Delcambre, La.

Acadiana JOURNAL

Shrimper's haven

Thomas Buckley
Iberia Bureau Editor

DELCAMBRE — At sunset, tattered red-orange flags of light stream through the dripping shrimp nets.

Shrimp boats, loved by their owners not only for their sentimental value but because they provide the livelihood for so many people here in Delcambre, cruise languidly home after a day's casting out in the gulf.

Friends and dock workers near the edge of the famed Delcambre Canal shout to the returning shrimpers, "How was the catch?" as the boats drift toward the bulhead.

Huge nets, hoisted out of the water at the back of the boats at the end of the day, fly as banners proclaiming the traditions of this small town.

Although Delcambre's shrimp industry is not quite the same as it once was, workers still diligently cling to the enterprise, hoping each day will be better than the last.

Audrey Morvant, manager of the canal-side Seafood Express shop, said this year's shrimp season has been slow so far, but that is not stopping the captains, the deckhands, and the wholesalers from making the best of the situation.

"Some days they have, some days they don't," Morvant said, "You just have to go out there and try even after so many years, the catching and selling of shrimp is the focus of Delcambre. Tourists come from miles around to sit by the canal and sketch the impressive boats before pooping into one of the many seafood shops to stock up on fresh shrimp. Delcambre has the freshest shrimp available, period.

"We have a lot of visitors that like to ride out to Delcambre and see the boats, stroll the docks and buy the fresh catch," said Fran Thibodeaux, assistant director of the Iberia Parish Tourist Commission.

Delcambre could be undergoing some changes soon, with the widening to five lanes of La. 14, the town's main street; the discussion over whether to keep the Iberia Parish-operated schools in town open or transfer the students to Erath;

and the turbulent shrimping industry.

"It's hard to visualize the future," Delcambre Mayor Carol Broussard said. "It depends mostly on the community sticking together."

That will not be too much of a challenge, said the Rev. Thomas Voorhis, pastor of both Our Lady of the Lake and St. Martin de Porres churches.

"This is a quaint little town with kind, generous, just good plain people," Voorhis said, "I'm praying the Lord will continue to bless us."

See next week's Acadiana Journal: For a visit to some historic sights in downtown Lafayette.

Photos by Terri H. Fensel

Delcambre shrimper John McCloy, wearing the white rubber boots that are a trademark of shrimpers, takes a day off from working on the boat to catch and fillet catfish on the docks behind Bayou Carlin Seafood Market.