

1953 in Acadiana and the years since: Conclusion to Emerging Views

This chapter opens with a picture of an oiled pelican from the century but it could start with a picture of Zachary Richard. that would be a more positive tone than I really want to set. Film photography are a particularly important part of the struggle for preserving the culture, language and identity of the Cajun In 2016, as I was on the waiting list for admission to Louisiana University's Doctoral Program in History, Zachary Richard was Humanist of the Year by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. And his work as a musician, poet and songwriter have been enormously impressive. However, he has always been connected with and aware of the camera and its role in communication, in communicating environmental concerns and making people aware of any aspect of cultural development and structure. Film and photography form a set of focal points in many of our lives.



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This book seeks to set out something about a number of communities which are not equal or similar in every way and in fact are dissimilar in many ways. The Acadians of Louisiana also known as Cajuns are the most important to the text. The Documentarians also known as documentarists are a second community. The Flaherty crew are a more intense community within this community. The Standard-Humble Oil people form another community and that exists with the nebulous but very real oil and gas industry or Oilpatch or Oilfield as sometimes referred to when those words are capitalized. The McIlhenny family under various names and guises and with various annexes is another community in the text. But while all of these groups are important to the text the documentarians work on film is the central occasion and instance of this text existing at all. It is an ethnohistory but in the end it is just as much a book of film and photographic history. I have found the text compelling even as this sentence is typed in a draft. I hope it may one day appear as a polished book.

In a text like this where photography is such a substantial part of the story that fact is made more clear. The images of life and the portrayal of life in Acadiana during the nineteen forties and to a small extent in the early 1950s do tell us something about the subjects they seek to portray and also about those who created the images. The image at the start of this conclusory chapter shows a pelican in severe distress after being coated in oil after what many have established as America's greatest environmental disaster resulting from a single event. The BP -Transocean disaster on the Macondo Deep Water Horizon drilling rig. Deep drilling is interesting because at the time when the Flaherty crew were making Louisiana Story in rural Iberia Parish elsewhere in the Parish other new was being made.

***World's Deepest Oil Well
Brought In At Weeks Island***

The world's deepest oil well was brought in as a producer this week on Weeks Island by the Shell Oil Company, it was learned today.
The Well Smith State No. 3 is the fourth producer brought in by the company on Weeks Island. A fourth well is the Myles Salt Company well.
The well was completed March 27 at a depth of 13,867 13,868 feet officials said....¹

The article goes on to tell of other deep wells in the area and how much they are producing. The oil industry was certainly very much on the minds of the people in the region as *Louisiana Story* was being made. That leaves aside the promise of offshore drilling which was in many ways an outgrowth of Louisiana wetlands drilling. The oil industry did offer a future. The local Cajun community already discussed problems with canal planning and spills but there was a need and a desire to work with the industry. In times where *Angels of the Basin* and the struggle related to the BP spill and the legacy lawsuits and so many matters come readily to mind Cajuns still want to work with the industry. Even the ones who are most critical. Only a few would would like to see them go before the resource is fully exploited. The struggles and tensions between the marsh and the drilling rig continue.

One cannot watch the blowout scene in *Louisiana Story* without thinking of these events. The perception of events from the more distant past is shaped by images from the more recent past. My own work on this project began in 1991 and I was not the only person in the area thinking about these topics at that time. Here is an excerpt of other work being done more or less at the same time. Almost no real coordination or communication occurred regarding these things. But the notice following this paragraph appeared in the Abbeville paper when I was researching and writing early drafts of this topic at LSU while earning my Masters degree. In Abbeville the memory of *Louisiana Story* has endured. It also is featured prominently in *Angels of the Basin* which is a film which deals with such current crises and coastal erosion and such a recent event as Hurricane Katrina. So there are many reasons why not only film and photography but this film and these photographs have remained highly relevant to current discussions of film and photography. The struggle for a full understanding of Cajun life and identity today must address these images. There is no way to ignore the role in shaping the image and identity of a people and a place without greatly limiting the understanding of how that place and people moved into the world of mass communications through film and photography.

In 1991 Abbeville added a new feature to its local architecture as the Abbey Players acquired their current theater building and set it up for business. It was also the year that I began graduate study in history. It was not long after that that *Louisiana Story* found its way into my research and their theater in different ways.

Abbeville Meridional June 5 1992

¹ *Daily Iberian* April 4, 1947 Front page above the fold.

PATRONS NIGHT COORDINATION— Abbeville Fortnightly Club coordinators have teamed up with the Abbey Players to coordinate several wonderful patrons nights for the summer production of "At the Picture Show on Magdalen Square", a musical to begin here next week. Patrons Nights will be June 17 and 18 and a jazz brunch on June 21 Fortnightly members Susie Bertrand and Tracy Russo met with Abbey Players Deborah Atchetee and Marie Vaughan Regular performances begin June 19 Tickets are available at The Apple Tree in Abbeville, Raccoon Records and Video in Lafayette

Take a nostalgic trip back to Abbeville in the 1940s and come to the Abbey Players for their original musical " At the Picture Show on Magdalen Square" it written and directed by F. Wade Russo, an Abbevillian now living in New York. Patrons' Nights are on Friday June 17th, Saturday June 18th, and a Jazz Brunch noon on Sunday, June 19th.. For information call 893-2442. Regular performances begin June 19th for a limited run, with' performances every Wednesday through Sunday through July 4th. Tickets are available at The Apple Tree in Abbeville, Raccoon Records in Lafayette and Verna's Hallmark in New Iberia. The Abbey Players in happy to announce that, starting now, there will be reserved seating for all shows (Patron's night excluded). Get your tickets early for this limited run musical. See you at "The Picture Show".(Staff photo by Angie Heart)

The truth is that the writer F. Wade Russo has had the kind of stellar career at places like Julliard and the Boston Conservatory. He had left behind life in Acadiana and was proud of his Sicilian heritage in Cajun Country. Nonetheless, he celebrates his heritage in the region as well. In addition he certainly had many Cajun friends growing up and the established Sicilian community in Vermilion Parish has many ties by blood and marriage to the Acadian ethnic community. But still, the Cajun connection to the work is a complicated one at least. My own connection to this community is not without complications and it is in fact a complicated community. Brasseaux's book *Acadiana* cites the judgement of other scholars and the direct evidence presented in his book to show the great cultural complexity of the place and its peoples. Only a small glimpse of that aspect of Acadiana's identity and essence has been presented here. It also deserves to be said that *Louisiana Story* is not like *Evangeline* it does not have the same towering respect and also pervasive influence that poem has had in the culture. But Wade Russo's musical revue was certainly a sign that the movie had become part of the local cultural scene in many ways. Some of the material taken from the 1992 press related to the production will show how it lived again in the popular consciousness:

Abbey Players Theatre will open its doors this evening for the first production of the original musical 'At the Picture Show on Magdalen Square.' In honor of the special occasion, Abbeville Mayor Brady Broussard has proclaimed Friday, June

19. as 'At the Picture Show on Magdalen Square' Day here. Written and directed by Abbeville native (Staff photo {of Russo included here} by Angie Hebert) Wade Russo. the musical is based on the premier of the 1940's movie, 'The Louisiana Story' — but with a local twist. The entire cast features local talent. Shown performing 'Riders in the Sky' are (left to right) Davlon Rost, Jack Smith and Wayne Hebert. See page 1B for more information and photos.

