The Cajun bouré queen

By RANDY WHATLEY

Mrs. Edith Gibbons Oubre of Loreauville was crowned the official World Champion Bouré Queen" March 5.

The Cajun card-playing contest was sponsored by Catholic High of New Iberia in conjunction with its “Cajun Fun Fest,” an annual school fund-raising drive.

The bouré (also spelled bourse and booray) tournament began two weeks earlier with 112 entrants. The preliminaries consisted of groups of eight players each playing the authentic Cajun card game, which is a form of five-card bridge. The elimination rounds lasted 4 1/2 hours each, and the top money winner from each table advanced to the next round.

All eight finalists were women, and Mrs. Oubre emerged the winner with net earnings in chips totaling $1,460.

Originally from the predominantly Anglo-Saxon, Protestant city of Pollock, in Grant Parish, Mrs. Oubre learned to play cards 35 years ago after marrying her husband, Sandy, and moving to Cecilia. Still remembering her upbringing which forbade playing cards for money, she insists, “I am not a gambler. I’m a social card player.” Other than bouré, she enjoys the poker game “Hi-Lo,” which she plays with friends in Lafayette.

Mrs. Oubre has converted to Catholicism and learned to speak Cajun French by playing cards. “The people I played with spoke only French. In fact the first thing that I ever learned in French was deux diz café (two 10s backed up). That was when I was 30 years old.”

“My husband, who was a school teacher, also taught me how to say Va’al’école (go to school). Back then when he wasn’t at home and someone came to the house to talk to him, it was in French and I couldn’t understand them, so I would just say Va a l’école.”

The champion advises other players to remember that “bouré is not like poker. The best hand in poker wins but that’s not necessarily true in bouré because you have to know how to play your cards.”

For each deal, if all stay in, you must ante. The dealer passes out five cards to each player, and the last card dealt is turned up to decide trump suit. The object of the game is to win the most tricks.

“It takes the three Cs—cash, courage and confidence,” says Mrs. Oubre. “And it also takes patience. You have to wait until you get trumps (the superior suit).”

Mrs. Oubre attributes part of her playing skill to her patience. “When I sat down at the bouré table, I stayed exactly two hours before I pulled my first pot,” she recalls of the championship game.

She also has an exceptionally high recall of the previous cards played. “I remember how many cards are drawn by each player so I can figure what they have.”

Mrs. Oubre suggests that the safest way to avoid “bouréing,” or losing without taking any tricks, is to play when holding trump combinations consisting of King, Queen and one lower card; Queen, Jack and 10; or Jack, 10, 9 and 8. Of course, the Ace of trumps is always a sure trick winner.

Mrs. Oubre advises others to play according to the mood of the game. “If someone is having good luck who is in the back of you, you have to push your hand. If someone is playing badly, you can cut any way you want, and you know it’s going to work.”

As the official World Champion “Bouré Queen,” Mrs. Oubre won a $2,000 grand prize. Being a typical 65-year-old Cajun mother, she plans to give the money to her children to spend on a weekend in New Orleans. “I’ll give them my money so that all my children will have a chance to be together and have a good time,” she says.