HEAR LEGEND - Journalists from French-speaking countries convening in Lafayette listen to the tale of Evangeline as they tour the Longfellow-Evangeline State Park in St. Martinville Saturday. The journalists expressed surprise at the number of French-speaking residents of Acadiana as they toured the area yesterday. (Advertiser Staff Photo)

IN ACADIANA

Journalists Feel Impact Of Culture

By GLENN FONTENOT
Advertiser Area Reporter

Amazement and wonder are only adjectives but they describe accurately the feelings expressed by the French speaking journalists who this weekend toured the compelling sights of Acadiana.

One Belgian journalist said that French speaking people in other countries were aware of the existence of French speaking people in Louisiana but that it took being in Acadiana to bring home the impact of the extent of the French culture in Louisiana.

Tours St. Martin

The 125 plus member delegation of the International Association of French Speaking Journalists, IAFJ, were treated to a tour of St. Martin Parish Saturday afternoon.

Maurice Pellier, secretary of the union of press managers and a Frenchman, said he was shocked that the area was predominantly French speaking.

Delegation members were feted to a crawfish etouffe dinner and entertainment from Breaux Bridge residents. Songs were presented in French as, indeed, the entire program from its beginning was given in French.

Create Rapport

A writer for Le Figaro, addressing the audience at Breaux Bridge, said he was impressed with Cajun hospitality and would do his best to create a rapport between his readers and Acadiana.

The journalists were also taken to St. Martinville where they visited the St. Martin de Tours Catholic Church, Courthouse and Evangeline - Longfellow State Park and Museum.

The representatives were impressed with the museum as well as their visit to Breaux Bridge. Many of their made recordings of French songs and the story of Longfellow's Evangeline.

The press corps were here to learn firsthand the efforts of Louisiana to preserve its French language and culture.

The first United States convention in the history of IAFJ was gavled to order at Griffin Hall on the University of Southwestern Louisiana campus.

In French

The entire program was conducted in French and area dignitaries were on hand to present opening remarks at 10 a.m. Saturday.

Saturday night, delegates returned to Lafayette to become guests in the homes of families here.

Activities Sunday will get underway at 9:30 a.m. when the journalists will leave their hotel to take part in tours of offshore Louisiana, the Atchafalaya Basin and country horse racing.

 Vermilion Parish Sheriff Euda Delcambre will conduct the Gulf of Mexico tour while Earl Willis will take other journalists for a fishing trip in the Atchafalaya Basin.

In New Iberia

Also on Sunday, there will be activities at the Sugar Cane Festival Building in New Iberia where former state Sen. Sam Broussard will serve as master of ceremonies.

Monday, Ville Platte and Mamou will be the focus of the journalists' attention.

At 10 a.m. a business session of the convention will be held in the Ville Platte community center and Mamou attorney Paul Tate will act as Evangeline Parish master of ceremonies.

The tour of Ville Platte will include French centers of interest, a luncheon and a musical program.

Delegates leave for Mamou at 5 p.m. for a city hall reception and dinner in the homes of individual families there.

Tuesday's business session will be held in Griffin Hall and that night the journalists, along with the general public, will enjoy a free Cajun music concert at Blackham Coliseum.

The convention in Lafayette is sponsored by the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana.