

POWER

LINEMAN
RODEO 2026
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OFFICIATING
ACROSS
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BE
WEATHER
READY
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CAJUN WEAVING TRADITIONS



AT JEFFERSON ISLAND

The Official Publication of the Southwest
Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation

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SLEMCO POWER (USPS 498-720, ISSN 0274-7685) is published bimonthly by Southwest Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation, 2727 SE Evangeline Thruway, Lafayette, LA 70508. Periodicals postage paid at Lafayette, LA 70509.

POSTMASTER: send address changes to SLEMCO, P.O. Box 90866, Lafayette, LA 70509-0866.

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Cover photo: Madame Dronet blanket: from left, Mary and Warren Perrin and Elaine Bourque Larcade with a Madame Dronet blanket donated to the museum by her great grandson David Dronet. Larcade will be the curator of the exhibition.



TAKE NOTE

Vegetation Management

Keeping Acadiana's Power Lines Clear and Reliable

SLEMCO MAINTAINS UTILITY RIGHT-OF-WAY CORRIDORS

THROUGHOUT ACADIANA by clearing trees, branches and other obstructions from overhead power lines to support safe, reliable electric service for members. This work is especially important in South Louisiana, where fast-growing vegetation, heavy rain, high winds and severe weather can quickly turn overhanging limbs into hazards for power lines and equipment. By planning ahead, monitoring growth near distribution lines and trimming or removing branches before they cause problems, SLEMCO's vegetation management crews help reduce storm-related outages, prevent blinking lights, improve access for lineworkers and preserve safe clearance around electrical facilities. *Lucky Number 4517928701.*

Why Vegetation Maintenance Matters

Keeping rights-of-way clear helps protect both SLEMCO members and the electric system that serves them. When trees or limbs grow too close to power lines, they can create safety hazards, damage equipment and interrupt service during storms or periods of high wind. Routine trimming allows crews to spot potential problems early, access lines more quickly when repairs are needed and reduce the chance of outages caused by falling branches. This proactive work supports reliable power, safer neighborhoods and more efficient restoration when severe weather affects the area.

Right-of-Way Safety Guidelines

- **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT:** Crews regularly trim or remove branches that grow too close to distribution lines.
- **HIGH-VOLTAGE SAFETY:** Before working or operating equipment within 10 feet of an overhead power line, contact SLEMCO at 337-896-5384 or 337-896-5551 after hours.
- **DIGGING AND EXCAVATION:** Louisiana law requires calling 811 at least 48 hours before digging so underground utility lines can be located and marked.

Do you need to report a tree branch touching a line? Are you looking for utility easement clearance information for new construction?

Members who see a tree branch touching a power line should not attempt to remove it themselves. Call us.

For safety guidance, vegetation management questions or utility easement clearance information related to new construction, members should contact SLEMCO directly at **337-896-5551**.





Rodeo Trophies and BBQ Bragging Rights

SOME DAYS, TRAINING LOOKS LIKE REPETITION. Other days, it looks like trophies, teamwork and a line of hungry folks waiting for grilled boudin. SLEMCO line apprentices and an employee BBQ team recently competed in the 2026 TLRA Lineman's Rodeo in Seguin, Texas, where the apprentices earned an impressive 6 of the 20 trophies awarded in the skills events. *Lucky Number: 4516277504.*

Meanwhile, SLEMCO's inaugural BBQ team claimed the top unofficial hospitality spot by serving grilled boudin that disappeared quickly among eager Texas guests.



Photos by Mary Laurent and Megan Leper

Texas Lineman's Rodeo Association

The Texas Lineman's Rodeo Association, Inc. (TLRA) is a nonprofit organization that gives lineworkers a place to showcase their pride, skill, and professionalism in high-voltage linework. Led by volunteers, TLRA promotes safety, education, teamwork, innovation and stronger working relationships across the utility industry. *Lucky Number: 4518468202.*

Building a highly skilled workforce that puts safety and teamwork first takes years of training, discipline and dedication—and that work can look different from day to day. Finding fresh ways to reinforce basic skills fights complacency, which is dangerous for line workers. Daily practice can become routine, but turning those life-saving fundamentals into a competition brings new energy and purpose to the work. *Lucky Number: 4516526600. ☎*



LUCKY NUMBER

WINNERS!

