Pine needle fire, 1988 photo by Debbie Caffery

Reception at Shadows honors Franklin author

Acadiana Staff Report

NEW IBERIA — A reception and autograph session featuring author Debbie Fleming Caffery is set for 1 p.m. Sunday in New Iberia.

The event, celebrating the publication of Caffery's new book "Carry Me Home," will be held in the gardens of the Shadows-on-the-Teche.

In case of rain, the event will be moved to the library on East Main.

Copies of the book will be available in hardback and paperback. Hardback copies cost $35 while the paperbacks cost $19.95.

Caffery grew up in New Iberia and now lives near Franklin.

Her first solo photography book, "Carry Me Home," was published in October by the Smithsonian Institution Press in conjunction with an exhibition at the National Museum of American History in Washington.

"Debbie's exhibit and book are wonderful artistic accomplishments which merit the attention of the people of Acadiana," said Sher-ee Minvielle, director of the Shadows.

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"It is especially fitting that the Shadows be involved in this event because of the sugar heritage which we share," Minvielle said.

"Carry Me Home" is a collection of 80 black and white prints, taken since 1972, covering three of Caffery's favorite subjects — the sugar cane culture, her children and Polly, an elderly African-American woman.

Pete Daniels a curator at the National Museum of American History, writes in an introductory es-

say in "Carry Me Home" that it is as if by opening the shutter she (Caffery) coaxes atmosphere and magic into the film...

"Her photographs convey a sense of place, mood and timelessness that elevate them above the ordinary," he wrote.

Caffery's life has been intertwined with the sugar cane industry.

She grew up in New Iberia, with a sugar mill right across the Bayou Teche from her home.

In 1974, as a student at the San Francisco Art Institute, she received a work-study grant to spend the grinding season in the fields and sugar mills of Louisiana.

While working on the project, she met her future husband, Clegg Caffery, who was employed at the Columbia Sugar Mill.

She now lives outside Franklin, in a home surrounded by sugar fields.

During her photographic career, she has produced thousands of negatives from which the book's photos were chosen.

"When the book project began I printed over 200 images which, over the years, had surfaced as the strongest," Caffery said, explaining the selection process for the book.

"Pete Daniel from the Smithsonian and Anne Wilkes Tucker from the Houston Museum of Fine Arts then selected the photographs which they felt best represented by photographic style shift from 1972 to the present," she said.

More information on the reception is available by calling the Shadows at 369-6446 or the library at 369-6321.