To have a day proclaimed for it is far more than is typical for events in the Parish or this small city. The interest in the return of the successful Russo to his native roots is likely one of the reasons Abbeville got behind this celebration. The article continues:

. To read these names brings back precious memories of the gala premiere of the 'Louisiana Story* at Frank's Theatre and the good old days. Residents and businesses are remembered in scenes throughout the production; including the late Donald Frederick who lost his life when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Abbeville paid respect to Frederick by naming a boulevard in his honor As the musical says, from the church on the square to the Audrey Hotel and the smell of the syrup mill, Abbeville is where our hearts belong Members of the harmonic cast include Davlon Rost, Jack Smith, Wayne Hebert, Clay Chauvin, Paul Landry, Julien Couvillion, Evona Quails, Dave Pierce, Brown Pierce, Laura Meade, Jenny Meade, Ray Meade, Lisa Nunez, Leslie Campisi, Lauren Orellana, Tiffany Babineaux, Mandy Hebert, John Cramer, Gerald Landry, Shannon Redwing, Ellis Byers III, Casey Pierce, Alexander Evangeline, (Staff photo by Angie Hebert) Abbeville Mayor Brady Broussard presents Wade Russo with key to the city Kim Stagg, Sarah Ortego, Devin Orellana, Margaret Collier, Allison Tine, Jenissa Allen, Rochelle Collier, and Shawn Carter. Coordinated by Musical Supervisor Ronney Mayard, the orchestra consists of Madeline Dehart and Deidre Dartez, flutists, Christy Simon and Jennifer Mula, clarinets; Jerry Dehart, trumpet, Tim LeBlanc, drums; Julian Couvillion, strings; and F Wade Russo, piano. The cast is scheduled to give 12 more magnificent performances at the theatre. The final performance will be held at Abbeville High School on July 4th. Underwritten by First Commercial Bank, tickets for the musical production are available at The Apple Tree in Abbeville, Raccoon Records and Video in Lafayette and Verna's Hallmark in New Iberia For more information contact the Abbey Players

The cohesion of the community goes back to the way the film was dealt with by the paper and others at the time and does not seem to have diminished. The names in this list are left in place partly so that the reader can remember seeing some family names earlier in the text and also be fairly sure of not having seen others. The original production in 1992 was about as big a dramatic and musical experience as Abbeville has ever seen. Few can equal or surpass it in a town that does have a good bit of music and drama.

Eight years later after the rather extensive support that the original production of the Wade Russo work had received Abbeville celebrated the sesquicentennial of its founding (that's right 1850 after saying it is rooted in the 1840's but the founding was based on act act late in the total process of founding -- its incorporation -- most of the work was done in the 1840s). Mayor Brady Broussard chose Russo's musical revue as the centerpiece of the celebration and it was largely billed as a celebration of life in Abbeville in the 1940s. That may be fair enough but I think we have seen that the premiere was by no means a typical day and the issues and interests it brought to the fore were by no means limited to Abbeville. *Louisiana Story* has remained however part of the consciousness of this city and a mayor named broussard could appreciate that reality.

The years go on piling on new images and new perspectives that come into the world because of or merely at the same time as other images. The films being shown to the audiences that either do or do not go to theaters and movie houses to see these feature films change. Many of them hardly have any life as true film and some none at all. Mostly they are streams and patterns of digital information created in processes which imitate the filmmaking processes and ventures of previous decades. The result is also intentionally filmic. But whatever their function they owe little to cellulose many may still come to be printed on this medium in the end but they are not crafted in the old rituals of silver, sweat, light and cellulose which defined this art and expression so intensely for a few generations.

Like F. Wade Russo moving beyond his roots, the film industry has left film and the demands it made on men like Flaherty and Leacock and Webb somewhere in the past. It may be a past that is respected and valued but it is not the present. For me the use of film was a large part of my daily life for many years and now has been entirely replaced by the manipulation of the digital component of images.

When I went to China I had a film camera which my sister Mary had given me and it saw a lot of use there. Some of the pictures I took and others I composed but had executed by third persons appeared in the second most popular periodical reporting mostly on Vermilion Parish. *Bonnes Nouvelles*, where I had written quite a bit, carried this article about my experience there and photographs connected readers and neighbors back home to those days spent in a far away land. It was not the first time I had appeared in the local newspaper.

I took a lot of pictures and yet not as many as I probably should have. The camera required a special film to allow it to take pictures in three various formats including a broad panoramic view. One can compare that to the increasing universality of the digital experience. I relied mostly on my chief contact and handler in the Board of Foreign Experts, Special Exchanges Office at the Shandong Institute of Business and Technology to procure the rare film. So even in the recent past film made its mark on lives such as mine and the experience of Flaherty and the documentarians in Acadiana was also shaped by any number of experiences based directly on

real and tangible facts about film. Some film was ruined, some was delivered late, some was defective. These instances were kept at a minimum. Film management was the reason why. Daily rushes are one thing but today one can see the image on replay right away. There is less need for the kind of structure in community and functional team which existed in the lives of those photographers and filmmakers.

Today the kind of work they did could be done with less obtrusive organization because of the ability to avoid the problems associated with film itself. This may allow all sort of records to be kept edited and erased which would be nice to have on a research project such as this has been. But it also lessens the chance of organizations which can be kept accountable in the same way. These people expected to be judged by history and while I applaud much of the work they did I also criticize it and find fault. That sense of doing work that endures in a group that is committed and documented is likely changing. Media companies abound in entertainment but the cohesion of the old studios is largely gone. That trend is likely to be more pronounced in work such as this. Nothing stays the same and what lessons may be gained here are not lessons for those doing exactly this work because this exact work will never be done again.

Cajuns have always traveled and so did Acadians and so did the folk of Poitou -- not everyone all the time but navigation has long been a major theme. Most traveled short distances and most cattle drives were short but the skills of travel formed part of the culture as did the tendency. Cajuns and their ancestors have also welcomed those who travelled to see, study and document them in various capacities for centuries. My trip to China was reported in a newspaper in which I had written quite a few stories very much about this particular region and its communities -- especially the Cajuns. The *Daily Iberian* reported while Flaherty was making his film in their parish that they boasted 3,006 veterans of World War II and many of them had traveled. The same paper had a regular column called the *Talk of the Teche* reported 4,100 visitors had signed in during one month at the Acadian House named for Gabriel at the Evangeline Park in St. Martinville. This was in March in 1947 and was reported in April and showed the fruit of Dudley Leblanc's earlier work as a legislator was ongoing at the time.

All of this was part of the fabric of a region and is captured to some degree in the work of the documentarians. But to a remarkable degree it is ignored. China was very much on the mind of newspaper readers in the region and on the mind of those families who still had sons and some daughters serving in Asia. Some of those who read my article and spoke to me about it when it was published after my stay in China had served in the Korean War as young men, more of them had served in the Vietnam War -- almost none were alive and able to speak to me who had been in the Pacific during the World War or in the region when the documentarians were here. But my grandfather who commanded a ship in the Pacific in World War II and died when I was studying at LSU for my Master of Arts in History discussed this work with me a great deal and saw now disjuncture between the life in rural Acadiana and the interest he had in world affairs. I was living with my family who were involved in a Catholic lay mission company working around the world when the China article came out. We all were used to reporting and being

reported upon within the context of the larger world. Looking back at supply lines to Louisbourg, ships between France and Acadie, Acadie and New England and the role of trade to New Orleans from the first settlement of the lands around what is now Abbeville each form an additional set of reminders that Barsam has misinterpreted this culture as it appears in this Louisiana Story quite a bit. In no way do Joseph Carl Boudreaux, Lionel Leblanc and Evelyn Bienvenue represent one of the most primitive cultures in the world. Nor is isolation a primary shaper of this culture as has been proposed by many poorly informed and ill advised observers over the centuries. A different value system and a different way of life have sustained themselves here for centuries and among these people for earlier centuries. That value system and way of life have in turn sustained these families, individuals and communities.

