruction of black communities, and why should we rebuild, and I was actually really concerned that if the culture didn't start back – I knew [Mardi Gras or Black Masking] Indians were gonna be Indians. You know, they were gonna come out regardless.

RC – Mmhmm.

JS – Cause Monk [Boudreaux, Chief of the Golden Eagles] was already sewing, right? And he was back. Everybody, you know, people came back as soon as they could, a lot of people, right? So I was actually concerned that if, you know, we didn't parade, if the culture didn't start back up, then they would use that as an excuse – if we didn't do it right away, then they'd use it as an excuse to stop it, or to change it. I mean, for years, there had been rumors about, oh they only wanna have like four parades a year, or six parades a year, and they'll have, like, five or six clubs parade together, and blah blah blah. And, you know, given the fact that the whole thing with, what's his name, [Allison] Montana, with the Indians.

RC – Mmhmm, mmhmm. [00:54:00]

JS – Right, Tootie [Allison “Tootie” Montana].

RC – Who was testifying in --

JS – Right. I was there, cause I had gone with Monk.

RC – Yeah, right, right. And that was just a few months before Katrina, right?

JS – It was a few months before Katrina.

RC – He passed away right there, on, like in the pulpit basically.

JS – ‘This has got to stop,’ and he fell over dead. It was --

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RC – Yeah.

JS - -- something.

RC – Right. And that was in June or July, of 2005?

JS – I think, yeah. But I was there with Monk. Monk doesn't drive, so sometimes I would take him and give him rides to places. I wanted to go anyhow, so. So, you know, I was concerned. And it just happened to be five of my guys here, Alvin [Epps] was working, picking up old refrigerators, working for somebody [FEMA], throwing trash. I can't remember what Walter [Andrews] was doing. Walter had a job somewhere doing something. Junior was here, and [so was] Little Bro—Sidney [Morris]—who at that time does renovations and stuff like that. And I said, 'Come on, we got to do this.' You know, we need, I said, 'Let's do it.' Because unlike most places, our route basically was, a lot of it was still ok.

RC – Yeah, a lot of that area didn't flood. [00:55:21]

JS – Didn't flood!

RC – Mmhmm.

JS – And even parts that did didn't flood as bad as some parts of the city.

RC – Sure.

JS – And people like, for instance, Purple Rain was already open --

RC – Uh huh.

JS – Right.

RC – Was Rock Bottom open yet?

JS – Oh yeah, the Rock Bottom was definitely open!

RC – Yeah.

JS – Stanley Gordon, who's gonna, who was in Prince of Wales, was gonna parade with us. He was running it.

RC – Uh huh.

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JS – And I can't remember his name, but he was, he had a really good chef who had a truck outside.

RC – Ah.

JS – Oh yeah, Rock Bottom was open, Purple Rain was open, and Second and Dryades was open.

RC – Mmhmm.

JS – Those three bar rooms. Cause I spent a lot of time in them. Everybody did.

RC – Yeah.

JS – I mean, it was the only place you could go to see people.

RC – Right, right. And Purple Rain --

JS – People would go --

RC - -- is uptown, right, on --

JS – Purple Rain is on Washington --

RC – Washington.

JS - -- and Saratoga.

RC – Yeah, right. [00:56:17]

JS – And that had been a place where we had stopped.

RC – Yeah, yeah.

JS – You know, I mean, people were drinking, too, but people would go to bar rooms just to see who was around, I mean, that's where people would go to see, find people, and find out who's alive and who's dead and where people are, and, you know. So, those were open. So it was basically, our route was open. And then, and then, so I said, 'Come on, let's do this.' And, because, we had, if you remember, when the hurricane was, right? We were getting, we had already had all our clothes, and everything, we didn't have them, but they were, we had bought 'em at, I can't remember the name of, it wasn't Steppin' – it might have been Steppin' Style, but they were up on Chef, that little strip



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mall on Chef where the Wal-Mart is? Our clothes were there, but we also had money with Meyer, for hats.

RC – Oh sure, right. French Quarter.

JS – So the clothes were gone, but we had money with Meyer. So I said, ‘Look, this is what we can do.’

RC – Clothes were gone because that flooded.

JS – Because they got, yeah.

RC – Yeah. [00:57:26]

JS – The place was gone, I mean.

RC –Right, right.

