

Anthony Nicolas Benachi

Good evening to you all, I am Anthony Nicolas Benachi. I am the son of Nicolas Marino Benachi, born in 1812, a native of Greece, on the Island of Khios---birthplace of the great epic poet, Homer. My father's brother, Emmanuel, was the mayor of Athens. My father's life in this country is truly an American tale of prosperity and economic opportunity. He became a great cotton merchant with the Greek firm, The Ralli Brothers in the City of New Orleans. They were international cotton brokers with offices in London, Cairo, Athens, and India.

My father married **Catharina Grund** and in 1852 purchased the beautiful house built by Joseph Zeringue. Father rebuilt and added on many times and this property still exists today and is known as the Benachi House, located 2257 Bayou Road. It is the site of many weddings and exclusive parties. Father also built our summer home on the beachfront in Biloxi, our home away from home. That house stood until Hurricane Camille claimed it in 1969. My father and Catherina were the parents of four children: **Michel, Marie, Marino** and **Pandia**. The Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1853, took the lives of Catharina and two of the children, Michel and Marino (5 months old), while they vacationed in August, here in beautiful Biloxi. They are buried here.

In 1856, my father married my mother, **Anne Marie Bidault**. Together they had six children, I am their second born. I made my livelihood in the Crescent City as a cotton broker and at Greenville in the Delta. By about 1900, I moved into the family summer home here in Biloxi. I loved Biloxi and spent more time here than in New Orleans because I was an avid fisherman and yachtsman. I lived to sail and be on the Gulf of Mexico. My cat boat, "**The Royal Flush**", was a 16-foot racer that I won many Biloxi Regattas with here in the beautiful sound. The Daily Herald ran a story per month about my many fishing trips and the many out of town friends who would vacation in Biloxi just to fish with me. But enough about me, I digress from the story of my father...

Along with his international cotton business, my father enjoyed a lucrative real estate career. He was an ardent hunter and horseman. But his most important contribution to his adopted country of the United States was the introduction of the first Greek Orthodox Church in this country. That church, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral is still a very active church and is located at 1200 Robert E. Lee Blvd. in New Orleans. Today, there are 540 parishes, 800 priests and approximately 1.5 million faithful in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

When my father's name is thought of here in Biloxi, it is not thought about because of cotton or even the Greek Orthodox Church, but probably because of the beautiful street that bares his name and mine. A little known fact, the beautiful oak trees that still line Benachi Ave were personally planted by my father, and though several were lost to both Camille and Katrina, many more remain as a living reminder that Nicolas Marino Benachi passed this way. Thank you for your time.

Elizabeth Carson Maycock Elmer

Good evening friends. I am Elizabeth Carson Maycock Elmer, a native of Biloxi and born in 1850. I was the daughter and only child of Captain James Maycock and Mary Carson Maycock. My father came to Biloxi at the age of 13 from Hull, Yorkshire, England in 1839 aboard an English sailing vessel. America, truly being the land of opportunity, became my father's home and he was quite prosperous here. He was one of the fathers of the seafood industry here in Biloxi. He was a founding member of Lopez Elmer and Company...along with Laz Lopez, William K.M. Dukate, William Gorenflo and my husband, Frederick W. Elmer. Frederick was born in Biloxi in 1847 and was the son of two European immigrants, Jacob Elmer of Canton Glarus Switzerland and Barbara Gettendorf.

Frederick not only was successful as a businessman in the seafood industry, but he was tremendously successful as a public servant, serving as a Supervisor of Harrison County for over 20 years, as alderman of Ward 2 in Biloxi, and as Mayor of Biloxi for three terms. In addition to these high offices, Frederick was also secretary of the School Board and a member of the state legislature. As you can see, my husband was a leader and never knew an idle moment! Frederick had many defining moments while in public office, but his greatest accomplishment would be the many bridges and roads that he was able to establish.....the most famous of these roads would be Beach Blvd or as you all call it Highway 90....in my day we simply called it Beach Road. Prior to Frederick's work to have it shelled and graded, it was simply a trail. When the road became useful for carriage and even later automobile traffic was when Biloxi became known as the "Riviera of the United States".

