***Quoteables***

**On God and Life:**
"I would rather live my life as if there is a God and die to find there isn't, than life my life as if there isn't and die to find out there is." (Author Unknown)

**On Teamwork:**
"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." (Henry Ford)
2019
October 14 – Columbus Day
October 31 – Halloween
November 1 – All Saints Day
November 3 – Daylight Savings Time Ends
November 11 – Veterans Day
November 14-17 – Mid-Winter Conf., The Hotel Bentley, Alexandria, LA
November 28 – Thanksgiving Day
December 7 – Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
December 15 – Wreaths Across America
December 24 – Christmas Eve
December 25 – Christmas Day
December 31 – New Year’s Eve

2020
January 1 – New Year’s Day
January 8-12 – Alabama Mid-Winter Conference, Auburn Marriott Opelika Hotel and Conference Center at Grand National, Opelika, AL
July 31-August 4 – National Convention, Hilton Anatole, Dallas, Texas

Life in Louisiana

I'm gonna fix a seafood-stuffed chicken, stuffed in a duck, stuffed in a turkey, stuffed in a gigantic smoked pork roast.

I love the time a year blowing up all its glory.
You can do that again.

When it feels like summer outside

but you are ready for Halloween

DAV at the ceremony honoring female veterans

Louisiana Gold Star Mother’s and Family’s Day Ceremony Held

The Louisiana Gold Star Mother’s and Family’s Day recognition ceremony, the first state-led Gold Star ceremony, was held at the Louisiana Veterans Memorial Park on Sunday, Sept. 29, to ensure woman and men killed in the line of duty and the families they leave behind are not forgotten. Gold Star families, or relatives of U.S. military members who died in battle, came in droves to show support for the event.

Gold Star families, the surviving family members of military personnel who died while in an active-duty status, often times fear their loved ones will be forgotten. The Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs (LDVA) is committed to ensuring that does not happen for Louisiana Gold Star families. Gold Star families, veterans, service organizations, and community members attended the Louisiana Gold Star Mother’s and Family’s Day recognition ceremony held at the Louisiana Veterans Memorial Park, located beside the Old Arsenal Museum on the State Capitol grounds.

“LDVA’s mission is not only to take care of Louisiana service members and veterans, but also to care for their families,” said LDVA Secretary Joey Strickland. Our new Gold Star Representative Jennifer Hahn, a Gold Star spouse, is moving us forward in accomplishing that mission. Leading one of the first state department-led Gold Star programs in the nation, LDVA’s newly-hired Gold Star Representative knows first-hand that freedom comes at a price. On May 24, 2005, her husband, Louisiana Army National Guard Sgt. First Class Peter J. Hahn was killed-in-action while deployed to Baghdad, Iraq with the 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

“We want to let Louisiana’s Gold Star families, like the Hahns, know they will always be connected to their military family, and that we will help take care of them,” said Strickland. All Louisianans are encouraged to help recognize the sacrifices that all Gold Star Family members make when a father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, or other loved one dies in service to the nation. You can contact LDVA’s Gold Star representative, Ms. Jennifer Hahn, via email at: Jennifer.Hahn@la.gov or by calling: (225) 219-5006.
Seventy-four years ago, Willie Durisseau was fighting with American troops on the Japanese island of Okinawa in World War II. Now the 101-year-old Opelousas resident sat at the Hotel Cazan in Mamou this past June as community members honored his life and sacrifices. A grassroots effort to honor Durisseau’s life had been brewing in the area since last year, when Durisseau was discovered as the last known living Creole fiddle player. Durisseau’s style of Zydeco fiddle blends blues and Haitian influences in a style that was previously thought extinct.

Hotel Cazan owner Valerie Cahill said with the D-Day anniversary Thursday, June 9, she felt it was the perfect time to honor Durisseau for his military service, as well as his musical contributions. The hotel hosted a musical celebration and military salute Friday and Saturday, building on a fiddle contest the hotel hosted in Durisseau’s honor last year. Cahill and others with Hotel Cazan personally spread the word about Durisseau to many of the roughly two dozen attendees present Saturday, speaking about his life and inspiring people to come meet a living part of the region’s history. Cahill said Durisseau is the picture of what people strive for as American citizens. “He’s done everything we call on everyone to do — have a family, serve in the military, be part of the culture,” Cahill said.

Durisseau and his wife, Irma, will celebrate their 77th wedding anniversary this year. The couple met while Durisseau was playing in a band at one of the area’s famous house parties in the 1930s. They had been married just over two years when he was shipped overseas to fight in the war. Durisseau later returned from the war and raised 14 children while working in construction, all while playing the fiddle at barbecues, holidays and after school for his grandchildren. Despite arthritis and struggles with shoulder pain, Durisseau still plays the fiddle every day in his home, he said. “I love music. It makes me feel good,” he said. The Durisseaus both expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the crowd at Hotel Cazan. Willie Durisseau said he’s “glad to have lived this long, and I hope to make it some more.” The group assembled Saturday marveled at different aspects of Durisseau’s life, whether his longstanding marriage, continued passion for the fiddle and music, or his military service. Many stepped forward to share how Durisseau’s life had touched them and made tributes to him. Opelousas Mayor Julius Alsandor presented Durisseau with a proclamation and a key to the city of Opelousas, where Durisseau has resided for his entire adult life. In true south Louisiana fashion, an aside between Alsandor and Irma Durisseau revealed the pair are distant cousins. A tribute by U.S. Army veteran James Bertrand included the presentation of an American flag that had flown above the U.S. Capitol. Bertrand, like many others, learned of Durisseau through Cahill and felt compelled to meet him. The flag he presented was a gift from President George W. Bush in the early 2000s, and Bertrand said he couldn’t think of anyone more deserving of the gift than Durisseau. “I think this is what President George W. Bush meant when he said, ‘Sooner or later you’re going to meet somebody worthwhile,’” Bertrand said. “He deserves it.”

