Celebrating Our Future

Millennium Edition

Ready or not, it's here! The year 2000, a new century, a new millennium (or, if you're a stickler, the last year of the second millennium). Either way, it's a time for celebration, reflection and maybe a little speculation. This fourth and final part of The Advocate's Millennium Series takes a look back at the 20th century and a tentative — but optimistic — look forward to the years ahead.

For a key to this illustration, please see Page 25.

SATURDAY
Section G January 1, 2000
The arrival of 2000 is a good time to look back at some of the local stories and trends that shaped the lives of Louisianians, and particularly Baton Rougeans, in the 20th century. Here are some of those stories:

**The Great Flood of 1927**

Melting snow and unusually heavy rains overwhelmed the patchwork levee system. The first levee breaks came in Mound City, Miss., and Pendleton, Ark., on April 21, 1927. Floodwaters eventually covered 17 million acres, killed about 300 people and left more than 630,000 homeless.

Baton Rouge didn’t flood badly, but 6 million acres of Louisiana land did.

Fear that the levee might break at New Orleans, pouring water into the city, led officials to sacrifice parts of St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes.

They dynamited the levee 13 miles below Canal Street, diverting the water from the Crescent City but flooding out 10,000 people between there and the Gulf of Mexico.

The flood’s most visible long-lasting effect is the current levee system. In 1928, federal engineers, who had previously advocated just using levees to control the river, adopted the Mississippi River and Tributaries project. It set up three spillways — including the Bonnet Carre and Morganza spillways in Louisiana — to divert rising river water.

**Hurricanes Audrey and Betsy**

Hurricane Audrey, in June 1957, brought 144 mph winds and pushed a 20-foot-high storm surge inland as far as 20 miles along the Louisiana coast. Cameron Parish was hardest hit, with more than 425 deaths, 154 of them babies and children. Most of the people who died drowned in the storm surge, which left seaweed hugging from power lines.

The storm destroyed rice crops, flattened buildings, downed acres of timber and caused widespread destruction in the offshore oil industry. Louisiana damage was estimated at $120 million.

Eight years later, in September 1965, Hurricane Betsy passed over Grand Isle and moved just west of New Orleans. It killed 75 people and injured 15,000 in Louisiana and Florida. Its 145 mph winds pushed a 20-foot wall of water through St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes.

In East Baton Rouge Parish, the storm caused about $50 million in damage and killed one person. Its major impact was sinking a barge loaded with 600 tons of chlorine, leading to fears of a massive chlorine gas leak.

It took weeks to plan the lifting of the barge. Trick-or-treating was held early to make sure it didn’t interfere with the barge lift, which was originally scheduled for Nov. 4. The Catholic Church provided a special dispensation to excuse local people from All Saints Day Mass.

Problems led the lift to be rescheduled several times, but the barge, which was not leaking, was raised on Nov. 12.

**Exxon explosion**

Corroded pipe caused a Dec. 24, 1989, blast at Exxon refinery that killed two people, injured several others and registered between 2 and 3 on the Richter scale, which measures earthquakes. The blast broke windows as far as six miles away and brought more than 1,000 reports of property damage.

The Occupational Health and Safety Administration ultimately fined Exxon about $5,000 for the explosion.

**Standard Oil comes to Baton Rouge**

The huge petrochemical industry in the Baton Rouge area began with Standard Oil’s decision to build a refinery here in 1909.

The $2 million oil refinery, situated on 225 acres of farmland along the Mississippi River, went into operation that November. The company wanted to be close to oil and gas resources and close to the river for easy, cheaper shipping. The refinery initially employed 750 people and processed about 1,800 barrels of crude oil a day.

The Exxon refinery is now the country’s largest and has been a major factor in Baton Rouge’s economy and culture.

In 1940, Standard Oil built the chemical plant on 150 acres next to the refinery. Much of what the refinery produced was used as raw materials at the chemical plant.

World War II created huge demand for synthetic rubber, aviation fuel and gasoline — all of which the plant produced.

