ONE FELLOW'S EVANGELINE

By ELVIN REED

Old-Time '801 de Maison'

MAMOU - At the bicentennial of the new Mamou branch library, an award was made to a talented student who took first place honors in the story contest sponsored by the parish library as part of the National Library Week observance.

Of the 62 entries from all parish high schools the entry by Miss Kay Guillory of Mamou was judged the best. Miss Guillory was presented with a one year subscription to Life magazine. All stories were written in some legend, fiction or non-fiction, or customes, or cultures of people of Evangeline Parish, or about history of the parish or any one of its communities.

Following is Miss Guillory's entry entitled "Old de Maison'.

The story revolves around a tale told by her boy grandfather, and unknown to the grandmother, Kay put it into story form for the contest. The story is true, by the way. Kay is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Guillory of Mamou, and a Junior at Mamou High. The story follows.

"During my great-grandfather and great-grandmother's teeny days, the big event of the month was the 'Old de Maison'. In the P'Anse Maligue community where my grandfather lived, neighbors held their homes far away from each other and loved to get together for their fun.

"Transportation was provided by horse, wagon, buggy, or sulky, a cart which looked like a buggy but had two seats into which a family of six could fit.

"The young men were really proud of their riding, especially those who owned horses that were used for riding only. In fact, many a young man was judged then by the horse he rode.

"Grandfather's family was quite large as were most families in those days. He had six big strong brothers and five beautiful sisters. He was the dandy of the family. He was the best dancer around and was famous with the ladies, young and old. Grandfather was a wonderful fighter also, but was too small to hold out very long, so naturally his brothers would finish up each battle.

"My grandfather was from a neighboring community, Pine Point, and was the only girl in a family of 12. Her brothers were big and strong and didn't think anyone was good enough for her little sister, especially the dandy of P'Anse Maligue.

"My grandfather's house was a favorite meeting place for all of P'Anse Maligue and the neighboring communities. Naturally the young people from the different areas were always competing against each other. They looked forward to the dance to show off. There were always fights, stunts, and tricks.

"Each community had its fighting champs, favorite beauty, fiddle player and accordion player. These two instruments were the most popular ones. Sometimes a scrub-board, spoon and "ba stick" or triangle, were used.

"On the day of the dance, all the furniture was removed from the parlor and chickens were prepared for the gumbo. The dance would go on just about all night. People from all around came. Young men arrived on their horses; mothers, fathers, children and old people in wagons. Such a dance took a lot of preparation, to stand the dancing and stomping that went on.

"People started arriving for the activities around four o'clock in the afternoon. Quilts were laid on the floor of the bedrooms for the smaller children to sleep when they got tired and wanted bed. The ladies were laid cross-wise in the beds; sometimes there were eight to ten in the same bed. This often proved embarrassing, as some parents picked up the wrong baby.

"Each family brought cake and wine. The young men always had something stronger hidden outside. Each dance usually ended in a contest between P'Anse Maligue and Pine Point. Exciting things happened during the evening which led up to this contest.

"As most houses were too small for everyone to dance at one time, the men stayed on the porch and took turns. In his own home my grandfather felt at ease, so he decided to try dancing the whole night.

"This special night the others were especially tough about his brazenness. While my grandfather was dancing, the Pine Point boys went on top of the house and poured black pepper down the chimney. Everyone started sneezing and running for fresh air. This incident kept my grandfather of the dance floor for a while. But he could see grandmother dancing with everyone and he could not go in, it was more than he could take.

"He finally let everyone think that he had given up. He went around the house to look for a place to get in unnoticed. A ladder which lay on the ground caught his eye and up to the attic he went. He found an opening right smack in the middle of the dancing room. Opening the trap door, he peeped in. HIs heart was in his mouth, because he knew he was going a little too far just to have his way. He was about to chicken out, when he saw grandmother swing by on the arm of her gardner. That was too much .. . My grandfather jumped out on the middle of the dance floor .. . Wham . . . Everyone stopped dancing and grandfather just stood, 'fif dare anyone to throw me out' he yelled.

"Well, someone did. The Pine Point boys had enough of him and the P'Anse Maligue people had to defend their own. What a fight that was. They knew grandfather was wrong, but they had to help him. The dance went on and out went grandfather again.

"Now this time he was mad at everyone, even grandmother; so he went to the place where the horses were tied. He started hunting on the ground for cockleburs to put under the saddles. He couldn't find enough to place on every horse; so he cut the remaining saddles. Then back to the porch he went to sit out the dance.

"Grandmother was not enjoying herself too much because she was worried about my grandfather. Every time he went by the door she looked for him. Finally she talked her brothers into leaving the dance. They said their good-byes; the host, who was grandfather, and the other guests went to see them off; secretly glad to see the noisy Pine Point crowd leave.

"The men climbed into their saddles. You can imagine what happened. The ones with the cockleburs started buckling with all their might. The ones with cut cinches were all right for a while, then wham . . . The saddles fell off, and off flew the riders right into the mud.

"Grandmother figured what bad happened and was deter-
minded not to have any fighting with her boy friend so she ran to stand by grandfather's side. It was surely a half hour of bucking and screaming before the Pine Point boys could get together again. Then they headed for grandfather; besides him stood grandmother saying, 'You can't fight him anymore, 'cause he just asked me to marry him, and I said "yes".

"From then on none of the dances were the same, be-cause grandmother always kept him, 'the P'Anse Maligue dandy,' in line.

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