An Open Door to China

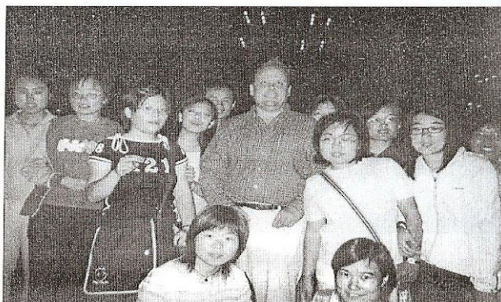
by Frank "Beau" Summers

Going to China has been a dream of many Americans. Whether we think of Nixon's famous journey to establish ties there, or the American diplomatic struggle we call the "Open Door Policy", America has struggled to have a chance to participate in the life of that vast and distant land. In August of 2004, the door opened for me to go to China after many years of reading about and studying the place and after several months of correspondence with the Shandong Institute of Business and Technology. The Institute is a university class institution in the port city of Yantai in Shandong Province. Yantai is in the North central latitudes beside the Yellow Sea on the Shandong (or Shantung) peninsula where the famous sage Confucius once lived, studied and taught. His greatest disciple, the scholar Mencius also lived there. I was as eager to dive into the local culture there as I had been to study this place when I was writing about the local cultural scene for *Bonnes Nouvelles*.

I am a college English major (with a Master of Arts in History added later) and I would be teaching English so it was a chance to do something in my major at the college level. My inexpensive internet-purchased ticket was from New Orleans to

Hong Kong. There were stops in Minneapolis and Japan. In Hong Kong I hoped to get a train through Eastern China to Yantai. My parents brought me to New Orleans after I arrived at their home from a send-off luncheon at my grandmother's house. In Minneapolis I exchanged some US money for both Hong Kong Dollars and Chinese Yuan or Remimbi. I had traveled to the Philippines and New Zealand, so I felt I would handle the long journey fairly well.

The Airport in Hong Kong is both very large and very modern. Speedy trains with television sets built into the seats connect the airport to the rest of the Hong Kong Special Autonomous Region. There are dozens of tour and travel agencies and it is easy for an American to get a Hong Kong only visa for over a month at the airport. After trying for several hours to book a train trip through to Yantai, I checked into the Regal Imperial Airport Hotel and set the concierge to work trying to get me a train or some other kind of transit on to Yantai. My first night in China I slept in a very nice - but for me, quite pricey suite. By then I was really tired. Almost 48 hours had passed since I had last been in a bed. But in the morning, I woke (with a wake-up call) to



The writer on campus for an open air meeting called English Corner with students from the Shandong Institute of Business and Technology, Yantai.

Photo courtesy Frank "Beau" Summers

enjoy my coffee overlooking both the bays and the green misty mountains of Southern China.

In the early morning, I checked in with the concierge and secured my late check-out from the hotel. Then I explored as much of Hong Kong as my brief stay would allow. The city had all kinds of modern advantages and problems, British charm, Chinese character and complexity squeezed in between fishing fleets, green hills and a bustling port. After I returned to the airport to pick up my luggage just in time to beat the extended

deadline, I explored the vast airport pushing a luggage cart. I now had given up on the train and had a China Airlines ticket through to Beijing and then to Yantai. I would change airlines in Beijing for another Chinese carrier. Before setting off for Beijing, I also sent out a good number of postcards.

On the flight I had a glass of Great Wall wine and noticed that although there were a good number of foreigners on the jumbo jet, there were very few other Americans. Already I sensed that some Chinese people would like to talk to me, but were afraid for whatever

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Travel is a part of the culture and cultural exchange is a part of the culture and there is no period of Cajun history when this is not evident. In the years that Flaherty was making his film Cajuns and others in the region were entertaining oil executives. Pan Am Airlines executives and others in the region in hopes of forging ties to the whole world and they did so without wishing to give up who they were. This kind of exchange was still part of the picture when the musical revue remembered the film in 1992. This is evident in some more press from the Abbeville Meridional that year.

Today's VISITORS FROM NEAR AND FAR Some 40 Girl Scouts from states throughout the nation toured the area as part of their two-week Cajun Days/Cajun Ways National Wider Opportunity program. The group enjoyed a tour of downtown Abbeville and the Vermilion Courthouse (left) by the Volunteer Tour Guide Committee while girls from Vermilion Parish enjoyed a week of Day Camp at Camp Steen in Abbeville. Second grade students Philana Jackson, Megan Trahan, M Dartez and Leslie Zaunbrecher (top photo) play with the balloon yoyos they made while campers Kathiryn Listi, Megan Pearson and Kattie Marceaux (bottom photo) relax in their camp chairs. Thie chairs were cut by Theodore Bares of Erath. Girl Scouts from throughout nation tour city of Abbeville California' Iowa' Florida' New York' That's just a few of the many states represented with 40 Girl Scouts from throughout the United States came into Abbeville Tuesday These girls were selected from over 250 applicants to attend the two-week Cajun Days/Cajun Ways National Wider Opportunity sponsored by Bayou Girl Scout Council The history and culture of the Acadiana area will be sampled and experienced by the scouts through demonstrations, tours, and hands-on experiences

The article will continue below but it is worth pondering just a bit the methodology of pedagogy. The idea that teaching a living culture is worth presenting to the nation as a whole is present here. The idea of learning across many resources, of girls being important, of all this being newsworthy. This is not an enormous event but it still is a significant event nonetheless. Significant for historians and ethnologists in what it can reveal with a little pause for careful analysis. The same text continues below.

They met with other Vermilion Parish Scouts at Camp Steen for a Day Camp training session Then on Monday morning the 40 scouts met each other for the first time as they converged at the Academy of Sacred Heart in Grand Coteau which would be their home for two weeks. From that location they travelled daily to such sights as Vermilionville, Eunice Liberty Theater, the State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Nature trails and refuges in Cameron Parish, an Alligator Farm, an Atchafalaya Basin tour, the New Iberia cane fields and Tabasco tours, and a weekend in New Orleans They arrived in Abbeville Tuesday afternoon and visited the Girl Scout Day Camp which was in progress at Camp Steen They departed from camp and arrived at the historic marker at St Mary Magdalen Church for a walking tour of downtown historic Abbeville led by the Volunteer Tour Guide Committee The hour and a half long tour brought them through St. Mary Magdalen Church, around the square, both North and South Concord Streets and to the Courthouse while enjoying a narrative of the early days of Abbeville. Organization of the tour committee was under the supervision of Nilta Russo who greeted the group upon arrival Ruth Broussard conducted a most

interesting tour of St Mary Magdalen Church explaining the stained glass windows, irons and other features. Guiding the girls through Magdalen Square was done by Francis Dixon. Interesting stones of yesteryear were related by Bee Bee McClellan and Rosemary Sandoz while strolling North and South Concord Streets. An information tour of the Vermilion Parish Courthouse was given concerning the paintings of Harry Worthman that are located on the first floor. The scouts enjoyed pizza while watching slides of the local scouts recent trip to Our Cabana Girl Scout World Center in Mexico. Then everyone joined in for a dance session and "Freeze Party". The evening culminated with a preview of the new Abbey Players production "Picture Show on Magdalen Square" by Wade Russo. The scouts enjoyed the dress rehearsal and the historical enlightenment the evening offered. Bayou Girl Scout Council, which sponsored the event, serves girls in the parishes of Acadia, Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, Cameron, Evangeline, Iberia, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, St Landry, St Martin, St Mary, and Vermilion. The organization is a United Way member agency.

The inclusion of girl scouts in this audience that saw a local interpretation of this film shows the values that still define the community were represented in diverse and varied ways. It also shows that people cared about the preservation of enduring values. In addition it shows that Louisiana Story had remained part of the memory of the local cultural tradition.