Frederick and I resided at 120 Water Street and were the parents of ten children: Marie Elmer Sichirich of Buenos Ayres, Argentina; Ida Elmer; Nina Elmer Scott; Cora Elmer Enochs; F.W. Elmer II, James C. Elmer; Inez Elmer Ebersole; Margueryte Elmer Cole; and Edward E. Elmer. Both Frederick Jr. and J.C. attended Ole Miss and graduated with law degrees. They were partners in Elmer and Elmer Law Firm and both held public offices, following in the footsteps of their father. Frederick, the children and I were members of the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer and my father James Maycock was an original member of the vestry of that fine church. We attended services and were members of the same congregation as Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson Davis and family.

After a very fulfilling life, I passed on in 1905 suffering from a lengthy illness with my heart. The next year, my daughter Marie Sichirich donated a beautiful stain glassed window to the Church of the Redeemer in my honor and my parents honor. My dearest husband, Frederick passed from this life on December 23, 1926. Upon his passing, it was written in the Daily Herald and I quote ***"one of the most useful citizens that Biloxi has ever produced has passed from this life"***. Next time you drive down Highway 90, remember the work of my husband, F.W. Elmer.

Florian Seal

My name is Florian Seal, and I was born in 1853 here in Biloxi. My parents are Roderick and Charlotte Seal. My father originally was from North Carolina, and my mother was from Louisiana. I have an older brother Marshall, but he is only one year older than I am.

My brother Marshall and I followed in our father's footsteps when it came time to find professions. He was a public servant for most of his life, and he began his career as a lawyer. He became a state senator in the Mississippi legislature, and he represented Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson Counties. Marshall served as a justice of the peace and was appointed by the governor for this position.

I served Harrison County my entire career, and I was the tax assessor for twenty-two years. I also served as the sheriff for twelve years, and I retired from that position in 1896, but became sheriff again in 1904. After this tenure as sheriff, I retired once more. In 1908, the Biloxi City Council hired me to complete a new tax assessment roll. In 1916, I decided I wanted to work again, and I took a position in the sheriff's office. My specialty in land assessments was a help to my work.

As a side hobby, I also am adept at drafting maps. In fact, in 1902, I completed the first complete map of Gulfport. Drafting was not my only hobby, however, as I also composed songs. In 1912, the Biloxi Herald Band played my composition, "My Pretty Polish Girl" at a band concert in the city park. The newspaper stated that it was "one of the prettiest bits of music that has been published in late years." I also wrote poetry. One such poem was dedicated to the publisher of the Biloxi Herald, George Wilkes, and it was printed in a 1911 paper. In the poem, I reminisce about growing up in Biloxi and the beauties of nature in this area.

My wife Rebecca Walker Seal and I had one son, Roderick, named in honor of my father. Rebecca's parents were Dudley and Mary Louise Walker. Rebecca and I married on December 1, 1877 at Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic Church in Bay St. Louis.

In 1918, during the flu pandemic, I visited with my daughter and her family, the Lopez's, and their entire family was sick with the flu. My son Rod's family was also sick with the flu during the same time period. Influenza, also known as the Spanish Flu or La Grippe at that time, was a very serious illness.

We were residents of Gulfport and Mississippi City at times as well, as my work brought me to the city. We also visited New Orleans to visit family. Seal Avenue is named for my family, and there was a race track in that area previously. The family owned property there and also on the east side of Lameuse Street. The Seal family certainly left its mark on Biloxi.

John Chevalier Delauney

I was born December 23, 1780, in Bordeaux France and baptized in the parish of St. Andre. My father was away at sea when I came into this world, as he would be most of my life. My Mother, God rest her soul, died when I was only 4 years old leaving my older brother and myself. She was only 30 years old. My dear aunt, Marie Dufour, raised me. The French Revolution began in 1789. It was a period of such deep turmoil, death and destruction. My father, Pierre requested and received a passport to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in the colonies. His passport was approved on August 7, 1790 and how he managed to acquire it, no one knows or remembers.

After living in the states for three years, my father filed petition to become a US citizen. He was granted this great honor on October 29, 1796. Papa carried freight for various companies from one seaport to another and made enough money to send my older brother to boarding school in Connecticut. I was angry with him and wondered why he seemed to forget about me. He would write to me and try to explain that he was working to bring me to America, but I was becoming impatient. The exact date of my arrival at my father's home in Philadelphia was sometime around 1801.

