The Cover

There aren’t many of his kind left. Saul Guidroz of Carencro, La., is one of a few blacksmiths still around who can make wagon wheels and plow points. He works in his shop daily as he has done for many years. Customers come from nearby Breaux Bridge or far away Oklahoma to ask him to repair a wheel or make a new one. Neighbors drop by and have him beat out their plow points. A story about his trade begins on Page 12. The cover photograph was taken by staff photographer G. E. Arnold.

Ark Park

Inspired by the donation of a small plane to the World Wildlife Fund for observation work in Kenya, Africa, this flattop chapeau worn by London model Carole Raddick combines a model airplane and an ark-like array of big game, while offering the shade value of an umbrella. Animals and aircraft are firmly glued to the bonnet, but Carole won’t wear it on windy days.

DIXIE, October 18, 1970
WHILE working on assignments in South Louisiana, someone mentioned that they knew of a blacksmith in Carencro. It sounded like a good lead, especially after I learned that he, Saul Guidroz, was one of the few who still made wheels for buggies and wagons. While there isn’t a great demand for these wooden wheels, there are some people who want—and need them. Ray

**Cajun Country Blacksmith**

Pellerin, from Breaux Bridge, who collects old buggies, uses them in his restoration projects. There are many wagons and buggies used in trail rides out West and there are buggies in the French Quarter in New Orleans. There is a market for these wheels! And that is why I wanted to visit one of the few remaining blacksmiths in this area. I called Guidroz, made an appointment, and asked directions to his shop. He gave them to me, in his unique Acadian dialect:

“You come in on the old highway, you know. Then go to the post office because you can’t miss it. It’s a new brick building, you know. Then, when you get to the corner, you go Kinda to the far side to that road that goes past the Negro church. You’ll know the church when you get to it. Then you can’t miss me, I’m right in front across the street.”

The photographer, G. E. Arnold, shook his head. But being from South Louisiana, I felt sure we wouldn’t have any trouble. I “kinda” knew what Guidroz was talking about.

The photographer didn’t have much faith, but agreed to go along.

We dutifully avoided Interstate 10. The photographer kept mumbling about not
seeing any brick post offices. I had to confess I didn't either. But I didn't feel lost. These friendly Acadians were always willing to help. We pulled into the parking lot of a grocery store and I called to one of the men sitting out front.

"Can you tell me where the post office is?" (I don't know why I didn't ask directions for Mr. Guidroz's shop for I'm sure the man knew. Perhaps I didn't want to lose face in front of the photographer. I still felt confident that once we found the post office we would have no trouble.)

"Sure can," he called out as he walked over to our car, eyeing us suspiciously as he noticed the big red warning lights mounted over the back seat. (Arnold uses them when he's on accident assignments.)

"You have to go into town (I thought we were in town) and at the signal light you take a right then a left. You can't miss it. It's a new brick building."

"You see, Jerry, I told you it wouldn't be any problem."

Off we went and sure enough, there was the post office. And sure enough, there was a road "on the far side," which we took. Now we kept our eyes open for the Negro church. Well, there were a couple of churches, but we knew which one was the right one. For I, behold, there was a blacksmith shop right across the street "in front."

Here, in this old wooden shed-like building with a dirt floor, Saul Guidroz practices his trade. Standing over his anvil, hammering white-hot metal into plow points or wheel rims, or just repairing old metal tools for his friends. With a contented smile on his face, Guidroz moves quietly around his shop, stroking the fire in the furnace, then moving on to gather his tools for a repair job.

He works steadily throughout the day amid stacked wheels, chains, old wagon pieces and discarded rubber tires.

While hammering on a plow point he told us how he came to be a blacksmith.

"My father had a farm and like many other boys who lived on a farm, I did all kinds of things around the place, you know. I picked up a little about shoeing horses, you know, and making plow points when I was about 14, then I taught myself how to do other things as I grew up," explained Guidroz with a hint of pride.

"I don't have much schooling, but I know how to do my work."

Guidroz also constructs buggies when he has a chance.

