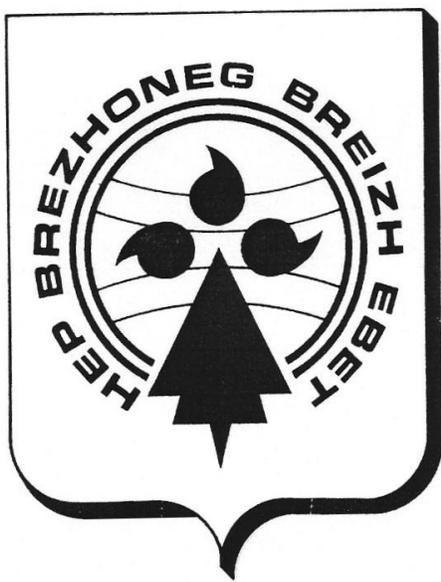


International Committee for the Defense
of the Breton Language

United States Branch

25th Anniversary Report

November 2006



Without Breton, No More Brittany

KUZUL ETREVROADEL EVIT KENDALC'H AR BREZHONEG



How the U.S. ICDBL Was Launched and Who Our Members Are

A little history from Lois Kuter

If one were to go back to the very beginnings of the U.S. ICDBL, this would actually be our 26th anniversary since the Board of the ICDBL in Brussels, Belgium gave me the go-ahead to serve as a U.S. representative in April 1980. But, our official incorporation as a non-profit organization was in the fall of 1981. For the record, after encouragement from friends in Brittany, I started the initiative to form a U.S. Branch of the ICDBL in September 1979. Here's the letter I wrote to Claude Sterckx, the President of the ICDBL.

September 26, 1979
Bloomington, Indiana

Dear Mr. Sterckx,

I was given your dossier several weeks ago by Jakez Josset at Ti Kendalc'h, Saint-Vincent-sur-Oust, Brittany. At that time he told me you were in search of representation for the committee in the United States. I will try to introduce myself to give you an idea of why Jakez Josset gave me your dossier (and why I took it).

I am a graduate student in anthropology at Indiana University (Bloomington, Indiana) now starting to write my doctorate thesis on the topic of Breton identity and music in Brittany. I have just returned from a year of research in Brittany (5 months at Ti Kendalc'h and 7 months near Carhaix) to collect information for the thesis.

I had previously spent a summer in Brittany (1975) making initial contacts and starting a study of Breton (which I did not have the opportunity to greatly advance during my September 1978-79 stay unfortunately). I have also done as much research as possible in the U.S. (Indiana in particular) in terms of searching our meager library holdings on Brittany. Although my knowledge of Brittany is just at a beginning I feel I have a fairly solid grasp of the political, economic as well as cultural issues which explain why an International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language is necessary.

I will be happy to apply my knowledge to helping your committee in its efforts to defend the Breton language as best I can. I will be a little isolated in terms of

location in the wilds of southern Indiana and due to the fact that I have as yet no links with the Breton community in the United States.

I will, however, make an effort to locate any other interested people who might be in a better position than I to work for your committee.

I would appreciate it if you could send me several copies of your dossier or other information on your organization as soon as possible. I am now a fluent French speaker and reader but English is my native language and the language I will use here to tell others of Brittany so I would appreciate information in English if possible....

I thank you in advance for your response to my request for information and I hope I may be of some service to your organization and to the Breton language.

Best wishes,
Lois Kuter

In April 1980 I received the news from Henri Lecuyer, an active member of the ICDBL in Brussels, that "... the executive Board of the Committee has reached the conviction that your willingness to help and your knowledge of Breton language and culture are quite decisive elements to designate you as the Committee's representative in the U.S.A. On behalf of the members of the Board in Brussels, may I therefore congratulate you for the choice which was made unanimously here and assure you of our gratitude ..."

