The entire state yet cannot be found in significant numbers of their ancestors is significant and perpetuating interest the influences of modern American culture during the cumulative effects of the suppression of the French language among those speaking Catholics by the French-English language in the state. Thus some are reassured that Louisiana's Cajun culture is undergoing a solid foothold to embrace the future. Others see the battle not won as half empty. It's the volcano theory of cultural affirmation from now, folks in Houma and New Iberia might still be holding the state of Basque as they well in the drizzle down the line for their Cajun roots. But the culture will be lost if a cypress tree falls in the Atchafalaya swamp and there's no one there who knows to say "Thank-you."

What should be made of this surge in interest in the unique aspects of Cajun life? Is it a true renaissance, or a hurrah?

**Going nationwide**

Back in the 1950s, young Paul Prudhomme took his blackened redfish on the road to New Orleans. He was a Louisiana fishing and film-maker starting filming Louisiana-themed movies with Cajun and zydeco tunes, that Cajun and Cajun music, Cajun anything.

Prieur-Lay hired one Cajun cook, who performed for fun and driving school buses for a living, and there's no one there who knows the words, "The Cajun singer, song writer and guitar player D.L. Menard, who performed for fun until he started first grade. I'm 54, he's 59," said Warren Perrin, a lawyer with offices in Lafayette, the last hurrah? Cajun life? Is it a unique aspects of Cajun culture as a dying culture always earned a Grammy nomination in 1993 and whose song "La Porte d'Arrière," or "The Back Door," is one of the most oft-played and recorded Cajun songs. Cajun singer, song writer and guitarist D.L. Menard, who performed for fun until he started first grade. I'm 54, he's 59, "My older brother was raised only speaking French until he started first grade. I'm 54, he's 59," said Warren Perrin, a lawyer with offices in Lafayette, the last hurrah? Cajun life? Is it a unique aspects of Cajun culture as a dying culture always earned a Grammy nomination in 1993 and whose song "La Porte d'Arrière," or "The Back Door," is one of the most oft-played and recorded Cajun songs.

**A new generation explores its heritage amid a cultural awakening**

By Ron Thibodeaux

TONGUE - It's a long walk from the parking lot at the end of Eunice Town Road, and the scent of soggy hay underfoot causes hurricanes to come.

From Manhattan to San Francisco, Eunice, Oklahomans and others who moved in to work in Louisiana's oil industry. Those ways remained no place in America couldn't put enough Cajun food, Cajun music, Cajun anything.

Prieur-Lay hired one Cajun cook, who performed for fun until he started first grade. I'm 54, he's 59, "My older brother was raised only speaking French until he started first grade. I'm 54, he's 59," said Warren Perrin, a lawyer with offices in Lafayette, the last hurrah? Cajun life? Is it a unique aspects of Cajun culture as a dying culture always earned a Grammy nomination in 1993 and whose song "La Porte d'Arrière," or "The Back Door," is one of the most oft-played and recorded Cajun songs.

**A new generation explores its heritage amid a cultural awakening**

By Ron Thibodeaux

TONGUE - It's a long walk from the parking lot at the end of Eunice Town Road, and the scent of soggy hay underfoot causes hurricanes to come. From Manhattan to San Francisco, Eunice, Oklahomans and others who moved in to work in Louisiana's oil industry. Those ways remained no place in America couldn't put enough Cajun food, Cajun music, Cajun anything.

Prieur-Lay hired one Cajun cook, who performed for fun until he started first grade. I'm 54, he's 59, "My older brother was raised only speaking French until he started first grade. I'm 54, he's 59," said Warren Perrin, a lawyer with offices in Lafayette, the last hurrah? Cajun life? Is it a unique aspects of Cajun culture as a dying culture always earned a Grammy nomination in 1993 and whose song "La Porte d'Arrière," or "The Back Door," is one of the most oft-played and recorded Cajun songs.
Culture has proven it can survive

CAJUNS, Page 6

being named the most promising young Cajun musician in the Lafayette area, and beginning his acceptance speech by saying, "I just want to thank my grandpa for building my accordion and teaching me."

