MISS PRESS FRANCE VISITS
'To Save French, Muskrats, Alligators...'

By BETSY HOLLINGSWORTH
Advertiser Staff Reporter

"I came to Louisiana to help save the French language, the muskrats, nutria, and the alligators," said Genevieve de las Cases, chairman of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, to the special session of the Louisiana Legislature who applauded her efforts with a standing ovation in Baton Rouge Wednesday.

This light statement was made after Miss de las Cases, holding the title of Miss Press France, participated in the Fur Festival in Cameron. There she became a part of and acquainted with the "joie de vivre" of the people living in Southwest Louisiana.

Miss de las Cases is from Paris and Lozere, France. She was selected as Miss Press France because of the historical family ties with both the United States and France. (Staff Photo by Peter Piazza)

Miss de las Cases, a Dominican father who was the first defender of the native Indians in Latin America, has not affected her life very much since his installation into office. "It has not created a problem with my friends, and very few others know," said Miss de las Cases.

Historical family prominence is a lifestyle which Miss de las Cases has long been accustomed to. On her father's side, she comes from a family which dates its ancestry as far back as a pilot on one of the three ships which sailed with Columbus to discover America. Miss de las Cases is also descended on her paternal side from Bartholomé de las Cases, a Dominican father who was the first defender of the native Indians in Latin America.

Honored By Statue
Father Cases stood up for the Indians against the injustices of Spanish landlords and a statue stands in his honor in Mexico City today. Tying her to the Revolutionary War in the days of the English colonies is her great-great-uncle, Comte Admiral d'Estaing, who has been credited with the successful organization of the Boston defense against the English fleet in August of 1778.

In July of 1778, the Comte also led the French fleet on the Delaware River in support of the forces of Generals George Washington and Marquis de Lafayette, who were at the point of collapse. He later died on the guillotine in 1794 during the French Revolution.

Because of his vital efforts as a soldier in the American Revolution, the U.S. Congress unanimously recognized his assistance in 1779.

Miss de las Cases reports that she has "found the people of Louisiana to be extremely cordial, which is regretfully different than the attitudes found generally in most of Europe."

During her two-week visit, she has been a guest of Domengeaux and his family at their Lafayette home. Her tour has been arranged under the combined sponsorship of CODOFIL, the French-speaking journalists, and by the Cameron Fur Festival.

Enjoying Cuisine
Miss de las Cases related that she has been enjoying the cuisine of Southwest Louisiana and has been "surprised and impressed that there is still a large amount of French spoken here." She has not had any trouble understanding the French spoken in the area, which has retained much of the dialect of the old Parisian French.

Some of Miss de las Cases' impressions of the United States in general have been with the fashions, since in Paris she is employed as a stylist for designers. She has worked in the designer's house of Christian Dior.

She said that the women's styles in France are moving away from pantsuits, into longer, more feminine dresses. The men's looks are basically the same, but in France they wear closer-cut suits, with more conservative looks.

American Homes
She noted that American houses are more impressive and larger than the ones in France. But her family may transport a French family, immersed in the history of both France and the United States.

During the remaining portion of her tour, the French visitor has plans to return to Cameron and visit friends she made during the recent Fur Festival and go oyster fishing. Also on her Lozere. The chateau comes under the combined sponsorship of CODOFIL, the French-speaking journalists, and by the Cameron Fur Festival.

Domengeaux said, "CODOFIL is greatly honored by the visit of this charming and gracious young lady, a descendant of a family which did so much for this country in the American Revolution, and even in its discovery!"