The rest is history, as they say. But the history of the U.S. ICDBL has incorporated a lot of people all over the U.S. (and Canada). Once the Brussels board declared me "fit," the next step was to send out an invitation to anyone I could think of to join me and form an organization. Letters were sent to Irish, Scottish, Cornish and Welsh organizations as well as French societies of all types in the U.S. Notes were published in newsletters and newspapers including World Literature Today, France-Amérique, Ninnau, American Committee for Irish Studies, Louisiane, Journal Français d'Amérique and Newodhow a Gescar Kernewek. But most new members came through word of mouth – individuals who sent along information to others they thought might be interested.

Who are the members of the U.S. ICDBL?

U.S. ICDBL membership has always included a large number of individuals who actively support other Celtic languages – Welsh, Irish and Scottish Gaelic, Cornish and Manx. And it has included an equally important number of people who love France or teach the French language. While I never succeeded in establishing contact with Breton emigrant communities in the U.S. a number of U.S. ICDBL members have family roots in Brittany – some from a distant past, some through marriage, and some as first generation emigrants.

We have not collected much information about members' occupations, but a good number of our members have always been university professors (in French, English, Linguistics, Romance Languages, Celtic Studies, Anthropology, History and even Oceanography). Members have also included a good number of high school teachers – especially French teachers – as well as graduate students. Other occupations represented include artists, journalists, writers, book sellers, choral directors, translators, building restorers, film makers, librarians, office workers, caterers and psychiatrists.

Breton music has been a medium through which members discover Brittany and we have among our members at least six bombarde players (or wanna-be bombarde players), pipers (Scottish Highland, Irish uilleann pipes, among others), and accordion and harp players who include Breton tunes in their repertoire. Two U.S. ICDBL members teach Breton dance, one of them certified in Brittany to do so. It is too bad geography put so much distance between us, but perhaps one day an American bagad will make its debut.

In the past 25 years the U.S. ICDBL has had the support of over 500 members and newsletter subscribers from 45 states and Puerto Rico, 6 Canadian Provinces, and 7 other countries. The only states where we have failed to find members are Arkansas, Idaho, Mississippi, Nebraska and Wyoming.

60 of our current members or Bro Nevez subscribers have been with the U.S. ICDBL for at least 10 years. It did not take me long after the 1980 go-ahead from the ICDBL board in Brussels to find individuals interested in supporting the Breton

language. In most countries where the ICDBL has a presence it is through one or two individual representatives. The U.S. Branch is unique in being a membership organization with a regular newsletter.

Because U.S. ICDBL members are so wide-spread geographically, we do not hold business meetings where members meet face-to-face. And this has meant that the work of the Officers and the Board of Consultants is not as visible as it could be to the membership as a whole. But this is a group that stays in contact by e-mail, and the initiatives undertaken by this group and the support they give for the regular edition of Bro Nevez is invaluable. So here's a salute to the current officers of the U.S. ICDBL:

President

Professor Lenora A. Timm, Department of Linguistics,
University of California, Davis, California

Secretary and Editor of Bro Nevez

Dr. Lois Kuter, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania

Board of Consultants

David Brûlé, Chairman, World Language Department,
Amherst Regional Schools, Millers Falls,
Massachusetts

Professor Richard Herr, Professor Emeritus,
Department of History, University of California,
Berkeley, California

Kathi Hochberg, French Department Chairman,
Harrison High School, Harrison, New York

Dr. James W. Kerr, Retired U.S. Regular Army officer,
Easton, Maryland

Natalie Novik, MA, Anchorage, Alaska

David Pugh, Bannalec, Brittany

Professor Gregory T. Stump, Department of
English/Linguistics, University of Kentucky,
Lexington, Kentucky

While the officers and board members are the ones who often undertake some of the actions you will read about later in this report, nothing would be done without the support of a strong membership. And we have a number of members who have been with the U.S. ICDBL for a long time. It is worth citing here current members who have shown loyalty to

the U.S. ICDBL and the cause of the Breton language.