"It gives me something to do when I'm not busy with my other work in the shop, you know," he smiled.

When we had finished taking pictures, Guidroz was anxious to show us around the cool, musty shed. Indeed there were all sorts of odd treasures buried beneath equipment and materials.

He showed us some engravings of buggies, a picture of an old hearse he helped to repair and letters from former customers. Over the old corn grinder was a portrait of Woodrow Wilson. He proudly showed us his power hammer and corn shucker which brought back memories from childhood days at my grandfather's farm.

After our tour, the photographer and I packed up and started home.

"How do we get out of here?" asked Arnold.

"Well, you kinda go like that, you know. Just like the way we got here."

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by Marcelle B. Wright

Saul Guidroz, left, works at his anvil hammering white-hot metal into a plow point. Nearby are several wheels he has made for customers. Above, Guidroz stokes the fire in his furnace as he readies his tools for repair jobs. Above right, he takes a break to talk to neighbors in front of his blacksmith shop. Right, he looks over old wagon he's hoping to repair soon.
WAY BACK WHEN — This is the old A. B. Baque blacksmith shop about 1915 on the corner of W. Main St. and Jefferson St. where the Lafayette Motor Co. service station is now. Baque (center) who opened a shop of his own in Scott before coming to Lafayette, is shown with his helper (left), Adam Delphin and his nephew (right), Rene Baque. Baque, now in his 89th year, is believed to have built the first horse-drawn school bus in Lafayette parish. He also built all the iron work for the old parish jail, which still stands in the rear of the old City Hall. (Photo courtesy Basil Clark)
Vanishing breed
Carencro blacksmith sweats out the dying art of an old-time craft

By KENT DAVIDSON
Staff Writer

CARENCA - He stands in a small metal shed, grinding the edge of a lawn mower blade. The glowing sparks fly as his ungloved hands hold the metal file firmly on the grinding wheel.

In a minute or two, the job is done. The old blade has a shiny new edge and is ready to be put to work.

As Ivan Broussard hands the blade to his customer, the man asks how much he owes.

"A dollar," Broussard says, as the man reaches into his pocket. Broussard takes the dollar bill, and putting it into his own pocket tells the customer goodbye.

"It gives me a little pocket money," Broussard says of sharpening lawn mower blades.

For more than 40 years, Broussard, who is known to most Carencro residents as Bado (pronounced bay-deaux), has been operating his own blacksmith shop out of his Carencro Street home. In his workshop stands his homemade hearth which he uses mainly to heat plow points for sharpening. The heating process enables the metal to hold its edge longer, he says.

That was the way he began as a blacksmith. Broussard adds, explaining that when he was 22 years old he began heating and beating plow points for Edmond Melancon.

And now, 38 years later, Broussard is still at it, a little earlier in the day a man from St. Mary Parish brought in three plow points to be sharpened, Broussard comments.

"He just left and he's going to bring me two or three more," Broussard said.

Business is usually brisk at this time of year because blades need to be sharpened for the grass-cutting season, but this year things are moving along slowly.

"There's no grass this year," he says, adding that the harsh winter stunted the growth of area lawns and fields. "They ain't got no grass growing. I've only gotten three sets, I believe, since summer started.

The biggest drawback to not having the usual business, Broussard said, is the deficit it leaves in his pocketbook. While the dollar here and dollar there are usually what he uses for his "walking around money," Broussard says he needs the business to keep up with some of his expenses.

"That's the only way I can pay my insurance," he said.

Sharpening plow points and lawn mower blades is not all that he does, though. He also uses his knack for metal work to build and repair bar-b-q pits and to build A-frame swings.

He began making the pits years ago, he said, when things were a little slow around the blacksmith shop.

"I started making them because sometimes they had not much to do," Broussard said.

In the past, Broussard says he sold quite a few of the homemade pits, but over the years, the demand has slacked off.

"I used to sell them all," Broussard says. As far as repairs go, Broussard's back yard is filled with six bar-b-q pits he has repaired. They're just sitting there a day or a half a day sometimes," Broussard said. "I don't take much work because I can't work long," he adds.

