



Killer Rubboard

February 20, 2007. Volume 1, Issue 7.

ISSUE 7: Les Bon Temps

EDITOR'S NOTE: Happy Mardi Gras! Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler! Let the good time roll one more day. In this last edition of Killer Rubboard, we visit an odd and wistful museum in Cajun Country and walk down the street with a flambeaux carrier. And of course, the Krewe du Review will let you know where you can find the best gumbo in Southcentral Alaska. You'll also get a chance to meet again the contributors who made this e-zine happen this Mardi Gras season. Enjoy! Thanks for taking the ride with us!

-- Aileen McInnis, Humble Editor

Featured Writing

Capitaine

By Bob Banghart

Bob Banghart is a fine fiddler, an elder on the Visa Quest Council, and once again a public employee working at the Juneau Museum.

It was late morning. The heat waves rising up from the green earth into the blue sky twisted the horizon like a slow turning garden snake. After a late night of tunes in Eunice I was driving north on highway 13 headed for Mamou and Fred's. Saturday morning boudin, beers and dancing to a Cajun band were on the day's agenda. Air conditioning on ... *check*; ice cold morning margarita in the right hand ... *check*; tunes on ... *check*; rear view mirror empty ... *check*; cruise control set... *check*; one week 'til Mardi Gras and all indicators in full party mode ... my world was in perfect balance.

I drove past the sign before what was painted on it struck me. "BEST MUSUEM IN THE WORLD - \$1...TURN NOW". I eased my dented rental ride onto the shoulder of the road, took a long pull on the morning margarita and swung back round to find the appointed side road to the "musuem". The arrow on the sign pointed down a one-lane dirt track framed by fields and fences.

"This," I thought, "I can't pass up." Fred's would have to wait.

No buildings are in sight but all roads lead somewhere as the front end of my rig begins to smooth the center ridge of grass. Flat does not describe Southern Louisiana. It is as if the earth has a dent in it ... there is no curve here ... the fields and rutted dirt road I am slowly making my way over are no exception. The green fields closed in around me as Highway 13 disappeared in the rear view mirror. Cruising speed now reduced to a crawl, the driving tunes of Boozoo Chavis seemed out of place. At 5 miles an hour I can just break into second gear and keep the margarita in the cup. Any faster and the floor would be drunk before I arrived. I switched off the CD and rolled down the window. Hot wet air poured into the car and sweat formed on my entire body simultaneously ... so much for air conditioning.

It was 1.5 margaritas from the turn off to the tin roofed shotgun shack and assorted out buildings I was approaching. One tree, one house, one chicken shack, one cinder block garage...this had to be the place cause there was nothing else around. The road swung into a cleared area around the buildings and stopped...it only needed the END OF ROAD sign like we use in Alaska to restate the obvious...*this was it.*

I drove into the yard, pulled up in front of the cinder block garage and cut the engine. Now I knew this was it...painted on the tin garage door, in the same hand as the road sign, was "BEST MUSUEM IN THE WORLD-\$1...HONK". Great sign, the marketing committee at work should do so well.

I tapped the horn ... one short hello honk. The horn seemed too loud for the situation...like an overly friendly drunk at a funeral ... but that is what was called for. I waited. Arm out the window, chin on arm staring at the front door of the house for a sign ... my mind running through old Twilight Zone episodes trying to remember if there was a scene like this and thinking if there was I should stay in the car until someone came out. Nothing. No movement, no breeze, no chickens ... nothing.

I tapped the horn again, twice this time ... still being polite about it and waited. No movement ... no nothing. The .5 of the margarita that made it to the driveway was almost extinguished and a decision was needed; one more tap on the horn and if no answer just leave or get out and walk up to the front door and knock. Just as my straw started sucking air from the bottom of the Dixie cup the front door opened and a thin shadow stood behind the screen door.

"Alright, someone is home...howdy!" I said and waved.

"Be right down...just gots ta gits my boots on...and stay in yer car till I gits the dog staked," the shadow said.

"Not a problem." I replied thinking how the margarita just saved my life by delaying an exit from the front seat.

The yard was hard, flat and saw little traffic from the looks of it. Paths wound through the grass to the privy and one to the chicken shack next to the tree. The tree was big, old and offered shade to the two chairs and crate made into a table. I bet around sundown or sun up when the air is cool and the light softer, that would be fine spot to sit and assess the moment.

The screen door opened and my host came into view...one bone thin weathered old dude... moving fast and sure, directly to the garage door. He never looked in my direction until he had the garage door up and stuffed a two by four into the jamb to keep it that way. He walked over to the car and held out his hand. "Ya got a dollar...then ya gits 10 minutes," he said.

I gave him the dollar and inquired about the dog.

"Ain't got no dog...honk when yer done." he replied, as walked back towards the house.