The names and residences of those listed will give a good idea of the diversity within the U.S. ICDBL.

Founding Members

(joined at the very beginning of the U.S. ICDBL and are still here!)

Séamus de Bláca, New York City, New York
Daniel Calvez, Easley, South Carolina
Lois Kuter, Jenkintown, Pennsylvania
Leslie Kuter and Bob Arnebeck, Thousand Island Park, New York
Geneviève Ray, Fountain Valley, California
Edgar Slotkin, Cincinnati, Ohio
Lenora Timm, Davis, California

Members or Bro Nevez Subscribers for 20 or more years – nearly from the beginning

David Brûlé, Millers Falls, Massachusetts
Cornell University, Olin Library, Ithaca, New York
Doris Creegan, Delmar, New York
Stephen Paul DeVillo, Bronx, New York
Nancy Dorian, South Harpswell, Maine
Anne Enslow, Hoboken, New Jersey
Bryan Frykenberg, Andover, Massachusetts
Roger Griffin, Seneca Castle, New York
Richard and Valerie Herr, Berkeley, California
Lani Herrmann, Richmond, California
James Kerr, Easton, Maryland
Alexei Kondratiev, Flushing, New York
Huguette Le Gall, Athens, Georgia
Dinah LeHoven, Pasadena, California
Cheryl Mitchell, Hyattsville, Maryland
Elizabeth Nedwell, Wappingers Falls, New York
Natalie Novik, Anchorage, Alaska
Judith Pendleton, Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina
Kenneth Rogers, Kingston, Rhode Island
Stanford University, Green Library, Stanford, California
Gregory Stump, Lexington, Kentucky

Members/Subscribers for 15 or more years

Robert Felix, Columbia, South Carolina
Donald Firth, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Stephen Griffin, Sommerville, Massachusetts
Kathi Hochberg, Harrison, New York
Ruta Jancys, Woodridge, Illinois
Phyllis Kadle, Indian Springs, Ohio
Ellin Kelly, Evanston, Illinois

Rick Moraux, Glenside, Pennsylvania
Allen Murphy, Brownsburg, Indiana
Liam Ó Caiside, Alexandria, Virginia
Gordon Peters, Rexford, New York
Mary Primel, Cumming, Georgia
Jan Robinson, San Francisco, California
Anthony Sutherland, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
Jan Zollars, Houston, Texas

Members/Subscribers for 10 or more years

Susan Baker, Gaithersburg, Maryland
John Bessey, Sante Fe, New Mexico
Roparz Carre, Inverness, Florida
Matthew Cosgrove, Sarasota, Florida
David Darr, Seattle, Washington
Nan Donald, Belmont, Massachusetts
Robert Doriss, Watkins, Colorado
Gerwyn Jones, Summerside, Prince Edward Island, Canada
James MacKillop, Syracuse, New York
David and Rebecca Pugh, Bannalec, Brittany (formerly Fairfax, Virginia)
Bill Reese, Fredericksburg, Virginia
Kevin Rottet, Bloomington, Indiana
Frederick Suppe, Muncie, Indiana
Mary Turner, Wichita, Kansas
University of California Los Angeles, Young Research Library, Los Angeles, California
Matthew Webb, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Gei Zantzing, Devault, Pennsylvania

Members/Subscribers for 5 to 9+ years

Arthur Bedard, Chatham, Massachusetts
Alain Berthier, Bethesda, Maryland
Philippe Berthier, Deale, Maryland
Daniel Bonadurer, Missoula, Montana
William Calin, Gainesville, Florida
Pól Duffy, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania
Lars Erickson, Wakefield, Rhode Island
Jacky Faucheux, Chatham, New Jersey
Robert Foulkes, Rock Island, Illinois
Tom and Marian Gittelman, Havertown, Pennsylvania
Raymond Jacq, Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin
John LaValley, Perkasio, Pennsylvania
Robert Merle, Stafford, Virginia
Alicia Ronan Stanley, Chicago, Illinois
Robert Tompkins, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Carroll Weinberg, Wynnewood, Pennsylvania



The Early Years of the I.C.D.B.L.

