

# Louisiana's Victory Run

**An inspiring pre-game ceremony is expected to become a tradition at Cajun Field**

**M**embers of Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship take their new responsibility seriously. • They're the UL Lafayette students who unfurl a giant Louisiana flag on Cajun Field before each home football game. It takes about 30 of them to handle the 80-foot by 53-foot state symbol, which weighs about 160 pounds. • They had a legitimate reason to skip the Sept. 29 contest between Louisiana's Ragin' Cajuns® and

Middle Tennessee: they wanted to attend a three-day statewide conference of Chi Alpha chapters being held the same weekend in Alexandria, La. But, they felt strongly about honoring their commitment to carry the state flag. So, they found a way to do both.

On that Saturday afternoon, a Chi Alpha crew boarded a bus in Alexandria and traveled back to Lafayette in time to parade the huge flag during "Louisiana's Victory Run." After the flag was folded and stored, the students returned to Alexandria to continue the retreat.

"Louisiana's Victory Run" is expected to become a tradition for every home football game. During the pre-game ceremony, cheerleaders also carry five 8-foot by 5-foot banners that herald every UL Lafayette gridiron win since the school's football program began in 1908. Four of the banners each display the dates and scores of 100 victories. At the beginning of

this season, the fifth banner already had 31 entries.

The project was started by Steve Gossen, '64, a three-sport letterman who is a member of UL Lafayette's athletic Hall of Fame. Last fall, he went to Darrell K. Royal Texas Memorial Stadium/Jamail Field to watch Louisiana's Ragin' Cajuns® battle the University of Texas in Austin.



Steve Gossen, '64

"I witnessed their (UT's) 'Running of the Flag' prior to the game," Gossen said. "A huge state of Texas flag was run the length of the field by students. This tradition has been in place since 1962 and it generates a lot of enthusiasm with the fans." That Texas flag is 125 feet by 75 feet and weighs more than 500 pounds.

After returning to his home in Thibodaux, La.,

Gossen phoned UL Lafayette President Dr. Ray Authement and offered to purchase a large Louisiana flag if the university would support a project similar to UT's.

"With Dr. Authement's support, all the doors at UL Lafayette were open to me," he said.

Authement recalls that first conversation about the project with deadpan humor: "I said, 'Steve, I'll back you. I think it's a good idea. I didn't know I was going to get a phone call every day for about six months as he developed it.'"

Gossen contacted Advertising Flag Co., Inc. in Chicago to produce "Louisiana," which is believed to be the largest Louisiana flag in the world. It's so big that it had to be spread out



on the roof of the company's building to be completed.

The state banner is made of 4,680 square feet of SolarMax® nylon dyed "Old Glory Blue" and 2,820 square feet of white SolarMax® nylon. More than three miles of blue and white spun polyester thread and heavy filament were used.

Randy Smith, president of Advertising Flag Co. Inc., estimates that 15 of its 39 full-time employees spent a combined total of 270 hours making "Louisiana."

Workers began by producing a full-size paper pattern, complete with perforated lines indicating where material should be stitched. The pattern was then taken apart; each piece was laid on top of the appropriate fabric. A paste was rubbed onto the paper to transfer the dotted lines onto the cloth. After the smaller pieces were trimmed and sewn, they were stitched together by industrial sewing machines.

At first, Gossen hoped to have the date and score of every victory embroi-

dered on the flag. But laws prohibit defacing it in any way. So, the information was embroidered onto strips of fabric at the university's Apparel Computer Integrated Manufacturing center in Abdalla Hall. Those pieces were later sewn onto the banners that cheerleaders carry.

Volunteers contributed money to buy a trailer in which to store the flags.

"Louisiana" was scheduled to debut before the first game of the season, now known as the Herbert Heymann Football Classic. But the threat of rain kept it off the field. "Louisiana" was shown to fans for the first time on Sept. 22, when Louisiana's Ragin' Cajuns® faced Southern Mississippi.

Gossen watched from the stadium's press box. "Everything came together," he said later. "Chi Alpha handled it well."

Meeke Golden, a UL Lafayette senior, is Chi Alpha's flag coordinator. She said the group has supported the football program in the past by serving

as ushers and parking assistants. But carrying "Louisiana" appealed to the group. "It's an awesome opportunity for us to show our school spirit." ■

## FLAG FACTS

### Official Name

Louisiana

### Dimensions

80 feet by 53 feet

### Weight

About 160 pounds

### Material

- 4,680 square feet of blue SolarMax® nylon
- 2,820 square feet of white SolarMax® nylon
- more than three miles of polyester thread

### Labor

270 hours of pattern making and sewing



Members of Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship carry the largest Louisiana flag in the world, while cheerleaders parade banners that show the date and score of every Louisiana's Ragin' Cajuns victory since the football program began in 1908.

GLEN CLARK

## Fitting Tribute

Season opener at Cajun Field honor football fan, philanthropist

**E**ach fall, for 31 years, Herbert Heymann sat in section UD2, seat No. 30, at Cajun Field to cheer his favorite football team on. • That seat was empty this season, but UL Lafayette has made sure Heymann won't be forgotten. The first home game of each football season was named posthumously in his honor—the Herbert Heymann Football Classic. • The Lafayette businessman and civic leader died April 10, 2001.

“We’ve chosen this way to remember him and keep his spirit alive,” said UL Lafayette President Dr. Ray Authement, who was a close friend of Heymann. The Classic should remind fans of everything the philanthropist did for the university and the Lafayette community, he added.

Athletic Director Nelson Schexnayder said the designation should inspire Louisiana’s Ragin’ Cajuns®. “It will be our challenge to have the first game of the season be the best game of the season,” he said.

The Cajuns took that message to heart. For the inaugural Herbert Heymann Football Classic, UL Lafayette trounced Nicholls State, 20-0. It was the team’s first shutout since Oct. 8, 1994, a span of 72 games.

During halftime, a video about Heymann’s lifetime of philanthropy was broadcast on the scoreboard, followed by a ceremony on the football field. Authement presented Claire Heymann, one of Heymann’s daughters, with a sketch of her father and

the first cap bearing the Herbert Heymann Football Classic logo.

Louisiana’s Ragin’ Cajun® fans showed their respect for Heymann by responding with a standing ovation.

He was chairman of the building committee for Cajun Field and chairman of a task force that helped establish the Cajundome.



Herbert Heymann

received the Roll On Award for recognition of his outstanding contributions and service to UL Lafayette athletics. He recently donated the Heymann Building downtown to the Natural History Museum.

He also created the Heymann Center for Performing Arts and was instrumental in providing land for such prominent Lafayette projects as the University Art Museum, the Lafayette Natural History Museum and Planetarium, and Lafayette General Medical Center.

Joan Bergmann, one of Heymann’s daughters, was on hand in August for the announcement of the Herbert Heymann Football Classic.

“This honor would have meant a great deal to him,” she said. “It also means a great deal to our family.” ■



Heymann served on the board of trustees of the USL Foundation and was a Louisiana Classics member. He