

## FROM THE EDITOR



# Governors and Legends

By Errol Laborde

### MANY STATES HAVE FOLK CHARACTERS

in their legends. It might be a Paul Bunyan-sized lumberjack; a cowboy as wild as Pecos Bill or a Casey Jones recklessly at a train engine throttle.

In Louisiana the legends are sometimes about a *rougarou*: a swamp-based werewolf, but most often the legends are about politicians. “Senator, I need to know, are you with me or are you against me?” Gov. Earl Long once reportedly asked a lawmaker.

### MAGAZINE WINS NATIONAL AWARDS

*Louisiana Life* won five national awards including two golds at the annual meeting of IRMA, the International and Regional Magazine Association. IRMA is the only trade organization that focuses on state and regional magazines. The meeting was held this past October in San Diego, California. Winners were:

- GOLD: Art Direction of a Single Story, “Duty and the Beast” Tiffani Reding Amedeo, art director
- GOLD: Photo Series, “Thunder in the Fields.” Ron Berard, photographer,
- BRONZE: Companion Website, Kelly Massicot, web administrator
- AWARD OF MERIT: Column, “The Rural Life,” Melissa Bienvenu, columnist
- AWARD OF MERIT: Cover, March, 2014, “Springtime Recipes,” Tiffani Reding Amedeo, art director

“Governor, when you’re right I am with you; when you’re wrong I am against you,” the Senator righteously replied.

“When I am right,” Long shot back, “I don’t need you.”

Brothers Huey and Early Long gave Louisiana politics much of its color and many of its problems, a legacy that would be embellished by the four terms served by Edwin Edwards and by the twice-elected country crooner Jimmie Davis.

Not all the governors have been colorful; some were conservative in style and methodical in management. Indeed too much of one style of governor has tended to send voters gravitating to another style, as in from Edwin Edwards to Bobby Jindal. There is a political pendulum that makes voters want more or less.

Sometimes the pendulum stops in the middle. Louisiana begins the year with another change at the mansion. Governors today are less likely to be flamboyant showmen and more conditioned to the TV-oriented 15-second response. Louisiana has historically given its governors great powers so the potential for change, the legislature willing, is enormous.

We wish the new governor well. And may his trail be free of the *rougarou*. ■

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### OUR READERS’ PHOTOGRAPHS



### NOVEMBER

*New Orleans Lakefront:* Rob Vinson of Marrero captured this image of sailboats at West End by Lake Pontchartrain.



### OCTOBER

*Last Crawfish of the Season:* Renee Zahorchak of Wilson snapped a pic of this rare crawfish in Zachary.

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## BRIGHT RED BLUES

*Shining a spotlight on our local crabs*

Our cover story this issue is about the Louisiana blue crab. What amazes me is that, as far as I can tell, this is the first time that the native crab ever has earned cover status. It has deserved better.

Known in some parts of the state as the “Lake Pontchartrain Blue” and elsewhere as the “Louisiana Blue,” it is one of the great delicacies from the sea.

There was a day, especially before air-conditioning, when folks used the New Orleans Lakefront to catch breezes off the lake. A favorite pastime was crabbing from a stepped seawall. The steps led into the shallow edge of the lake, where the nets were placed. The rest was up to the crabs, who frequently complied.

A Louisiana Blue is a beautifully designed creature. From the front, eyes at the top of the shell stare back while claws wave as though hoping for errant shrimp. In its natural form, there is a blue hue – especially on the claws. Once plopped into the pot, the crab turns red, just as a crawfish does. Yet, it’s still blue to us.

For all of its attributes one of the blues’s most vulnerable points is its apparent fondness for chicken necks, the longtime traditional crabber’s

bait. A neck would be pinned into a water-bound crab net. For the crabs it is supertime, though, in this case, they might have done better fasting.

To be fair, it should be noted that there are other places that have blue crabs, mostly along the East coast and into Maryland where restaurants have nevertheless been known to import our local variety when the want quality. Also, we just know how to fix them better. From its experience with shrimp and crawfish, Louisiana already has its own seafood-boiling infrastructure. We know how to make the seafood boil ingredients better by stirring in the right seasonings; we’re not afraid to toss onions, garlic, potatoes and sausage into the mix. We’re not afraid of the fat. We know how to make a crab a celebration.