Jean Cévaër

I had the great honor to be invited by Henri Lecuyer when he organized the founding meeting of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language in the Saint-Gilles district of Brussels, on October 4, 1975. All the early presidents of the association were present. The objective was to initiate a network for international lobbying to support the Bretons in Brittany who tried to prevent the French state from eradicating the Breton language. In a few years the network covered 23 countries.

The first General Secretary, A. Debijl, was a Belgian and he had with him in the directorate 18 members of 11 nationalities. Of course I became a member of the Belgian support committee from day one. The subsequent General Secretary was also a Belgian, Claude Sterckx, a noted specialist of Celtic cultures and languages who incidentally was recently honored by the Cultural Institute of Brittany with the Ermine Collar.

During those first years the Committee worked hand in hand with organizations fighting for the safeguard of the Breton language in Brittany and supported the Diwan schools during their early days. It was in the forefront of the lobbying for a Breton CAPES degree needed for Breton language teaching in secondary schools and its actions took the form of letters and reports sent to French authorities but also to the European Parliament. When the Dutchman Gerke Somer became General Secretary the tone became more insistent considering the deafness of the French powers that be.

From its early days the ICDBL developed links with the USA through Lois Kuter who was studying in Rennes from June to August 1975 and from September 1978 to September 1979* and initiated many contacts with defenders of Breton culture and language, including the ICDBL and, in 1981, when she had completed her informative study on "Breton Identity: Musical and Linguistic Expression in Brittany," she could devote time to installing the U.S. Branch of the ICDBL and publish its paper, "Bro Nevez."

Since that period Lois Kuter has been in constant touch with defenders of the Breton language in Brittany and elsewhere, and, with other members of the U.S. Branch, extremely active in addressing letters of protest to the French authorities. Of note, for instance, is the detailed letter sent to President Mitterand by the then President of the U.S. Branch Robin Brendan Mackey on April 9, 1982. Many would follow.

Traveling through Paris in September 1982 before spending some time in Brittany where she gave a most enlightening interview to the noted journalist Thierry Guidet of the Ouest-France paper, Lois Kuter animated two meetings in Paris and Versailles under the aegis of the OBE and I had the honor to interview her on Radio Bro, a local radio founded by representatives of various French "provinces," including Brittany of course.

In October 1982 Lenora Timm was in Brittany benefiting from the hospitality of a Breton speaking farmer and in the course of a passage via Paris in November was also interviewed by me on Radio Bro, and took part in an exchange with representatives of the French Provinces. In March 1987 Marcel Texier interviewed Natalie Novik, also on Radio Bro. To be noted during that period is the "Fact Finding Report on the Breton Language" published in January 1983 by the U.S. Branch.

To conclude, it must be added that Bro Nevez has found a faithful, if limited, readership in Brittany and elsewhere; the quality of its information is noted and some of its articles are not to be found elsewhere.

But Brittany has not been forgetful and in September 1995 Lois Kuter received the Ermine Collar in Guérande from the hands of the president of the Cultural Institute of Brittany and on that occasion were stressed her radio broadcasts on Breton music, her specialty.

* Lois' Note: I was doing independent research during these periods and while spending a lot of time in Rennes – especially in 1975 – traveled throughout Brittany.