Denise Frazier, assistant director of the New Orleans Center for the Gulf South at Tulane University, said experiencing Durisseau’s musical talent is an incredible gift. His music tells the story of the South, Louisiana, the Creole tradition and so much more. On Friday evening, the musician and academic said she was honored to have Durisseau play her violin. Frazier, 38, has played violin since elementary school and said in over 25 years of playing she’s never heard an instrument sound the way it did in Durisseau’s hands. “With every strain of his string and every piercing note of the strings and bow, we hear so much...We hear who we are, and we begin to imagine how far we’ve come and how far we have to go,” Frazier said. Musician and producer Dirk Billie said he hopes to capture that inspiration and share it with a wider audience in a forthcoming documentary on the 101-year-old. He’s been spending time with Durisseau and his family inside their home and has made it his mission to preserve Durisseau’s experience for future generations. Billie said he’s hoping to eventually have recordings of Durisseau playing the fiddle catalogued in the Smithsonian Institution. “He’s a jewel,” he said. “This kind of stuff people don’t pay attention to anymore. They’re so tied up on the internet and they’re so tied into their phones...they don’t really look into the past anymore. I think it really’s important.”

During the presentations, the Durisseaus’ granddaughter, Maci Danatta, said she was holding back tears while watching her grandfather be honored. She said he’s made an incredible impact on her life and she cherishes having the ability to continue making the most of her time with him. “I’m happy to be a piece of him,” she said. Danatta said she’s glad her grandfather can share his experiences outside of their family. Events like Saturday’s are an opportunity to preserve history through Durisseau and reflect on the extreme progress the country has made in the past century, she said. It wasn’t that long ago that her grandfather struggled against racial discrimination as a Creole man, and it’s important to remember that, Danatta said. Durisseau wasn’t raised with praise, and he and his family are thankful he’s getting to experience an outpouring of love from his community in his twilight years, she said. “He told me about when he grew up the hardships he had just because he was an African American. He was marked. He was stumped most of his life with something that kept him from achieving everything that he set for himself,” Danatta said. “Him reaching his goals at 101 and getting honored means so much.”

Wille Durisseau receives the key to the city from Opelousas Mayor Julius Alsandor. Willie Durisseau looks over an American flag presented to him by James Bertrand. Joseph Crachilola plays saxophone during a weekend event honoring Willie Durisseau. In top photo, Willie Durisseau gets a kiss from granddaughter Maci Danatta.
DEDICATION OF CHAPTERS 33 & 37 NEW HSC VAN IN NEW ORLEANS

From an article by Jamie Mobley

On September 18, in a small ceremony at the New Orleans Veterans Medical Center just one week before the Disabled American Veterans' (DAV) 99th birthday, Chapters 33 from Metairie and 37 from Jefferson Parish gave Veterans of southeast Louisiana a gift to demonstrate DAV's mission of empowering Veterans to lead high quality lives—a 2019 Ford Flex 7-passenger minivan. As part of the DAV's Transportation Network, the new van will provide additional routes as it joins six others DAV has donated to SLVHCS over the years.

"The vans are a very important tool for getting Veterans who don't have transportation to their appointments," agreed Air Force Veteran Anthony Wickramasekera, Past Commander of DAV Chapter 33. "Some of the Veterans don't have the resources or can't drive due to medical issues. This is a big help to them." "This is a proud moment for us," said U.S. Army Veteran Richard "Terry" Waite, DAV Chapter 33 Commander. "We worked on this for months, and now the van is finally here. I can't wait to get it loaded with Veterans and bring them to their appointments." Waite also works as the SLVHCS Hospital Service Coordinator arranging transportation with the DAV vans. "Chapter 37 is very proud to have been a part of this procurement," said Coast Guard Veteran and DAV Chapter 37 Treasurer and Service Officer Larry Jones. "We worked with Chapter 33 to pool our resources and our money to make this van possible. We're all members of the Disabled American Veterans, and we're proud to be a part of that organization that continues to support our fellow Veterans." "I'm very proud of Chapter 37 and 33 for getting this put together," said DAV Department of Louisiana Commander Gene Durand. "I'm also very proud of our volunteer drivers getting Veterans where they need to go through the transportation program."

SLVHCS Director Fernando Rivera was pleased to accept the generous donation from Chapters 33 and 37, many of whose members he has known and worked with for years. "Support from DAV and other Veteran Service Organizations opens a world of opportunities to better serve our Veterans," Rivera said. "This donation allows us to keep making a difference in the lives of our nation's heroes, and I can't thank DAV enough for their continued support."