FIND YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER AND WIN \$100 CREDITS!

We've hidden 10 SLEMCO account numbers in this issue of the magazine. Look to see if you find your SLEMCO account number. If you do, call Michelle Courville at (337) 896-2504. Once she verifies you as a winner, she'll credit \$100 to your SLEMCO account. *Lucky Number: 4503617800. ☎*



The Acadian Museum in Erath displays many traditional Acadian textiles.

WEAVING TOGETHER HISTORY

Photos courtesy Acadian Museum

Acadian Museum Textile Annex to open on Jefferson Island

story by **CHÉRÉ COEN**

IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY, Cajun women would card cotton, then spin and weave textiles to give their children a trousseau upon marriage. Gladys LeBlanc of Lafayette learned both at an early age and gifted her children with trousseaus that would usually include a dozen blankets and towels, two or three bedspreads, two pillows and sheets. Sometimes she used brown cotton, known in Cajun French as *coton jaune*, unless she had access to dyes. *Lucky Number: 1040430500.*

By the mid-century, Gladys (now married to Alexis Clark) and her LeBlanc family became widely known for her creations, demonstrating and selling her textiles at festivals and museums. In 1997, she became a National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellow.

Gladys is no longer with us, but much of her work lives on at the Acadian Museum of Louisiana in Erath. The museum contains her loom and scrapbook among dozens of textiles.

“I have her entire collection,” said Warren Perrin, museum chairman. “She even made a self-portrait of her on a quilt.”

Gladys is only one of numerous

textile artists included in the museum’s holdings, the largest Cajun textile collection in Louisiana, according to Warren. In addition to the 140-plus homespun and woven blankets and quilts, there are five spinning wheels from France, Canada, England and Louisiana—so many textiles, that the museum dedicated to Cajun history and exhibiting artifacts is bursting at the seams. Textiles take up a large portion of the Erath museum, making it difficult for busloads of tourists and those in wheelchairs to navigate the tight aisles, which is why the museum is opening its first annex.

This fall, Warren hopes to finish the renovation of the 100-year-old schoolhouse at Jefferson Island’s Rip Van Winkle Gardens outside New Iberia. The historic building once belonging to the Diamond Crystal Salt Co. that operated on the island, will showcase many of the museum’s textiles, including ones by Gladys and other Cajun spinners and weavers.



Gladys LeBlanc Clark

Photo by Peter Piazza

"It gives us a bigger footprint," Warren said, adding the admission to the museum annex will be included in the gardens's admission fee.



WHAT YOU'LL SEE

Elaine Larcade Bourque is a master spinner and weaver of Acadian brown cotton textiles. She held an apprenticeship under Gladys by the Louisiana Division of the Arts and they traveled together demonstrating their craft. Elaine was inducted into the museum's "Acadian Museum Legends" in 2023 and will serve as curator of the Annex exhibit.



New Iberia veterinarian Andy Reaux donated his collection of about 80 blankets to the museum, including the one on top made from more than 500 cloth tobacco pouches stitched together.

"This has been her dream, and she will demonstrate with loom and wheel," Warren said of Elaine's participation in the Annex opening. "She is in the process of documenting every blanket we own. She knows the genealogy."

Some of the items to be included in the exhibit are textiles from Madame Dronet, one of the first Cajun spinners and weavers of cotton to be nationally recognized. She was part of a

1942 documentary titled "Cajuns of the Teche," visited the Chicago World's Fair, demonstrated at political conventions and she and her daughter performed together, according to Warren. Four First Ladies were gifted one of Madame Dronet's bedspreads; Pres. Harry S. Truman received one for his wife when he visited Abbeville in 1960.

"The most popular bedspread was made in a diamond and cross pattern and the sides were fringe like a fishing net," Warren explained. "And every woman wanted one."



One of Madame Dronet's famous "Popcorn Purses."

Some of Madame Dronet's textiles at the museum include her unique brown cotton "Popcorn Purse" with fringe on the side and a brown cotton blanket donated by her great grandson David Dronet.