Bro Nevez – the Newsletter of the U.S. ICDBL

A look back by the Editor, Lois Kuter

The publication of a newsletter has been the central action of the U.S. ICDBL since its beginning and the first newsletter issue was published in July 1981 – 11 pages. In the 99 issues produced from July 1981 through August 2006 (Issues 1 to 99) we have printed 2,976 pages of information in our newsletter – an average of 30 pages per issue. With this November 2006 issue of Bro Nevez the pages top 3,000. Published quarterly, each issue has had a new number, rather than using different volume numbers for a given calendar year with numbers 1 to 4 for each issue within that year. After the first issue of July, a pattern of February, May, August and November newsletters was established – with newsletters mailed sometime during each of those months (sometimes at the very end if the editor gets bogged down!). As the editor since the beginnings of the newsletter I thought it might be interesting to give a history not only of how its contents have developed, but also of the changing technology in how the newsletter was produced.

In the early days putting out the newsletter was a heroic effort. It was easy enough to find things to write about, but getting this onto paper had its challenges. Stencils were typed on a typewriter capable of punching the letters through the stencil page so that you had the cut-out of the letter on a thin black sheet. If you made an error you applied a smelly liquid that closed the hole so you could type a new letter over it. It was extremely tedious and did not lend itself to the easy editing and freedom of revision a computer allows. Once you had your stencil sheet, you put this on the stencil machine – a drum which turned as paper came through to apply black ink to the page. It could be a very messy affair, and the quality of print varied wildly, and often pages needed to be thrown away if one side was too pale. Thankfully new technologies have sent stencil machines the way of the dodo bird, but until the end of 1986 this remained the only affordable method to produce Bro Nevez.

Typed in a single font with little graphic freedom, stencil-produced newsletters were not beautiful to look at. During the first five years of the U.S. ICDBL the newsletter varied from 24 pages to 40 and even 50 pages. With issue 13 (November 1984) a name was found to replace the uninteresting and much too long “Newsletter of the U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language.” While a call for suggestions from newsletter

subscribers brought some good ideas, it was Herve Thomas who is to be credited with “Bro Nevez” – short, sweet, and suggestive of the status of the U.S. as a “new country” in comparison to Europe. And this title also evoked the idea of Brittany as a “new country” where the Breton language would flourish.

Herve Thomas lent his graphic skills to the newsletter in designing a series of imaginative covers starting with No. 6 (February 1983). With No. 13 (November 1984) a standard border had been designed by Herve for the cover which is still used today. By the end of the 1980s Herve had drifted away from the U.S. ICDBL, and we greatly miss his artistic contributions. The look of Bro Nevez has remained graphically simple and reasonably attractive, but one can hope that the editor will one day better master technology to allow for a bit more creativity in graphic design.

While an occasional photocopied page found its way into Bro Nevez during the 1980s, it was with issue No. 21 (November 1986) and the 5th anniversary of the U.S. ICDBL that photocopying of pages produced on a typewriter replaced stenciling. Although I used a great deal of white-out to edit the typewritten master pages for Bro Nevez, and there was some cutting and pasting of pages, this was a big improvement over the very tedious process of producing stencils and the many hours spent running a stencil machine, checking print quality, and collating pages. Switching to photocopying also allowed some more creative use of fonts for article titles. While my typewriter only gave me a standard font, I could create different sizes and fancier lettering for titles using letters that were rubbed onto the page from a plastic sheet. Photocopying also allowed the inclusion of lots of reproductions of news clippings, reprints of flyers and brochures, and catalogs from Breton publishers during the late 1980s (and into the 1990s).

By issue no. 43 (August 1992) I was using a computer at my job and generated a few pages that way, but the typewriter remained the dominant means of producing a master copy of each issue. In the pages of Bro Nevez No. 46 (May 1993) you can read a short note: “Kuter joins the computer age,” announcing that I was getting a home computer. By issue 49 (February 1994) there is evidence that I have mastered my computer and the newsletter takes on a much cleaner look. With issue No. 58 (May 1996), we begin to report on the presence of Brittany on the internet with an article pointing to some Breton websites. In issue No. 66

(May 1998) we announce the creation of a U.S. ICDBL website (thanks to Mary Turner) hosted by Breizh.net. With the rising cost of both photocopying and postage (especially overseas) by the end of the 1990s, there was concern about the cost of producing Bro Nevez, and an effort is made to limit the number of pages to under 30. By issue No. 77 (February 2001) a two column format with smaller print allows us to fit more information into fewer pages. While the editor has a long way to go in learning to use a computer more effectively and creatively to improve the look of Bro Nevez, we continue to pack a great deal of information into its pages.