At 80, and with his legs giving him a little trouble, Broussard says it's sometimes hard to put in a full day in the shop.

"I was talking with my wife the other day and I don't know how long I can keep going," he said.

Usually, Broussard begins his day in the shop around 9 a.m. "By 3:30 or 4 o'clock, I'm out if there ain't nobody around," he said.

As the long, hot days of summer approach, Broussard says he may consider shortening his day a bit.

"After a while I guess I'm just going to work half a day," he said. "I try, but I can't go no more.

If and when Broussard does walk away from his home-made hearth, it will mean the end of a tradition in Carencro, as no one has stepped up to learn his craft.

"I've got a grandchild that's an electrician," Broussard said. "I ask him to come around sometime, but he doesn't like that (blacksmithing)."

The craftsman hammers a hot plow blade into shape

Blacksmith Ivan Broussard carries a shovel of burning coals

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Rendezvous

By Mario Maminakis
Special to The Advertiser

Charles “Chuck” Hamsa’s occupation is associate professor and bibliographer at the University of Southwestern Louisiana. His avocation is to “rendezvous” back in time prior to 1840.

“I got into ‘rendezvous,’ the historical reenactment of that period in American history because, among other things, it allowed me a chance to do historical research,” Hamsa says.

While this historical research in the academic sense of the word is not ‘publishable,’ it can have tremendous impact upon the tourism development of Acadiana.”

Hamsa says there are plans to have a rendezvous encampment in the woods adjoining Acadian Village this fall, during the Cajun Heritage and Music Festival.

“This will provide an opportunity for rendezvous participants to learn of the Cajun culture of this area: its food, Mardi Gras, Cajun music, Indian crafts and folklore, alligator production and skinning, and many other events unique to Cajun Country,” Hamsa says.

FOLLOWING HIS DESIRE to rendezvous, Hamsa decided to become a blacksmith. His father was an orthopedic surgeon, but there were also several generations of blacksmiths in his background. “I learned to be a blacksmith by reading a lot of books and practicing,” Hamsa says.

Now he is the blacksmith at Acadian Village, where on a forge and anvil he hammers out products to be sold at the village country store or for his personal use.

Hamsa came to Lafayette about 20 years ago and accepted a position at UL’s Special Collections Library. He volunteers his services at Acadian Village, a folk museum depicting Acadian culture. Acadian Village developed as a project of the Lafayette Association of Retarded Citizens.

USL librarian Charles Hamsa in his role as a blacksmith at Acadian Village.

“I was president of the Civi- tan Club when the first building, a log cabin, was constructed and paid for by that organization. I was also president of LABC during a period when that organization went deeply into debt to construct the village and move the New Hope Center from its location to Acadian Village.

HAMS A ALSO BECAME a ‘buckskinner,’ members of a loose confederation of people. It evolved locally a decade ago and is now a nationwide fraternity.

They meet ‘whenever they feel like it’ and their purpose is to get together periodically to relive a year in the historical period between 1800 and 1840, the years for trapping and fur trading. They may don buckskins or other clothing of the period, sleep in tepees and cook over open fires, sometimes with implements and utensils made by Hamsa.

At a rendezvous, participants, who may be either buckskinned, traders, camp followers or ‘coureurs de bois’ (French trappers of the west and Midwest of the 1800s), relive the old-time way of doing things with family gatherings and talks at campfires rather than listening to radio or TV.

Hamsa chooses to relive in 1803, “because it was a fun time with the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the Louisiana Purchase.”

AT THESE RENDEZVOUS camps, Hamsa portrays a rural correspondent of the early 1800s. In April 1990, at the Southeastern Primitive Rendezvous in Wetumpka near Fort Toulouse, Ala., Hamsa as usual portrayed a rural correspondent.

HE WOULD ALSO give a report on American and British activities to Don Manuel de Salcedo, governor of the province of New Orleans, when he returned home, pointing out that British traders were undercutting the Spanish in the region by...