

# The French Review

*From the Editor's Desk*

The annual meeting of the AATF held in Baton Rouge from July 12–15 turned out to be a resounding success in spite of the high temperatures and humidity. I think that one of the reasons for this was that a significant number of us had never been to Louisiana or experienced “*la culture cadienne louisianaise*” in its many guises. I know that I felt as though I were in a foreign country where French is spoken by a minority to be sure, but where manifestations of this unique culture were ubiquitous. For those of us who visited Lafayette, the heart of “Cajun country,” the bilingual street signs were a reminder of the tenacity of the *Cadiens* and their determination to safeguard and expand knowledge and understanding of their living culture. Visits to two Lafayette nightclubs made it possible for us to speak French with the *Cadiens*, whose welcoming demeanor served to increase empathy and meaningful exchanges. Learning the Cajun two-step was a challenge, and it was sometimes difficult to understand the songs to which we danced. The Québécois among us seemed to have an easier time understanding all the words, and one said that many of the sounds were close to those of *québécois* French. It was fascinating to hear one Cajun band consisting of mostly middle-aged and older men, and another of young men who are also committed to Cajun music and culture. One of the lead singers is the third generation of his family to sing Cajun music. The mix of plaintive and joyous cries in the songs told the history of the Cajuns. The memorial to Evangeline transported some of us back to grade school and the famous poem by Longfellow. “*Le Grand Dérangement*” came to life before our eyes.

Thanks to the folklorist, Barry Jean Ancelet, who delivered his keynote speech with pointed humor in presenting Cajun history, culture, and jokes, we all gained greater insight into the past, present, and future of this unique civilization. Under the name Jean Arceneaux, Ancelet is also a poet, and he read one of his poems. My only regret is that we were not able to attend his Saturday night radio show, “*Rendez-vous des Cadiens*,” in the Liberty Theater in Eunice, Louisiana.

Other highlights of the convention included the presence of Cajun dancers from Baton Rouge and many sessions on Cajun culture and language, including workshops on dance and song. One of these included presentations on the revitalization of “*français louisianais*” and a discussion of a new, bilingual dictionary of *français louisianais* and English. This session, which included Barry Ancelet and past-president of the AATF, Albert Valdman, as well as Amanda LaFleur and Thomas Klingler, also presented ways to introduce creole and *le français louisianais* in the classroom. There was a fascinating excursion to the LSU rural Life Museum, where we learned what a “*garçonnière*” is.

One of the exciting things about AATF annual conventions is that no matter what the theme of the convention, there are always a wide range of other topics available. This year there were sessions on Belgium (next year's convention will be held in Liège from 16-19 July), Quebec, France, sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb, non-verbal communication, and the Marquis de Lafayette. Indeed, the Marquis was actually present at the convention in the form of Robert Lafayette, who sported a uniform, wig, and sword. Bob Lafayette is known throughout the profession for his work on pedagogy and culture, and he served as the stellar member of the welcoming committee from LSU, where he taught for many years. His knowledge of Louisiana and Cajun history informed us all. There was also a session on the

French heritage of the northwestern United States. Finally, the post-conference excursion introduced me to my first alligators. They were hanging out in the Atchafalaya swamp and were called to our boat by a wiry and wily old Cajun who banged on the boat and called them by their names, Georges and Sam.

I must close with a sad note. On 20 June 2007 Professor Emeritus Gervais Eyer Reed, 75, died as the result of a bicycle accident in Appleton, Wisconsin. Gerry served the *French Review* as Review Editor for Creative Works for fifteen years and wrote of his first ten years in the job in an article entitled "Ten Years of Reviewing 'Creative Works'" in the May 2002 special issue of the *French Review*, which was the Seventy-fifth Anniversary Issue. Gerry set the standard for review editors, and his guidelines have served as a model for all review editors for many years. Gerry was also a long-time chairman of the French department at Lawrence University, where he was a seventeenth-century drama specialist. In recent years he was working with one of his sons on a project on *Japonisme*. He was a "Chevalier de l'ordre des Palmes Académiques." Gerry also helped me greatly in my transition from Managing Editor to Editor in Chief. I will never forget his friendship, kindness, generosity, and scholarly acumen. Gerry was a man who loved life, art, and good conversation. I still remember a lively debate we had with Raymond Gay-Crosier about Camus in 1999 at the Editors' luncheon in Denver. All of us who knew Gerry Reed were enriched by him and his engaging manner. We will never forget him.

Once again I congratulate all of you who participated in the eighth annual Semaine du Français and wish you all de très bonnes vacances et une excellente nouvelle année!

Christopher P. Pinet