One museum quilt contains a fascinating story. Artist and author Mary Perrin purchased a quilt at a flea market in Rayne for \$400 to add to the museum's collection. It was more than she wanted to spend.

"I felt horrible paying \$400," Mary recalled. *Lucky Number: 4520523001.*

When Warren and Mary attended a recent Antiques Roadshow television program at the LSU Rural Life Museum in

Baton Rouge, they presented the hosts with the quilt for appraisal. The quilt made from scraps of old handwoven clothing or remnants and traditional Acadian cottonnade woven with brown cotton, white cotton and indigo-dyed cotton was appraised at \$9,000!

"It's valuable because none of those shirts, bedsheets or kitchen

textiles survived except in those quilts," Mary explained. ☯

“The most popular bedspread was made in a diamond and cross pattern and the sides were fringe like a fishing net.... and every woman wanted one.”

WARREN PERRIN,
MUSEUM CHAIRMAN

The Annex at Jefferson Island



Actor Joseph Jefferson, widely known for his role as Rip Van Winkle in the play he adapted from Washington Irving's short story, built his Victorian home in 1870 near Lake Peigneur, a few miles from New Iberia. After his death, the Diamond Crystal Salt Co. mined materials from the salt dome beneath the lake. The company offered everything for its employees, including a dairy, grocery and a school for the employee's children.

"They were totally independent," Warren said. "They didn't need cars."

Today, the property is open for tours of the Rip Van Winkle Gardens, 15 acres of semi-tropical gardens, and the Joseph Jefferson Mansion, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There's also a gift shop, Café Jefferson restaurant and Acadian cottages for overnight stays. *Lucky Number: 1419750000.*



A man's pants made from bags of flour material are part of the textile displays.

The property's historic schoolhouse was used over the years to house exotic bird cages, so the Acadian Museum has been busy sanding and renovating the floors, hoping for a fall opening. The museum's textiles and display cases will take up the majority of the building with an office in back. "It's going to be beautiful when it's finished," Warren said.

The annex may be the first of many, since the Acadian Museum in Erath has acquired and

been gifted numerous Cajun historic artifacts over the years.

"We will move to more locations if this works out well," Warren said.



Mary and Warren Perrin

Gentlemen of the Same Stripe

An Elite Father-Son Combo In Sports Officiating

story by JAMES EDMUNDS

Photo by James Edmunds



Dan and Greg Gautreaux

IT CAN BE QUITE GRATIFYING to see a son follow in the footsteps of a successful father—including rapid footsteps along the sideline that put a sports official in the exact right spot to make the correct call on the field.

Lafayette's Greg Gautreaux had a full career as a sports official, highlighted by a substantial run in the NFL. His son Dan has followed suit, and is a top football official for the SEC. Like their counterparts on the playing sides of the field, the top officiating performers, who are closely watched, meticulously graded and continuously evaluated, advance to the elite contests: Greg refereed the 2009 Superbowl in Tampa, FL, for instance, and Dan works not only at the SEC championship level, he has been selected multiple times to bring order to games of the College Football Playoff series. Last year, Dan officiated in both the Cotton Bowl and the Peach Bowl (quarter-final and semi-final) games, two of the most-watched contests of the season.

"When other dads were bringing their sons hunting or fishing, I had Dan with me at the ball game," says Greg. "He just sort of naturally fell into it."

The double-generation talent, wisdom and experience of the Gautreauxs isn't just for the big games in the showcase venues. Both are very active in officiating and teaching for multiple sports at different levels.

"There really is technique that you can teach that helps you know how to correctly make those difficult calls," Greg says. "Are both feet inbounds, does the receiver possess the ball, you have to put yourself in the right position and know how to look at it." But he does add that officials who make it to the higher levels have what he can only term as "It." "There are some people who can just really see it, and the best ones are a bit rare."

