Festivals Acadiens combines food with fun

by Shawn Fitzpatrick
Staff Writer

Festivals Acadiens '87 got underway Sept. 18, with Beauregard downtown and ended Sept. 30, with Wayne Toups' Zydeco-Cajun Band at Girard Park. 

A cook from Randol's Restaurant commented, "This year's festival might not be as good as last year's, but at least this year they have 'shrimp on a stick.' For my money, that improves it twofold."

The Bayou Food Festival had approximately 26 restaurants participating this year with a few from as far away as New Orleans. The representatives from these establishments served up stuffed shrimp, gumbo pie, jambalaya, alligator molee and many other traditional Cajun dishes.

Visitors could view the artwork of Floyd Somier, the creator of this year's official poster. Simon explained that he has worked with the Festival for over 10 years and has been producing posters for about 10 years, but this is the first year that his poster has been chosen as the official poster.

John Roger, an accordion maker from Merieux, Louisiana, said, "The people come here for the music as well as the food."

Many crafts and trades of the Cajun heritage could be found at the Louisiana Native Crafts Festival. The crafts included adorning and making baskets, weaving, boat-building, quilting and dress-making.

Vilia maker, Adoré Ottego, said that he worked with the festival since its inception.

The Planetarium had an exhibition of photographs depicting Louisiana in the postwar era (circa 1946-50). Along with these photographs were artifacts of the period.

Festivals goers danced the Cajun square to the music of Zachary Richard and the Zydeco Rockers. They experienced traditional Cajun music with bands like Beesoo Chrest and Natch Menard and the Cajun Ramblers.

All together, there were 14 bands which performed at this year's festival.

"This is our first time playing at the music festival. I hope we can do it again next year," said Beesoo Chrest.

The Fair and Trade Show had 100 exhibitors, including NASA, with its 22 and 46-foot scale model rockets.

The show featured vendors and merchants from all over the state and also included many games and rides.

Monica Landry, one of the exhibitors at the show, commented, "I felt I had to bring my exhibit here so people would know that this is what education and culture was not what the exhibition was all about.

"I want the people to see what the Acadians were really like," she added.

Landry explained that she is trying to bring Acadians and Cajun together through a program called Tours Acadian.

Along with all the activities, there was the Louisiana Film and Video Festival featuring Cajun and Creole music, culture and history.

Acadian Village highlighted the traditional way of life with tours of old Cajun homes and a farmer's trade show.

Aaron Gray, a cook for one of the New Orleans restaurants, commented, "We want to return next year to make it another great event!"