JS – Buildings were practically gone, if I remember correctly. So I said, ‘Look, this is what we can do.’ Cause people were working, people had money. You know. So I said, ‘Look, this is what we can do: we’ll rent tuxedos.’ First we tried to find clothes, we couldn’t find any clothes. I said, ‘We’ll rent tuxedos,’ we went to Meyer, I said, ‘Look, we got this money,’ I said, ‘Find us’ – we wanted to use our colors, we wanted blue and white. So we rented tuxedos, and Meyer got us hats, and then my daughter [Lakisha] was living in Atlanta, my granddaughter’s mother, they were living in Atlanta, and she found these cheap, these thirty dollar shoes, royal blue shoes, in a shoe store in Atlanta, and bought ‘em for us and sent ‘em to us. And we didn’t – and then Monk made us corsages, and that was it.

RC – Where did you rent the tuxedos?

JS – Metairie.

RC – Ok, yeah, uh huh.

JS – Metairie wasn’t, Metairie was Metairie, Metairie was up and around. Ok. So then we went and put an application and the date, and we also got, somebody had told me that Black Men of Labor had that weird parade that they did for Spike Lee --

RC – Oh, ok. For the film? For the --

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JS – They pretended like was a second line.

RC – Right, right, right.

JS – Ok. Somebody told me Putomayo had given them money.

RC – Oh! The record company.

JS – A thousand dollars. Yeah.

RC – Ok.

JS – So, I, I wrote them, and I said, ‘Look, we’re trying to do this.’ And they gave us a thousand dollars. And between that and I can’t remember where the rest, and then so we hired Rebirth, and I said, ‘Look, this is what we’ve got. And we’re hustling. If we hustle more, we’ll pay you more.’ So we did, we actually, think they said they’d do it for fifteen hundred, and we actually ended up giving them eighteen.

RC – Oh, nice, yeah. [00:59:27]

JS – Which wasn’t, you know, but we were – so, you know, some of the things I, you know, so about the parade itself, but I was just, I really thought it was a very, really important thing to do. Maybe I was just, maybe over-reacting, I’m not sure. But [laughs]  
--

RC – No, no. Given, I mean, given what we know now, it was wise to not underestimate.

JS – Right.

RC – Right?

JS – Right.

RC – I mean, what happened.

JS – Pence, our Vice President, was one of the people who said, ‘Why do you want to rebuild the --

RC – Yeah.

JS - -- swamp.’ I wonder if they’re gonna want to rebuild Houston. Floods even more than we do.

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RC – Right. [Stern laughs] Right, which --

JS – Somebody told me they had just started, there was a second line in Houston! Somebody had organized a club, and there was a parade in Houston.

RC – Really!

JS – I just heard that the other day. Before this storm, somebody was telling me. I said, ‘Wow, that’s wild, that’s great.’ [01:00:28]

RC – Before, oh not, not in reaction --

JS – No, before, it was that they had organized a club, and hey were parading --

RC – I heard that the people, maybe who moved after Katrina, or --

JS – I’m sure it’s people who moved there after Katrina, I don’t know who it was, I just had heard about it.

RC – Yeah.

JS – I said, ‘That’s really great, that’s wild.’

RC – Yeah, yeah.

JS – I mean, if you gotta live in Texas. [laughs] I know, I spent twenty-one months in Oakland, in 2001 and ’02. And every Sunday, I would, it was like, oh, man. [laughs]

RC – Yeah, yeah.

JS – What am I gonna do.

RC – Yeah.

JS – So anyhow, we had the parade. I mean, I really don’t remember whole lots about it. I remember people coming up to me for months afterwards, thanking me. You know, and people telling me when the band started playing, they started crying. You know, it was really very emotional. You know.

RC – Yeah.

JS – I remember, you know, certain places, you know, at some places where there was still trash in the streets, and everything. And then, I should, and as far, as like, the route to

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get us – so we were gonna start at Tip’s, then we were gonna go to the Rock Bottom, then our route has traditionally been, going down Louisiana, we would stop at the, what’s that bar?

RC – Oh --

JS – See what happens when you get old and you have too much information in your head?

RC – [laughs] Right? Is it the two-story purple one? On Louisiana?

JS – What is it? Yeah, yeah. [01:02:06]

RC – The, and I can’t remember, cause I don’t live here full time anymore, so now places in my head are --

JS – Everybody knows where I’m talking about, the Candlelight.

RC – Yeah.

JS – No, that’s not the Candlelight, that’s downtown.

RC – No --

JS – Uptown. Oh, whatever.

