

2-4-1997

Merci beaucoup Article

Lewiston Sun Journal

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Our view

Sun Journal - 2-4-91

Editorials

Merci beaucoup

A well-known phrase among French Canadians and Franco-Americans is "*Je me souviens*": I remember. Thanks to people like Madeleine D. Giguere and the folks who work with her at the Franco-American Reading Room at Lewiston-Auburn College, area residents have an opportunity to know themselves much better than ever was possible before.

Giguere, a longtime professor of sociology at the University of Southern Maine, accepted an appointment as volunteer coordinator of the reading room upon her retirement from the USM faculty in 1990. Since then she and her invaluable colleagues have bolstered the collection, arranged displays and events, and served as a conscience for the Franco community — and, indeed, for all of us.

Now Giguere is retiring again, this time from her directorship of the reading room which she has helped guide to a preeminent position among repositories of Franco-American history. Even those who have done nothing more than walk past the room's display window on their way to somewhere else at L-A College have paused, perhaps in spite of themselves, to gaze at the faces and buildings and festivals in long-ago photographs; to read heart-wrenching letters; to study citations for bravery or certificates of excellence. When they resume their walk, they cannot help but know a little more and feel a little different. Memories locked within the hearts, minds and scrapbooks of our senior citizens have been preserved for new generations.

The values French Canadians brought with them when they made the journey from Quebec to the mills of Maine — faith, hard work and the belief in a better life for their children — often were sorely tested but never lost. Giguere and her colleagues have made sure that the people and their dignity will be remembered, so that all who share a part of that heritage will be able to say, proudly, "*Je me souviens*."