MAKING Grand Isle GREATER

Jefferson's own and Louisiana's only saltwater playground, rated among the top ten fishing spots of the world. Grand Isle possesses eight miles of the safest surf bathing and swimming in the nation... In order to protect this precious asset of golden sands which the relentless tides, year by year, strive to return to the hungry sea, several small groins several hundred feet in length have been constructed over the last several years. As seen in the middle section of the above air view of Grand Isle, their presence already has forced the tides to slowly rebuild the beach, rather than slowly destroy it... And now the next step! The U. S. Engineers have proposed a major groin about one mile long at the eastern tip of the island (around the location indicated on this photograph). Its commanding size will help build up the entire beach along the entire length and will make Grand Isle even greater. It is a project of immediate importance to this popular Pleasure Island.
It was when the bold Baratarians of Lafitte the Pirate, following their participation in the Battle of New Orleans and their pardon by a grateful government, peacefully returned to their original livelihood of fishing that the present prosperous hundred and fifty year old seafood industry of Grand Isle began... In the beginning their red sailed schooners brought their catch direct to the historic seafood markets of Harvey and Westwego. Today the diesel powered trawlers of their descendants cruise far out into the Gulf for the succulent shrimp to satisfy the hungry hoppers of seafood canning and packing plants. Likewise their lugger and their labor plant and harvest the delicious Barataria Bay oysters. The annual seafood haul of Grand Isle's growing shrimp and oyster fleets is mostly enjoyed by the thousands of inland gourmets who have never seen the dawn come up like thunder over Grand Isle 'cross the Bay.
Shrimp trawlers like these, each averaging an investment around $25,000, typify the Grand Isle Fishing Fleet that search for shrimp in the Gulf the year round.

An aerial view of the always busy Grand Isle harbor at Bayou Rigaud where, all year round, in orderly confusion can be found commercial fishing boats, charter sport fishing boats, private yachts and sleek cabin cruisers.

To succor and serve Grand Isle’s commercial and sport fishermen and all those who go down to the sea in ships from its shores, the U.S. Coast Guard maintains on the Island trained rescue crews and a constant vigil.

The growing importance of Grand Isle’s oil drilling operations is indicated by this huge Humble Company installation at Bayou Rigaud, complete with slip, docks, office headquarters, warehouses and tank storage.
Less than twenty-five years ago there was no road to Grand Isle. Its few hundred people, although located only a hundred miles from New Orleans, lived in a primitive paradise a hundred years in the picturesque past. Its beautiful and beloved Beach of the Buccaneers was available only to those adventurous outsiders who came, like the corsairs came, by boat. It was still an undiscovered subtropical Pleasure Island... Then came the road, at first dusty and bumpy — but recently hard surfaced and smooth. Publicized by little more than the enthusiasm of its visitors, it has already become the mecca of sport fishermen, the sanctuary of low budget vacationists and the favorite weekend retreat of lovers of sun and surf and golden sand. As the dawn is coming up over the horizon on its long and lovely beach in the picture below, the dawn of its discovery by the rest of the nation simply awaits the rising Sun of the Seaway.
Following an exhilarating swim in Grand Isle's wonderful surf are Agnes Santangelo (Junior Miss New Orleans 1954), Caroline Santangelo (Junior Miss New Orleans 1953) and charming Temple Fleming — all residents of Jefferson Parish.

Merlin Garcia, Miss New Orleans and Miss Louisiana of 1955, accommodatingly poses to show how to acquire a golden Grand Isle tan. Miss Garcia is a resident of Gretna, Jefferson Parish.

Left: A Salute to the Dawn on Grand Isle's glorious golden beach, enacted by Merlin Garcia, who was both Miss New Orleans and Miss Louisiana of 1955.

Back from the beach, too lazy after their swim to even roll the ball over the warm sand dunes, are Temple Fleming and Agnes Santangelo, Junior Miss New Orleans 1954.
Right: Over these peaceful footpaths once trod Lafitte's Baratarians, more concerned with booty than beauty. The period and the people have changed but the background is still the same beautiful Grand Isle that sheltered the freebooters.

