Acadian's French Heritage
One Of Our Prime Assets

Acadiana planted her feet solidly on the ground during 1969 as she gathered support for the campaign to preserve her French heritage. The state legislature gave an invaluable boost toward this laudable goal by giving the green light to the teaching of French as the first grade level for Act 66. The importance of this legislation cannot be overestimated in the preservation of our unique French culture.

The private sector kept pace by focusing attention on Louisiana's revitalized interest. One result was the initiation of a successful pilot student exchange program which could in time bring about a steady flow of students to and from Canada.

This cooperation aimed at a common objective reached full climax at year's end with the staging of the International Acadian Festival in Lafayette, and also in Baton Rouge. The entire state shared the spotlight that blazed throughout Acadiana. The front pages of newspapers throughout the country, as well as in France and Canada, carried the story of the fascinating happenings in Louisiana. This saturation coverage of an historic event contributed greatly to make the other 49 states aware of the wonderful people of southwest Louisiana. It was found to reawaken interest in our fellow Americans in the supernatural tourist attractions we have here. The emphasis on the traditional aspect of Acadiana served greatly to enhance our image the world over.

Many individuals and organizations have worked effectively in Acadiana for many years to preserve the native tongue of Acadians and their ancestors. They traveled various roads and paths and lost years of patient work by others of like persuasion. As the trails converged, the goal for preservation of the French culture began to take shape. Teaching French is now, officially, a law in Louisiana. Some time will be required to work out the details and fully implement the program, but this is now a major question of mechanics.

Such a move has long been overdue. The Acadians of Southwest Louisiana have a long and distinguished history. They have survived trials and tribulations that would have felled a lesser people. The Huguenots, Huguenots, French, French, Acadians, and Acadians of today are the descendents of a hardy breed of Nova Southerners who survived their own troubles and over two hundred years ago. Led by de la Borne, thousands moved into Acadia and established a foothold.

Their descendents have been statesmen, congressmen, senators, jurists, bishops, educators, industrialists, agriculturalists, governors, military leaders, builders of cities and leaders of men. The history of our state would be incomparably incomplete were it not for the contributions of the Acadians. It is not right any longer for any Acadian to feel ashamed of his heritage, of his ability to speak the language of his forefathers. On the contrary, it is something to be proud of. How many people of other descent have the distinct advantage of being bilingual? Let it not be forgotten that French and English are the diplomatic languages of world affairs and will continue to be so for generations to come.

Acadiana-wide involvement in the preservation movement has generated support from chambers of commerce, from state legislators, from mayors and councillors, from college educators, from high school teachers of French and their students, from police officers, from businessmen and business people, from members of the clergy, from men and women in the news media and many others.

A genuine community effort has been the end result. The University of Southwestern Louisiana has played a major role in the developing bilingual drama. There is an excellent chance that a French-Spanish trade mart in Lafayette will be one of the other benefits.

Transformed Cajun who moved here from Texas, Oklahoma and elsewhere have come to appreciate the good life, the unique heritage of beautiful Acadiana. They have become some of the biggest boosters of "French Louisiana." There is a reason to be learned here for the future of all Acadiana.

Other endeavors have come from other sources. What Acadians must do is unanimously a better job of packing the tourist appeal and marketing it broadly. The Acadiana community must also promote the bilingual advantages offered by her great University of Southwestern Louisiana. Young people must be made aware of the many opportunities offered by a bilingual society. There is no better laboratory and training ground to prove all of this than right here at home.

The Daily Advertiser pledges its continuing support to the worthwhile objective of preserving the French language and the French culture of Acadiana.

(Continued—Industry Inducement)