Acadian Makes Plea For French

A South Louisiana Acadian in France has discovered a new facet to being an Acadian and has written home about it.

He is David Marcanl, son of District Attorney and Mrs. Bernard Marcanl of Jennings. He is a graduate of LSU and is teaching English at Sete, France.

Marcanl writes:

"To all of us who have lived in southwest Louisiana, Acadian, the words 'Acadian' and 'Evangeline' are very familiar. They are so familiar, in fact, that we tend to give little thought to what it means to be Acadian . . .

Acadians All Over

"It is only when one travels that one realizes that Acadians are found not only in Louisiana but in Canada, France, South America, Africa, indeed all over the world. I had visited the Acadian regions of Canada as I had some idea of the existence of the international Acadian world. But it was when I met Acadians here in Sete in southern France in the Mediterranean Sea that I realized that the Acadians are truly a people, a people with a common origin who have remained Acadian throughout the centuries though separated by thousands of miles.

"These Acadians whom I met here in France are descendants of the Acadians who returned to France after the expulsion of the French from Nova Scotia (Acadia) by the English in 1756. For these hundreds of years they have kept their identity much as the Louisiana Acadians have kept theirs. Several whom I met have traveled to Louisiana and Canada to visit the Acadians who remained in America.

Common Link

"The common link among all the Acadians is the French language. If the language is lost, all is lost. That is why the Louisiana Acadians have maintained their language against terrific odds since they arrived in New Orleans over 200 years ago.

"But today this precious bilingual culture can no longer be maintained without the help of the schools. Recognizing this fact the state passed laws several years ago authorizing the institution of French instruction in Louisiana primary schools. The French government has made available highly qualified French teachers at very low cost to the school boards so that there is no shortage of available teachers. Many parishes have already begun French in the elementary schools with excellent results.

Seems Tragic

"It seems tragic that some parishes with large Acadian populations are still offering no French instruction below the high school level. There are even some high schools in south Louisiana with no French programs. This means that the children of these parishes are being denied the educational benefits enjoyed by the children in neighboring parishes. And since most Acadians are Catholic, it seems strange that the Catholic schools have been so slow to implement French elementary school programs.

"The advantages of bilingualism - biculturalism are obvious and legion. French is the language of over thirty nations, and a bilingual person enjoys cultural links with the entire English and French world. We who enjoy this precious bilingual heritage must never let it die.

La. - Acadians in France