VISIT OF THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR

Sunday, September 28th, proved to be superb on all counts. On that day, France’s Ambassador to Washington, François Bujon de l’Estang, was awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree by Assumption College. He in turn promoted Claire Quintal, Directress of Assumption’s French Institute, to the rank of Officier in France’s National Order of Merit. The citation describing the Ambassador’s accomplishments at the very highest level of both diplomacy and the international world of finance and commerce reads in part: “Excellency, in conferring upon you the degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa, Assumption College recognizes in you the worthy representative of the land where Emmanual d’Alzon, founder of the Assumptionist congregation, was born. As an outstanding diplomat and an accomplished administrator, you have been a man capable of straddling two worlds—that of diplomacy and that of finance, but you are also a man of two continents—Europe and North America. We deeply admire and greatly respect your ability to comprehend these two sometimes opposing worlds with a seemingly innate mastery.”

In his remarks preceding the award to Claire Quintal, the Ambassador stated in the course of his speech: “It was obviously in order to recognize the scope of your activities on behalf of French language and culture that my government named you a Chevalier of the National Order of Merit in 1976 and then a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor in 1990. But, you are not a person who rests on her laurels. Since 1990, you have intensified your activities in all areas. As the history of your entire life and career makes clear, you have been, and continue to be, first and foremost, a key person in the history of relations between France and the Franco-Americans. We can only be infinitely grateful to you for this, just as we are to Assumption College in its entirety. The role played by the college and you yourself in American francophone circles is outstanding, and serves as a beacon for others.”

In accepting the honor bestowed upon her, Claire Quintal declared: “Your Excellency, today is a memorable one for me personally, but also for all of us gathered here. Because of the rank you occupy, at the highest level of diplomacy, and by your impressive achievements, you do great honor today to the descendants of all those who set sail for New France in the 17th century and who subsequently left France’s imprint on a new continent. It is all of these women and all of these men, who lived at a great distance from their homeland throughout all of the ensuing centuries, but who never forgot the land of their ancestors, whom you are honoring on this day.

All of those present here to acclaim you today wish to say thank you through me—thank you for having come among us, thank you for not having forgotten those who remained true to a language and a faith they brought with them from the mère patrie. I am but the spokesperson for this quasi-miraculous phenomenon which makes it possible for human beings, even the most deprived, to have the heart to remain faithful to an ideal of ideological survival which, even these many generations later, is capable of bringing forth living proof of this heroic enterprise.”

Rev. Wilfrid J. Dufault, A.A., Chancellor of Assumption College, and founder of the French Institute, served as master of ceremonies for the gala event. Rev. John L. Franck, A.A., Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, as well as Dr. Charles L. Flynn, Jr., Provost of the College, were on hand to award the degree to the French Ambassador.

FRENCH INSTITUTE’S LATEST PUBLICATION

The French Institute of Assumption College is pleased to announce the publication of an annotated, up-dated English edition of Marie Louise Bonier’s 1920 book on Woonsocket and the first 117 French-Canadian immigrant families to settle in that city. The book was officially presented to the public at the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket on Sunday, November 2nd.

The American-French Genealogical Society (AFOGS), responsible for the data entry of the entire genealogical section of the book—for which Roger and Sylvia Bartholomy have created an Index to facilitate research—were co-hosts on that day with the Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste to whom this 595-page book is dedicated. The goal in translating Bonier’s book was to
make the information it contains accessible to new
generations, in a language they understand, just as Bonier
herself had done for her own generation by writing for
them in French. In this new English edition of Bonier’s
book, available from the French Institute for $26.95 +$3.00 for postage
and handling, the descendants of those first families will find
not only their ancestral charts but answers to their
questions about why their forebears chose to leave
Canada and what they accomplished once they reached
Rhode Island’s Blackstone Valley.

On October 8 and 9, Claire Quintal was
interviewed for Québec’s Télé-Journal and for a radio
documentary on Franco-Americans in Woonsocket in
connection with the opening of the Museum of Work and
Culture and the French Institute’s publication of the Bonier
translation. She was also quoted in a recent article in
MacLean’s Magazine. The directress of the French Institute
is one of the scholars serving as a consultant for a play
based on the oral histories of Franco-Americans to be
produced at the museum. Written by Laurel Gelinias, a
Woonsocket native, the play is funded in part by the Rhode
Island Committee for the Humanities.

AUBUCHON AWARD TO WALTER J. JENSEN

Now living in retirement in Florida, Walter J. Jensen,
who received his M.A. degree in French from Assumption
in 1966, was granted the William E. Aubuchon, Jr. Award
by the Institut français at its annual banquet in May. The
award, created in 1995, is granted to major benefactors
of the Institut français who wish thereby to help in
promoting French culture. Following his career as a
Professor of French at Westfield State College (Mass.), Walter Jensen now lives in retirement in Bradenton,
Florida. The text of the award, written in French, reads in
part as follows: "The French Institute salutes in Walter
Jensen—its notable benefactor—the civilized man, the
devoted professor, the erudite colleague, the upright citizen."

