

MON CHER CAMARADE

A Film by Pat Mire



64 minutes/color/2008
English and French with English Subtitles

A Pat Mire Films Release
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“Cajun translators were as important to the American war effort as the much acclaimed Native American ‘Code Talkers’; yet, the Cajun translators’ contributions have been entirely ignored.”

– Historian Carl A. Brasseaux, Ph.D., ULL

Short Description

MON CHER CAMARADE tells the story – never before told – of the French-speaking Cajun soldiers in WWII. Hundreds of French-Louisiana Cajuns served as interpreters for their field commanders and several of them were secret agents who passed as locals to work with the French underground. This documentary blends an original music sound track, 35mm film footage and HD interviews with stunning archival footage from the National Archives in a storytelling fashion that puts the storytelling where it belongs – on the shoulders of those veterans.



Synopsis

During World War II, hundreds of French-speaking Cajun men from South Louisiana enlisted in the U.S. military. Their linguistic skills and French heritage had been denigrated for decades in South Louisiana and was ridiculed as well by American officers in the processing centers at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and Fort Polk, Louisiana. Remarkably, these same men found that their ability to speak French became of vital importance to the American war effort in French North Africa and in France and Belgium. French-speaking Cajuns not only worked with the French resistance after D-Day, but they also provided the U.S. Army’s most effective means of communication with local authorities and the civilian population, which, in turn, provided critical support and intelligence to the American army. Indeed, Cajun translators were as important to the American war effort as the now much acclaimed Native American “Code Talkers,” yet, the Cajun translators’ contributions in this regard have been largely ignored until now.



This documentary film, through memoirs and interviews of French-speaking Cajuns who served in WWII either as members of the OSS or as citizen soldiers, tells the story of this important aspect of the American war effort in Europe. Additionally, cultural scholars provide insight into the stories of these veterans from both an historic and linguistic perspective. As a result, this documentary film allows the audience to take a new

look at the American experience, from a South Louisiana perspective. The Cajun G.I.'s of World War II were American citizens, however, their cultural pedigree was tributary to something other than the typical American experience. The end result is a film that acknowledges the unique and important contributions of the French-speaking Cajun soldiers to the war effort and gives long overdue credit to them and their linguistic skills and French heritage.

Director's Statement

I began the journey that led to the production of this film with a brief conversation several years back with historian Stephen Ambrose. Recognizing that an important aspect of the American war effort during WWII had not been told – that of the role of French-speaking Cajun soldiers – he urged me, whose father was one of those soldiers, to tell it. In the process of putting that story to film, my life took many difficult turns—losing valuable film footage and a dear actor friend to Hurricane Katrina and then losing my father, truly “mon cher camarade.” In the end, the film is a different, and I think, better film, than I had first envisioned after that early conversation with Stephen Ambrose. The story is told through a combination of powerful archival WWII film footage, moving interviews in both English and French with Cajun veterans who served in the OSS or as citizen soldiers, and 35mm film footage of the Southwest Louisiana winter landscape that symbolizes the last act of these veterans' lives when their stories can and should be told. As my friend and scholar, Carl Brasseaux, assured me when I expressed concern that this film should have been made years ago, “No, Pat, they weren't talking then.” I thank them for talking now, telling their stories and, ultimately, in so many ways, making this film possible.



Biography

Pat Mire is an award-winning documentary filmmaker born near Eunice, Louisiana and now based in Lafayette. Mire's cultural documentaries have been broadcast nationally in the United States on PBS, the Discovery Channel, and TNN's American Skyline. His documentaries have won awards in national and international competitions, including the Margaret Mead Film Festival and the American Anthropological Film Festival, at which he won the coveted “Award of Excellence.” Mire and his films have been the subject of numerous articles and reviews in major magazines, newspapers and journals. Carl Lindahl, film reviewer for the Journal

of American Folklore, called Mire “an important artistic force at work in French Louisiana whose camera work and editing are excellent.” Lindahl’s review compared Mire to the legendary documentary filmmaker Les Blank. Lindahl has written that, “[t]he second -generation films reviewed here find Blank responding to a call for a more focused and academically-guided cultural exploration and mark the debut of Pat Mire, a filmmaker dedicated to intensive, holistic presentation of specific aspects of his cultural heritage.”

Recognized for his creative filmmaking skills, Pat Mire was the only Louisiana filmmaker to receive a 1991 regional fellowship from the Southeast Media Fellowship Program that included fourteen states. In December of 1993, the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities honored Mire with a Special Humanities Award for his film work in recognition of his major contribution to the humanities in Louisiana. He was also the recipient of a 1994 fellowship from the Louisiana Division of the Arts, which had not given a fellowship to a filmmaker in six years. In 1995, Mire was recognized as a “Louisiana Success Story” at the Governor’s Arts Awards. In 1997, the Acadiana Arts Council honored Mire with the “Distinguished Artist Award,” which is given to an artist whose work has achieved national recognition. In February of 2000, Mire was presented with an “Artist of the Year Award” in Washington D.C. by United States Senator Mary Landrieu.

Mire’s feature film debut, *Dirty Rice*, was an official entry at the 1998 London Film Festival, where it played to two sold-out auditoriums. Neal Norman, film critic for the London Evening Standard, reviewed the film and wrote, “[w]hile the Big Easy, No Mercy, and more recently, *Eve’s Bayou* have flirted with the Cajun world, this is the real deal, 100% proof. This is not to be missed.”