I watched him retreat then climbed out of my car right as he opened the screen door...our doors closing together.

My eyes took a few moments adjusting to the darkness in the garage...my nose did not require the waiting period.

"He sure seems to be up on the current trends in museums, " I thought, "low light levels and olfactory stimulation to enhance the visitors experience, phew." Taking one last breath of air from the present, I stepped deeper into a single room lined with shelves, the floor set with tables and narrow aisles and stuff hanging from the roof rafters.

There were rusted tools, old work clothes and boots, harnesses and hay cutting equipment, car parts, tires, cans and jars of stuff long evaporated...just what you expect to find in such a place...even a pinup calendar with its months torn off but the important parts still there shining through the gloom.

"He could use a bit of work on the labels," I thought, as I poked around the mounds of the static past. I got used to the heavy smell after a bit. It was damp, organic and petroleum product sweet...like a wet cow pie coated in engine oil. I worked my way to the back wall of shelves picking up and setting down an assortment of items ... no problem with object relocation ... the dust outlined placement perfectly.

I was about to leave, as my 10 minutes was rapidly coming to a close, when the contents of a half-opened closet called out. The tall closet door looked more like the lid to a standing coffin ... a thought I quickly tried to dispel with a step or two closer. I slowly pulled the door open ready for it to fall off its hinges and a desiccated corpse to plunge into my arms ... but nothing happened.

The contents was a costume and mask from the old style trail ride Mardi Gras...the party held on Shrove Tuesday, the day before lent begins. "The old man must have been a *capitaine*," I thought looking at the finery attached to the baggy suit with fringe. His painted screen face stared blankly at me from the closet door.

"Ya got another doller...then ya gits 10 more minutes cause ya first dollar time is up." His voice made me jump back from the closet like it was coming from the mask.

I looked toward the open door and saw only my host's outline against the daylight. "You bet" I said making my way back to him holding a dollar in my outstretched hand. P> He took the bill and was turning to go when I asked if he was a front *capitaine* or a rear *capitaine*.

"Whacha know of these things?" he asked, turning back, looking straight into my eyes.

"Not much, but I do play some of the tunes from around here and have friends that talk about the old ways of marking the day. Sounded like a great party." I said looking at the ground to break his stare.

"Well, it ain't that way no more...old ways end up in da museum... " the words forming and releasing as if the air was being let out of his body.

He didn't move nor did I. For a long moment I thought my second dollar was going to be spent with me looking at the ground and my guide staring through me.

"I was da rear *capitaine*," he said, "had da best horse in da parish...spent more time on her decorations than on myself. Did da bridle and saddle to match my costume and put stars all over her chest...she was a big ole mare that always found her way home...even if I had ta tie myself on and was hanging down...she knew what to do, never shook me off no matter how much drinkin' I be doing."

"Da Sunday before Mardi Gras, dey call that da "little Mardi Gras." da old man Bode would gets a white flag on a bamboo cane, and he'd go 'cross the fields with twenty-five to fifty little boy Mardi Gras. Dey'd be waitin' for us. I first ran when I was six years old. All day we'd run all over Tasso. Den da women, dey take the chickens and make a big gumbo. We had a dance at night. Da big Mardi Gras, we would ride horses, and just sang for da music, we didn' have instruments on da run. Dey had a buggy to pick up da chickens. We'd ride horses around all day, drinking, hollering, raisin' holy hell." he said still staring through me.

"But dem days is done, no more like da old rides., he said, turning towards the open doorway, "Now days its all da tourists in New Orleans thinking dey keeping things in balance with the spirits, dey don' have no idea...no idea at all."

"Ya want another 10 minutes?" He asked looking down the road..."It's on the house this time."

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Flambeaux Royalty

By Aileen McInnis

He know the real colors of Carnival
not be king purple, doubloon gold or cash green
but be bright spark, gravestone ash and blue black flame,
silver glint of coins tossed in an arc when
he dance extra fine and make the blazing torch pulse
to the trombone-drum-trumpet-tambourine,
silk-blazoned, hat-topped, metallic-bead-draped, slightly-drunk Second Line
crowding him to strut and shine
and make his way.

He don't feel the pinpricks of heat, splashing kerosene
and tarnished metal cutting into his shoulders.
He wrap a tattered cloth round his face
to stop embers from burning too deeply
and done make him even blacker
more beat up than the day before.
He know on this night,
Rex be no bigger king
than him leading the parade

in fire and flame, mask and blister,
iron, spark and flash,
the true colors of Mardi Gras.

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Krewe Du Review



Eating Establishment Reviews
By Steve Montooth & Christy Williams

February 20, 2006.