SLATER MILL HISTORIC SITE

Samuel Slater’s first textile mill, which launched the
American Industrial Revolution, is located in Pawtucket, R.I.
This mill was the venue for an exhibit of quilts by Franco-
American women, pieced before 1950. Claire Quintal was
the keynote speaker at the opening of this exhibit.

ANNUAL COLLOQUIUM AND BANQUET

The aim of this year’s colloquium was to bring
together seven scholars active in the field of Franco-
American research to give them the opportunity to know
each other better and to share among themselves and
with our audience the state of their ongoing research. One
of them, Constance Gosselin-Schick, of our Council, who had just
spent her sabbatical year from Holy Cross studying
Franco-American literature, was able to communicate her
enthusiasm as well as to indicate research possibilities
which should be pursued. Elizabeth Aubé, a Franco-American
who now teaches at Erindale College of Toronto’s York
University, explained that she has set up a workgroup,
called LIFRA, for the study of Franco-American literature,
both theory and practice as well as criticism, whose aim is
to foster Franco-American literature, its creation, its
diffusion and the study of its works. Éloïse Brière, of SUNY
Albany, spoke of the efforts and results of the computerization
of a Franco-American database of talented individuals.
Grégoire Chabot shared his musings on what it means to be a
Franco-American writer at the close of the 20th century.
Cynthia Fox, also of SUNY Albany, summarized the linguistic
research on Franco-American speech patterns. Raymond
Pelletier, of the University of Maine at Orono, described the
various ongoing research projects at his university and his
own course in Franco-American studies which utilizes the
French Institute’s Steeple and Smokestacks. André Senecal,
of the University of Vermont, continues to pursue his major
project of computerizing all Franco-American newspapers
and periodicals.

Following the very meaningful mass and homily
preached by Rev. Clarence W. Forand, a member of the French
Institute’s Administrative Council, the institute held its
annual banquet, attended by some 100 persons. At the
banquet, the Institute awarded its Certificate of Merit to the
journal de Lowell, published from 1975 to 1995, for its
meritorious efforts at publishing a newspaper in the French
language. The founder of the newspaper, Raymond J. Barrette,
of Lowell, was on hand to receive the award which reads in
part: "The loss of Le Journal de Lowell marks the end of
an era, that of survivance through language... the staff of
Le Journal de Lowell can take pride in having added a
precious stone to the impressive monument called
Survivance."

For a more complete text, see the French
section.
IN MEMORIAM

Rita La Joie, wife of Henry W. Lajoie, a member of the Institute's Administrative Council and sister of Jeannette Bonneau, a founding member of the Institute's Council and one of its vice-presidents, passed away in February. To Henry and Jeannette we offer our deeply felt condolences.

Normand Brodeur, M.D., of the Class of 1942, recently passed away. A generous benefactor of the French Institute, Dr. Brodeur practiced medicine among the Franco-Americans of Webster, Mass., for many long years. To his wife and his daughter we offer our heartfelt sympathy.

C. Alexander Peloquin, a musician and composer of sacred music, who received a Certificate of Merit from the French Institute in 1993, also passed away this year. He will be sorely missed. His was a "voice" which added substance to Franco-American culture. We reprint here for our readers a portion of the text of the Certificate of Merit awarded to him by the Institute: "Inspired composer, respected organist, admired chorale director, C. Alexander Peloquin is also one of us, a man who took his first steps among Franco-Americans. This man, who is at home everywhere, is also a man who walks among us. His musical compositions, which spring from the innermost depths of his being, belong to the world, but it is at his mother's knee, in the classrooms of the Sisters of the Assumption, in a Franco-American milieu, that he was taught to pray in the language of his forebears and that he learned the rudiments of his art. By grafting his musical genius to his heritage of Christian faith and French culture, this Franco-American has composed a remarkable oeuvre. As a composer, C. Alexander Peloquin covers the gamut of emotions known to the human heart, from pain to ecstasy, but it is in the portrayal of religious jubilation that his genius shines forth, it is in the exultation of the faith of his ancestors that he surpasses himself. C. Alexander Peloquin has always been true to himself and to his many-sided genius, but faithful also, as were his ancestors, to a cultural heritage, transmitted, no matter the cost, down to this day, to him, and through him, to us all."

STEEPLES AND SMOKESTACKS

Steeple and Smokestacks continued to draw positive reactions throughout the year. We print below some of these comments. "Steeple and Smokestacks is certainly an appropriate title for this treasure-trove of Franco-American heritage.... This rich collection of very readable essays plumbs the diverse aspects of the hardships, persistence and successes of our ancestors.... Dr. Claire Quintal...furnishes the background for the essays with her lucid and concise introduction." Eugena Poulin, R.S.M., in Je me souviens, a publication of the American-French Genealogical Society, Spring 1997.

"This book is a great follow-up to Gerard Braut's tome on the French-Canadian heritage in New England. It allows both the Francophile and the history buff to dig into the roots of the French-Canadian people." Robert L. Potvin, Ware River News.

"Steeple and Smokestacks is truly encyclopedic in scope, exploring nearly every facet of the Franco-Americans in New England.... The French Institute should be proud to have written such a book that makes the Invisible People of New England to be seen." Albert Marceau, Connecticut Maple Leaf, vol. 7, no 4.