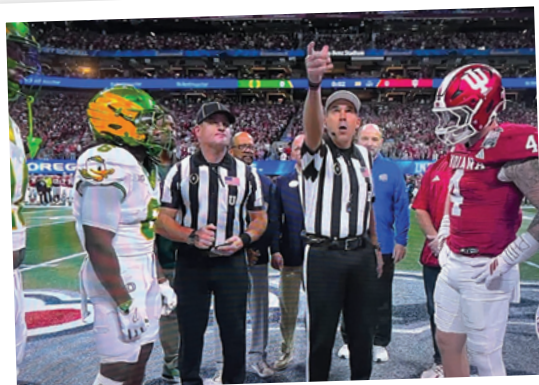
Son Dan adds that there are a couple of other qualities that are essential to being a top official. "You have to be able to keep calm, and also be able to communicate quickly and effectively to the coaches and players," he says. "At the upper levels, there are tremendous pressures on the athletes and the coaches. The stakes are huge." *Lucky Number: 3423111502.*

The pressure is on the two teams on the field, and also on what the Gautreauxs call the third team, the officials. Expectations are high—on all three of those teams. "We like to joke that the officials are expected to be perfect," Dan laughs, "and then get better from there." 🍀



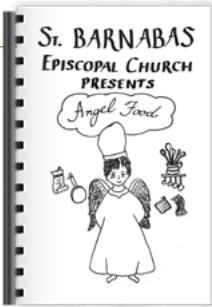
Mom and dad Greg and Betsey Gautreaux and wife Callie Gautreaux with Dan Gautreaux refereeing 2025 Cotton Bowl semi-final College Football Playoff game between Miami and Ohio State in Arlington Texas.

Referee Dan Gautreaux does the coin toss to initiate the 2025 Peach Bowl semi-final College Football Playoff game won by Indiana in Atlanta, GA.



Greg Gautreaux officiating at Pittsburgh's Super Bowl win over the Arizona Cardinals in 2009.

let's get COOKING



If there's a reason vintage cookbooks are sought after at estate sales, it's because gems like **Angel Food**, put out by St. Barnabas

Episcopal Church, bring us forgotten or unknown-to-many recipes like "emergency" cookies made for soldiers during World War II and a pecan caking filling lost with the passing of a Cajun family matriarch. The book also has interesting and delicious takes on modern recipes.

Cheese and Rice Krispies Wafers

Makes about 3 dozen

- 2 sticks butter
- 2 cups sharp grated cheddar cheese
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup self-rising flour
- ½ tsp. red pepper
- ½ tsp. dry mustard
- 2 cups Rice Krispies

Mix butter and cheese. Add rest of the ingredients, roll into small balls and place on an ungreased cookie sheet. Press down with a fork. Bake at 350 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes.

Sweet Potato Supreme

Serves 4 to 6. Two unexpected ingredients make these stuffed sweet potatoes a must-try.

- 1 large can apricot halves
- 1 ¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 ½ tbs. cornstarch
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. grated orange rind (optional)
- 2 tbs. butter or margarine
- ½ cup walnuts or pecans
- 4 medium sweet potatoes, baked just until tender

Drain apricots, but reserve syrup. Mix sugar, cornstarch, salt and orange rind in a saucepan. Gradually add about half the reserved syrup, bring all to a boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Add more syrup as necessary to get a medium-thick sauce, then add apricots, butter and nuts. Half the sweet potatoes and put in a lightly buttered shallow baking pan. Cover with sauce and bake at 375 degrees for 25 minutes.

Quiche Lorraine

This version is different, with a quirky ingredient that adds extra flavor and nutrition.

- ¾ cup toasted wheat germ
 - ½ cup flour
 - ¼ tsp. salt
 - ¼ cup butter, cold
 - 4 eggs
 - 1 pt. half-and-half
 - ¼ tsp. salt
 - ⅛ tsp. pepper
 - ¼ tsp. thyme
 - 2 cup grated cheddar cheese
 - ½ cup chopped green onions
- Your choice of bacon, ham or mushrooms

Mix wheat germ with flour and salt. Cut in butter until the consistency of coarse meal. Blend 1 egg. Press dough evenly against bottom and sides of a 9-inch pie or quiche pan. Bake at 425 degrees for 10 minutes. Allow the pie shell to cool 10 minutes. Reduce oven to 350 degrees. Meanwhile, beat 3 remaining eggs with half-and-half, salt, pepper and thyme. Stir in cheese and green onion. Add bacon, ham or mushrooms. Return the pie to lower rack of oven. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes or until the custard is set in the center.

