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By KENT DAVIDSON
Staff Writer

In 1972, when newspaper editor Truman Stacey wrote a 35-part series on Louisiana's French Heritage, he never dreamed it would become a book.

But it has.

"Louisiana's French Heritage," has been published, for the first time in book form, by Acadian House Publishing Co., Lafayette. The author and others involved in the project "unveiled" the book Tuesday at Le Centre International.

"I figured that was the end of it," Stacey said referring to the series that ran in the Lake Charles American Press, "but as you can see, this series has had a long life.

"I'm pleased to see that my little child has sort of grown up," he added. "I had no idea I was writing a book when I wrote it."

Since the original 35-part series, the text of the book has been reprinted in magazine form three times, said the book's editor, Trent Angers. Each time, the magazine edition sold out.

"This apparently has got tremendous appeal," Angers said. "It's incredible the demand and interest people have in the subject of French heritage."

Five thousand copies of the book were printed in the first run, Angers said, but he's expecting many more printings.

"I'm anticipating 12 to 15 printings over a 10-year period," he said. "We sold 50,000 copies of this in magazine form and would have sold more if we hadn't run out."

Stacey said he began writing the series after meeting the late James Domengeaux, founder of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, a state agency dedicated to preserving the state's French language, culture and heritage.

The book, which is dedicated to Domengeaux, also features an article about the CODOFIL founder written by Philip Dur, a professor emeritus of political science at the University of Southwestern Louisiana.

"He twisted my arm, as well he could, to start a southwest Louisiana chapter of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana," Stacey said of Domengeaux.

"It was after I met Domengeaux, and talked to him a few times, that I began to be curious," he said. "When I began to research it, I saw what a fascinating story it was and I said 'I have to write about this.'"

The book is a history book detailing the experiences of the Acadian people from 1500 to 1800, Angers said.

"It basically gives the French the credit that is due them for their influence on our American way of life," he said.

Although it is a history book, the text is written in a lively fashion, Angers said.

"It reads as much like an adventure story than a history book," he said.

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Highlights

Written by Truman Stacey, here are some highlights of "Louisiana's French Heritage."

- Written in 1972.
- Originally published as a 35-part series in a Louisiana newspaper.
- Published three times as a magazine edition, with each edition becoming sold out.