

## **“The Lee Joseph and Anna ‘Gertrude’ Hensgens-Monlezun Special Collection!” ‘The Kitchen!’**

The heart of the home! How wonderful a central room this was, completed in 1957 after twelve years in business! It began as two rooms, the kitchen and dining room but it did not take long before the wall was removed where the quaint ceiling shelf hangs and all merged as the command center around the table and twelve chairs. They were crafted by a Reiners relative in Crowley, LA whose descendants do custom work to this day! O, if this table could talk!! It has served legions as legions have spun the lazy susan round and round! The glass crucifix from Germany belonged to my maternal grandmother; it never moves from this centered place of honor. When the lights are turned off and upon departing the home it is the last treasure I see and it always has a slight glow which is what I take with me.



The black clock belonged to my maternal grandparents and is from Germany. The lovely canisters on top of the wall cabinet are vintage with the requisite spices printed in German; Mom loved these treasures! The chest and china cabinet are original to this room which was the Dining Room. The china cabinet displays their beautiful collection of gold and white china and accoutrements which are used for special events in this home while on top preside the wedding anniversary plates of twenty, twenty-five and forty celebrated years. (Daddy died in 1985 in their forty-seventh year of marriage at age sixty-eight and Mom was sixty-three). We have the cards and guest book in their Original Bedroom from their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary celebration August 13, 1966 as well as the newspaper article which reads, *“over 400 guests attended the open house by Mr. and Mrs. Lee J. Monlezun on Saturday afternoon. The couple renewed their wedding vows at Our Lady of the Lake Church that morning with the Rev. Jude Speyrer and the Rev. F. Gouaux officiating having all of their eight children present for the occasion.”* The cross over the doorway was a wedding gift and has hung here since their move into the home in 1942! Many-a-photograph has and is being taken under this beautiful bronze

and wooden cross! The door to the right leads to the Upstairs' library and Rev. Mother's Suite! Just recently a wooden railing was installed for her and we...after all these years!!



The buffet is the most used area in the home! It is filled with morsels for all during events held in the home for years now and still counting!! Above the home altar is their Marriage License dated 24 July 1941, Dad age 24 and Mom age 19, and below is their wedding photograph and a vintage photo of the home. The wonderful Italian bronze holy water font was given as gift from the German Heritage Museum staff, board and volunteers of Roberts Cove, LA who toured the home February 2009, *the* first organized "Arthur Avenue Heritage Tour"! St. Joseph is the Patron Saint of the family and these statues were originally in the 'Original Bedroom' all the years long! I light the votive

upon arriving in the home; they are purchased at the church rectory as my mother exchanged like votives in the back of the church where one offered their earnest intentions supplicating to the high heavens. She collected the 'candle money' for years and often brought along her grandchildren for this precious duty; they fondly remember these special times with their MawMaw!



A commercial milk machine sat where the home altar is today! It was a stainless steel 'Narris' and held two five gallon cans of the coldest milk on the planet and one five gallon can of cold, cold water! One container of milk was changed every three days for many at the table had up to three tall glasses of milk per meal! (I once tried to jump the front fence in order to pay the milkman as he was leaving and ripped my left knee wide open with a prominent 'milkman scar' to this day!! I did hand him the money with a slight grimace on my face!) The only thing today to connote where this milk machine lodged is a cow light switch plate for many people walk in and go straight to this spot and ask, "Where is the old milk machine" and then spot the cow!!! Tis all there is left as indeed time marches on and it is one 'udder' thing after another~couldn't help myself!!

Daddy sat on this stool many-a-weekend-morning flipping pancakes, omelet's or French toast using up to 2 loaves of bread at one time not to mention dozens of fresh brown eggs! Mom stood at this stove for 47 years and with the pots beneath she cooked the daily staple which was meat, rice 'n gravy, 10 lbs of potatoes a day, a pot of fresh navy beans and canned vegetables with fresh tomatoes and cucumbers from Grandma Monlezun's huge garden. Daddy bought by the case lot (this was way-y prior to Sam's!) from wonderful *Adam's Store*; they were stored on high shelves in the pantry. I would jump up on the washing machine

and count up to 6 cans of corn, peas, etc. per two meals per day. The crooked can opener with a red handle after a while just up'ed and fell off the wall from pure exhaustion! The old coffee drip pot stills drips! The door to the pantry has years of hand prints going in and going out which means it has character, right(!); I just can't bring myself to change her precious look of total wear!! And, I am looking for another vintage red can opener!!!

*P.S. Look up when standing at the sink for I left some of the original paint as in green!*



The 'Blessed Mother Blue' nook was part of the entire west porch which ran the length of the house to the living room. It was eventually enclosed anchoring the original aluminum yellow kitchen table, chairs (the last one is in the attic!) and a bench against the little windows! I love this nook! The 'secretary' holds the in-house communications center... I love sitting in the rocker sipping coffee and gazing outside... all in gratefulness for all the tasks at hand... many more visitors are on their way and this is where they enter!

(The Archivist from McNeese State University library after a recent Heritage Tour and lunch wanted the group picture in this her favorite spot!!)





*What a space in time; many walk in with a smile on their face and look around saying...*

*“I’ve been here before”...*

*“It smells and feels just like my grandmothers’ house”...*

*“I want a big kitchen just like this”...*

*“This is the table and place I pictured during Hurricane Rita (2005) and thought if I could just get here that me and my family would be safe; I love this house, I feel safe here!”...*