Family Favorite Meat Loaf

Serves 6 to 8

- 2 lbs. ground beef
- 1 cup Pepperidge Farm stuffing
- ¾ cup milk
- 2 eggs
- ¼ tsp. garlic salt
- 2 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 1 tbs. dried parsley flakes
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 ribs celery, chopped
- 4 medium potatoes, halved
- 4-5 carrots, 2-inch slices
- 1 large onion, thickly sliced
- 1 bouillon cube
- ½ cup boiling water
- ½ tsp. Kitchen bouquet

In a large bowl, mix stuffing and next 8 ingredients. Allow mix to stand until milk is absorbed, then add beef and combine well. (But don't over mix.) Place in a 13 x 9" baking pan and shape into a 13" loaf. Bake, uncovered, for 45 minutes. Drain off the fat.

Place the vegetables on either side of the meat and sprinkle lightly with salt and pepper. Dissolve the bouillon cube in the boiling water, add the Kitchen Bouquet and pour this sauce over the meat and vegetables and cover tightly with foil. Bake 1 hour, then check the vegetables for doneness. (They may require a little more cooking time.)

Pecan Cake Filling

This is a very old Cajun recipe that you won't find in just any cookbook. Aside from being a fabulous filling for a white or yellow cake, it makes a great topping for cupcakes.

- 1 can evaporated milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 cups pecans, chopped into very small pieces (pulse in a food processor)

Cook milk and sugar together until the mixture boils; then add pecans and cook until thick enough to spread. Cool before spreading.

1940 Emergency Cookies

During WW II, chocolate was rationed, but used in a version of these care-package cookies made for soldiers

- 1 sq. unsweetened chocolate
- ½ cup milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 tbs. butter
- 10 finely-cut, large marshmallows (kitchen scissors make it easier)
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 ¼ cup graham cracker crumbs

Cook the chocolate with milk and sugar to the point where when you put a drop in a small glass of water, it begins to form a ball (also known as the "soft ball" stage.) Add the butter. Add remaining ingredients, stir lightly then roll into 2-inch-thick roll. Wrap in waxed paper (not parchment paper) and refrigerate. When cold, cut into thin slices.



A 'Quiet' Hurricane Season Can Still Be Dangerous

Be Prepared

THREATS FROM HURRICANES
INCLUDE POWERFUL WINDS,
HEAVY RAINFALL, STORM
SURGES, COASTAL AND
INLAND FLOODING, RIP
CURRENTS, TORNADOES
AND LANDSLIDES.

Hurricanes are massive
storm systems that form
over warm ocean waters
and move toward land.
Hurricanes...



...can happen along any
U.S. coast or territory...



...can affect areas more
than 100 miles inland...



...are most active
in September.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM A HURRICANE



Know your evacuation
zone and consider
your personal risk.



Evacuate immediately if told to do
so. If not, take shelter from high
winds in a designated storm
shelter or an interior room.



Make a plan to
evacuate AND be ready
to shelter in place.



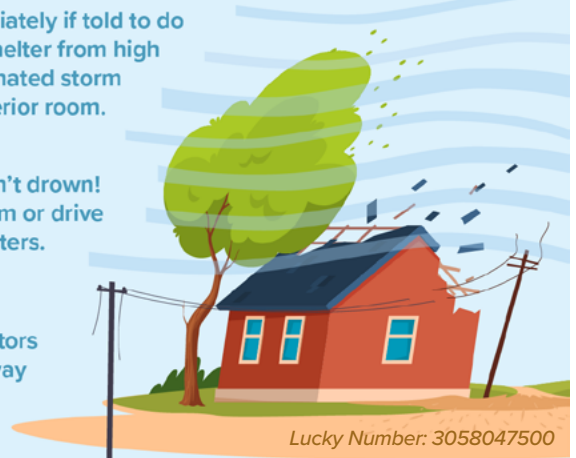
Turn around, don't drown!
Do not walk, swim or drive
through floodwaters.



Monitor communications
and follow instructions
from local authorities.



Only use generators
outdoors and away
from windows.



Lucky Number: 3058047500