

Young, Allie "Nonc"



Accordion Player for the "Basile Cajun Band"

Nonc (Uncle) Allie, as everyone called him, lived near his birthplace just south of Basile, Louisiana. Nonc, whose musical career began over eighty years ago, led a simple and happy life with his wife and children. As a young man, Allie worked on the farm where he was born; when World War II broke out, however, he learned the sheet metal trade, and he and his wife moved to Orange, Texas to work in the shipyards. After the war, the couple returned to the family farm where Young opened the country grocery store which they operated for twenty-eight years. Upon retirement, Nonc Allie began to travel more and to play Cajun music professionally.

Allie Young, who is respected by Cajun musicians of every generation, began preparing for his legendary career as a very young child. Young Allie loved accordion music and he wanted to play so much that he fashioned for himself an accordion made from folded cardboard on which he "played" all day. Finally, at age eight, his father bought him a used accordion for \$3.50. Allie began to watch and to listen to those around him who could coax the coveted sound from their squeezeboxes. While doing so he learned the technique with ease at a fast pace.

By age twelve, Allie was performing at area fais-do-dos. He was his own agent as he and a friend went around on horseback trying to get neighbors to host a dance at which he would play his accordion. Assisted by a single triangle player who beat out the rhythms, Allie and his friend were busy playing several times a week.

Like most Cajun musicians, Nonc Allie did not depend on music to provide for his family, upon his retirement he began to travel widely and to tour with such country greats as Ricky Skaggs and "The Whites." While still playing for local events, in clubs, and at festivals, Allie stayed on the road quite a bit, too. He entertained audiences in almost every state in the United States, has thrilled crowds in Canada, France, and in ten Asian countries. He played Cajun music with some of the greatest names in Cajun music such as Leo Soileau, Nathan Abshire, D.L. Menard, Doc Guidry, Rufus Thibodeaux and Jimmy C. Newman. Nonc Allie played accordion with the "Balfa Brothers Band" for eight years.

Nonc Allie and the "Basile Cajun Band" were together from 1983 and until the time of Nonci's death-played the New Orleans World Fair, Festival Acadian, Frog Festival, Louisiana Folklife Festival, Jazz & Heritage Festival, Liberty Theater, Rice Festival, Rivertown Festival, Cajun Days Festival, Kitschie Folklife Festival, Freedom Festival, Gran Bois Festival, Pecan Festival, plus numerous night spots in Minneapolis, St. Louis, Chicago, New Orleans, and Houston. "Nonc" Allie Young was inducted into the Louisiana Hall of Master Folk Artists.