

ACADIAN MUSEUM

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Acadian Heritage & Cultural Foundation, Inc.
Fondation Culturelle du Patrimoine Acadien
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To: Local Media & Friends of the Acadian Museum

From: Acadian Museum of Erath

Date:

RE: Acadian Museum of Erath and Vermilion Parish
Louisiana's 200th Anniversary of Statehood
200 years of Acadian culture:

Government - Governor Edwin W. Edwards: celebrating an Acadian Governor
Military - Pvt. Farrell Vice and 1st Lt. Brandon Dronet: celebrating Acadian Valor
Heritage - celebrating 200 years of musical legacy

As part of the upcoming celebration of Louisiana's 200th anniversary of statehood, a Vermilion Parish event will be held in Erath, Louisiana, highlighting its unique Acadian history. As celebrations are scheduled throughout the state to commemorate Louisiana's statehood, Vermilion Parish will host a multi-event to reflect upon and revisit its contributions to the state focusing on three areas: its government, its military contributions, and its heritage.

Tickets for the 6:30 p.m. event are \$30 and may be purchased at Perrin, Landry, deLaunay, Dartez & Ouellet, 251 La Rue France, Lafayette, LA and at the Acadian Museum of Erath, 203 South Broadway, Erath, LA. For more information, contact Event Chairman Robert Vincent at 337-224-8952, Assistant Jean Frigault at 337-262-5810, frigaultjr@yahoo.com; Ticket Chairman Elwood Leblanc, 333-658-3078; Andy Perrin at 337-233-5832; John LeBlanc at 337-981-3289, Kermit Bouillion at 337-277-0342, kjb7651@cox.net; Tommy Vincent 337-288-2388, tv@infeaux.com; or Warren Perrin, perrin@plddo.com.

Andy Perrin, member of the Executive Committee of the Acadian Museum, announced that on Saturday, August 4, 2012, at 5:30 p.m., the Acadian Museum, 203 South Broadway, will unveil the busts of two of Erath's native sons who were killed while serving their country. This event is free and opened to the public. Later, at 6:30 p.m., at the Erath Community Center, 100 City Park Drive, the Acadian Museum will honor former Gov. Edwin Edwards by inducting him into the Order of Living Legends."

GOVERNMENT

Edwin Washington Edwards, born August 7, 1927, served as the Governor of Louisiana for four terms (1972–1980, 1984–1988 and 1992–1996), twice as many terms as any other Louisiana chief executive. Edwards was also Louisiana's first Roman Catholic governor in the 20th century.

The young Edwards had originally planned on a career as a preacher. He served in the U.S. Navy Air Corps near the end of World War II. After his return from the military, he graduated at the age of 21 from Louisiana State University Law Center and began practicing law in Crowley. He relocated to Crowley in 1949 after his sister Audrey (who had moved there with her husband) told him there were few French-speaking attorneys in the southwestern Louisiana community. Edwards' career was thus helped by his being articulate in both English and Cajun French.

In 1949, Edwards married Elaine Schwartzenburg. While Governor, he appointed Elaine to the Senate to fill out the unfinished term of Allen Ellender, who died while in office. Edwin and Elaine had four children: Anna Edwards, Victoria Edwards, Stephen Edwards and David Edwards.

In 1954, Edwards entered politics through his election to the Crowley City Council. Edwards remained on the Crowley council until his election to the Louisiana State Senate in 1964; in that race he defeated 20-year incumbent Bill Cleveland in a major political upset.

After serving in the state senate as a floor leader for Governor John McKeithen, Edwards was elected to the United States House of Representatives, where he served from 1965 to 1972.

Edwards was one of the few Southern congressmen to support the extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In the election of 1971–1972, Edwards won the state governorship after finishing first in a field of seventeen candidates in the Democratic primary. His greatest support came from southern Louisiana, particularly among its large numbers of Cajun, Creole, and African-American voters. The victory showed that south Louisiana was eclipsing the north in both population and hence the future political domination of the state.

Both in his liberal political rhetoric and in his flamboyant public persona, Edwards cast himself as a Louisiana populist. One of his first acts was to call for a constitutional convention to overhaul Louisiana's bulky charter. For the first time, Louisiana operated with a "cabinet style" executive department in lieu of the hundreds of boards and commissions that had existed for decades, each being its own fiefdom.

During his first two terms in office, Edwards developed a reputation for being one of the most colorful politicians in the history of a state known for its unorthodox political figures. Charismatic, well-dressed, and quick with clever one-liners and retorts, Edwards maintained wide popularity.

On July 29, 2011, Edwards married Trina Grimes Scott at the Monteleone Hotel in New Orleans. When the Louisiana Political Museum and Hall of Fame opened in Winnfield in 1993, Edwards was

among the first inductees. On February 19, 2012, Edwards served as the King of the Spanish Town Mardi Gras parade in Baton Rouge.

MILITARY

Since 2003, Chris Landry has been involved in dedicating over 200 statues of men and women who sacrificed their life for our country. According to Landry, "It was always my intention to dedicate statues of our fallen heroes from south Louisiana."

The first statue unveiled will be of Pvt. Farrell Vice, a native of Henry, Louisiana, who was killed in battle on May 24 , 1969, in Vietnam. In recognition of his valor in combat, he was awarded the silver star. This is the first statue completed from the Vietnam War.

The second statue will be of 1st LT. Brandon Dronet who was killed in a helicopter crash on February 17, 2006, in northern Africa while training pilots for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

HERITAGE

The musical entertainment will be provided by Natial d'Augereau of the performance troupe *Renaissance Cadien*, and Helen Boudreaux who will perform and demonstrate through song and dance the 200 years of Louisiana's mixture of musical heritage. Louisiana's rich music tradition is based upon the unique combination of Acadian, Spanish, French, German, African-American/Créole and native-American cultures.

The "Living Legends" series honors individuals who have helped shape and define the Cajun culture and is hosted by the Acadian Museum of Erath (acadianmuseum.com), a nonprofit organization. Corporate sponsors for the program are the law firm of Perrin, Landry, deLaunay, Dartez & Ouellet, Envirochem of Erath, Tabasco, and The History Channel. For more information, call (337) 937-0012.

Additional sponsors are needed for the event. Varying levels of sponsorship are available, and donations of refreshment and food service are also sought. Proceeds raised will benefit the Acadian Museum and a scholarship program for Vermilion students participating in French language programs.