The chemical industry that began with Standard Oil and quickly brought in other companies protected Baton Rouge somewhat from the oil bust of the mid-1980s.

Today, the refinery employs almost 1,500 people, processes almost 500,000 barrels a day and covers 2,100 acres. The chemical plant employs about 1,400 people and another...
1970 Bombings

Scaffolding fills the Senate chamber of the State Capitol in 1970 as workers repair major damage caused to the building when a bomb exploded there.

Standard Oil comes to Baton Rouge

Standard Oil announced in 1909 it planned to build a refinery in Baton Rouge. The plant quickly grew to become the city's biggest employer. Employees are seen at the afternoon shift change in December 1943.

News

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4G

er 1,200 work at the research and development labs and other parts of the company.

Chemical products are Louisiana's largest export, and the industry's direct sales are around $3 billion a year.

1970 Bombings

Two bombs exploded within minutes of each other on April 26, 1970. One caused a half-million dollars in damage to the Senate Chamber of the State Capitol and the other caused relatively minor damage to the Baton Rouge Country Club. Both were dynamite explosions. No one was injured, and repairs to the Senate chamber were made in time for the Senate to meet there two weeks later.

The bombs were apparently found to be the work of members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. They bombed the buildings to attract Gov. John McKeithen's attention to a strike against Gulf States Utilities. They apparently chose the country club because Gulf States had hosted a public relations dinner there shortly before the explosion.

See NEWS, Page 9G
Earl Long’s commitment

Gov. Earl K. Long sits in a car in June 1959 shortly before he was served with papers committing him to a mental institution.

News

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8G

The strike that prompted the bombings lasted 75 days.

Assassination of Huey Long

The book “Louisiana: A History” describes Huey Pierce Long as “the most significant figure in Louisiana history.” Brilliant and power-hungry, he served as governor and U.S. senator, and had his sights set on the presidency when he was killed on Sept. 8, 1935, in the State Capitol he’d built.

The Winn Parish native became what some called a dictator, controlling every level of government in the state. A self-acclaimed defender of the little guy against big business, he was wildly popular with voters and viciously hated by the power structure he overthrew.

Elected governor at age 34 after a stint on the state Public Service Commission, the Kingfish defeated candidates controlled by business and the New Orleans elite.

Long paved roads, turned LSU from an agricultural school into a university of national renown, repealed the poll tax and created the homestead exemption.

He was nearly impeached in 1929.

After his own brother was elected U.S. senator, he remained in control of state politics by persuading the Legislature to pass laws giving him ever wider authority and by making sure O.K. Allen, a lifelong friend, was elected governor after him and did his bidding.

There is still speculation about whether it was a shot from the pistol wielded by Dr. Carl A. Weiss — a Baton Rouge doctor whose father-in-law was a judge Long was trying to boot out of office by gerrymandering his district — or a ricocheting shot fired by his bodyguards that actually killed Long.

Earl Long’s commitment

Earl Long, Huey Long’s brother, was lieutenant gover-
nor when Richard Leche had to resign after being convicted of mail fraud. He served as acting governor from 1939 to 1940, then lost the next election. He was elected governor unopposed in 1948 and again in 1956.

Under Long, teachers got pay raises, education and welfare got some funding, and taxes were raised on gasoline, beer and retail sales. But Long is perhaps most remembered for his foibles.

Long carried on a well-publicized affair with New Orleans stripper Blaze Starr and had to be placed in mental institutions during his second term. While at the state mental hospital at Mandeville, he fired the director—one of his powers as governor—and hired someone who would let him go.

East Baton Rouge Parish schools desegregation case

Filed in 1956, the case is one of the longest-running school desegregation cases in the nation.

It was filed two years after the U.S. Supreme Court said in Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka (Kansas) that segregated schools were unconstitutional and should be eliminated “with all deliberate speed.”

That didn’t happen in Baton Rouge.

In 1980, the School Board proposed a plan that depended on magnet schools to desegregate the system. U.S. District Judge John Parker said it wouldn’t work well enough.