"Dr. Quintal unveils dynamic new book. Expertly edited in English, this collection of essays belongs on every Franco-American's bookshelf." L'Union, the publication of the Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

"Yes, I did receive a copy of Steeples and Smokestacks, for which many many thanks! It is an impressive volume!" David Plante

Wish to express our gratitude to all of our faithful friends and supporters who purchased Steeples and Smokestacks or who wrote articles encouraging others to buy the book. Proceeds from the sale are enabling us to print Marie Louise Bonier's Beginnings of the Franco-American Colony in Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

BOOK AND ARCHIVAL DONATIONS

Marcelle Chenard of the College of St. Elizabeth, has donated the papers of Germaine Pellerin Bonenfant, a noted Manchester, N.H. musician whose career she is researching. The following persons have contributed books to the French Institute's collection: Louis R. Leveillé, J. Armand Saulnier of Southbridge, Mass., and Janine Leboeuf of Webster, Mass.
MADELEINE GIGUÈRE

A member of the French Institute and a donor of long standing, professor emerita Giguère is being honored by the University of Maine's Women in the Curriculum and Women's Studies Program. She is one of three women from the university system who will be receiving the Maryann Hartman Award for 1997-1998 "for her work in preserving and promoting Franco-American culture in Maine." A Madeleine Giguère Fund has been set up at Lewiston-Auburn College of the Maine System to benefit the Franco-American Heritage Collection housed there.

SISTER MARIE-JEANNE DUCHARMÉ, P.M.

The directress of the French Institute was recently asked to eulogize Sister Marie-Jeanne Ducharme, past chair of Rivier College's French Department, for her many years of service to that institution. We reprint here excerpts of the eulogy: "For many years, Sister Marie-Jeanne Ducharme embodied Rivier's French voice. She is now a grandmotherly figure recalling our ethnic past, cautioning us not to let it all, telling us to hold on to what was noble about the survivance of our people in New England's Little Canadas even when we wanted, more than anything else, to break down the walls of ethnic ghetto life, to free ourselves of ties that seemed to bind too tightly. Marie-Jeanne has dared to be that voice crying out in our post-modern wilderness, reminding us that much of the past was good and decent and worth preserving. Marie-Jeanne asks us now, as she has always done, to remember those from whom she and I—and many of you also—descend, not to forget those to whom we owe this institution, by whom and through whom so much was done to educate the children of the three deckers, the offspring of the working class, to make them better citizens as well as better Christians. She is one of Marie Rivier's own who has taken to heart and who has lived out with tenacity the call to serve those from whom she springs."

USIB ESSAY CONTEST

A. Léo Caisse, now a senior French major at Assumption College, was the recipient of the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Educational Foundation's first competitive essay contest worth $1,000. He also received the Archibald Lemieux $500 Scholarship for summer study at Laval University. Administered by the Conseil de la vie française en Amérique, this scholarship was instituted by Lemieux, a Worcester industrialist, to encourage the study of French by Franco-Americans. Léo is a work-study student at the French Institute.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

At its last annual meeting, the French Institute's Administrative Council added two new members to its roster: Constance Gosselin Schick, an Associate Professor of French at the College of the Holy Cross, and Rev. C. Melvin Surette, a priest of the Boston Archdiocese, who has deep family ties in the Acadian community of New England. Some of our readers may have known Constance's father, Léo Gosselin, legal counsel for many years of the Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste, and its president for a brief period of time. Atty. Wilfrid J. Michaud, Jr. was named a vice-president of the Council to replace Rev. Claude L. Grenache, A.A. who was posted to the Assumptionists' Mexican missions.

REV. WILFRID J. DUFUAULT, A.A. FUND

This fund, constitutted to honor Father Wilfrid on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his ordination, has now reached the sum of $10,340. Assumption College's Class of 1942 continues to contribute generously to the fund, giving a total of $1,500 this year on the occasion of the 55th anniversary of its graduation from the college. Father Wilfrid turns 90 this year, on December 11th. We encourage our readers to contribute to the fund in his name to mark their appreciation for all that Father Wilfrid is, all that he has accomplished, indeed all that he represents that is good and holy and venerable.

The following Endowment Funds exist to benefit the French Institute: Wilfrid and Oda Beaulieu Fund, Omer and Lorette Bovin Fund, Dr. Claire Quintal Fund, Club Richelieu/Springfield Fund, and the U.S.J.B. Fund. Anyone wishing to contribute to one or the other of these funds is encouraged to do so. All donations to these funds make possible a greater level of activity by the French Institute.

DUPLICATE BOOKS

We remind our readers that the French Institute has duplicate copies of books on the history and literature of Acadia and Québec as well as the Franco-Americans of New England. To receive a copy of the list, write us, call us at (508) 767-7414, Fax us at (508) 767-7374 or e-mail us at <instfran.1@eve.assumption.edu>.

HONORARY DOCTORATE TO CLAIRE QUINTAL

The directress of the French Institute has just learned that Assumption College will be granting her an honorary doctorate in Humane Letters for her many years of distinguished service to the college.