Experts say cocaine use here widespread

Headin' down Scott, turning' up Main
Looking for that girl who sells the cocaine
Cocaine, running all around my brain
— Jackson Browne, "Cocaine," 1968

Chandos Music, by Rev. Gary Davis

First in a series

Cocaine, a white, crystalline drug once thought to have numerous beneficial effects, falls on mirrors and tabletops in Baton Rouge bars and living rooms each night like a blizzard.

Narcotics agents and drug abuse treatment professionals all say that cocaine use has pervaded every level of Baton Rouge society in the last five years.

"I see it in all strata," said Dr. Louis Cataldi, medical director of the Silkwor

The shock waves are still rippling through the city from this fall's federal prosecution of wealthy businessman Claude B. Pennington III, who pleaded guilty to supplying dentist Kraemer Diel and LSU student Glenn D'Spain with 10 grams of cocaine.

Diel and D'Spain, the son of a prominent businessman, have not yet been tried on possession of cocaine charges.

There are many of the seductive myths that surround the ancient, and illegal, drug.

The coca plant, from which cocaine is refined, was used for centuries by Incans and priests to mitigate hunger and thirst so that they might endure earthly demands.

The drug was a gift from the gods to their descendants, the legends said. Later, the Spaniards noted that Indian workers were easier to recruit for arduous labor if they were allowed to chew the coca leaves.

Another Incan legend tied to the drug's aphrodisiac qualities is that the plant grew from the body of a beautiful adulteress who was caught in the act, cut in half and buried.

"Hence the nickname 'lady,'" Cataldi said.

But the powdery substance that is inhaled or injected with increasing frequency here was not produced chemically until the 19th century in Europe.

As soon as cocaine was isolated from the leaves of the coca plant, scientists began proclaiming its healthful effects.

"In small doses, it produces intense, short-lived euphoria and enhances self-confidence," according to Dr. Ellis Deveille, medical director of Baton Rouge Chemical Dependency Unit.

Sigmund Freud praised its therapeutic
(See COCAINE, 6A)
Cocaine
(Continued from 1A)

effects in combating depression and other ailments, but he later recanted, when he discovered its addictive properties.

The argument over whether cocaine will make one addicted, "keeps on changing, old, initial research among medical professionals has suggested that it could be the most harmful drug known to man," according to Dr. John D. Anderson, director of the Drug Abuse research book on cocaine said. By 1932, Coca-Cola stopped using a syrups made from coca leaves, which had developed a taste for the drug that today, according to some authorities, is used to combat alcohol in addictive power and health-destroying ability.

Since its classification as a narcotic in 1914, cocaine's legal use has been limited as an anesthetic, particularly in nose and ear surgery. Its illegal use during most of the 20th century has been by professional jazz musicians, actors and other members of the so-called 'bobby-sox' set, and among affluent drug dealers in urban black ghettos, according to a 1977 article by the late Rev. William P. McManus of Sacred Heart Church in Chicago.

The easy availability of amphetamines and barbiturates, along with the surge of the mid-1960s and early 1970s into popularity downs the street.

But the combination of new abuse and interest in drug use since the mid-1960s have combined to make the street "a real cocaine "hot spot", the scientist added.

The farmers of Colombia and Bolivia plant thousands of acres in coca, then ship the harvest to the colander, where the cocaine is removed to produce street drugs in massive quantities to America and Europe.

Although seizures are not accurate indicators of use, it is in-teresting to note that the Federal Bureau of Narcotics seized only six pounds of cocaine.

In a six-month period in 1972, four towns were under the control of the Administration. One of the largest of those seizures occurred in New Jersey, where U.S. Customs agents seized 600 pounds of cocaine worth about $15,000, sewn into a load of cattle feed bags flown in from Panama.

That record-high seizure last April helped re-duce cocaine use, but the demand is still high, according to Bill Dea, a DEA official in Washington, D.C.

Government officials suspect that Louisiana ranks high as a secondary entry point for cocaine because of its large numbers and proximity. Since it is a large crop, they estimate that 50 percent of the drug continues to arrive in trucks.

Since then, cocaine has attracted to this state's rugged coast with its many bays and small, remote air strips, said Howard Whitaker, the DEA's top officer in Baton Rouge.

Despite the prevalence of cocaine use in Baton Rouge, many local authorities feel most of the drug smuggled into the state is sent to Florida, where the major distribution takes place.

Because of its compactness, cocaine is more easily smuggled than marijuana, and it is less expensive, allowing it to increase its growing availability, agents said.

The drug can be hidden in pro-phonologies and it is increasingly being found to result in a number of deaths. There are also special items, such as false-bottomed and false-bottomed cars, for carrying the drug into the country.

Because of the ease with which cocaine is smuggled, state and federal authorities keep smugglers have been largely unsuccessful, according to Robert McDonald of the U.S. Customs Office.

The sophisticated "operators" can often "buy the kind of help they need," he said. Today, he said, the U.S. Coast Guard and have begun a program that they hope will give them an edge.

The National Narcotics Border Interdiction Program, a cooperative program of local, state and federal law enforcement agencies with the military, making seizures and makes use of advanced technology and equipment available to fight smuggling on land, on water and in the air.

The New York Times