This is a flower draped arborised gateway to a typical Grand Isle home on Santiny Lane, where Agnes and Caroline Santangelo have just been served a friendly cup of that potent Island coffee and given a basket of Island blooms.

Left: Long a resident of Grand Isle, the Yucca or Spanish Dagger, waves a roadside welcome from unsuspected corners and crannies.

Caroline, Temple and Agnes rest on their hike in Chita Lane, one of the many tree canopied cathedral like rustic roads that beautify Grand Isle.
This is "Fairyland" — actually the name of a particular portion of Grand Isle, but really the description of the whole heart of the Island, that part concealed under the protecting limbs of giant patriarch oaks, bedecked with oleander and Yucca, and carpeted with fern and moss and all the infinite variety of Nature's shades of green lavishly interspersed with floral color. Along this backbone of the island, a long double row of oaks separates the back door beauty of Barataria Bay from the front door splendor of the Gulf of Mexico. Under these trees, amid these colors, the islanders have lived contentedly for countless generations and the visitors are awed with the majesty of an island wonderland which their eyes can almost encompass but their curiosity can never exhaust.
Judge Adam, the benevolent Justice of the Peace of Grand Isle for many long years, shows Temple Fleming the lost of the once fabulous loot of Lafitte which, at the time the U. S. seized his pirate strongholds on Grand Terre and Grand Isle, amounted to almost a million dollars in contraband in the warehouses alone. This remaining ring was taken from a Spanish galleon by Nez Coupé, one of Lafitte’s most trusted Lieutenants, who returned to his Grand Isle role of fisherman after the days of piracy were over, and it was Nez Coupé’s granddaughter who presented the ring to Judge Adam. Yes, many of the present day island inhabitants are the proud descendants of these famous followers of Lafitte who, for ten long years, pirogued their plunder through the mysterious water wilderness between the Gulf of Mexico and New Orleans. And actually, the Island’s greatest treasure still remains intact — its golden sand, its ruby red sunsets and the soft scent of its sea air.
Left: A native daughter of the island herself, Judge T. Mercedes Adam has so long and so ably handled the problems of her people that she is affectionately known as “The Guardian Angel of Grand Isle.”

Father Gerard Larouche of Our Lady of the Isle Church greets two Sunday visitors, for it’s here that the island’s tourist Catholics attend mass.

Right: Reverend Don Minton of the Grand Isle Baptist Chapel shakes hands with his congregation after the inspiring Sunday morning sermon.

Today Grand Isle participates in the splendid Jefferson Parish School System — and here is where its children learn their three Rs and how to be good citizens.
Every July for twenty-three years the Grand Isle Tarpon Rodeo has attracted the deep sea fishermen from all over the nation — not only to compete for the valuable prizes, but for the thrill of three days of exciting sport in one of the world’s top ten fishing waters. It is our pleasure to introduce to you a few of the 1955 Winners.

This proud piscator is Joseph F., "Eustache" Lafont, Sr., of Grand Isle, with his prize winning 6 pound Speckled Trout. Up East it would be called a Weakfish.
Joseph Boudreaux of Houma, Louisiana, holds up his 26½ pound Triple Tail or Black Fish that won First Prize in that class.

Helen Louise Smith of New Orleans, with two of the Speckled Trout she caught, is just as excited as if they had won a prize.

Jimmy Summersqill, Sr., of Golden Meadow displays the imposing swordfish he hooked. Too bad there was no prize for this class.

Handivers Roland Riviere, Jr., J. Harry Beck, and Roy Smith, all of New Orleans, came up with these two massive Swordfish, one 157½ pounds, the other 158½ pounds. No prize for catching fish this unorthodox way.

Prize winning Tarpon (130 pounds, 4 ounces) was brought in by Brigadier General Raymond F. Huff of New Orleans. It is the one he is touching.