In 1992 while working on the first drafts of the first version of this text I had already some kind of reputation in Vermilion Parish for both scholarship and being associated with film and movies. This has been mentioned before but now it is spelled out a bit more specifically. On June 28, 1988, in the year that came forty years after the release of *Louisiana Story* on an ordinary day which was a Tuesday, *The Abbeville Meridional* featured a photograph on the upper left hand corner of its eighth page that was captioned. I was already married and in fact had worked on the film just after coming back from my honeymoon. During that Honeymoon among other things Michelle and I spent some time at the Shrine of the Confederacy at Jefferson Davis's home at Beauvoir Mississippi. But the moviemakers had cleared out long before this article appeared. Our wedding had gotten significant ink in the same paper but beyond that I had not had many article length pieces appear which discussed me or my life. Neither had I been absent from photographs with briefer captions or notices of some achievement or other. If Lionel Leblanc was a well known trapper. I perhaps was well known too. In addition, a few years before I had held several positions at the paper and my byline had appeared there a good number of times. But enough of that and on to the first connection with film which really is associated with my name in the Cajun community.

"BEAU IS BAD -- Beau Summers of Abbeville cradles his M-16 automatic weapon between takes on the motion picture "The Blob" here in January. Shoot-to-kill orders on photographers were never given by producers intent on squelching photos such as this of guarded special effects (the white bio/chem costumes), but it came close. (Meridional photo by Bernard Chaillot).

It was a time in my life when things were somewhat different than they are today.... The facts of human life are such that there are many side both to every real and actual person and also to every substantial reputation. My reputation would appear under quite different representation just the following year, not the dangerous near outlaw of the screen and set but rather the promising and relatively young graduate who could still hope for a bright future.

Summers Top Graduate at USL

LAFAYETTE — Frank W. "Beau" Summers III of Abbeville has been named winner of this year's Outstanding Graduating Senior Award, given by the USL Alumni Association. Summers was announced as winner of the award at the university's May 14 commencement exercises in the Cajundome. He was selected from nine ' nominees from USL's various academic colleges, on the basis of leadership, scholarship and service. Summers graduated with a • degree in English, and earned a cumulative grade point average of 3.661 on a 4.0 scale. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank W. Summers II of Abbeville, and the grandson of Frank W. Summers, retired Chief Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court, and Mr. and Mrs. Cecil B. Gremillion of Abbeville. He is married to the former Michelle Denise Broussard, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Eddie J. Broussard of Abbeville. "I believe that we live in a world community," he says. "My devotion to my campus, hometown and my country have always been an integral part of my commitment to the needs of humanity as a whole. My upbringing as the child of missionary parents has given me a sense of fraternity with all people." He entered USL with 18 hours of advanced placement credit, 16 in Spanish, and has been on the Dean's List each semester of his enrollment and was elected to Outstanding Young Men of America.

Reputation in the local papers, the chats of the most respected raconteurs and in other places means more in a place like a small Acadian town than it does in many other places. The South has at times had a kindred spirit in that regard. But reputation alone, honor alone and all such related values alone are not enough. Cajun culture teaches people to aspire to a very strong basis in substance for anything that raises itself above that substance. The fictional LaTour family added the income from oil to their trapper's income and secured the life they were living into a better future. My own journey in life has been defined by my failure to achieve the kinds of security in some ways which both Lionel and Dudley Leblanc achieved in differing degrees. In producing a work like this one can hope of course to lay a foundation of a more secure future for one's own life but the odds of such success only grow longer with the passing of the years.

This is one of the more mixed and digressing chapters in a text not distinguished by laser like focus. I end this work mostly as one reflecting on the completion of a major project. When any writer sits down or leans on an elbow at a computer, sheet of parchment, papyrus or paper or anything else to write a story, fictional or historical it seems to me that a writer expresses some real faith in humanity. The truth is that as America and the entire world continue to evolve it is necessary and desirable that Acadiana continue to evolve as well. The challenges of all humans are no less real and no less shared than challenges specific to the many groups of humans that share this planet. To tell the story of this particular group of people does not diminish the need for Cajuns to address the challenges which they face along with all other people and simply as people without distinctions deriving from their unique ethnic identity. I am deeply ensconced in and conversant with Acadian/Cajun culture. I write with faith in their aspirations and in my own heritage I write with faith in those who read and study history. One hopes that it is not a blind faith but producing this text has certainly been an act of faith.

Faith that members of the human species remain literate, curious, prosperous and sympathetic enough to give a damn about a narrative that does not immediately determine their own survival. Of course one may hope that either social pressure from the popularity of the book among a reader's friends or real pressures on students assigned to read the text may help its popularity and boost its readership. Nonetheless most writers realize that the odds are long against their book achieving either of those two particularly desirable ebeneffits. Sometimes that faith seems misplaced, when one examines the circumstances in which one is writing and all the urgencies of any year including 2016 it may seem unlikely that one's words will find their way to the last (or at least the current) descendants of Thucydides, the latter votives of Clio who will really find in themselves the energy to address a vision of the past and find in it some direction and insight as regards the present and the future. Anyone who has read this up to now can see that in part it is a family history in any number of ways, it is thereby equally prone to deeper insight and also more likely to be subject to accumulating misinformation. The book is more than one story and more than an interweaving of multiple stories. But a story of documentarians, Standard Oil, Cajuns and the McIlhenny family between the years of 1943 and 1953 is at the center of this text and that story is about as accurate as I can make it. The story begins in a time when a great war was ending and America's role in the world was changing, people of various sorts were faced with the nearly eternal realization that the world would change and yet people were much as they had always been, the social context was modified by the war's massive boost to industrialization and a kind of early information explosion that we overlook at times because the one before it was more striking compared to the days before the printing press, telegraph and photograph had been integrated well before the war. We also overlook it because the information explosion in more recent times has been substantially bigger. This final narrative section that is not labeled an appendix ends with the present not because the present is a logical and inescapable climax and fulfillment to the processes of the early postwar era but because it is when I am writing.

Acadian history as I have known it, petroleum history and film history as subjects similar enough to my topic to matter may one or the other or all three well be over within a generation or two.

That is not mere baseless conjecture but in all three cases one can readily enough see signs that could portend the end of Cajuns and Acadians, the end of the oil and gas industry and the end of anything that could be called the film industry. I personally hope that none of these cessations will transpire and most of all that Acadians and Cajuns will be around for a long time to come. But perhaps history is most itself when it is written to preserve a story with as much depth, reality and fullness as possible in every way that the historian can preserve it.

If this relationship with readers is one in which a great deal is invested in an uncertain outcome then that is perhaps as it should be. The winners and losers of actual wars often will both read the histories of those wars but in all the small cultural struggles which occur across a society and across lifetime's and generations there is involved in these times a struggle for relevance and readership. In the minds of many writers there is a sense that simply in being read at all there is a dimension of victory. For those in an intense and broad struggle of ideas that are not very compatible being read seems to indicate that the writers side has won through, because the writer feels, his or her opponents are by and large through with reading the sort of things the writer is producing.

Cajuns and other people in Acadiana were not extremely and broadly concerned about the SONJ documentary projects. That is one of the most definitive realities that cannot be escaped as one researches the response to the documentarians and to Flaherty's somewhat autonomous film crew within the Stryker SONJ organization. These creative and observant outsiders were the objects of gossip and newsgathering but they were not major objects of either. Largely, this is a story of a people caught up in a period defined by the end of a war they did not believe was going to lead to any certain and enduring peace. As a whole the regional press was very concerned with rebuilding Germany and Japan, with the threat of Communism and with what would happen to the economy, The press also reported on the progress of the oil and gas industry in the region and the country, Movies also commanded some attention. But reporting on the SONJ projects as such was limited. Neither do I allow my own intense interest in these activities to distort the portrayal of the larger response to what was being done and thus to distort the story more than I can help it. The documentarians on the other hand show little sense that they had sold out their integrity and point of view to big oil. They seem to me to be aware that they are creating serious work in a documentary tradition that would stand alone before the judgement of history. Whatever greatness we believe the documentary tradition to have, we remain condemned by their words and efforts if we do not consider these projects to have been part of that tradition.

