

Satchmo

Riverside Hotel.
Rena Nevada,

February, 9th, 1952,

Mary had a little bear
The bear was mighty fine
Everywhere—'Mary, went,
You'd, see her bear behind.

Dear Miss(Mrs)Betty Jane Holder"

Received your fine, letter..And was really glad to get it.... It came as a surprise...But, 'Man, ' Whatta'surprise". Especially when it comes, to telling, how thrilled I was, being the 'King of the Zulu,s on Mardigras Day...Several years ago, I witnessed those very fine moments... Moments, that I—as a lil,ol,kid, selling news paper up and down Baronne Street - St Charles Street--Canal Street, infact, all of those busy streets where I used to love to hop on those fast street cars, selling ana hollering—'paper-paper—read the New Orleans Item—paper paper...And some times, the street car would not slow down, and the first time I went to jump off of one of them, I was' nt 'Hipped- to trotting a little bit when jumping off, something going as fast as they—and— ' My ' Gawd' — I couldn't sit down for a'whole week... ha ha...

The Zulu,s Social Aid and Pleasure Club, was originated in the neighborhood that I was ' Reared—should I say-' R 'Raised-?....I don't like the word 'reared..... All of the members of the Zulu,s are people,for generations,—most of them, brought up right there around, Perdido and Liberty - Franklin Streets... So finally, I grew into manhood—ahem—and the life long ambition,never did cease... I have traveled all over the world...And no place that I've ever been,could remove the thought,that was in my head, - that, someday, I will be the King of the Zulus, - my life long ambition...And there,bless my'Lamb, I won it in the year of 1949.... Wow... 'Whatta wonderful feeling I had...

The night before the mardigras parade we my band (the -All Stars-) played for a dance in New Iberia Louisiana... That was the last time we all saw the great trumpet man—Bunk Johnson... Bunk came to the dance(as he always does,)when ever he saw the name-Louis - Armstrong in the lights, or the 'marquee—or, just a plain old sign Bunk knew, he was as welcome as the flowers in may....He used to sit in with us, every time he came.... Sort of,made him feel good,and we too.... I shall never forget the look, of happiness on Bunk's face, when I told him,that, I was going to be the King of the ZMu,s Parade,the next day... He gave me a great big smile,and said—"Go- 'On 'Dipper....That,s the 'nick name, the early settlers,of the Zulu,s neighborhood,gave me when I was just a shaver(a small boy) Dippermouth...That,s the name..... next page please.

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Bunk said, he wouldn't miss the mardigras for the world...And he didn't either.... We finished playing in New Iberia, around two o'clock, in the morning...And by the time we had a bite to eat(which every bands does after a hard night of swinging)--by then, it was three -A*M...Then we tore out for New Orleans, by bus...Our chartred bus...We reached home (at the hotel where we were staying--the wife Lucille and I) it was- six o'clock--a.m, --- so I thought I'd stretch the old frame - my body, for an hour or so.... No sooner that I had fallen asleep, when I felt somethi crawling around my chops*(my mouth)--etc... It was a member of the Zulu Club, whom the President had sent to my hotel to - 'make me up.. You' no? put all of the white stuff around my lips, - eyes, infact, everywhere he could swirve a brush

As much as I was not accustomed to this sort of, creepy feeling, I did remember my step father -having the same stuff, put on his face, some 20, years before I was the King....So, after I realized, what was happening, I stretched out and went fast asleep, while he still swung the brush... What amused me most about the whole thing at my hotel that morning, was when Earl Father Hines--who was playing the piano with my All Stars at the time, he and his wife Janie, came into my room looking for me to take a picture with his camera.... And when Lucille pointed towards me, with all of this jive on my face, Earl, s eyes got as big as saucers, saying "WHAT THA HELL IS THAT--?..... He said it so loud, he awakened me..

It was time for me to get up and get dress for the grand parade, and to meet the Barg, which Mr Janckie - the great gravel man, loaned us each year we had our parade.... Lucille, had a cute little secretary working for her at the time....Her name was Selma Heralda...And Selma lived next door from us, in Corona Long Island, where we have our home...Everybody were trying to help me, get in to my Costume, etc, which was really a gem. The very best and finest material... Everything went down and fit perfect except for the hat...And for that reason, - all day long, I had trouble trying to keep that hat on my head... Wondering to myself--Hmm--there must be 'some way, to keep this, so 'N' so, hat on my big head.... Anyway--we had a real time, all over the city, throwing coconuts to the people, and sayin hello, and waving to the old friends, etc....

Just think---twenty thousand coconuts, which each member on my float thre threw to the crowd.... I happened to look up on a porch where a young man was justa yelling to me, ' Come on Satchmo(meaning me)'thrw one of those fine coconuts up here... And I taken a real good aim, and threw one at him, with all of my might...The guy waited until the coconut reached him and the coconut hit the tip of his finger, and fell down on a bran new Cadillac..... 'Gecccc.... I just turned my head to the direction in front of me, just as nothin happened.... Wow...Close shave, - huh?.... I shall never forget the incident, when our float reached Dumain and Claiborne Streets, and as high as I was sitting, I see straight down Claiborne street, for miles, seemingly, and the whole street were blocked with people waiting for the parade to come down their way...But instead--the float, turned the other direction....And - all of those people made one grand charge at once, towards the float....

The real surprise of the day, was---when the float that I was on turned the corner, my eyes looked direct in to Hugues Panassie's...He's the President of the Hot Club de France...Paris France...His secretary Miss Madeleine Guatier was standing--eagerly waving with him....