In 1981 Parker closed 13 schools and instituted widespread busing. Busing didn’t end until 1996, when the parties in the case agreed on a community-based plan that relied on voluntary desegregation efforts like magnet programs. That plan is in place today and many schools remain segregated.

Edwin Edwards era

Edwin Edwards, one of the most colorful politicians in Louisiana history, served four terms as governor after three in the U.S. House of Representatives.

First elected in 1971, he called the Constitutional Convention that produced the current state Constitution and oversaw construction of the New Orleans Superdome.

But Edwards, a reputed womanizer and longtime high-rolling gambler, will most likely be remembered for his scandals. In 1976, he was accused of allowing South Korean lobbyist Tongtae Park to give $10,000 to his wife while dealing with Park on selling Louisiana rice to South Korea.

In 1985 Edwards was indicted for racketeering and fraud related to state hospital licenses. His first trial ended in a hung jury, and he was acquitted in a second trial. He was indicted again in 1998 and currently faces trial in 2000 on allegations that he extorted riverboat gambling applicants and manipulated the licensing process for gambling boats. He also has been indicted in an insurance fraud case.

Civil rights movement

In some respects, the civil rights struggle in Baton Rouge paved the way to the State Capitol. Left: Gov. John McKeithen shakes hands with Bogalusa civil rights leader A.Z. Young. McKeithen’s handling of the Bogalusa protest and other civil rights crises was considered a breakthrough in Louisiana race relations of the time.
The Louisiana Superdome

The steel framework of the Louisiana Superdome begins to rise near downtown New Orleans in October 1972. The building was a project promoted by Gov. John McKeithen. The Louisiana Superdome changed New Orleans but also served as a symbol of Louisiana's aggressive pursuit of tourism business.

News

Continued from Page 14G

way for the movement nationwide. The 1953 bus boycott here was the model for the more well-known boycotts that followed in Montgomery, Ala.

Arrests of black Southern University students in a 1960 lunch counter sit-in at the Kress department store on Third Street were the first of several similar cases to get to the U.S. Supreme Court. The court overturned the students' convictions and heralded the end of separate public facilities for people of different races.

But Baton Rouge and Louisiana also had more than their share of trouble during the civil rights movement. Federal marshals had to escort Ruby Bridges, a 6-year-old black girl, past angry mobs and into her New Orleans elementary school in 1960. It was one of the first times a Southern public school was forcibly integrated.

Three black Muslims and two sheriff's deputies were killed in a confrontation on North Boulevard in January 1972. Later in the same year, two Southern university students were killed by deputies during a campus protest.

But one Louisiana governor in particular turned the tide of civil rights in Louisiana, reversing his segregationist stance and pledging to enforce the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the federal law that outlawed racial discrimination.

During August 1967, black civil rights activists led by A.Z. Young marched from Bogalusa to Baton Rouge. The march ended at the State Capitol at a rally over state employment opportunities for black people. McKeithen called out the National Guard to protect the marchers and warned both Ku Klux Klan officials and civil rights leader H. Rap Brown that he would not tolerate the violence seen in other cities. He also helped federal registrars enforce the right of black people to vote.
Dead 64 years, Huey Long’s legacy goes to 21st century

By GUY COATES
Associated Press writer

He predicted often enough that he would be assassinated and accepted the inevitable — until it happened and he uttered his last words:

"God, don’t let me die. I have so much to do."

He had already done quite a lot, either the devil’s work or that of the Lord, depending on who was talking.

Good or evil, the onetime peddler of pots and pans, later a governor and then U.S. senator, changed the landscape of Louisiana in the 20th century and tried to do the same to America.

He was Huey P. Long, and a bullet caught up with him in a corridor of the Louisiana Capitol in 1935, leaving his name a footnote in the nation’s history book but with larger than life in Louisiana’s history.

It was a year when the Great Depression was still causing misery and the time was right for Long’s idea to redistribute the nation’s wealth by taking from the rich and giving to the poor.