It is not worthwhile to simplify a comparison of Donald Frederick who died and Whitney Leblanc who lived in two different wars. But the era does seem to be different. Acadiana seems to have

joined a more individualistic America than when it named a street for Donald Frederick after Pearl Harbor. In 1953 Whitney Adam Leblanc of Iberia Parish was involved in one of the most bloody and violent encounters in U.S. Military history. Nobody was making a movie about his experience or carefully documenting his days in pitched battle in still photographs. He endured a great deal in battle and afterwards his records were confused or misfiled and the consequences of that battlefield confusion stayed with him later on. By the time the Battle of Pork Chop Hill was over his family had more or less lost track of him for a while. It may not be much more than a coincidence but there is an individualism within a broad national context that seems to describe and define Whitney Allen Leblanc's wartime homecoming. Years later after some deliberate restorations of ethnic and regional institutions had been made his son Roger would help to restore his war record to good order. In 1953 he was somehow more than a little bit alone in that vast and terrible conflict. The Battle of Pork Chop Hill would be portrayed in a movies that focussed only on the last few days of what was actually the longest battle in the Korean War. That movie lay in the future, the film and the lasting name of the battle came from the shape of the hill on a contour map most soldiers never saw. But those who were there fighting related to the name because it was a place where men did not merely die but were reduced to chops of flesh lying about unburied on display. Surely an incident like that ought to define this year, but graphic and significant as the Korean War may have been for the Cajuns who fought in the war or lost loved ones in it it has little to do with this study except to mention that it had so little influence on the regional experience of daily life as a whole. There seems in many ways to be little connection between the year at war as the troops lived it and the experience of being or observing Cajuns in 1953 we are mostly considering those experiences at the end of this text. We consider a year marked not by great violence and risk but by a sense of being caught between the past and the future.

Robert J. Flaherty and his wife Frances had lived in the small town of Abbeville more often than not while working on the film. They had been the center of a community that included quite a few people. Frances Flaherty has perhaps been shorted more than anyone else for her likely contribution to the film. But the Boudreaux family were also very much a family unit that completed the environment. A great journey had been made in a short time from the first meeting between Robert Flaherty and Roy Stryker on April 1944 when they met in New York, shared a bottle of Irish whiskey and discussed the project. He and Frances had discussed the project thereafter and he had signed the contract in December of that same year. *Louisiana Story* had begun.

The SONJ photography project supervised by Roy Stryker ended completely somewhere else and the occasion was not much noticed in Acadiana. The previous decade had carried the world from the greatness, horror and weighty contests of the Second World War to something else. The something else was a period of emerging American prosperity. It was a period of urbanization. For the first time the US Census of 1950 showed that more residents of Louisiana lived in cities than outside of them. The period of this study began when the Louisiana Maneuvers were the largest training drill in U.S. Army history. By 1953 despite the heroic action of some Cajuns and some of their neighbors in the Korean War and the pervasive influence of

the Cold War with the Soviet Union on society Louisiana had the character of a region long at peace in the eyes of many people. Compared to the wars on their own soil and the mass mobilizations of World War II the role of the military in the state was greatly reduced. For Cajuns the early 1950s were a time of uncertainty. The region itself was changing. Dwight D. Eisenhower was the new President of the United States and although few could imagine all it might mean people were starting to talk of a system of highways that would change rural America like never before. The Mississippi River Gulf Outlet was promoted in the 1950s was to help rectify the limits of the Industrial Canal and other features of New Orleans shipping to help it compete with the rest of the world in a changing era of navigation, bigger ships need different kinds of canals. By 1953 many rural Cajuns had already noticed problems with natural drainage disruptions on a smaller scale as oil companies changed waterways to allow deeper draft vessels to work in many location and then abandoned the canals as improvements without any real plan or inventory. A few were already concerned about the effects of some plans to correct Louisiana's deep draft deficiency by permitting deep-draft vessels to access the Industrial Canal inner harbor in a new feature. But the kind of very distinctive rural and wetlands Cajuns who most discussed these things tended to have a fading influence and little voice to speak of in those years. In addition Cajuns had built many miles of levees and canals for centuries and were hopeful that the emerging national power would make good choices. There was no organized Cajun resistance to the authorization for the MRGO was formally provided by the United States Congress in the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1956. The world had begun to rely on fewer people per ton to crew a ship or a boat, produce an acre of crops and local militia duty in small boats and infantry units was more or less fading into the past. Chris Park in his book *Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion* states that Roman Catholic religious affiliation has been in decline among Cajuns since 1945. He also the extremely important role that Roman Catholicism played in maintaining a distinct identity for French Louisiana throughout its history within the largely Protestant and Anglicized United States of America.

The forces that would make the coming years had not yet fully matured but for those most aware of the limits of the new era there was no doubt that powerful forces were reshaping America. It was a time of anxiety about the nuclear war. The Soviet Union had by then detonated a nuclear weapon and begun building more and the Cold War had begun in earnest. In 1953 Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were first United States Citizens who were both civilians and executed for treason by their government. The world clearly faced new dangers that were unfamiliar to the long and complex heritage with which they associated themselves. Mostly the Cajuns were at peace and in prosperity as they lived out their lives. For them, as for most Americans the Korean War was a far away thing following a terrible war with Japan and hopefully part of avoiding an even more terrible war with China and Russia. For Whitney Adam Leblanc of Iberia Parish and some other Cajun soldiers it was a struggle nightmarish violence in which they fought two actions known together as the Battle of Pork Chop Hill in 1953. For them the year was spectacularly violent. But there would be nobody to meet Whitney Leblanc at the bus stop when he got home. The Korean war was a war mostly of individual Cajuns and individual Cajun families in the smaller sense of the word. These people felt at once very Cajun and very American but the two identities had little connection in this experience. For the

purposes of this book the Korean War is fairly or unfairly largely ignored. It has often been largely ignored in recountings of the period as it was perceived by Americans at home. One cannot help but note that the war was fought far from any Cajun or Acadian homeland, neither the enemies nor the allies spoke much French and the nature of the struggle was poorly understood across many sectors of American society. The contrast between the experience of being involved in the fighting and being left behind was even greater than is normal in the long history of war.

It is hard to say how much the *Louisiana Story* and the SONJ photographs were viewed, discussed and remembered but clearly they were already objects of nostalgia. Already the vision of their world before the growth of the oil industry was seeming like something tied to a distant past. The world that children learned about in school and the world that was reported in the media was most a world that seemed likely to share values that were continuous with those of their past. Increasingly there was a specialization of cultural functions within the community. People who identified themselves as Cajuns were more than ready to support those who preserved cultural expressions and traditions to some extent. However, the sense of continuity of communal interdependence which relied on culturally distinct institutions was in decline. Language, religion, the basic components of the economy and many other aspects of life were in a real sense changing in the face of a world that was less amenable to preserving their distinct identity than ever before. This has not been and will not now become a comparative history text. However, other rural communities and other minority groups were becoming aware of a rapidly changing world as well. *Louisiana Story* had been released again as *Cajun* the year before this final year of the SONJ project and the tone of its distribution was less respectful than previously. the Stryker project for Standard Oil was ending and it was not much noticed. America was moving into the period that was recognizably the 1950s and in many Cajun towns and villages there was a strong effort to go with the flow of the new American consensus. Cajuns were generally proud to be Americans and were also wondering as individuals and in groups of different sizes and types exactly how American they were welcome to be. Some Cajuns were fighting in Korea under the American flag and a few had already returned from action in that war. Those who had known or cared a great deal about Flaherty and were interested in movies noted that Flaherty had been credited as one of the directors on a final Academy Award winning Documentary about Michelangelo called *Titan*. That laurel earned in 1950 would be one of his last, by 1953 had been dead for more than a year. He had died in Vermont and Louisiana seemed to be just one of many places where he had spent some time.