In 1808 my father remarried and had another son, Charles. My older brother, Robert, died in 1812 and finally in 1819 I made my way from Philadelphia to New Orleans with my wife Elizabeth Ireland and our 3 children. I was educated which gave me every advantage in this new world. By 1822, my wife Elizabeth and I were parents to five children: Robert, Catherine Elizabeth, Therese, Pierre Henri and Louise Josephine. I had been trained in the art of carpentry and made a fine living in New Orleans where my children had schools to attend. But on a trip in 1820, I came to Biloxi. I was immediately enchanted with the area and its families. They were hard working people, living off the sea. I purchased a tract of land fronting 600 feet on the beach and extending back for more than a mile to the Biloxi Bay for \$800.00 in gold. This property lay between what is now Lameuse Street and Rue Magnolia. I built a summer home there that my family visited often. Tragedy befell us in 1823 when my wife, Elizabeth died in New Orleans. Baby Louise was only a year old. Elizabeth is buried in St. Louis Cemetery.

In 1829, I remarried. My second wife was Adele Ladner, who was born on Deer Island and was the daughter of Joseph and Rosalie Fayard Ladner. Her father owned considerable property in Biloxi. We were the parents of four children: Marie Adelaide, Charles, Elizabeth Adelia and Caroline. Both Charles and Caroline died before the age of 10 and are buried here in this grave. Perhaps it was too much responsibility and hard work or perhaps she was just a strong-headed woman, but Adele and I parted ways and divorced in 1839...she did go on to have three more husbands, so maybe I am not the only one who found her, shall we say, opinionated. Immediately upon Adele's departure, I married her younger sister, Elizabeth Ladner (give an evil little chuckle here). Elizabeth was quiet and reserved, a true lady. She loved family and was a very smart woman. Alas, I lost Elizabeth before 1850, we had no children.

Because of my education, I was a notary public. So few could read and write, that my skills were necessary for land deeds, wills and legal documents of all sorts. At this time, I along with Louis Caillavet, were among the only notaries in Biloxi. I had become a businessman acquiring much land, a hotel and I built several cottages for summer visitors. I never married again, instead I enjoyed my grandchildren and managing my properties. I placed advertisements in the Picayune newspaper to attract wealthy New Orleanians to Biloxi. One might say that I was one of the first directors of tourism.

I lived a great life in Biloxi and even though it was not my birthplace, it was my home. One of my cottages became the first permanent free library in the State of Mississippi in 1905. It has survived the numerous hurricanes and remains to this day in use for the City of Biloxi...you know it today as the Creole Cottage. There is a street in Biloxi to the very day named for me and my descendants.

Juan de Cuevas

My name is Juan de Cuevas and I am known as the “Hero of Cat Island.” I actually have lived on Cat Island since my marriage, and my large family and I enjoy living and farming on the island. I was born in Spain on March 16, 1762 near Seville to Pedro de Cuevas and Isabel Bautista. My wife’s family actually lived on Cat Island before we married, and that is how we came to reside there for the rest of our lives.

You may be wondering how Cat Island was named. It is said that it received its name from Pierre Lemoyne Sieur D’Iberville, the Canadian who visited this area in 1699. He recorded in his journal that he found animals that he called “chat sauvage,” and at that time this was a colloquial term for raccoons. Roughly translated, later generations believed they were called cats instead. There is even an area on Cat Island known more appropriately as “Raccoon Point.”

I would like to tell you more about my family. I married Marie Helene Christian Ladner around 1794, and we had twelve children. Our children included Juan, Elena, Francois, Brigitte, Celeste, Marie Anastasia, Marie Solitelle, Pierre, Charles, Ramond, Euphrosine, and Henriette. Through our children’s marriages, we are related to the Moran, Dedeaux, Necaize, Dubuisson, Mauffray, Garcia, Krohn, Ladner, Caillavet, Penalvert, Monet, Guardia, and Basquez families. You may also see our surname spelled in many different ways, some of the most common today being the surnames Quave and Cuevas. No matter how the surname may be spelled today, if a person has a variant of my surname and are originally from the Mississippi Gulf Coast, they are descendants of our family.