With so many people depending on charity’s soup lines, Long’s idea caught on. Four million Americans joined Share the Wealth chapters, a grass-roots effort by Long to become president.

The program was based on the philosophy that made him king in Louisiana, a war of the have nots against the haves. After all, there were more have nots.

Sixty years later, a quarter of Louisiana’s population is still poor, and the philosophy still works some of the time, a legacy from Huey.

Never mind that his scruples were so suspect, his record as governor so harsh that The New York Times called him a fascist and TIME Magazine said he was a dictator.

The main issue is to do the job, even if the means of doing it are distasteful, Long said.

He wandered out of the piney hills of north Louisiana after tiring of peddling, passed the bar exam without a formal education and became a lawyer. He spent his time reading anything he could find, was elected to the railroad commission and finally got the governor’s chair in 1928.

Long wrested control of the state from the wealthy planter class by appealing to the poor who had few roads to travel on, few schools, not enough textbooks, not enough hospitals or much of anything else.

He delivered it all by taxing Standard Oil and other corporations, selling bonds and getting approval for it all from an initially hostile Legislature by ruthlessness and guile.

The House impeached him during his first year, but he controlled enough Senate votes to ward off a trial. The whole affair just made him stronger.

Those who got in his way saw their political or business careers destroyed either by statute or by hate sheets distributed to the people.

A political enemy who owned a funeral parlor saw his business go to ruin because Long put out the word that the man took funeral clothes from bodies before burial, putting them in the ground naked.

Long was crude, even vulgar when he wanted to be, and a polished orator when the occasion called for it.

The occasion was right, for example, at the Evangeline Oak, a Cajun landmark made famous by Longfellow’s poem about a young woman who waited in vain for her lover.

Rose and Huey Long
Legacy
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 133
"Evangeline wept bitter tears in her disappoin-
tment, but it lasted through only one lifetime. Your
wars in this country, around this oak, have lasted for
generations. Give me the chance to dry the
wars of those who still weep here."

The masses loved him. Some of those who hated
him began carrying guns and Long, when recog-
nizing a threat, would call out the National Guard as
his private police force. On at least one occasion in
the capital city he declared martial law to keep his en-
emies from gathering at meetings.

"I am not a historian. I am the history," said attor-
ey Marian Becket, who addressed a recent semi-
inar on Long. "She was an old Long student when
she was being imprisoned."

"He was the king, and showed hate for those
who didn't bow," she said. "He crushed them. He
called martial law. At times, two people couldn't
gather on the street in Baton Rouge." Becket said her
college law school colleagues would not associate
with her because of her outspoken views on Long. She left and graduated from
Tulane.

His legacy, she said, was one of tyranny.

"His legacy was Russell B. Long," said Robert
Moss, author of "Legacy to Power, Senator Russell
Long of Louisiana." He referred to Huey's son, who
took his father's seat 13 years after the assas-
sination and kept it for 38 years.

Russell Long became one of the most powerful
members of the U.S. Senate, helped shape policy
and, as chairman of the Finance Committee for 15
years, determined to a great extent who got how
much of what.

In its own version of Share the Wealth, Russell
Long fashioned the law allowing employee stock
options, which, in effect, allows employees to
own their own companies.

There's much more Huey legacy for Louisiana.
The state's political party system, unlike those of
other Deep South states, is more attuned to econ-
oomics than any party philosophy.

"We, New Orleans, comment. It's the economy,

stupid, is Huey Long politics," said Wayne Parent,
political science professor at LSU. "It's still the
haves versus the have nots, and all of that is from
Huey."

Now finally, the idea for Social Security came
from Long. In the state, he created the homestead
custom. That established the poll tax and consolidated
power in Baton Rouge with legislation that stripped
tax control from parish governments and school
boards.

The populist style of politics holds on even when
Louisiana has a Republican, pro-business governor
like Mike Foster said Parent. "He campaigned as a
duck hunter, a Christian, and a businessman."

