



By Darrel J. Papillion

# L'EAU HAUTE DE VINGT-SEPT

**M**y paternal grandparents were both born in 1906. Although they lived a combined 159 years, they lived all those years in rural Acadiana, where they were born. French was their native language, and, between the two of them, they knew only enough English to defend themselves in the simplest of transactions in that language. Over their relatively long and colorful lives, they saw America and the world change in many ways. They lived through two world wars, the Great Depression, the Civil Rights Movement, and the administrations of U.S. Presidents from Roosevelt (that would be Teddy Roosevelt) to George H.W. Bush. And, even though they also lived through one of the greatest ages of innovation in the history of the world—a period that would include the development of automobiles, radio and television, the jet age, and conveniences like refrigeration and air conditioning—they rarely spoke of these things. They did, however, speak rather regularly of one event in Louisiana's history, especially when the French radio broadcast from KVPI in Ville Platte warned of heavy rain. That event was something my grandparents called *l'eau haute de vingt-sept*—the high waters of '27—or the most destructive river flood in the history of the United States.

While my family's small farm on the Acadian Prairie in St. Landry Parish was spared serious flooding, my grandparents were keenly aware of the suffering en-

**Resources**

**LSBA Disaster Recovery website:**  
[www.lsba.org/dr](http://www.lsba.org/dr)

**Volunteer to help those affected:**  
[www.lsba.org/goto/volunteer](http://www.lsba.org/goto/volunteer)

**SOLACE information**  
(see also page 103):  
[www.lsba.org/goto/solace](http://www.lsba.org/goto/solace)

**LSBA Disaster Response Message Board - post offers of help or requests for assistance (for LSBA members only):**  
[www.lsba.org/goto/DRmessage](http://www.lsba.org/goto/DRmessage)

ured by many. Roughly 630,000 people in Louisiana, Arkansas and Mississippi were affected by flooding. More than 80 percent of St. Landry Parish flooded. Nearby Opelousas had a population of only 6,000 people in 1927, but, within a few days of when the Atchafalaya River levee failed a few miles north of St. Landry Parish in Avoyelles Parish in May 1927, nearly 15,000 registered refugees, and many unregistered ones, from other parts of Louisiana would seek shelter in Opelousas' Red Cross refugee camps. Another nearly 2,000 would seek refuge in camps in nearby Eunice. My grandparents often spoke of the human misery that ensued as thousands, often with all their possessions including livestock in tow, journeyed to higher ground because much of Louisiana

was under water.

Nearly a century later, in August 2016, I would recall my grandparents' frequent references to *l'eau haute de vingt-sept* as a slow-moving storm would pound Louisiana with rainfall for several days and would drop nearly seven trillion gallons of water—enough to fill more than 10 million Olympic-sized swimming pools or fill Lake Pontchartrain four times—on our state. More than 140,000 homes and thousands of businesses would be affected. Like in 1927, thousands of Louisianians, including many in the legal profession, would seek refuge in shelters or with family and friends. As in 1927, and like the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, thousands of Louisianians would need help from their state and federal governments and, of course, their communities. Louisiana, of course, survived the Great Flood of 1927 and has survived numerous tragedies and disasters since then. And, it will survive and rebuild from the damage caused by the floods of 2016.

The Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) acted quickly in the aftermath of this year's historic flooding to help our members and our system of justice. The LSBA activated its disaster plan and quickly rolled out the disaster page of its website, [www.lsba.org/dr](http://www.lsba.org/dr). The LSBA's leaders worked with Gov. John Bel Edwards' office to help with emergency Executive Orders regarding legal deadlines.

Similarly, the LSBA worked with the

chief judges of Louisiana’s federal courts to secure similar orders in federal court to prevent lawyers and citizens who were busy rescuing their families and neighbors from the devastation of the floods from being prejudiced by legal deadlines. Before the flood waters receded, LSBA leadership was in close contact with Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson and the staff of the Louisiana Supreme Court to ensure that Louisiana’s lawyers had timely information regarding court closures and other issues that might affect their clients and practices.

The LSBA worked quickly to begin raising funds to help lawyers and legal professionals affected by flooding, and the LSBA’s SOLACE Program provided scores of flood victims with aid, services and relief in the aftermath of the flooding. The LSBA also began working to develop a seminar to help lawyers affected by flooding to rebuild their practices. As I write this article, the LSBA is working on numerous flood-related projects.

I am proud of the LSBA’s response to the flooding of 2016. The flooding has had a devastating effect on lawyers in several

communities in our state, most notably Livingston Parish, and much remains to be done. The LSBA will devote considerable time and energy over the next weeks and months to help our members affected by the flooding of 2016. While these flood relief efforts will be challenging, like so many times in the past, Louisiana’s lawyers, judges and legal community will rise to the challenge.



# SOLACE

Support of Lawyers/Legal Personnel – All Concern Encouraged

The Louisiana State Bar Association/Louisiana Bar Foundation’s Community Action Committee supports the SOLACE program. Through the program, the state’s legal community is able to reach out in small, but meaningful and compassionate ways to judges, lawyers, court personnel, paralegals, legal secretaries and their families who experience a death or catastrophic illness, sickness or injury, or other catastrophic event. For assistance, to contact a coordinator or for more information, visit [www.lsba.org/goto/solace](http://www.lsba.org/goto/solace).

Area	Coordinator	Contact Info	Area	Coordinator	Contact Info
<b>Alexandria Area</b>	Richard J. Arsenault rarsenault@nbalawfirm.com	(318)487-9874 Cell (318)452-5700	<b>Natchitoches Area</b>	Peyton Cunningham, Jr. peytonc1@suddenlink.net	(318)352-6314 Cell (318)332-7294
<b>Baton Rouge Area</b>	Ann K. Gregorie ann@brba.org	(225)214-5563	<b>New Orleans Area</b>	Helena N. Henderson hhenderson@neworleansbar.org	(504)525-7453
<b>Covington/ Mandeville Area</b>	Suzanne E. Bayle sebayle@bellsouth.net	(504)524-3781	<b>Opelousas/Ville Platte/ Sunset Area</b>	John L. Olivier johnolivier@centurytel.net	(337)662-5242 (337)942-9836 (337)232-0874
<b>Denham Springs Area</b>	Mary E. Heck Barrios mary@barrioslaw.com	(225)664-9508	<b>River Parishes Area</b>	Judge Jude G. Gravois judegravois@bellsouth.net	(225)265-3923 (225)265-9828 Cell (225)270-7705
<b>Houma/Thibodaux Area</b>	Danna Schwab dschwab@theschwablawfirm.com	(985)868-1342	<b>Shreveport Area</b>	Dana M. Southern dsouthern@shreveportbar.com	(318)222-3643
<b>Jefferson Parish Area</b>	Pat M. Franz patfranz@bellsouth.net	(504)455-1986	<p>SOLACE is accepting assistance requests for non-monetary needs from those affected by the severe weather. Requests can be for gift cards, furniture, office space, temporary housing, food, etc. Requests for assistance will be circulated to the 20,000-plus SOLACE members. If you or someone you know needs assistance, forward your request to SOLACE at <a href="mailto:solaceinfo@lasolace.org">solaceinfo@lasolace.org</a> or post your request to the LSBA Diaster Response Message Board. Please include an email address that protects the sender’s identity.</p>		
<b>Lafayette Area</b>	Josette Abshire director@lafayettebar.org	(337)237-4700			
<b>Lake Charles Area</b>	Melissa A. St. Mary melissa@pitrelawfirm.com	(337)942-1900			
<b>Monroe Area</b>	John C. Roa roa@hhsclaw.com	(318)387-2422			