As I mentioned earlier I am known as the “Hero of Cat Island,” and legends speak of my supposed involvement in the War of 1812. The legends have it that I helped the American cause by misleading the British troops in their path to the famous Battle of New Orleans. Also, there is a story about my being locked in chains as I refused to help the British as they made their way to the Battle of Mobile. Some call these stories myths, and I wonder if historians will be able to decipher what actually happened one day?

It is known that a British officer named Gleig actually visited the island in 1814. He wrote a description of our island home in his journal, and he noted that our simple cottage was beautifully situated within a short distance of the water. He also saw that we have a well stocked garden, two cows, and a few sheep. We continued to raise cattle on the island, a tradition begun by Marie’s family.

As you can see, I have led an interesting life, and our family is deeply connected to the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Many of our ancestors and descendents are buried here in the Biloxi Cemetery, and you can also visit their graves during your visit today.

Linda Rose Lienhard Dukate (1859-1939)

Look at that view (sigh) Biloxi is still as beautiful today as it was when I was a girl in the 1860s. But where are my manners, good evening, I am Linda Rose Lienhard Dukate. I am the daughter of Peter J. Lienhard, a Swiss immigrant, and Malinda B. Seaman. I was born in Biloxi and grew up on Lameuse Street. On April 27, 1878, in my parent's home, I married William K. M. Dukate. Mr. Dukate was a native of Fredericksburg, Illinois and found his way to Biloxi while working as a telegraph operator for the L&M Railroad. And might I say, without being too forward, what a catch he was!

My husband was an exceptional businessman, a civic-minded community leader, lover of the arts, and an exceptional father. Our life here in Biloxi was one that books are written about and movies are made of. One might say that we were one of Biloxi's leading families. William and I were the parents of six children. Elbert, Eula, Vera, Linda, Leola, Irma, and Buella. They were the pride and joy of our lives and we endeavored to bring them up as good citizens of Biloxi and caretakers of all they were given. I truly believed to whom much was given, much was required. Our children were asked to serve at early ages for various community organizations....one of our family's favorites was the Doll and Toy fund, which is still active in Biloxi today.

As you all know, the Dukate name became synonymous with the seafood industry. William is considered one of the fathers of the industry. What some of you may not know or remember is that Biloxi was built on shrimp and seafood. We became the "Seafood Capital of the World". In 1880. William joined with Lazaro Lopez, William Elmer, William Gorenflo and James Maycock to form the Lopez, Elmer and Company. This cannery was situated on the back bay of Biloxi at the head of Reynoir Street. Once the factory opened, William traveled to Baltimore to study oyster and shrimp canning methods used in that already booming seafood processing area. There, he learned the latest methods of canning seafood and discovered that the factories also used a seasonal labor pool...the Bohemians or immigrant workers. When he returned to Biloxi, he shared what he'd learned with his partners. Soon the Yugoslavian, Austrian and Polish immigrants came to Biloxi and of course the Acadians from South Louisiana. Maybe this fact will tell you just what an effect the success of the seafood industry had on Biloxi: in the 1880s Biloxi's population was 1,500....by 189 it had jumped to 3,000 and by 1903 it was 8,000! The workers flocked to Biloxi. Eventually the original canning company was dissolved and was replaced by many individual companies: Barataria, Gorenflo & Co., Joulilian & Co., and JT Maybury to name a few.

William's life however was about much more than just seafood, he was a member of the Biloxi School Board and the Board of Trustees of the Bank of Biloxi (now Peoples Bank) and so many, many more boards and committees. Both of our lives were filled with civic and social endeavors. My husband built the Dukate Theater, a state of the art opera house and performing arts center which has been beautifully preserved by Bancorp South. The house that we gave to our daughter Vera upon her marriage to Brantly Bond in 1904 still stands today and is the beautiful Bond-Grant House, Biloxi's Visitor's Center. Our daughter Irma was Queen Ixolib in 1913 and the whole family was involved in carnival. Our home was the setting for many formal and informal parties, dances and bridge games, my personal favorite pastime. The street named for my husband is in the heart of historic downtown. I'm proud to know our family name is remembered.

Raymond Caillavet

My name is Raymond Caillavet, and I was very influential in early Biloxi politics. I was born here in Biloxi in 1839, and my family has deep roots in Mississippi. At various points, I served as Justice of the Peace, Coroner, Ranger, Alderman, and last but not least, Mayor of Biloxi. I served as the Mayor from 1877 until 1882. In my duties as Justice of the Peace, I married many couples in Harrison County. My grandfather also served as a Justice of the Peace in the community prior to my tenure.

