

Spring 2020

1^{en Louisiane} chez Nous

Not-So-Average Joe

page 4

Creole or Cajun?

page 7

back to our roots

Staff

Editor-in-Chief

Lauryn Madere

Copy Editors

Devin Griffin

Brody Gannon

Graphic Designers

Brendan Landry

Troy Dupont

Layout Designers

Lauryn Madere

Janetta Duckett

Photography Team

Dylan Ferreira

Dillan Massey

**Chez
Nous**
en Louisiane

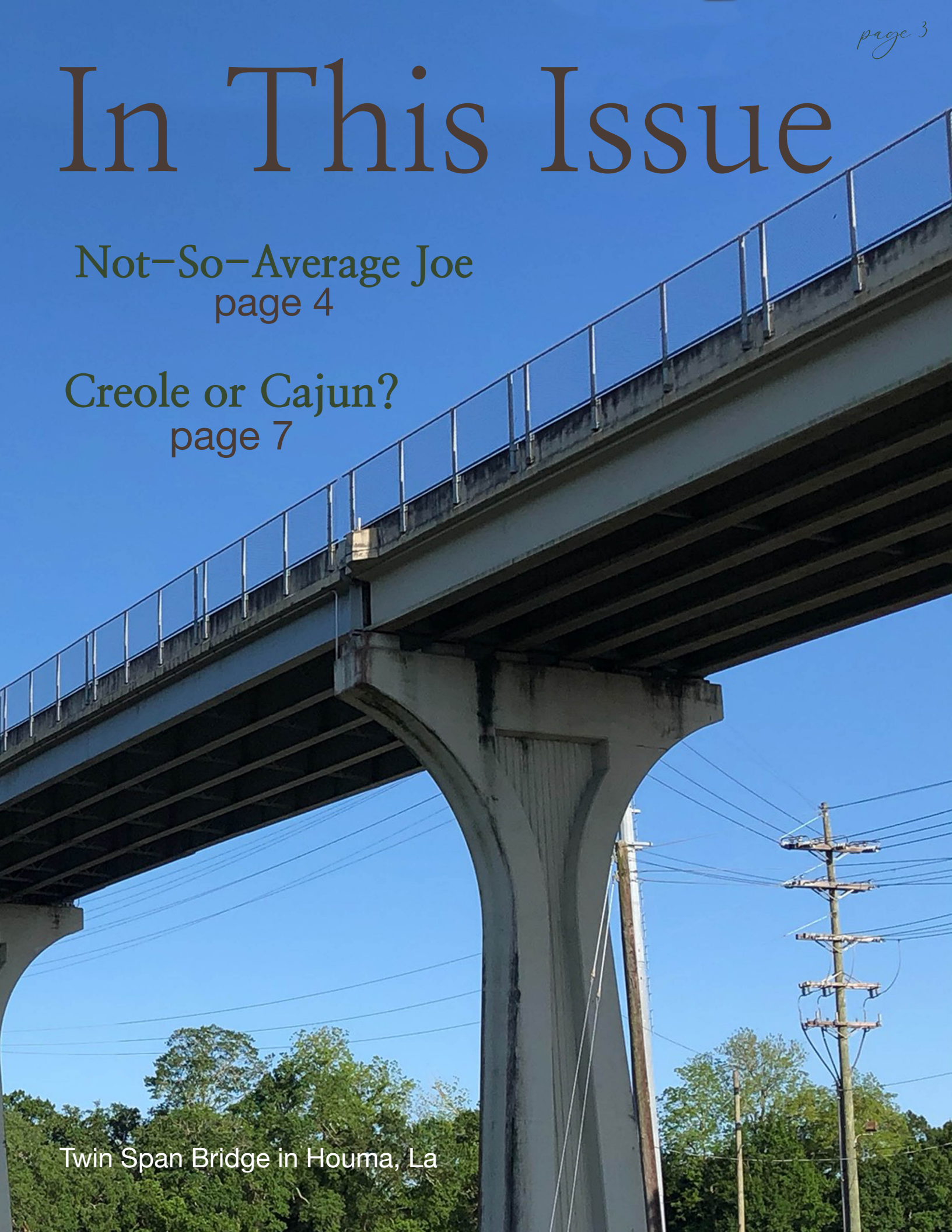


In This Issue

Not-So-Average Joe
page 4

Creole or Cajun?
page 7

Twin Span Bridge in Houma, La



Not-So-Average Joe



The Fishing Industry's Complexities *by* Devin Griffin

photo Dylan Ferreira

graphics Troy Dupont

layout Lauryn Madere

The sun rises on a blistering morning, the sky painted in light shades of purples and blues and the sun plays a game on the horizon before it's completely ready to wake up and see the world. But there he is, on his boat, casting his net and living. He watches as the world wakes up before him; he's been up for hours. A fisherman's job is never done, regardless of the season or life events going on, working for yourself to make the community operate. The normality of a small-town is riding on today's catch, but for now, it's peaceful and man is one with the sea.