Foster, who switched parties in 1995, keeps a
populist flavor, making sure social programs and chas-
dity hospitals have what they need, that rural roads
are maintained.

"Another thing we see is that race-baiting politics
does not work in this state like it would in Mis-
sissippi or Alabama," said Parent. "The Long family is
proud of the fact, justifiably, that while many other
politicians of his era used race-baiting to win, Huey
didn't."

"While we do have vestiges of racial politics, it's
not as strong in Louisiana" because the unwritten
political handbook was fashioned by Huey Long,
said Parent.

Regardless of the legacies, there is little talk
about Huey Long any more. His generation is mostly
gone.

The seminar on Long drew an audience of about
50.

"There's still 100,000 of the Long people out there,
and they're proud of him," said Foster.

Regardless of literary squabbling over who
pulled the trigger, even most of Long's detractors agree
he pulled Louisiana from its post-Civil War moras-

Louisiana had not caught up with the 20th cen-
tury until Huey stepped on the scene," Simpson said.

"Regardless of his tactics, he made modern
Louisiana by giving the poor a voice."

---

James Carville's comment, "It's the economy,

stupid," is Huey Long politics. It's still the have-

versus the have nots, and all of

that is from Huey.

— Wayne Parent, political science professor at LSU

---

Sen. Huey P. Long addresses

the Democratic National

Convention from the

speaker's platform on June
28, 1932. As the state's

party leader, he was

victorious when the

convention voted to seat

his supporters. Three

years later, he was

assassinated.

---

Camp Overnight Aboard The

USS KIDD

Located at the foot of Government Street on the Mississippi River

For information on overnight camping and tours

call 342-1942

Visit A WWII Hero

She's a veteran of many WWII full-scale replica of Old Ironsides'

---

A look at the record books

Weather data compiled by the Louisiana
Office of State Climatology, with

comments by Malcolm B. "Mac" Monroe and Jay

Grymes of the Office of State Climatology.

COLD WEATHER EXTREMES

Lowest Minimum Daily Temperature

Baton Rouge - 2°F (Feb. 3, 1953)

Statewide - 16°F (Feb. 13, 1985)

Not only was this date the "coldest" day

for Louisiana, but Feb. 13, 1985 is the all-time record

data for most stations throughout the south-

central and southeastern United States. More

recently, the "Christmas Freeze" of 1989 (Dec.

21-23, 1989) includes the second-lowest tempera-

ture ever recorded for Baton Rouge, dipping to 8°F on

Dec. 21.

"Cold Spells"

It is difficult to flag definitively Baton Rouge's
"coldest spell," as there are several significant
events, even within the last 50 years. Data prior
to 1930 are even more difficult to evaluate. And,

of course, the meaning of "cold spell" can be

debated. But based on the past five decades, six

events are most memorable:

a. Jan. 3-4, 1951: 60+ hours of temperatures at

or below freezing.

b. Jan. 27-29, 1963: Although the temperature

never fell below 20°F, the thermostat never

rose above 15°F for more than 100 hours, with

10 of those hours at 3°F.

c. Jan. 6-12, 1968: Shivers took to the University

of Louisiana Lakes with temperatures dipping as

low as 9°F. Temperatures were at or below freezing

for well over 40 hours during a 96-hour period.

d. Dec. 23-26, 1969: 76 hours of freezing tempera-

tures, including an 11°F minimum on Christmas

Day.

e. Dec. 21-28, 1989: An explosion at the Exxon

plant accompanied a freeze event that produced

Baton Rouge's second-lowest temperature on

cold winter days with temperatures posted for a total

of more than 80 hours.

Weather-trivia buffs may be interested in the

fact that while the city has experienced a run of

mid-winters, we've still seen at least one freeze

each winter in the capital city in each of our

recent winter seasons. Based on available data,

the winter of 1921-22 is the only "freeze free"

winter since 1975-76.

---

For more photos of Baton Rouge area weather from Advocate files, please see

"Weather Album," Pages 129, 316 and 476

---