

A Congres Blessing by Don Thibodeaux

It was a wonderful Congres. The opportunity to return to part of our homeland and renew acquaintances with distant relatives and friends was a fabulous experience. One single event, more like a blessing, occurred that we did not anticipate.

On August 15th, National Acadian Day, Dick Thibodeau and I were fortunate to participate in an an emotional visit with a New Brunswick Thibodeau family. The next day, Kathy (Sonnier) and Lewis Mier had the same fortunate experience. Kathy is the sister of the late Floyd Sonnier. Their mother was a Thibodeaux.

After the Thibodeau Congres concluded in Sheila NB, we were gathering our belongings and helping the organizers pick up displays, posters, etc. A young lady named Nadia Thibodeau of nearby Brantville, NB came to our table with a request. She said that her father, Ulysse, had attended the Thibodeau gathering in Nova Scotia in 2004 and enjoyed meeting "lost" cousins and relatives. She said that her father would like to meet some Thibodeau's from Louisiana and other parts of the United States. We said that was ok and we would stay around a while and do that. Nadia then explained that her father had not been able to attend this year's Congres because he was homebound and confined to a wheel chair. He was suffering from the affects of a series of strokes and an aneurysm that had occurred within the past two to three years. After hearing her earnest request, we said we would gladly do that. The tears of appreciation in her eyes when we agreed to see her father were compelling. We, however, did not have any idea when we were going to fulfill that promise as our schedules were filled with other activities. We just knew we would do it.

On Saturday, Aug 15th, Dick and I drove to Brantville to visit Nadia and her father. What a wonderful and blessed event that turned out to be. Mr Thibodeau was confined to his wheel chair as noted but his awareness of our being there was an intermittent thing. At times he would engage in conversation even though his speech was slurred and halting. As quickly as he spoke, he lapsed into a temporary catatonic stare. He would recover from that condition and again speak often repeating what he had previously stated. At one point, he said how happy he was to see us. I looked over at Nadia who was sitting next to me and the tears of joy were streaming down her face. I could tell she appreciated our being there and the love for her father was quite evident.

Mrs. Thibodeau served us coffee and delicious ginger cake. It tasted just like the ginger cake we make in Louisiana using Steen Syrup. We stayed and visited with the Thibodeau's for over an hour and the event was exactly like any family gathering in Louisiana around the kitchen table. We departed with hugs, best wishes and tears all around.

After getting into our car to leave, the emotional magnitude of that visit hit us hard and we were thankful that we were able to fulfill Nadia's request. I'm not sure who benefited the most from the visit. We were just grateful that we were able to fulfill a "relatives" request. It was a blessing.

Don Thibodeaux
Baton Rouge, LA

See photo below

Standing: Dick Thibodeau (Maine), Mrs Thibodeau (Brantville, NB), Don Thibodeaux (Louisiana), Nadia Thibodeau (Brantville). Seated: Mr Ulysse Thibodeau



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