The Double Musky Inn, Crow Creek Highway, Girdwood

RATING:

The Krewe du Review has saved the best for the last installment of the Killer Rubboard magazine. As far as we know the Double Musky was Alaska's first Cajun restaurant and it is still the gold standard for consistently superb Cajun and Creole food. They were the inspiration for our Cajun food quest---as Mardi Gras season approached we wondered what other venues were cooking up Louisiana-inspired cuisine. Our review is based on dozens of visits to the Grande Dame of Alaskan Cajun cooking.

The restaurant is owned and operated by Bob and Deanna Persons. They bought the place in 1979 and sought out training with New Orleans chef Paul Prudhomme and his staff to develop their menu and cooking style. The rest is history! They stick to a solid menu of Cajun and Creole dishes---the best gumbo I've ever had (see Aileen's article on making roux in rubboard issue #2), tasty appetizers, etouffees, seafood and meat dishes, and desserts so good that they'll have your bathroom scale shrieking in horror. They use the best ingredients available (just try to purchase a piece of beef as good as you will be served here), and everything is cooked fresh and to perfection. The Persons recently published their second cookbook that has great recipes and cooking tips, and I was surprised to find that the restaurant has four chefs trained at Le Cordon Bleu, one of whom is their son Justin.

Steve and I make the pilgrimage to the Double Musky to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, visits with out-of-town guests, etc. Our favorite routine is to spend the day hiking up the Crow Creek trail (just up the road from the restaurant) to the pass where there is a spectacular view of the Raven Glacier. We then trudge back down the hill, clean ourselves up a bit, change out of hiking clothes in the trailhead parking lot, then head to the Double Musky for a great meal---I mean we are in "calorie debt" you know! The restaurant is definitely an Alaskan establishment---no pretentiousness whatsoever, so we feel fine about coming in wearing jeans. It's always a wild hodgepodge of patrons---fisherman in the summer, skiers in winter, wedding parties, politicians, prom couples and tourists.

The parking lot is usually jam-packed with everything from hippie vans to pick-up trucks and limousines. Don't you just love Alaska? The restaurant takes no reservations so everyone has to wait it out together---usually in the bar. People are generally friendly so share table space, chairs, etc. The décor is difficult to describe---stuff is hanging from or tacked up to every available space---Mardi Gras masks and beads, signs of all sorts, stuff from liquor distributors, stained glass pieces, notes from past Olympic ski team members, etc. There is a limit to the stuff plastered up---no unmentionables tacked up as in some other infamous establishments.

The wait can be long, so you do have to be prepared for it (they are open for dinner only, and sometimes people line up early to get in right away). There's plenty to look at in the restaurant, and in the summer it's beautifully landscaped with gorgeous flowers-showy dahlias to local wildflowers. Sometimes people are content to order gumbo or appetizers in the bar. The portions are very generous and make a tasty, complete meal.

Steve and I are creatures of habit and even when we tell ourselves that we are going to mix it up and try something different on the menu, we always order the same thing. We start with a bowl of gumbo-rich, almost black roux, spiced just right with freshest shrimp you'll ever eat. It's served with a little scoop of rice and a great corn muffin. We should stop there, but no.....I always order the Sausage and Shrimp Jambalaya and Steve has the French Pepper Steak. The jambalaya is notably the spiciest dish on the menu---keep your hanky handy! It's full of peppers, onions, sausage and that wonderful shrimp. Steve swears that the pepper steak is consistently the best beef he's ever eaten. It is a perfectly marbled large piece of beef, covered with a black pepper sauce, made again with that wonderful "black" roux and laced with burgundy. The meals are served with outrageously huge and delicious cheese jalapeno rolls, a fresh green salad, and perfectly cooked fresh vegetables, still almost crisp and lightly tossed with a bit of butter and their own seasoning blend. The portions are enormous here, so we try to pace ourselves and take some of it home. My jambalaya will often provide two more meals (that is if Steve doesn't get into it first). If we've really hiked hard that day, we'll order dessert. The selection is killer-Double Musky Pie (pecan/meringue crust, chocolate brownie-like center, whipped cream topping), Cajun Delite (lots of chocolate, pecans, pudding and whipped cream), crème brulee, chocolate pecan pie, their famous carrot cake, cheesecakes of various sorts....this is dangerous territory!

Aileen recommends the stuffed mushrooms (stuffed with their own Cajun spiced mixture), the French pepper steak tips appetizer (then you can have a bit of the steak as well as some other selections) and, of course, their great gumbo. I have tried their crab-stuffed halibut with Creole beurre blanc sauce, and other fish dishes--all are wonderful.

The Krewe du Review clearly holds this restaurant as a favorite, and to celebrate the close of this year's Killer Rubboard season, we plan a visit to enjoy it and toast our gracious editor Aileen for a job "well done" (no pun intended). As we close up our last review we note that we're pretty lousy as food critics, but we've learned how much we enjoy visiting with people about the food they love and their own spin on interpreting and adding to the great tradition of Louisiana cooking. And best of all, we had an excuse to get together and share food and stories with our friends---isn't that what eating should be about? We'll raise a glass (and a fork) on Mardi Gras, this year really feeling the meaning of fat Tuesday!