An Everlasting Endeavor

The life of commercial fishermen never pauses. A fisherman is out on the water from the break of dawn 'till sunset, making four or five trips out on the water. Most commercial fishermen do not catch big fish to sell to companies. They fish for bait: minnows, shrimp, and other small bait fish. Selling these bait fish to local businesses allows South Louisiana to be the fishing paradise it is. It's nothing for someone to stop by a live bait shop on their way to Grand Isle, pick up live bait from these commercial fishermen's shops and continue on their way down to fish on the isle.

How this works is commercial fishermen have the client shops that they sell to for their living. Commercial fishermen are not people who catch game fish for a living. It is more common to catch bait fish and bring it to shops for game fishermen to buy from. Commercial fishermen live a quiet type of life. Though there are some local fishermen who fish for local stores, most commercial fishing is bait fishing.

Charter fishing and commercial fishing have their differences. Charter fishermen are those who companies will pay to go out and catch certain fish for them. Charter fishermen will also charter their boats for people to take trips and do tours.

Those are the main differences between the two professions. Similar in practice but very different. You'll see more commercial fishermen in the areas of South Lafourche. Stringing along the bayou of Golden Meadow are commercial fishing boats named after family members and wives. These are the boats that make the town go around. These boats drive the culture. Commercial fishermen are also shrimpers and oystermen who sell their products themselves. These fishermen, no matter what they sell or fish, are the backbone of this small-town culture. These businesses are small and mostly family run.

Goo's Opportunity Occupation

1985
Goo began his career as a commercial fishmen

1996
Goo and his family receive the business after Goo's father's passing

2010
BP Oil Spill caused a slight hitch in the business

1986
Audrey graduated from high school and moved into Leeville

1998
The family business thankfully began picking up

2019
Goo and his wife currently own a successful bait shop

A Shop's Story

There is a small bait shop in Golden Meadow that is called Goo's Live Bait Shop. It's been in business for about four years now, since 2016. According to his wife, Goo bought the bait shop because he had a regular customer that was not buying from him and he was concerned. When he asked, his service was no longer needed, but he was offered to buy the shop and he did. Every small business has a story behind it, and a story that matches.

Audrey Saucier has been married to Goo for over 27 years. They met in the mid 80's at her parents' house. Audrey graduated from high school in 1986 and moved to Leeville, a fishing town less than a half and hour from Golden Meadow, where she grew up. When she moved there, she started working right away in the family fishing business.

Goo is his nickname because he's named after his father whose name is Huston. Goo was working with his dad before he was 17 or 18 years old. His father had grown too old to work the boat and Goo

decided to take on the family boat. The Lady Iris was originally a shrimping boat, meaning that they were shrimpers rather than normal fishermen.

Later, Goo bought his own boat. It was a small fishing boat that the couple worked on for years alongside Goo's dad's boat with his mother. Unfortunately, shrimping, or trawling as it is commonly called, wasn't in season. They had to have a source of income, so Audrey and Goo took to net fishing where they would catch red fish to sell to various customers. This was to get ready for the Spring shrimp season, but the event was short lived. The Wildlife and Fishery office regulated net fishing and made it illegal.



Photo by: Devin Griffin
Goo and Audrey Saucier embracing near a livewell in their shop.



Photo by: Dylan Ferreira
Goo's Live Bait Shop storefront.



Photo by: Devin Griffin
Goo using a net to catch some bait fish out of his livewell for a customer.

A Change of Pace

After net fishing went down, Goo's dad started to fish minnows along with trawling to make money year around. It was a short-lived endeavor, and the trawling industry went down. The young couple built and sold a boat during the drop of the industry. The one thing that stayed was fishing for minnows year-round.

In 1996 Goo's father got sick and passed away, leaving the business to Goo, Audrey and Goo's mom Iris. Mrs. Iris decided that they couldn't fish minnows then; too many memories were tied to the trade. In 1998, the business picked up again.