Film editor Helen Van Dongen was still alive when I began writing this thesis and I had begun the process of contacting her but never did. Since that time she has published a diary of her experience on the project and that diary has formed a valuable counterpoint and compliment to other points of view and observations throughout this book. She seems to have gone from Flaherty's company to restore the long and complex relationship with Joris Ivers after *Louisiana Story*. She was certainly at least relatively young and vigorous in 1953 Forty-four years old and near the end of a career in film that had begun back in her native Netherlands when she was in her teens. Born overseas in Amsterdam, Netherlands she did one last film after *Louisiana*

Story. A film to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human rights was a work she produced edited and directed. She married a pro-Soviet US Journalist named Kenneth Durant and all three of them were in Vermont when Robert J. Flaherty died. It is hard to be sure what she was thinking about her stay in Cajun country in 1953. But she was in another part of rural America. She had edited Flaherty's work *The Land* produced or commissioned by Pare Lorentz and so with her time in Cajun country and her long final stay in Vermont her commitment to rural American life was really very substantial. Her life was also deeply shaped by the experience of the Cold War in her marriage to her husband. But one has to presume that she left Louisiana and the Cajun mostly in the realm of memory. Not interviewing her is one of those missed opportunities for which there can be no substitute.

Richard Leacock the photographer on the film was also not interviewed during the first years of work on this thesis and that is another lost opportunity. He was still of coherent mind and sufficiently vigorous when this work was begun. In fact he was still making films when this work became dormant in 1993. But he did speak of *Louisiana Story* on the record and as his career in film continued to develop we know that he continued to think about making that film. In fact he spoke about the film for a project that asks some of the same questions this project asks and he stated that he never worked with anyone who was "nearly like" Flaherty. However neither the Cajuns nor the oil industry seemed to draw him in at a personal or professional level to any great degree. At least that is how things would have seemed to people paying close attention in 1953. Over time things would have seemed much different. It would not be possible to draw a line from *Louisiana Story* to his later life but we know he thought about the film and discussed it. We also know some other things about his later years. But the French language and Francophone world that had been part of his life in Cajun country would have it day later in life. He spent his final decades in France. There is very little doubt that his Cajun connections through the film gave him an extra entree into French life and society.

Ned McIlhenny's legacy of a fascinating life, studying alligators traveling and developing the Jungle Gardens for naturalist and tourism interests all continue. His involvement with his family and with Tabasco sauce are his greatest legacies and those charged with preserving his legacy do not spend much time and energy on enshrining his contribution to the film he made with Flaherty. He got a credit in a life with many other perhaps more impressive credits. It was to be one of his last projects however and he scarcely survived the premiere of the film. His family and company would continue to be a big part of the local scene and environment. One of the many mysteries related to the life of a man whose life is well documented is exactly how much he had to do with the introduction of the nutria to Louisiana. The nutria is in many to rural Acadiana as the boll weevil was to the former Confederacy after the Civil War. The nutria damaged the levees with its dens and that could be vastly dangerous to everyone and very costly to rice farmers especially,. The indigenous muskrat did not do this. In addition it competed with the muskrat for habitat and deprived trappers of a pelt bearing animal that could continuously produce a valuable commodity and which contributed more than the nutria to the health of the ecosystem. The nutria was one of several invasive species that damaged the country Cajuns had long labored to bring into a kind of maturity and development many of them

felt that most of America would never understand. So for this and many other reasons he was always an ambiguous figure for the Cajun who lived all around him. There was reason to like or dislike him but no way to trivialize his influence in the region. His involvement in *Louisiana Story* was only one of the things he did which kept getting him mentioned in conversations among Cajuns throughout his life.

But by 1953 he was gone. He had been a man who could deal with the Cajuns and the oil industry as an independent outsider who dealt with both communities often enough but did not depend on either one of these influential local institutions for his primary identity and financial support.

Beyond *Louisiana Story* the Standard Oil photographers who were shutting down had documented a great deal of life in Cajun Country. Roy Stryker was still going on as an almost entirely unique figure in America's twentieth century experience. He would do several more projects before his career ended. He had acknowledged that Flaherty would be entirely autonomous and would have all direct influence that anybody exercised over his little unit of Helen Van Dongen, Richard Leacock, the actors and a few locals hired for different tasks. But this was not "entirely autonomous" in the ordinary English definition of the words. He still felt that he was the overarching authority for what Standard Oil was doing on film. In a real sense this text takes his point of view seriously and uses his project as the larger matrix for the studies and discussions that appear in this text. Photographer Arnold Eagle was apparently charged by Roy Stryker with keeping an eye on the Louisiana Story group. In a sense he was Stryker's man there and he doubled for and complimented Richard Leacock's work in still photography on the film. He would remain in that field of endeavor his whole life more or less. A radical leftist by American standards with ties to other Eastern European Jews on the Left who were part of New York City's political and social milieu. In 1953 he seems to have been getting established back in that city and environment and leaving Cajun Country somewhere in his memory. Eagle would become a Professor of Photography at the New School for Social Research in 1955 and would die shortly after this thesis was begun the first time. Like many others on the left he had little incentive to emphasize the years he had spent in the employ of Standard Oil.

Todd Webb was one of the photographers whose work moved me the most and he too was alive in the first years of this project and not in the renewed project of 2016. I never interviewed him. He had been a photographer for the U.S. Navy in World War II and after the SONJ project he would distinguish himself with many more photographs and photographic endeavors. Many of them have received recognition but the time spent in the SONJ project and specifically his Acadiana photographs in that period have not received that much recognition. In many ways Todd Webb seemed conflicted about his work in the South for SONJ. The Cajun Country episode in that part of his work was not the focus of his most obvious discontent but he seems to have moved on and not spent much time reminiscing about his work on the photographic project.

Louisiana Story had been filmed just as real and substantial oil exploration in the Gulf of Mexico was getting started in 1953 the offshore oil industry was a real industry and was employing

people on rigs in the water and also in all the jobs and industries it took to keep them there. the leases from small landholder and larger ones would continue but the Gulf itself would become the more important asset to develop and none of it had to be leased from Cajun families that resembled the fictional La Tour family in Flaherty's film. Cajuns would find their way forward in the world but the pattern laid out in the film would not be as important as some might have thought it would be. By 1953 there were many more signs of the future being one in which a variety of forces would create new population groups, new economic patterns and a great deal of social change. That sense of change was tied to the emerging forces of social change promoting a major set of adjustments in race relations. To a remarkable degree the Standard Oil of New Jersey Photographic Project and the film were both projects which had far less to do with racial questions than did many other major film and photography projects that were in some way similar.