Food



Atmosphere: *The Double Musky is fun and funky, but pretty crowded and noisy.*



Mardi Gras Spirit: *No restaurant has as much Mardi Gras memorabilia and "stuff"!*



Lagniappe: *Always good, friendly service, consistently superb food and a welcoming attitude. The desserts alone put it into the stellar category!*

February 20, 2006.

Christy's Gumbo, Krewe du Roux Parade Route, Anchorage

Guest Review by Aileen McInnis

RATING: 

Now there is nothing better than a perfectly executed bowl of gumbo after the toil, sweat and tossing of beads of your scheduled Krewe parade. And I can hardly think of a better bowl of gumbo than I had the pleasure of eating at the home of Christy Williams's home after the Krewe du Roux did our third annual parade down Glenwood and Cottonwood Streets. The festive room was filled with the atmosphere of Mardi Gras-- a purple table cloth with beads, babies and noisemakers as a centerpiece; hanging Mardi Gras decorations tumbling from the ceiling, and a half dozen beads flung over the upright bass in the corner. The outside of the house was just as festive, with another half dozen comic/tragedy faces decorated the front of the house. The Krewe du Roux assembled and paraded around the neighborhood before all returned to the house of Christy Williams and Steve Montooth for a meal of gumbo and the slicing of the King Cake.

Ah, the gumbo! Christy served it up hot and spicy with cornbread on the side. Smooth and silky broth, with a dark, dark roux that could have only been made from patient stirring and a butter base recipe in a cast iron skillet. So well blended and flavorful that you didn't care if there was any shrimp or sausage in it at all. But lucky us, there was fresh shrimp tossed in at the last possible moment, rendering them tender and flavorful. The Louisiana link sausage was spicy and biting. You know the spices are just right when your tongue doesn't lose its tastebuds but your nose starts running about a third of the way through the bowl. Pass the Kleenex, fellas! Right on time!

"Five crawdads!" Brian DeMarcus shouted and waved his spoon. I concurred, but to be fair we had to have a second bowl just in case we were biased. "Five crawdads!" I soon yelled again through a mouth of broth and rice, and Brian nodded in agreement.

Jason Bent found the baby in our version of the King Cake and he was crowned our King of the Krewe du Roux for the 2008 season, preparing to take over the reign of Queen Linda Hearn. So two things to look forward to-- King Jason, and even more bowls of Christy's parade gumbo. Five crawdads, I say to both!



Food: *Beyond good, it was heart warming, nose running and fabulous!*



Atmosphere: *Beads galore with musical instruments, Cajun music, a house decorated both inside and out, more plastic babies than you can shake a bonfire at, and the festive air of Mardi Gras filling the air.*



Mardi Gras Spirit: *The Krewe du Roux Rocks! See above!*



Lagniappe: *The Krewe du Roux parade was very funky, small, and featured a drum, clarinet, guitar and saxophone, two bead throwers, a mechanical dummy, and an ever growing Krewe. The King was crowned appropriately with a crown made of plastic forks, spoons, chickens and babies. The scepter was a large mixing spoon adorned with jewels, babies, chickens and beads. I can't give the rest of Anchorage must credit, though. During the parade, some people actually ran into their homes when they saw us coming!*

ABOUT THE REVIEWERS: Steve Montooth and Christy Williams are members of the Anchorage-based Krewe du Roux and man, can Christy make a good gumbo! Steve excels at playing with his food. *Copyright 2007. All Rights Reserved.*

Author! Author!



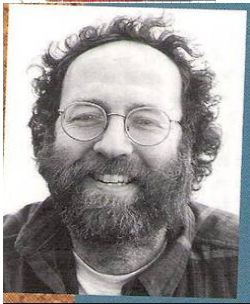
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Links & Lagniappe

February 20, 2007. ISSUE 7: Les Bons Temps!



Double Musky Inn, Crow Creek Mine Road, Girdwood, Alaska

The Double Musky used to put their recipes on their website, but now they have a cookbook so that's even better. Find out what's for dinner and how to buy the cookbook at <http://www.doublemuskyinn.com/framed.html>.

The Courir de Mardi Gras

Celebration of Mardi Gras in the Cajun towns of Louisiana is very different than New Orleans, but there is still the mocking of royalty and the big party on Mardi Gras Day. You can find out more about the Courir de Mardi Gras in Cajun Country and find out the words to the Mardi Gras song at <http://www.iotamardigras.com/history.html>

Old New Orleans Photographs from 1900-1920

Check out these old postcards and photographs from early Mardi Gras at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historic_New_Orleans_Mardi_Gras_photographs