Goo and Audrey decided that if they were

going to do this as a living, they were going all in. They bought their biggest boat and began developing local clientele. Goo sold to the same customers for years. There was a slight hitch in 2010 when the BP Oil spill happened. Goo had to stop fishing while the

gulf was being cleaned. Business was up and down, leading to 2019. Goo and his wife own Goo's Live Bait Shop. Someone fishes his minnows and live bait for him, and he sells what is caught, much like how his career started in 1985. His life has almost come full circle.

This is just one story of a commercial fisherman and how they make their living. There is so much that makes a livelihood and how careers and lives change, and how someone can find themselves back where they started.

Goo and Audrey decided that if they were going to do this as a living it was going to be a living. They bought their biggest boat and began developing local clientele.





photo Dylan Ferreira

graphics Brendan Landry

layout Janetta Duckett

In her office is a framed map of Louisiana hanging on her wall. The words are in a language that is not English. Large bold text of what should be the word 'Louisiana' is written as 'Lalwizyàn.'

"If you look at that map and read the words, those are words older than Cajun or Acadian. Those words are Creole," says Dr. Robin White.

And those Creole words are dying.

Origins of the Language(s)

Cajun French, Creole French or Louisiana French, as White likes to call it, is a language specific to Louisiana culture.

The language originated around the early 1750s, when French Acadians were deported from Nova Scotia by the British, settling in Louisiana. Creole is a mix of the French language as well as Spanish, African, Native American and English.

Robin White works in the Language and Literature department at Nicholls State University and is a professor of English and French.

She helped start Le Cercle Francophone, a group that comes together once a week at the Jean Lafitte Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center in Thibodaux to speak French.

Council for the Development of French in Louisiana

There are many groups like Le Cercle Francophone all over the state. Youngsville, Eunice and Lafayette are one of many cities where people have the tradition of meeting to speak French to save their culture. They are supported by the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, or CODOFIL.

CODOFIL encourages Louisiana's French culture, with hopes to save the endangered language of Creole and Cajun French according to their website. Louisiana is the only state with an organization dedicated to language, and it's necessary considering the lack of French speakers in the state.

"The sad thing about Creoles is that there's only about 1,000 speakers left," says White, "So, it is very much a dying language."

Although French and Creole are spoken and thriving in different parts of the world, Louisiana Creole is completely different.

"There's Creole in Haiti, French Guiana, Guadalupe and in the Indian Ocean, which is crazy," says White.

"Louisiana Creole is a Creole language that's similar to other languages, however, sadly it is dying out," says White.

"The sad thing about Creoles is that there's only about 1,000 speakers left."





Photo by: Lauryn Madere

Bonfires are the southern way to light a path for Papa Noel (Santa Claus) on Christmas Eve to visit the children. In 1990 the Festival of the Bonfires began to raise money for the community. The tradition of the festival and the building of the bonfires continues today and attracts visitors from all around the world.

Language Endangerment

White says Louisiana Creole is specifically endangered because it was considered a basilect, or a less prestigious dialect of a language.

Back in the 1920s through 1960s, speaking Louisiana French was associated with being uneducated.

Speaking French was not allowed in school during that time. All public schools in Louisiana had to be taught in English according to Acadian-Cajun.com

Many people recall French being banned and getting punished for speaking it, but White says French was not banned at all.

“Nobody banned French,” says White, “They said the language of instruction will be English, nothing but English.”

White says the law marginalized the French language, which is harder to argue than saying it was banned.

These laws were passed to Americanize South Louisiana and overcome communication barriers according to 64parishes.org.

“They became a linguistic minority who were bullied, and that’s one of the reasons why people are really passionate about it,” says White, “Because they heard, ‘my parents were punished for speaking French and so I don’t want to let it die,’ which makes a lot of sense.”

There were reports from children in school experiencing physical, verbal and emotional abuse for speaking French during the 1920s through 1960s. Often students had to write “I will not speak French on the school grounds,” according to Tope-La. “So, they’ll say it was banned, but it wasn’t banned,” says White.

White says Louisiana French culture is important

especially in Lafourche Parish because the Acadian population is so high.

“Lafourche may be more than any other parish that has lots of people who are descendants from Acadians,” says White.

However, White would not say that Thibodaux is an area that speaks Cajun or Creole. It’s mostly regular French.

“Specifically, Thibodaux is more French speaking, and it’s been labeled Cajun French because it’s just French,” says White, “So, I call it Louisiana French. Nobody else does, basically me and a handful of people.”

