

## Spirited Composition

Fight song penned by 1950s songwriting team



Hilma LaBauve in 1952

**U**L LAFAYETTE'S FIGHT SONG is a tune with staying power. The sports anthem that debuted in 1950 still gets fans pumped up at games and tailgating parties.

Hilma LaBauve Levis is the song's originator. In a recent interview from her home in Santa Fe, Texas, the 1953 grad shared the story of how she and her late brother, Jack LaBauve, created the composition.

In the fall of 1950, Levis was an energetic 19-year-old sophomore studying education at SLI and reporting for *The Vermilion*, the student newspaper. "I jokingly say that I minored in lower elementary education and majored in extracurricular activities," she said. Levis embodied school spirit. She was a member of Delta Sigma Delta



Jack LaBauve

sorority; the Red Jackets, an all-female pep squad; and SLI's Mixed Chorus.

LaBauve, a 1941 graduate of SLI, had recently joined its faculty. "His expertise was arranging music. He was hired as the arranging teacher in the Music Department. He also taught brass instruments and percussion," Levis said.

The Student Council announced a contest to create an original fight song, offering a \$100 savings bond as the prize. "At the time, we were using the Yale University fight song, which had been written by Cole Porter, who was one of its students," Levis said. Yale and SLI shared a common mascot, the bulldog.

SLI students had borrowed the Ivy League version, "Bull-dog! Bull-dog! Bull-dog! Bow, wow, wow, Eli Yale!," substituting "S-L-I!" at the end of the lyric line. "It was catchy and it was fun, but we needed an original song," Levis said. "I had a little tune in my head," she recalled. That tune had been

developing since she was a student at Logansport High School in Logansport, La., where her brother served as band director.

Several band members were also football players. "During spring scrimmage, the band was short on musicians. So, even though I wasn't a music student, my brother would have me fill in," Levis recalled.

She learned to play the glockenspiel, or bells. "He would bring it home for me to practice on, so

### ORIGINAL FIGHT SONG LYRICS

Fight on, Bulldogs, fight on to vic'try  
For the red and white.  
We all sing of triumph and glory  
For our boys tonight.  
You will hear the bark of the Bulldogs  
Soaring to the sky  
Hustle up and rustle up  
And fight on to vic'try, S-L-I!

The fight song was included on a 1951 RCA Victor album recorded by the SLI Band and Male Chorus.



I could play it in the band. That's when I found this little tune. I would play on the bells and I came up with the melody.

"I'd never mentioned it to my brother before. But when the contest was announced, I hummed it for him.

"He wrote the music down on some staff paper, then he played it on the piano. We made some adjustments here and there and it sounded pretty good."

LaBauve transformed his sister's simple melody into a full-band arrangement. "He wrote parts for all the instruments and the manuscript for the director.

"We got it in at the last minute. A few days later, I got a call from the student body president, Winston Fontenot, who said that the song was very good and that I was among the finalists."

Although the arrangement was solid, the brother-sister team had overlooked a key ingredient: lyrics. Fontenot told her he thought the entry would have a better chance of winning if it had words, Levis recalled with a laugh. She turned to war-time songbooks for inspiration and was drawn to the words "victory," "triumph" and "glory."

Levis' composition was among 11 entries, which were narrowed to four. The morning of Tuesday, Dec. 19, 1950, the contest was held during general assembly in Earl K. Long Gymnasium.

"The students voted and I won," Levis said. "Everybody clapped and cheered. They asked me to come up on stage with the band and direct the band as they played the fight song. I didn't really know what I was doing, but that was kind of exciting."

Levis turned her winnings into a gift for her brother. "He had just starting teaching, so I cashed in the bond and bought him a desk. I thought, 'If he hadn't helped me with the song, I wouldn't have won.' I wanted him to include his name on the entry but he wouldn't do it. He said, 'It's your song.'"

LaBauve died in 2006. After serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, he returned to Louisiana, where he earned a master's degree in music education from LSU. He retired from UL Lafayette in 1977.

Levis retired in 1997 after teaching elementary school in Texas. She said she's proud of the contribution she and her brother made.

"The music is still there. It's nice that everyone seems to have enjoyed it for almost 60 years." ■

## Ragin' Cajuns To Face OSU in Televised Game


Louisiana's Ragin' Cajuns® have a 12-game schedule this fall that includes a Friday night contest against Oklahoma State to be broadcast on ESPN2.

It's the second consecutive season that the Cajuns play a team from the Big 12 Conference. They defeated the Big 12's Kansas State last year, 17-15, at Cajun Field.

The Oklahoma State game on Oct. 8 will also be played on the Cajuns' home turf.

UL Lafayette's first home game is Sept. 11, when the team faces the Arkansas State Red Wolves. It's the earliest Sun Belt Conference game in school history.

UL Lafayette has been bowl-eligible in four of the last five seasons.

 [www.ragincajuns.com](http://www.ragincajuns.com)



SEAN MANUEL

Football fans set a Cajun Field attendance record Sept. 5, 2009, when 41,357 of them turned out to watch the Cajuns defeat the Southern Jaguars 42-19.

### LOUISIANA'S RAGIN' CAJUNS® 2010 FOOTBALL SCHEDULE



Sept. 4	University of Georgia	at Athens, Ga.
SEPT. 11	ARKANSAS STATE*	CAJUN FIELD
	10th Annual Herbert Heymann Football Classic	
SEPT. 25	MIDDLE TENNESSEE*	CAJUN FIELD
Oct. 2	North Texas*	at Denton, Texas
OCT. 8	OKLAHOMA STATE	CAJUN FIELD
Oct. 16	Troy University*	at Troy, Ala.
OCT. 23	WESTERN KENTUCKY*	CAJUN FIELD
	65th Homecoming	
Oct. 30	Ohio University	at Athens, Ohio
Nov. 6	University of Mississippi	at Oxford, Miss.
Nov. 13	Florida Atlantic*	at Boca Raton, Fla.
NOV. 20	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL*	CAJUN FIELD
Nov. 27	UL Monroe*	at Monroe, La.

• Sun Belt Conference Games