

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE AATF ANNUAL CONVENTION IN BATON ROUGE

The 81st annual AATF Convention, July 12-15, 2007 in Baton Rouge had as its theme, "Le Français aux États-Unis." It actually began a few days earlier with a pre-convention excursion to New Orleans. 24 teachers spent the day visiting Oak Alley Plantation, taking a riverboat cruise on the Mississippi River, visiting the warehouse where Mardi Gras floats are made, and spending the evening in the French Quarter.

The AATF Executive Council spent two days deliberating before the convention began but took time off for a brief trip to Lafayette. There they were welcomed by Philippe Gustin at the International Center in Lafayette followed by a *fais-do-do* at Randol's where a courageous few even tried their hand at Cajun dancing.

The convention officially opened on Thursday, July 12. AATF President Marie-Christine Koop welcomed attendees, and then she introduced French Consul General Pierre Lebovics who expressed his appreciation for the convention coming to Louisiana. Just as President Koop was about to introduce the keynote speaker, a surprise guest appeared to greet convention-goers, the Marquis de Lafayette. He thanked AATF members for coming to Louisiana on the occasion of his 250th birthday.

Finally, the Marquis gave the floor to key-



Barry Ancelet giving the keynote address

note speaker Barry Jean Ancelet, who regaled the audience with stories and shared his expertise on Cajun culture with AATF teachers. After the opening session, nearly 120 *congressistes* attended the Welcome Luncheon where they were able to become acquainted with other attendees who live in their geographic region.

The room was overflowing at the Chap-

ter President's Breakfast where President Marie-Christine Koop and Executive Director Jayne Abrate welcomed representatives of more than half of the AATF 75 chapters. Dave Marinacci and Tuomas Sahramaa from LM&O Advertising in Arlington, Virginia, made a presentation about the genesis of the AATF/French Embassy PR Campaign in support of French (see page 1 for more information). Materials, including a poster, pencils, and a preprinted postcard to be mailed to administrators, were distributed to attendees who were also able to have their photo taken for a press release in front of a publicity banner.

Sessions and workshops began in ear-



Jayne Abrate with Catherine Pétilon of the French Embassy in front of the PR Campaign banner

nest following the luncheon and continued throughout the next two and a half days. To close the opening day, participants were able to get a first look at the Exhibit Hall (find out more about our exhibitors on the AATF Exhibitor Web page at [www.frenchteachers.org]) during a wine and cheese reception cosponsored by the AATF and, as they have for many years, by the Cultural Service of the French Embassy in Washington.

Following a pause for dinner, members were able to enjoy a concert by Lili Maxime, whose novel, *Ouragan sur le bayou*, was one of the AATF Book Club selections.

Day 2 was a full day of sessions and workshops, many highlighting the theme of the convention, "Le Français aux États-Unis." During the lunch break, many members participated in the third annual *Dictée* organized by Marie-Simone Pavlovich, herself a final-



Molière with the Marquis de Lafayette

ist in *la Grande Dictée* run by Bernard Pivot. Winners were announced at the beginning of the AATF Delegate Assembly. Throughout the day, buses left to take groups of teachers for a French-language visit at the LSU Rural Life Museum.

Past-President Albert Valdman, keynote speaker Barry Ancelet, Amanda LaFleur, and Thomas Klingler presented a semi-plenary session on Cajun French. Amanda LaFleur did a presentation on her book, *Tonnerres chiens!*, which was another of the 2007 Book Club selections. There were also two sessions on our special guest the Marquis de Lafayette who attended them to see what the speakers had to say about him.

Guest speakers included Bernard Vincent of the *Association française des études américaines*, Baudoin Blairon from the SPI+ in Liege, and Christine Lanphere, 2007 ACTFL Teacher of the Year. Other special sessions and meetings included numerous exhibitor and commission sessions, as well as meetings of the National French Contest Administrators and sponsors of chapters of the *Société honoraire de français*. Organizational meetings were held throughout the convention for Chapter Presidents, chairs of the thirteen AATF commissions (see page



Winners of the 2007 *Dictée* with organizer Marie-Simone Pavlovich (center)

9), and a *French Review* Editors' Luncheon, presided by Editor in Chief Christopher Pinet (see the complete program on the AATF Web site).