Current language use

White knows plenty of people who speak “Cajun” French.

“There’s no shortage. They’re older for sure but there’s a little bit of a renaissance,” says White.

As for White herself, she isn’t fluent in Louisiana French, but she does know a couple phrases.

“Komen to yê?” says White, which translates to “How you’re doing?”

Louisiana French is not much different than French spoken in other parts of the world, says White. For example, “Comment ça va,” which means “How are you,” is a phrase anyone who speaks French can understand no matter the dialect.

White went through a couple French words and phrases most people in South Louisiana would consider to be Cajun, but the words originate from areas across the world. Words like ‘c’est bon’ which means ‘it’s good,’ or ‘chaoui’ which means raccoon are not just words said in Louisiana.

“Bouder is just a word in French,” says White, “It means to pout. C’est bon. This is French. Chaoui. It is not French, it’s Choctaw, so it’s a word that’s Native American. Chevrette. That is not standard French, however in Haiti they also call shrimp Chevrette.”

“If you look up what the definition of Creole is it will say it is cultures that come out of Europeans, Native people and Africans in the new world.

The new world meaning: South America, the Caribbean and the United States,” says White.

“To me the culture in Louisiana is Creole. People have come to label it as Cajun, and I’m fighting an uphill battle because people don’t speak French anymore,” says White, “They’re like ‘no, it’s Cajun.’ In the past, I don’t remember there being such an emphasis on the Cajun-ness of the French.”

Creole Speakers

Benjamin Gilyot is a New Orleans native and says Creole is in his family’s lineage.

“My family’s French last name and the fact that we can’t figure out exactly when we got here, but it was before 1860, implies that we are French in origin, making us descendants of Creoles,” says Gilyot.



Although no one in his family can speak French, Gilyot studied French in high school and college, but he forgot much of the language.

Gilyot says it is upsetting that there is a lack of French speakers in Louisiana especially since the cause of it was Louisianans not being allowed to speak French in schools for almost 50 years.

“That was intentional to make sure we weren’t speaking a language the Americans didn’t know,” says Gilyot.

He says people should take the time to learn Creole French because of how important it is to South Louisiana’s culture, specifically in New Orleans.

“I like to think of New Orleans as the northern most Caribbean city, not one of the most southern most American cities,” says Gilyot.

Although he says he appreciates the Creole culture, he says it is a bit confusing. It is even more confusing to differentiate Creole and Cajun culture.

“What exactly is Creole culture is very complicated because there are white Creoles, free black Creoles and not free Creoles.”

Unlike White, Gilyot does not fully agree that Cajun culture copied Creole culture.

“It’s hard to make these broad strokes about large groups of people making a lot of individualized choices which happen to proceed in the same direction in certain cases,” says Gilyot.

He also says he doesn’t think Creole is just black and multiracial people and Cajun is just white people taking southern multiracial people’s culture.

“Race is very complicated when you talk about these things. One of the big things that happen with these sorts of things is a lot of people make a lot of individual choices that are horrible as a group but individually make sense at the time,” says Gilyot.

Cajun Speakers

Sixty-one-year-old Anna Leggion grew up in Bruly Saint Martin fishing and crawfishing with her father. If asked, she would say she is 100 percent Cajun. However, she says it’s pretty much true that Cajun culture is just the same as Creole culture, even the French spoken.

Leggion learned French by listening to her parents speak the language as a child.

“When I go to my mom’s we speak French to each other, but I speak broken French,” says Leggion, “I might say a few words in French and say a few in English in the same sentence.”

She takes her Cajun culture to heart, passing on the culture’s traditions and language to her three children and eleven grandchildren.

Growing up she and her family could not show off their culture or speak French in public. Her oldest half-sister was one of the many students who had to learn English in school.

“She could only speak Cajun French. It was hard on her,” says Leggion.

She also knows many people who speak French, but like White, they are from an older generation.

“I wish they would teach young children how to speak Cajun French like I know it,” says Leggion, “It’s such a beautiful language.”

Creole and Cajun languages

Creole and Cajun, it doesn’t matter which one came first, or which one copied the other because they are both immensely important to Louisiana’s culture, and the French language spoken in both is a huge part of that culture. Although the number of native French speakers in Louisiana is declining, people like Leggion and groups like Le Cercle Francophone are putting effort to preserve the language. Let’s not allow it to die.



A Publication of
the Department of Mass Communication
at Nicholls State University