Thurgood Marshall and whatever lawyers, scholars and political operatives participated with him in the early Civil Rights Era before the Civil Rights Era did not have the kind of visibility that the movement headed by Martin Luther King Junior would have. However, in Vermilion Parish there would be a great deal of discussion among people who watched the law with the eyes of an established white majority in the rural south. Here the sense of constitutional change and the complex demands of federalism was somewhat heightened. The eyes of many of the better informed Cajuns were turned to cases working their way through the US Supreme Court. The sense of a more interconnected and yet less institutionally diverse American society was not so much palpably present as it was expected and felt to be everywhere approaching. Leander Perez was not a Cajun but his 1962 excommunication by New Orleans Archbishop Rummel was still a good number of years away. But it was a confrontation that among many others was in the wind. Like Pork Chop Hill Brown Versus the Board of Education was one of the biggest things happening in 1953 and it had a kind of well known invisibility. American seemed to have become a place where the great contest that many were involved in nonetheless did not define daily experience. Abbeville would have its connection to a New Orleans born churchman who was much more influential in internal Church discussions of race relations than Archbishop Rummel but the name of Tracy had not entered our story in 1953.

The Civil Rights Era as we really know it to have been played out was still in the future. Segregated schools and facilities were spread across Cajun country, but the complicated history of race relations in the region was clearly moving into a new phase of experience. Whatever unique qualities the racial protocols and structures of South Louisiana may have preserved were not likely to thrive in the more nationalized American society that everyone saw emerging. That growing nationalizing pressure also had the effect of increasing the sense of Southern and Neo-Confederate identity. The memories of the abuses of the Reconstruction era had not died away. Generally there was a fear of integrating forces greater than any hopes of a better opportunity for social progress and ethnic restoration for the Creoles of Color with whom the Cajun community maintained some kind of relationship. The first inklings of the tensions to come were being felt in many sectors of the community and the region in 1953.

African-Americans were experiencing the continuous change sense of change with more optimism as the U.S. Supreme Court heard the case of *Brown Versus The Board of Education* twice that year and prepared to outlaw racial segregation in the states on the grounds of the equal protection clause and other guarantees of the United States Constitution. For anyone French Louisiana in general who had a sense of this was a strange time because the U.S. Supreme Court had in 1896 used its authority to destroy the traditional privileges of those of mixed race communities who had long known special opportunity and privileged status in their larger cultural context. There were in rural Acadiana many instances of resistance to the uniform application of all the minutiae of the current Jim Crow regime. There were nonetheless many segregationists, white supremacists and adherents of other points of view who feared the interference of the United States government in every school district. The decision of the U.S. Supreme Court would not be handed down until 1954. But 1953 saw the Court deciding a case people knew was important. The United States government opposed segregation because it alienated the colored peoples of the world. This was very specific proof that the Cold War was a force for a new level of political conformity.

My grandfather Frank W. Summers had put his private law practice which he had resumed after the war into the hands of law partner Sam Leblanc and was serving as a judge in the Louisiana Fifteenth Judicial District in 1953. He would return to private practice before leaving it behind forever when he was elected to the Louisiana Supreme Court in 1960. Just before his death I would discuss an earlier version of this thesis with him and he would give me his opinions about the period of time as well as about some of the characters who made their way into the story. One of the factors he remembered was that this was a period when Thurgood Marshall and not Martin Luther King Jr. seemed to be man destined to be remembered as the head of the movement for African-Americans to achieve greater rights and more civic and social equality. Marshall was perceived as a man with a sophisticated racial consciousness, an understanding of the theory of federalism and who really valued the constitutional process. For some like my grandfather Marshall inspired a certain cautious optimism for those who were involved in trying to understand the nature of Louisiana's legal and constitutional future which would largely be the matrix of Cajun ethnic and communal status. Something slow, careful, enduring and well conceived was within their view of what one might hope would form the next stage in race relations. From the standards of men such as this the real Civil Rights Era led by King and others on the streets and using direct action was a profoundly different kind of movement. One of the other lenses of this period through which my grandfather and others in Vermilion parish would look back was the life, work and friendship of Bishop Tracy. This pastor of St. Mary Magdalene Church in Abbeville while he was Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of Lafayette would attend the Vatican council and would speak forcefully in favor of clear language supporting racial equality. This was a future bound to harm white residents of Acadiana and other regions and bound to sweep aside a constitutional sensibility. The split between the lives they could assure for their own families and the ideas they had in their heads about what law and government ought to be about was strained and many feared that the future would bring changes they could not manage very well. Abbeville and Vermilion Parish and Acadiana were not centers of strong opposition to all change in the state of racial affairs. But neither were they

universal desegregationists. They looked out at a complicated reality with anxiety in a year marked by anxiety.

It is tempting and might even be right to diverge here and see how the careers of Robert Leblanc, who would become a Brigadier General in less than a decade from 1953, was going. He was to be Postmaster general for a region as well as another kind of general. He was dealing with all sorts of aspects of racial tension and ethnic identity but there is no place here to discuss such things in depth. Looking at Bobby Charles Guidry soon to come of age as a precocious musician by local standards is tempting as well. Revis Sirmon and my maternal grandfather Cecil Gremillion were forging a deeper friendship as military flyers who would connect the immediate region to the oil industry. The Broussard Brother might be described as seeking a path for a long journey home in the same large industrial context. But beyond a brief mention these are not the stories that define the era. This was really a time when history and the future were very big concerns even as a boom had people working on the present more rapidly than normal

This connection to *Plessy versus Ferguson* was known but the complexities of connections to Old Louisiana culture were poorly understood. For those Cajuns who were culturally informed a great deal of education in history and social studies could validly be classified as shoddy and lazy anti-Cajun propaganda. The facts of Governor Mouton as an Acadian Governor, the role of Acadians in the colonial struggle, the role of Acadians and the Acadian region in the formation of the first Constitution of the State of Louisiana, the law of 1847 that authorized education in French and English were all among the facts that were not being learned. The preservation of the French Civil Code in law and the rest of their larger Francophone heritage were ignored in what had to seem a hodge podge of absurdly biased communication. The real nature and circumstances of the Louisiana Purchase seemed to be deliberately distorted and that in itself distorted the rest of their history in the state and region which constituted their part of American life and history. At this time in the early 1950s cultural deprivation theory was a model used across America to explain poor educational attainment in minority communities across the United States (Crawford) and bilingualism was linked to poor proficiency in English this all added to the perceptions behind the *English Education Act of 1915*. In addition this tended to increase the divide between the most and least privileged members of the ethnic community. Acadian or Cajun identity was under a new set of strains related to the larger societies changing and more suspicious attitudes to communities that preserved another language. There was a diminishing sense of social space in the emerging American consensus.

The final chapter of this text brings into focus the limits of a journey across very few years in a restricted region. The area of Acadian influence in Louisiana from 1943 to 1953 is not a negligible scope of study but neither is it vast. Seen through the work of Robert J. Flaherty and Roy Emerson Stryker the Cajuns and Cajun country had fallen under the eyes of the father of documentary film and the indirect observation of the man who as his archivists put it “had supervised the great photographic documentary efforts of the 20th century.”

