

Harlan "Mark" Guidry
Preserving Louisiana's History & Heritage

Dr. Mark Guidry, is no stranger to the world of history and heritage. His preservation work started with Louisiana's "Grand" families - Dupre, Goudeau, Lacour, Metoyer, & Ray - his maternal ancestors who formed a tight network of extended relatives from Cane River to Goudeau, Louisiana. Smiling, he calls himself a "Louisiana mixed breed" - half Creole and half Cajun in heritage. His father's multicultural Acadian heritage originates from the South Louisiana communities of Abbeville & Grosse Isle.

Before *Roots* and before *Forgotten People*, a junior high school teenager sought his identity by questioning his elders and later acquiring a personal collection of church, government, and family-owned records. His discoveries gave birth to a story about a unique Franco-American people, uncovering a nearly forgotten heritage and a personal genealogical tree rich in generations of multiculturalism. His initial work culminated in his first written product, "Back to Our Roots," at the age of 19, for which he was honored as the "Grand Family Historian" in 1981.

Self-driven, he travelled to Isle Brevelle in 1979 at the age of 18 where he found and immediately enamored his cousin, Lee Etta Dupre Coutii, "Tante Lee." She was the most referenced Isle Brevelle descendant in *Forgotten People* and was recognized at Creole Heritage Day 2000, as the "First Known Creole Historian & Preservationist." Courageous Tante Lee shared her knowledge and spoke out at time when Creole heritage was rarely discussed in public. "Cher Neveu," Mark Guidry, carefully documented Tante Lee's oral history which spanned generations from Augustin Metoyer to his daughter-in-law, Perine Metoyer Dupre to Tante Lee.

Mark has received many awards and honors as a writer, speaker, historian, and preservation leader. To name a few:

- ❖ · In 1980, exhibited his family tree at a reunion of Descendants of Fort St. Jean Batiste des Natchitoches.
- ❖ · Writer of "History of a Grand Family: Birth of an American People"; 2000 - disseminated at a New Orleans Grand Family Reunion hosting over 600 attendees.
- ❖ · Received a Louisiana Creole Heritage Center Preservationist Award in 2000 for documenting the history of Grand Family. He is also a former advisory board member of the Creole Heritage Center.
- ❖ · Co-authored the popular coffee-table book, *Natchitoches & Louisiana's Timeless Cane River* along with Bobby Deblieux, photographer Philip Gould and Rick Seals.
- ❖ · Produced educational and historic reenactments about the founding of St. Augustine Catholic Church as well as about the life of the venerable Henriette Delille, Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family in New Orleans.
- ❖ · Founder and President of the National Grand Family Heritage Foundation -

a tax-exempt, non-profit promoting Louisiana's French-Creole history and heritage.

- ❖ · Organized "The Historic Grand Family Reunion" in 2011 in Natchitoches and along Cane River with about 550 attendees from over 15 states, featuring presentations, exhibits, reenactments, local tours, and more.
- ❖ · In Jan 2013, Isle Brevelle community members unanimously elected him as President of the St. Augustine Historical Society. In a short amount of time, he has reactivated and organized the organization in time for many 2014 Tri-Centennial celebrations and he led a successful fundraising campaign to restore, beautiful, and historically mark the tomb of community founder, Augustin Metoyer. Elected annually, he has served as President for the past 5 years.
- ❖ In 2013, the NSU Creole Heritage Center gave him special recognition in an award for preserving creole heritage & culture a

In the real world (smile), Mark is an accomplished board-certified physician executive - the Chief of Staff of the Alexandria VA serving veterans in a 23 parish area of Louisiana through several community clinics, including the one in Natchitoches. As a healthcare executive, he has also received numerous awards, including the 2016 Texas Statewide Public Health Award for improving the public's health in Texas.

A St. Augustine parishioner, Mark is a devout Catholic, a Christian vocalist, and medical mission worker. Besides all that, he is most proud of his cultural calling to be a "traiteur," faith healer. Most of all, he prides in being a father to his daughter, Ethel Marie - named for his grandmother, Ethel Lacour Goudeau, and Marie Llorens Roque.