Acadian Gifts to Culture Praised

By Kathleen Trepas

Grand Coteau — The unique qualities and values of Acadian culture were discussed by speakers at the symposium on Acadian culture, held last Saturday at the Academy of the Sacred Heart here.

“The resilience of Acadian culture has been proven by the way it has withstood constant pressures from without for total absorption,” it was pointed out by Father C. J. McNally, S.S., associate editor of AMERICA.

Father McNally, a native of Lafayette, quoted author Harriet Kane’s description of Southwest Louisiana, “There is a culture without parallel in the United States — a curious, untypical American theme that is warm and rich in value, fitting so small but its own.”

But Acadians are no lesser Americans, Father McNally emphasized. “Our ancestors were here a decade before there was such a country as the United States, many of them fought for freedom in the Revolutionary War that brought the U.S. into existence.

Proceeding there is no single cultural element which is uniquely Acadian. Father McNally cited a number of characteristics which are identifiable, if not strictly definable.

“The style in music, the accordion, fiddle, guitar, triangle, is unmistakable, bi-lingualism, architecture, special style in cuisine, where in the world such indicators as we have!” he said.

He cited the classical style in music, L’ornel, Achele, Abbeville, Tayssole Telepresence or in southern Louisiana, Nacelle, Lucas, the Tierras, Peppers.

Another important Acadian inheritance in their religion, Father McNally pointed out. “The map of the nation shows only a slender percentage of Catholics in the South. The majority of these are in Southwest Louisiana. Our family traditions are strong,” he said, “and a by-product of this is our manners; our courtesy is superior to the rest of the South.”

“Toula de peaceful and if we ever let our Acadian nature and culture be exterminated.”

Distinguished guests present included Robert Amurac, vire consul of France, Jean Paulous, consul of French consulates, both stationed at the French consulate at New Orleans.

Opening prayer was led by Father Auguste D. Coyne, S.J., chaplain of the academy, and dean of St. Charles College, Grand Coteau.

Introduced at the opening of the symposium were members of the planning committee: Mrs. C. P. Hamilton, re- enactment; Monsignor A. J. Vincent, coordinator; Pearl Segura, exhibit of Acadian literature, Rosemary Distiller, publicity; Allen Robin, treasurer, and Dr. Phillips, president of the French Americas Foundation, sponsor of the symposium.

Differences and similarities of Acadian Francophones with that spoken in France were discussed by Dr. John Phillips of the UIU, French department.

“Basically, Acadian French is good French, even though we have adopted many local words,” Dr. Phillips said.

There are regional words or phrases which have established the region in France from which their ancestors came.”

He said the popularity of radio and television made necessary the adaptation of many English words into French.

The “distinguished and distinctive” of the Acadian cuisine were cited by Marie Louise Cowan, director of the School of Home Economics at UIU.

She stressed the importance of preserving many of these Acadian traditions in cooking and noted that this has been one of her aims in the school of home economics at UIU.

“Out of our cultural heritage in the French and Indian recipes for a cuisine that is dominant in the U.S.,” Miss Cowan said.

“With artistry, patience, economy and skill, they use to preserve all these rich foodstuffs which are common to the Acadians. In New Orleans, we owe it to these early Acadian cooks to work for the survival of this tradition of cooking,” Miss Cowan concluded.

Examples of Acadian architecture and furniture were shown in an illustrated lecture given by Prof. E. H. Studen of the UIU, Louisiana.