I served as a private in the Confederate Army as a member of Company E of the Mississippi 3rd Infantry. We were known as the "Biloxi Rifles." We were mustered into State service on May 21, 1861, and we represented Harrison County.

I married Zelina Joncheray in New Orleans; she was born there in 1841. We became members of the Catholic Church of the Nativity, Blessed Virgin Mary upon settling in Biloxi. We had seven children together, and all lived in our Biloxi household in the 1880s. We lived next door to other members of our family on Cuevas Street. My parents Francois and Euranie Caillavet lived there, and I was their oldest child. My younger brother John Caillavet and his family also lived near us.

At that time in my life, I was primarily employed as a butcher; however, I was deeply invested in the political arena in Biloxi during that period, too. My father was a carpenter, which I also was, and my brother was a laborer for a time. By 1888, John served as a supervisor for District 1 of Harrison County. It was also during that time that fellow Biloxian Florian Seal was sheriff of the county. Both of our families fulfilled a tradition to serve both Biloxi and Harrison County.

Caillavet Street in Biloxi is named for my family, who originally owned the land in that area. It is fitting since I was also Biloxi's street commissioner in the closing years of my life. The deed to the street was executed while my grandfather was alive, and it was thanks to Biloxi Alderman Nash in 1896 that the street was identified after it was "lost." Up until that time, the records had been lost due to a fire. The street was originally thirty seven feet wide and ran from front beach all the way to Back Bay, but after years of alternate paths, the street nearly disappeared from history altogether!

Many of my family members are buried here in the Biloxi Cemetery. My father died on September 26, 1883 at the age of 68, and he is buried here. My mother was a Fayard, and we are related to many other Coast families through her. My parents had ten children together, and you can imagine that we are related to many more Coast families from the subsequent marriages. Some of the family names of my siblings include Lestrade, Hunter, Collier, and Fayard. Even though the Caillavet name may not be as prevalent in modern times, our family is still ever present through our many descendants.

Rosa Dorsey Reynoir

I was born Rosa Dorsey on December 23, 1842 in New Orleans. I did not permanently move to Biloxi until I was fifty years old, but I vacationed here often previously. I married Frederick "Arthur" Reynoir, and we had two sons, Fred and John, and one daughter, Marie Louise.

I enjoyed living at the family's summer home, which was situated on Bayview Avenue. Of course, you have probably heard of my husband's family before, as Reynoir Street is named in their honor. The Reynoir family is well known in the Biloxi, and donated the land for the original Jewish cemetery at the north end of Reynoir Street. The cemetery is much smaller today, as some of the plots were moved when the street was widened in 1916.

Back when my sons were young, they suffered from typhoid. We did all we could to make them comfortable during their illness. John recovered quicker than Fred, but we were lucky that they both survived. Fred married Nellie Boyle in New Orleans in 1892. Marie Louise and Henry Camors married in 1891. I have six grandchildren, as Fred and Nellie had three children and Marie Louise and her husband Henry also had three. Poor Nellie died in 1915 from breast cancer, and she is buried here in the Biloxi Cemetery. Arthur had a tomb of Georgia white marble built in the cemetery on our plot. A. Wertling of New Orleans built the tomb for us in 1896.

One particularly interesting part of my life is my ownership of a Millinery shop in New Orleans. It is located on Chartres Street in the French Quarter, and is not far from Canal Street. French corsets are a specialty, and I advertise the lowest prices in New Orleans. In the spring of 1878, the opening seasonal reception of the store was very well received. Our bonnets were very ornate and stylish that year, and that season one of our hats was called the "Princess Louise." This hat was made of flowers, sea grasses, and streamers of ribbon and it was also embroidered with pearls.

Before he died, my husband Arthur was quite the businessman himself. He had always been employed in commercial circles, and this was a great help with my business. He was one of the charter members of the Back Bay Artesian Water Company along with members of the Bradford and Elder families and others. Arthur also rented out seven cottages that fronted Back Bay in the 1890s. When he passed away in 1897 at the age of 65, the Mississippi Hook and Ladder Company Number One, one of the local fire companies in Biloxi, attended the funeral. He had been an honorary member of the company, and was even the godfather of the fire truck.