



Iry LeJeune

Iry LeJeune is regarded as the man responsible for the revival of the Cajun accordion after World War II and one of the most important musicians in the history of Cajun music. Though he was a brilliant accordionist, people still speak of him as a singer and songwriter whose music evokes the hardship and pain of 200 years of Acadian Exile.

Iry (christened Ira) LeJeune was born on October 28, 1928, in the community of *Point Noir* near Church Point, Louisiana. Nearly blind from birth and unable to help with farm work, as a child he spent his days at the home of his uncle, Angelais LeJeune, a popular Cajun musician of the 1920s. There LeJeune was allowed to practice on his uncle's accordion and heard, in addition to Angelais's music, recordings by the great Creole accordionist and singer, Amédée Ardoin, both of whom influenced him deeply.

Due to his blindness LeJeune was forced to pursue music as his livelihood to support his wife and family. In the 1940s the accordion was no longer in style, having given way to fiddle as the lead instrument in bands during the 1930s. This was to change with the return of Cajun GIs from World War II, hungry for their own culture and music, and with the advent of LeJeune's recording career. In 1948 LeJeune recorded "Love Bridge Waltz" and "Evangeline Special" for the Opera record company in Houston, Texas. The record was an immediate success and LeJeune continued to record primarily for Gold Band records. He rapidly became a leading dance-hall attraction and his popularity grew with the release of records such as "Lacassine Special," "*J'ai Ete Au Bal*" and "Calcasieu Waltz."

On the night of October 8, 1955, LeJeune and fiddler J.B. Fuselier were returning home from a dance in Eunice, Louisiana, when their car developed a flat tire. As they changed the tire at the side of the road a passing car struck them. Fuselier was seriously injured;

LeJeune was thrown into a nearby field and killed instantly. He was not yet 27 years old.

Iry LeJeune left a legacy of 26 recorded songs, a body of work essential to the development of Cajun music. Years after his death, his recordings remain in print and his songs are sung and played by musicians throughout southwest Louisiana and the world.