Mire directed *Against the Tide: The Story of the Cajun People*, which was a November 2000 PBS “Pick of the Week” and had a 49.3% market coverage.

Clay Fourrier, executive producer of Louisiana Public Broadcasting, has recognized that Mire’s work has led to a number of high-profile film projects with LPB that have been aired nationally on PBS and that have garnered “both LPB and Mr. Mire numerous awards, including nationally recognized Telly and NETA awards of excellence.” According to Mr. Fourrier, all of these films highlight “the good things about South Louisiana and the Cajun culture.” Fourrier adds that “[i]n his films, Pat shows the contributions of real people, not Hollywood stereotypes, to our country. This is the underlying theme of all of his work.”

Pat Mire was born on June 23, 1953, and grew up in a farming community near Eunice, Louisiana. He is an English and French-speaking Cajun, busy at correcting stereotypes and misconceptions about his beloved Cajun culture by presenting an insider's perspective.

Filmography

Mon Cher Camarade (2008, 64 min., 35mm and HD Color, Black and White),
Producer, Writer, Director

Forever My Love: Music from the Bayou (2002, 60 min., 16 mm Color), Producer,
Writer, Director

Against the Tide: The Story of the Cajun People of Louisiana (2000, 60 min.,
16mm Color), Director

Swapping Stories: Folktales from Louisiana (1998, 30 min., Color), Producer,
Writer, Director

Dirty Rice (1997, 85 min., 35mm Color), Producer, Writer, Director

Sisters of the South (1994, Color), Writer and Director.

Dance for a Chicken: The Cajun Mardi Gras (1993, 60 min., 16mm Color),
Producer, Writer, Director

Legends of Louisiana (1991, 60 min., 16mm, Color), Consultant and Segment
Director.

Anything I Catch: The Handfishing Story (1990, 30 min., Color), Producer, Writer,
Director.

Wildflowers of the Cajun Prairie (1988, 39 min., Color). Producer, Writer,
Director.

Credits

THIS PROGRAM WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM THE LOUISIANA ENDOWMENT
FOR THE HUMANITIES

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY

Pat Mire

PRODUCED BY

Pat Mire in Association with Louisiana Public Broadcasting

EDITED BY

Todd Justice

Pat Mire

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY

Sam Broussard

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

Rebecca L. Hudsmith

MEMOIRS OF SAM S. BROUSSARD TO STEPHEN AMBROSE

Courtesy of The Family of Sam S. Broussard – Simone Guillory and Dot Broussard

VOICE OF SAM S. BROUSSARD

Gene Billeaudeaux

HD AND DIGITAL CAMERA

Eric Breaux

Rex Q. Fortenberry

35MM CAMERA

JWJ "Jimmy" Ferguson

STILL PHOTOGRAPHY AND BIRD WRANGLER

Neil Hahn

STILL PHOTOGRAPHY

Robin May

SOUND RECORDIST

Terry Dupuis

GAFFER

Keith Crews

GRIPS

David Brasseaux

Erik Charpentier, Ph.D.

CONTINUITY

Rebecca L. Hudsmith

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Chelsea Breazeale

POST-PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR

Chris Miranda

GRAPHICS

Todd Justice

Mark Carroll

MUSIC SUPERVISOR

Pat Mire

POST-PRODUCTION SOUND MIX

Todd Justice

FILM LAB

CineFilm Lab, Atlanta, Georgia

HARD DRIVE TRANSFER

Jeff Cotten

LA Post, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

RESEARCH CONSULTANTS

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Jason P. Theriot

LOUISIANA PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Ken Miller, Production Manager

Clay Fourrier, Executive Producer

Steve Graziano, Deputy Director

Beth Courtney, President and CEO

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE OF WWII

Courtesy of U.S. Army and National Archives

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE OF LT. ALBERT BURLEIGH
Courtesy of Shane K. Bernard, Ph.D.

COMBAT! FOOTAGE
Courtesy of Image Entertainment

DEDANS LE SUD DE LA LOUISIANE FOOTAGE
Courtesy of Jean-Pierre Bruneau

“LA VALSE DE LA VEUVE” AND “VALSE DE POINTE NOIRE”
By Angelas LeJeune

A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THE VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES WHO HELPED MAKE THIS
PROJECT POSSIBLE, INCLUDING

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Felix Mire
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Lee Bernard
Charles Bernard
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Andy Reaux
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Missy Benoit
Randy Richard
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Carl Brasseaux
Jennifer Ritter



Mon Cher Camarade Director Pat Mire

Photo By Robin May



Mon Cher Camarade Director Pat Mire frames up for winter look scene. Crew from left to right: Rebecca Hudsmith, Continuity, Terry Dupuis, Sound Recordist, and Cinematographer, Jimmy Ferguson.

Photo By Neil Hahn



Mon Cher Camarade Director Pat Mire and
Cinematographer Jimmy Ferguson

Photo by Neil Hahn



Mon Cher Camarade Director Pat Mire and Cinematographer Jimmy Ferguson shoot sunset at Lake Martin, Louisiana.

Photo by Neil Hahn



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