Catahoula residents depict Cajun pastimes

Thirty-two Catahoula residents traveled to Shreveport last week to participate in the filming of a motion picture that will be released later this year.

Filmed on Caddo Lake near Shreveport, "Southern Comfort" is a contemporary suspense film starring Keith Carradine and Powers Boothe. Set in the Atchafalaya Basin, the story follows the desperate attempt on nine National Guardsmen to escape from the swamps after they inadvertently violate the territorial rights of the Cajun natives.

The original screenplay was co-written by director Hill and producer Giler, who co-produced the 1979 science fiction blockbuster, "Alien". Hill has also written and directed the critically-acclaimed films, "Hard Times" (starring Charles Bronson), "The Driver" (starring Ryan O'Neal and Bruce Dern), and "The Warriors" (starring Michael Beck). He most recently directed last summer's hit, "The Long Riders", which starred the Carradine, Keach and Quaid brothers. Giler has previously written such screenplays as "The Parallax View" and "Fun With Dick and Jane," and wrote and directed "The Blackbird." Andrew Laszlo, the cinematographer of Hill's "The Warriors" and NBC mini-series, "Shogun", is serving as the director of photography of "Southern Comfort." Musical artist Ry Cooder, who scored "The Long Riders," will compose and arrange the music for the film, drawing heavily on traditional Cajun songs and sounds.

The 32 St. Martin parish natives acted out many of the popular cuisine customs followed by Cajuns. They reenacted a boucherie, a fish fry, a crawfish boil and the making of a large gumbo.

They also staged a "fais do do" complete with a Cajun band and lots of food and dancing. A game of bourre was also played.

The 32 "extras" left Tuesday morning and returned Sunday afternoon, one day ahead of schedule.

Greg Guirard and June Borel, both of Catahoula, have been cast as supporting actors in the motion picture. Guirard is also serving as a technical advisor on the film.

Guirard began working with the film's production company, The Phoenix Company, early last fall when he was asked by the Louisiana State Film Commission to help the film's producer, David Giler, and director Walter Hill, to scout possible film locations in the Atchafalaya Basin.

The lack of a practical road access and housing facilities in the Basin forced the company to shoot instead on the cypress-covered Caddo Lake. Because of his fluency in Cajun French, knowledge of Cajun customs and familiarity with the Basin, Guirard was asked to join the production as a technical advisor.

A former school teacher, Guirard is currently self-employed as a custom furniture builder and professional photographer. He fashions his unique pieces from old red cypress, which he gathers in the Basin. He is married to the former Mary Fournet of St. Martinville and has four children.

June Borel was signed to appear in the film after auditioning for producer Giler. She recently began working as a bilingual aide at the Catahoula Elementary School. She is a 1971 graduate of St. Martinville Sr. High and is married to Catahoula native Mervin Barras.

"Southern Comfort" will be released by 20th Century-Fox in October.