RC – Ah! Shoot.

JS - That’s the best bar room in town. It’s where all the schoolteachers used to go. It’s where everybody goes when everywhere else closes down, it stays all night. [*Correction: The Sandpiper*]

RC – Cause it’s open later?

JS – Yeah. And we used to stop there, and we used to stop at Kemp’s.

RC – Ok.

JS – Ok. So that was gone.

RC – Uh huh.

JS – And, oh, and so, but the, but Purple Rain was open.

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RC – Right.

JS – So we had stopped there before. And then, there's a man called Charlie Wright, ok, he'd grown up in the Twelfth Ward. He had never been a [member of] Prince of Wales, but he had been friends, and we had stopped, he lived on Second, on Third and Dryades, and we'd stop there every year. Ok? Cause he had been friends with, he was an older man, and he had been friends with Jimmy Parker and some of the older guys in the club, so he gave us that stop, at his house. And I was driving by, and I saw [laughing] him in the yard, I said, 'Charlie! You're back!' He said, 'Yeah.' I said, 'You know, we're having a parade.' He said, 'Oh, you gotta stop here.' So --

RC – So then you had another stop. **[01:03:33]**

JS – So we had another stop, and that was enough stops.

RC – How did you advertise it? I mean, did you do route sheets?

JS – Boy, I don't remember. I'd have to check. Who would I have given them to? Sometimes I gave them to Ronald Lewis, I gave them to a couple of people, to say, you know, if you want to save these.

RC – Oh, sure. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, right.

JS – I don't know if we did a route sheet or not. Huh. Word got out.

RC – Well, I'm sure. [laughter]

JS – Word got out.

RC – The way you describe it, I mean it really, it sounds – I mean, you're describing community organizing, what you were doing.

JS – Yeah, right.

RC – And you knew that it was gonna be really important. And for people's spirits, you know?

JS – It really was. I mean, people - literally, for months, people would come up to me. 'Man, thank you.' I said, you know, I did it for me! I needed it. [laughs] You know. I mean, a lot of people said, 'You know, if this culture hadn't started back up, they

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wouldn't've come back.' That's why they came back, because they couldn't live without the culture.

RC – Yeah.

JS – So.

RC – Yeah. I mean, I had, the first time I came here was in 2007.

JS – Oh, ok.

RC – And I still heard people talking about it. **[01:05:01]**

JS – Oh, really?

RC – Yeah! [laughter] Yeah.

JS – Oh, ok. Well, good. Well, we paraded the next year, too.

RC – Yeah. But, yes --

JS – That's when we were, I think we did, that was that, I think.

RC – Yeah, that's, that's really an excellent [laughs] that's an excellent ensemble there.

JS – Oh, yeah. That stuff will --

RC – It's really amazing.

JS – The Indians call that bananas on fire. [laughter]

RC – That's perfect!

JS – Yeah. It was a great, that was good, too.

RC – One clarification of detail that I just wanted to circle back to is when you said you had the, I guess the charter, or the papers of incorporation, right?

JS – Yeah, uh huh.

RC – When did that happen? Incorporating the state, you said?

JS – Yeah.

RC – Ok. Did you-all do that like in '88, when?

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JS – No, we didn't do that. They did that in '28, '29? **[01:06:02]**

RC – Oh, that was from, like, the original --

JS – Yeah.

RC – Oh wow. And you still have that.

JS – Yeah. I don't have the original, but I got a copy from the, I remember, I went to the Superdome – not the Superdome, the Convention Center, they were doing something in the Convention Center with that kind of thing, and I went down there, and they found it. It's --

RC – They were doing something at the Convention Center?

JS – They were at the, something for the city was at the, the records department for the city was at, whatever it was, I remember having to go to the Convention Center to do it, to get the documents.

RC – Oh, I see. Wow.

JS – Yeah. So I made copies, I've given a lot of copies to members.

RC – Yeah.

JS – Yeah.

RC – I would love to see, even just look at the wording on it, if you have it around.

JS – I do!

RC – Sometime. I'm really curious about --

JS – I can show it to you. I can give you a copy.

RC – Sweet, ok.

JS – If I have more than one.

RC – Great. Just, I really appreciate the conversation. And your time.

JS – Oh.

RC – Is there anything else you wanted to add before I turn the camera off? **[01:07:08]**

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JS – No, I don't think so.

RC – Ok.

**END OF RECORDING**

*Transcribed by Jess Pinkham, 10/25/16*