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Panassie and Madeleine followed us, until we reached Orleans and Roman St and it was getting rather late in the evening... Around six thirty in the afternoon... And, with all of those people riding on top of my float with me, I'm sure, those -four mules, when they looked around, in our direction as if to say, 'hey there--what goes--?... Just then, my float commenced to crumbling down to pieces..... Ha ha ha... The extra people were my vocalist, Velma Middleton, who weighs, a good two hundred and fifty pounds. Big Sid Catlett, who was the drummer of the All Stars, that year, Stuff Crouch, a friend of mine who came all the way from Los Angeles California just to witness me doing my stuff on top of that float,, And several others, along with six Zulu Members who were supposed to be up there in the first place.... Now you can see, the load we had on those mules... And I, once being a teamster for C.A. Andrews-Coal-Company, from Ferret and Perdido Streets, - making - fifteen cents per load - but I did-O.K. 'anyway - I could easily understand those mules... Because, I used to-all but talk to 'mine (my mule) every morning, five, o'clock, when I went to hitch him up to the coal cart I was driving....

When I was a youngster, hanging around the corner of Libert^y and Perdido- all of the all time great teamsters, took great interest in me... Taught me the ropes, as to how to load up my cart, without all but breaking my back in two,.... And they're the ones, (especially my step father-'Gabe) he'd say to me, - 'Son, always have a kind word for your mule in the mornings when you'd go into his stall to hitch him up... Because, a mule is a very sensitive and stubborn animal... You'd might go into his stall one morning, and find him, one of those old nasty feeling-just like a human being, and he's liable to kick your brains out.... Savy??.... So, I never forgot that piece of advise... Infact, anything 'Gabe, and Joe Oliver had to tell me, I was always, ready to listen... They would'n't tell me anything that wasn't right... Thats, why, I give Joe Oliver all the credit in the world, when it comes, to telling who went out of their way to show me things' on my trumpet....

When that float broke down, mardigras day, I was so glad to see Panassie (whom) I hadn't seen for quite some time... Since the last time I was in Paris France, playing concerts at the Sal Playel Concert Hall,... A hall similar to the Carnegie Hall in New York.... Panassie and secretary stayd with me the whole time their visit in this country permitted them.. When we left New Orleans, we made a tour, all through Mississippi, and all the other points, down there in Galalee (south)--By them being from Europe, they did not pay any attention to, whats, happening... Such as, white people going to colored dances, etc... You know, they did not know, because everywhere we played, he and his secretary would sit right up on the bandstand where they could hear that horn... Which was what they came all the way from France to hear... And the Law, who saw them sitting up there, did not say one word to them... And, Oh, was I happy... My My... The day before I mounted the float for the Zulu,s Parade, I had a very fine afternoon with our great (sharp) Mayor La Sepp... Oh, we had a ball at City Hall... His office was packed and jammed with the press-his friends and my friends, and I'm telling you Janie, ol, deah, we really did pitch a boogie woogie... The Mayor and I killed 'em, when he said to me, Satch P.S. thats, a abbreiviation, to Satchmo... The English People gave the short name Satchmo---because they thought I had more mouth.... 'Dooo...

Betty Jane Holder.

Satchmo

PG.4....

Getting back to our boy' (the Mayor-of New Orleans)-when he said-Satchmo I read in Times (Times magazine) where - you said--all you wanted, was to be the King of the Zulu,s and you were ready to die---??.. I said, yes Mayor, I do remember saying those words--but it ain't no use of the Lord taking me litterally..... And the house came down with laughter...P.S. Did'ja' get the -'Laughter--?....

I would like to say a whole lots more to you Jane...But, since this is my first letter to you, I won't wear my welcome out... Thats, onething about me, when I start to writing, especially, to someone whom I really 'want to write to, huh, - 'girl,--I can write until times get better... Ofcourse, I remember you saying in your letter, that I should send in about six hundred words, etc...Ofcourse I did not count them..And since I am here in Reno (not getting a divorce)--just doing a show, here at the Riverside Hotel, with my band, - I have to write between shows...And you can imagine, trying to write, and shaking hands with your fans at the same time.... But I managed to get in there, just the same....

So, you can tell everybody, that Ol, Satchmo, has 'Octopus hands.... I have my tape recorder right here by my right side, which I have, pretty all of my recordings, on reels...So, when I listen to my records, I can get food for thoughts, since I'm writing my life,s story...But I would'nt miss fine opportunity, to write you and let you know how thrilled I was to be the King of the Zulu,s....And I'd gladly livitt (live it) over again, if I had the chance...Infact I'm looking forward to another year of it before I die...Hmmm???.....Who said something about dying...Tee hee.

So Janie, thanks very much taking your precious time out to drop me a line and let me in on the know as to whats, happening there in my home town...As far as this New Orleans Item deal... I'd - just love to be able to get my hands on one of the articles, you said, would appear in the Item... Maybe, you will be kind enough to grant me this little favor, - Hmmm?.... Thanks in advance Jane... And I am so very happy to have had the opportunity to jot down a few 'gapping's-- for you...And most of all- I am very glad to meet you... You give a big hello to the Mayor, and all the rest of my Jazz Fans down there in my home town... And, - as the little boy who sat on a block of ice, said, - My Tale Is Told.... Yea... Goodnight and God Bless 'Ya'

Am Red beans and ricely yours,

Louis Armstrong