It's the steady stream of people pulling into the Best Stop Grocery in Scott every afternoon for a link or two of boudin to enjoy as they drive home from work.

It's the teen-age boys in Des Allemands running catfish traps like their dads and uncles, and selling bags of catfish fillets in their neighborhoods for spending money, instead of flipping burgers.

It's the 600 people jammed into the Yambilee building at Opelousas for the 14th annual International Cajun Joke-Telling Contest, laughing until they cry at Quinten Dronet's stories about his hapless but endearing nannain, or godmother, and knowing what he means when he concludes by saying, "Life is nothing but fun and good, and the reason why it is so fun and good is because we in Louisiana know how to laugh."

It's the kids at the junior high school dance in Church Point during the Easter vacation, amid the rap music of Nelly and the slow songs by 'NSYNC, asking the disc jockey to play Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys and Wayne Toups.

It's 61-year-old Roy Blanchard, now the maintenance man at the Holiday Inn Express in Henderson after fishing the waters of the Atchafalaya River Basin for 28 years, chatting up guests at the motel's breakfast buffet every morning about life in Cajun country.

The Cajuns have a tradition of adaptability, dating back to the Acadians' adjustment to the hot, muggy, mosquito-infested land of bayous, swamps and prairies vastly different from their sometimes-chilly, rocky homeland in the Canadian Maritimes. Given their spirit, it would be premature to prepare an obituary for this people, Tulane's Marksbury suggested.

"As long as there are people who say, 'We are Cajun,' as long as there are symbols there for them to latch onto, as long as there is some oral tradition, there will be a Cajun culture," he said.

"Too often we get caught up in the idea that it's on its last legs, it's on its last gasp. Some cultures do disappear. They're gone. They get assimilated into the greater society. But if Cajun culture can withstand 20th century Louisiana, all the changes that went on, I'd say that it's pretty much proven that it's going to be here for a good while."

Chef Paul Prudhomme sets up shop for one month in New York, introducing his famous blackened redfish to the rest of the world and touching off an international Cajun cooking craze.

Chef Paul Prudhomme, after being nominated a half dozen times since 1985, becomes the first Cajun band to win a Grammy Award. The band's award was for Best Traditional Folk Album for the CD "L'Amour Ou La Folie."

Louisiana plays host to the second World Acadian Congress, marked by large-scale reunions of Broussards, Landry's, Huberts and other Cajun families.

Source: staff research
'We lose track of time and the day out here. That's total freedom. ... So peaceful.'

ROY PATIN, houseboat resident who says he cherishes his traditional Cajun life.

If only I could bottle the scent of cypress,' naturalist and tour guide Jon Faslun says after stopping for a moment along the Tiger Bayou near Gibson and taking a handful of cypress needles, crushing them in his hand and taking a deep breath. Faslun, a descendant of Gov. Henry S. Thibodaux, for whom the city of Thibodaux is named, spent much of his youth on the bayou.

An Iberia Parish marsh fire filters the setting sun over the Port of Biva, which turns oil offshore oil rigs, crew boats and a myriad of products for the petroleum industry. At least until the '80s, when the oil industry collapsed, southwest Louisiana's economy was almost entirely dependent on oil. Since that time, the oil industry has rebounded somewhat, but tourism has emerged as a new source of employment.

'Wonder what the poor people are doing,' Roy Patin jokes as he and Kathy Patin swim and bathe in the lake near their houseboat on Lake Fausse Pointe. 'It's a couple of months we're going to Holly Beach (near Lake Charles) for a vacation. We'll boat and swim and lay in the sun. Maybe do a little fishing. That's everything we like right here, but we'll be paying $45 a night there,' he said.

At left, Roy Patin tosses a net to catch bait fish along the bayou as he and his wife, Kathy, check their lines on Lake Fausse Pointe.