Economic Asset

By Boa ANGERS JR.

Allen Babineaux, chairman of the French Heritage Organization (FHO), encouraged Lafayette Rotarians Thursday to join “Operation Unlimited” in making Acadiana a world linguistic center and USL an incubator for the diplomatic corps of America.

During the meeting a couple from France was welcomed to the community, Mrs. C. E. Hamilton explained the origin of the Acadian flag, and FHO members Dave Perkins, E. J. Chatelain and Charles Martin were presented as guests of Babineaux.

The bi-lingual Acadian country is different and delightful, the FHO chairman noted, and urged citizens to convert it into an economic and tourist asset. He asked that South Louisianians quit trying to “out-British the British” and capitalize on their French heritage.

He felt that Lafayette as a dynamic oil, medical, financial, legal and religious center could also expand into a linguistic center and develop ambassadors and teachers of foreign languages. He opined that some of the “most linguistically affluent citizens in the world” are found in Acadians.

Babineaux observed that although a colony was established at Jamestown in 1607, the Acadians were in Nova Scotia in 1603. He asserted that Acadians bore the brunt of British tyranny in 1755 and today Cajuns leave Acadia only long enough to fight for their country. He found in the French language an “extra dimension” for growth and progress and encouraged citizens to be proud of their French heritage.

Mrs. Hamilton, longtime leader in the movement to preserve the Acadian culture, spoke in French and English on the origin of the Acadian flag that is being displayed around Lafayette. After reminding Rotarians that Acadians have fought in every war in which the nation has engaged, Mrs. Hamilton explained that the silver on the blue field of the flag is symbolic of France. Spain was in control of Louisiana at the time the Acadians fled here and the Acadian flag recognizes that fact.

Babineaux said that Charles Martin was one of the first to fly the Acadian flag and that the First National Bank and other business places and schools placed orders. The FHO chairman advised that a new order had been placed and the flags could be obtained through E. J. Chatelain, the Chamber of Commerce or his office. Babineaux also recommended that the “Ragin Cajuns” be translated into French and imprinted on the helmets of the USL Bulldogs.

Serge and Genevieve Mendes of Paris were guests of the club and Mendes responded in French to a letter read in English by Babineaux.

Rotary Pres. Derrell Hamm revealed that a Lyons, France student will attend USL this summer to study agriculture because of the club’s efforts. A letter from a Lyons Rotarian directed to Hamm was given to Dean Thomas Arceneaux of USL who coordinated the arrangements.

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