Don’t forget the sausage and potatoes from the pot.

*Errol Laborde*

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# Louisiana Life

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2012 Gold Award Winner for Companion Website and 2011 Silver Award Winner Tiffani Reding Amedeo for Overall Art Direction



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WHEN IT SNOWS

At precisely noon on Christmas Day 2004, snow began to fall on New Orleans as it did throughout most of southeast Louisiana. For locals who waited all their lives for a white Christmas it was a joyous moment. Christmas dinners were interrupted as folks scampered outside to toss snowballs at each other. While the cornbread dressing cooled, the ice flinging intensified. It was a Christmas to remember although no one suspected the way it would be remembered. Some people were only half-joking, others were outright serious but eight months later and beyond — as people dug through the moldy remains of hurricanes Katrina and Rita — local lore would blame the Christmas snowfall as an omen of what would happen. A joyous weather event signaled a tragedy to come.

Science could not back up the theory, nevertheless if it snows again on Christmas Day some natives with memory might get a little more anxious during hurricane season.

North Louisiana is more susceptible to polar blasts than the state’s southern part, though geography has usually protected it from tropical phenomena. While Shreveport is 383 miles closer to

the North Pole than Grand Isle, there was one white Christmas that came from a different direction — Texas. That would be Christmas 1989 when frigid eastbound weather hit on Dec. 23. By Christmas day as the house pipes began to crack, the most anticipated arrival was not in a sled but in a plumber’s truck.

A truer image of Louisiana at Christmas is not white, but brown, as the foliage in the landscape that will be so lush in spring takes on a more sober tone. There is beauty in that too, as there is in the fresh cut sugar cane fields, the billows of smoke and tangy fragrances from boucheries, the Christmas Eve bonfires on the levees, and the bright

lights reflecting off the Cane River in Natchitoches.

Our Christmas dinner is pretty much like what the rest of the continent has, although having a bountiful hot gumbo and oyster dressing as part of the menu makes it all the better. Keep the snow for another day. We have our own style of celebrating to do.

*Errol Laborde*

Errol Laborde

AWARD WINNING

Louisiana Life won three national awards at the recent presentation of the International Regional Magazine Association. IRMA is the trade organization for state and regional magazines. Art director Sarah George won a silver

plaque in the category of Art Direction for a Single Story (“A Fresh Take on Nostalgic Recipes”) for magazines with a circulation of 30,000 or more. Melissa Bienvenue won a bronze plaque in the column category for

her Rural Life column and Stanley Dry won a bronze in the Food Feature category for an article entitled “The Lighter Side.”

Awards were presented at IRMA’s annual conference in Ft. Lauderdale.

MEET THE SALES TEAM



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RENAISSANCE PUBLISHING IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE FOLLOWING HONORS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL REGIONAL MAGAZINE ASSOCIATION:

Stanley Dry and Eugenia Uhl  
**Bronze** - Food feature

Sarah George  
**Silver** - Art direction of a single story

Denny Culbert  
**Gold** - Magazine Photographer of the Year, **Silver** - Photo Series & Melanie Warner Spencer - **Award of Merit for Art and Culture Feature**

Sarah George  
**Gold** - Overall art direction & **Finalist** for Magazine of the Year

Danley Romero  
**Bronze** - Portrait Series

Sarah George  
**Gold** - Art Direction of a Single Story

PLUS

- Bronze** - Column  
“Rural Life” by Melissa Bienvenue  
*Louisiana Life* 2015
- Bronze** - Magazine writer of the year  
Will Kalec; *Acadiana Profile* 2015
- Award of Merit** - Reader service article  
“Beyond the Ballot” by Jeremy Alford  
*Louisiana Life* September/October 2015
- Award of Merit** - Single Photo  
“Seafood Hotspots: Hawk’s Boiled Crawfish”  
by Danley Romero; *Acadiana Profile* April/May 2015