In 1949 year Virgil Thompson's score had become the first film score to win the Pulitzer Prize in Music and in that same year "HADACOL Boogie" commissioned by Dudley Leblanc had climbed to number nine on the general charts in the country. Bill Nettles and the Dixieland Blue Boys never had a bigger hit before or after that hit. In the next few years HADACOL became the second largest advertiser in the country only behind Coca-Cola, But this little flash of Vermilion Parish imperialism had not endured. In 1953 HADACOL had played out and was disgraced with the disappearance of that great brand it seemed that the likelihood of Dudley Leblanc achieving any further political greatness was gone. Millions of dollars in disputed claims were being contested. He had known problems with the FDA before HADACOL but this was very different. This was the kind of trouble people could see from differing points of view in Cajun Country. The new health claims were vague, but he couldn't do anything about the testimonies consumers gave. Without specific diseases, In the years from 1948 to Leblanc liquidating his equity in the company Hadacol had grown to be a company in which a small percentage of those using the potion were either Cajuns or very conversant with Cajun culture. The drug had never been a very specific modern medicine curing a specific malady but in the year before he abandoned it the drug became a cure-all for whatever people hoped it would cure. Those investigating the business were soon aware that no matter what was wrong, the medicine made people feel better -and that was all that mattered to the growing crowds at the increasingly elaborate shows.. LeBlanc instigated rumors that Hadacol was good for sexual potency, a tip that was slyly alluded to in the medicine shows. In the later years Leblanc had a whole set of incentives to involve medical doctors in the HADACOL movement as much as possible.. To enlist doctors for endorsements of the controversial mixture he still believed in LeBlanc made plans similar to to other promotions he had sued with consumers, He offered free samples and a payment for each patient a doctor could include the research he believed could vindicate his product. Hadacol was said in ads to to be recommended by doctors and it seems that some doctors did find a limited utility for the elixir but would not risk the dangers of being associated with such a disreputable product. So in the struggle for public medical branch to everything else going on there was only one doctor named, this single supposed doctor was Dr. L.A. Willey, who later turned out to be a Californian convicted of practicing medicine without a license. Dudley Leblanc's political career might have peaked and HADACOL might have faded away but Cajun unity and Acadian restoration were still challenges into which he would pour a great deal of energy and in which he would be effective. The various Cajun regions photographed by the SONJ photographers would find in Dudley Leblanc a new voice and force for unity,

So with *Louisiana Story* now released under the title *Cajun* and seeming to have a different tone in its marketing and distribution and with Leblanc in political decline there were many other areas of the cultural fabric that people turned more attention to in the years ahead. The music that Virgil Thompson had heard when he composed his score would be a focus of some attention among opinion leaders. People were talking about the work Alan Lomax and others had done and there were people organizing new venues and connections in the Cajun music scene but it was not easy to see a path forward and the home and the dancehall were still the venues people had available. Frances Parkinson Keyes was just really conceiving the idea of

her novel *Blue Camelia*. Lyle Saxon had died in 1949 without ever fully addressing the Cajun experience and contribution to the state. Dr. Harry Oster, a thirty year old academic who would become a prominent American folklorist and musicologist and was the child of Russian-Polish Jews, who had emigrated to Cambridge, Massachusetts. He had already become involved in Folklore while doing his university studies and had been involved in both business and the military before earning his doctorate in 1953. In a couple of years he would begin teaching Louisiana State University and would become one of the founders of the Louisiana Folklore Society. He and the society would do a great deal to help unify a group of Cajun musicians seeking to cope with the new era into which their people and all Americans were moving.

French Immersion Education, CODOFIL, the Cajun French Music Association and many other institutions and groups such as the Action Cadien founded by 2016 Humanist of the year Zachary Richard to promote the restoration of French Immersion Education were a long ways off in the rapidly changing and fast-paced time scale of the Twentieth Century. In these early years of the 1950s and continuing on into the 1960s, South Louisiana like the rest of the nation and much of the world was profoundly affected by the emergence of rock and roll, the proliferation of car radios, the availability of television, the increase of international air travel and the rise of a new kind of multinational corporation like Standard Oil that was tied to America or some other country and was powerful and ambitious but was also distinct from the old colonial corporations which Europeans had used to administer much of the world. Cajuns noticed these changes in many aspects of their lives and experience. One example of this kind of change was that as the Cajun French Music Association has stated in discussing the era *"the sons and daughters of Cajun musicians followed the musical lead of fellow Louisiana musicians Jerry Lee Lewis and Anton "Fats" Domino to produce what was called swamp pop. Country music and swamp pop were tempting alternatives and Cajun music was again strained "to water the roots so that the tree would not die."* This year of 1953 was 11 years before Cajun musicians would really join the national folk and roots music scene with an historic appearance in a musical event in Newport, Rhode Island with John Baez, Bob Dylan and Peter, Paul and Mary. In 1953 there was plenty of reason for widespread and profound concern about preserving Acadian musical culture.

The University of Southwestern Louisiana would change its athletic nickname to the Ragin' Cajuns in 1964 and that also had not happened yet. The Cajuns of 1953 were a people still looking out at a new national consensus and wondering what their regional and ethnic responses to the new situation might be. The Baby Boom was an optimistic and positive reality in the eyes of most Cajuns. But the fact that so many Americans had small children in 1953 when their parents faced a changing world increased the sense that the world could and would exchange for America because all these new people would not have known the world that existed before 1943. Historians and other scholars as well as journalists and just well informed people have commented on the anxieties of the Cold War. The fear of nuclear annihilation was certainly a feature of daily life for Americans and people across the world. However other anxieties were clearly abundant. In America, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, China and many other places lives were affected by the new and emerging world order after World War II

through the lens of the nation states in which these people lived. The major powers in the world and certainly the United States were under significant pressure to change and conform to a new set of demands. The Cajuns in many ways had fully entered into an identity as an American community for the first time since the Civil War in the huge changes, trials and opportunities of the Second World War and now there were to be many questions about what kind of America was emerging from that same experience. Clearly it was not to be an instance of joining the same society that had existed in 1940. In many ways the changes that had occurred had more risk and more opportunity for the Cajuns than for almost any other of their anxious Cold War fellow American citizens.

But it is nonetheless wrong to see this as a period primarily of anxiety and resentment. Cajuns were in general optimistic about the future of America. There was an increasing transition between calling those outside the community Americans and calling themselves Americans. This was a hugely significant transition and can be traced to more or less this very time in the history of the community for many rural families. So this was a complex time.

The complexity is hidden in the lack of significant events that marked the lives of most Cajuns who did not serve in the Korean War. Acadian history is not uneventful and this period contrasts with many others as not being so starkly distinguished by conflict and upheaval as many other periods in history. There is no *Grand Derangement*, no War of American Independence, no War of 1812, no Civil War, no Reconstruction and the great turmoil of the Civil Rights Era in the Deep South had not yet begun. It is pardonable and perhaps even reasonable that many people would look at this era and see it as a peaceful, prosperous and optimistic time. Many people both within and outside the Cajun community more or less take that view of the 1950s as a happy, prosperous and optimistic time. Just after our period of 1953, in 1957 came the turmoil of hurricane Audrey, a terror too great to describe here. J.C. Boudreaux lost his first house to a hurricane in that storm and would lose another in hurricane Rita which came the same season as the more famous Katrina which was featured in *Angels of the Basin*. Robert Leblanc the Brigadier General whose life is a part of the framework of this story was at the forefront in fighting the horrors and devastation of the storm with the largely Cajun units he commanded in the National Guard. But aside from hurricane Audrey many Cajuns take a positive view of the fifties and among those who take that view there is usually a fairly positive view of the oil and gas industry. It is not the intention of this text to see the region as merely an oil producing region. Many other forms of economic activity and employment survived. But for many Cajuns oil and gas related activity provided the main chance for a good future and survival in the present era.

My own view as it appears in this thesis can be summarized as being a more nuanced view. I simply refuse to reduce the elements of the era into a simple statement of what the realities might be if they were conveniently organized for the benefit of scholars. It makes easier lesson plans, textbooks and lecture formats if a period is either optimistic or anxious. It makes for simpler and clearer political history if this is a time of ascending or declining cultural identity.

What I believe to be the case that for Cajuns in 1953 America was in a period of fairly rapid transformation which had both threatening and promising possibilities.

I was not born until 1964. Therefore for me all of this period is in fact history outside of my personal set of recollections. But anyone my age cannot help but feel that this is a world much closer to the one we all know. This story ends not with some great conflict or transformation. It simply stops as the world is going on for a people still caught up in change, still living between the past and the future. So having spent the first part of this conclusory chapter telling how the legacy endured in specific forms I truly end in 1953 remembering what it was like or may have been like at the point when the SONJ projects ended.