Day 3 of the convention was equally busy. In addition to the many sessions and workshops, there was a morning coffee break in the exhibit hall where lucky attendees won valuable prizes at the annual exhibitor raffle. The raffle was expertly organized by AATF staff member Amy Hanson. Thanks to Region II Representative Jean-Pierre Berwald for again handling announcer duties. Be sure to check out the Exhibitor Web page on the AATF Web site at [www.frenchteachers.org] as well as the list of convention sponsors on page 2.

In the afternoon, the AATF Assembly of Delegates met to ratify the decisions of the Executive Council, and the *Dictée* winners were announced. At the close of the day, participants were treated to a reception to celebrate Bastille Day sponsored by TV5. "La Marseillaise" was expertly sung by AATF intern Jordan McGuire.

Immediately following the reception, nearly 200 members participated in the Awards Banquet (see the complete list of honorees on page 12). We welcomed a new honorary member (see page 13), Barry Jean Ancelet, honored Outstanding National French Contest Administrators (see page 8), and recognized our outgoing Executive Council members, Vice-President Barbara Ransford and Past-President Margot Steinhart, who will finish their terms in December (see page 2). Among the numerous award recipients were Tracy Lam-



Jordan McGuire singing "La Marseillaise"



L. to R.: Vice-President Barbara Ransford, Jayne Abrate

bert and John Patrick Greene who received the 2007 AATF Dorothy S. Ludwig Excellence in Teaching Awards at the Secondary and University levels (see page 10). This award is sponsored by former AATF Region I Representative and Honorary Member Robert Ludwig who provides a cash award for the recipients. This year, we instituted a new award, the AATF CERAN Lingua Outstanding

ing Chapter Officer Award which was received by Catherine Hobby, Immediate Past-President of the Maine Chapter (see page 9). She will enjoy a one-week stay in Belgium provided by CERAN Lingua. Intercultural Student Experiences again sponsored the ISE Language Matters Award which was made to Donna Czarnecki (see page 14). The Banquet and awards presentation were followed by yet another convention highlight, an interactive performance by the

Danseurs de la capitale de Baton Rouge. Six couples performed intricate routines and then led the crowd in Cajun two-steps and waltzes around the ballroom.

Those who did not have early morning flights were able to take advantage of the final half-day of sessions and workshops. The last official activity of the convention was the departure at noon of post-convention excursion to Cajun Country where participants visited St. Martinville, Lafayette, had dinner at Mulatte's, and went on a swamp tour!

Although the weather was typically hot and humid, participants found ways to sample Cajun food around Baton Rouge and to visit some of the sights. In short, the 487 participants were able to enjoy 132 sessions and 4 workshops, 47 exhibit booths, numerous guest speakers and performers, and several unique excursions. The AATF would

like to thank the staff members who helped make the convention such a success, Ad-



Les Danseurs de la Capitale de Baton Rouge at the Awards Banquet

ministrative Assistant Darla Macaluso and Bilingual Secretary Amy Hanson who handled the AATF Exhibit Booth and raffle. We would especially like to acknowledge the contribution of our *stagiaire*, Jordan McGuire who helped us throughout the convention and led "La Marseillaise" during the reception. AATF staff members were aided in



L. to R.: Executive Director Jayne Abrate, Past-President Margot Steinhart, President Marie-Christine Koop

their work by the personnel of the Holiday Inn Select and Mike Hankins of Technology Express who was handling audiovisual equipment for the third time. Furthermore, the help of Meghan McNamara, was invaluable in making arrangements for the excursions and museum visit. Finally, the Local Committee worked tirelessly to ensure a memorable convention: Jacqueline Labat, President of the Louisiana Chapter, as well as Robert Lafayette, alias the Marquis de Lafayette. The AATF would like to thank the speakers, exhibitors, and sponsors (see page 2) without whom the convention could not have happened.