Newsletter Content

Articles about the Breton language

Because the idea of the U.S. ICDBL has always been to support the Breton language in Brittany, a primary focus of the newsletter has been information about what is going on in Brittany concerning the Breton language. I have not tried to analyze all 99 issues of Bro Nevez, but the following rough breakdown of topics listed in the newsletter index I have prepared gives an idea of the attention given to Breton language issues. These are topics under the heading "Breton language"

- And French government - 37 articles and short notes indexed with an additional 12 about the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
- And Breton government – 15 articles and notes cited
- And media (Breton on radio, TV and internet) – 42
- And presence in schools (at all levels) – 72
- Census of Breton speakers – 7
- Classes (outside of schools) – 29 about classes in Brittany; 12 about classes in the U.S.
- Computer technology – 1
- Dialects – 1
- General situation and history of the Breton language – 12
- Learning materials (including a number of book reviews) – 35
- Linguistic studies – 11
- Miscellaneous – 22
- Names for people – 7
- Organizations supporting Breton – some 22 organizations presented and listings of organizations given in 43 articles and notes
- Place Names – 9
- Public presence and road signs – 44
- Publishing in Breton – 15, with and additional 26 magazines presented in 41 articles and notes, and 11 publishers presented in 27 notes, listings, and reprinted catalogs

- Recordings in Breton (other than song) – 5
- Surveys of public opinion about Breton – 6
- Theater in Breton – 3
- Bretons speakers in the U.S. - 2

Diwan appears in the index as a separate heading and articles and notes can be found in 66 of 99 issues of Bro Nevez published so far, starting with No., 1 (July 1981). Numerous other articles on the Breton language in schools also include information about Diwan.

Articles in the Breton Language

While the bulk of information in Bro Nevez is in English, we have tried to include articles in the Breton language. Occasional bilingual Breton/English texts have appeared in Bro Nevez, and in recent years Natalie Novik has offered a series of quick Breton language lessons (six so far). Most notable in our printing of Breton language material was a series of 24 articles by Reun ar C'halan found in issues 3 (May 1982) through 40 (November 1991). These cover a wide range of topics but focus especially on Breton language literature and writers. Recognized in Brittany as a talented poet and writer in the Breton language, Reun has lived in the U.S. for most of his life and was a professor of French at Wellesley College. He was an early and loyal supporter of the U.S. ICDBL, but upon retirement from teaching, chose to step back from the U.S. ICDBL to devote as much time as possible to writing in Breton – and what better way to support this language.

Book Notes and Reviews

In the 25 years we have published Bro Nevez we have introduced – briefly or in depth – over 800 books from Brittany.

Because Bretons themselves speak best for Brittany, newsletters have regularly alerted our readers to the wealth of books and magazines printed in Brittany – especially those in the Breton language. From the beginning book reviews and notes have been a regular part of Bro Nevez. We have presented 52 magazines from Brittany (half of them Breton language magazines) and a dozen publishers and distributors of Breton language books. 73 of 274 book reviews printed in the 99 issues of Bro Nevez have been of books in Breton (128 for books in French, 26 books in English, 21 in a variety of languages about other Celtic languages, and 16 about minority languages and bilingualism).

423 of 570 short notes about books in 99 issues of Bro Nevez were about Breton language works (including some bilingual books, dictionaries, grammars, etc. as well as literature). Short notes also described 127 books in French, 4 in or about Gallo, 11 books in English, and 5 focused on other Celtic countries.

Breton Music

As Editor I have had a great deal of freedom to choose the content for each issue of Bro Nevez, and because I do much of the writing of each issue, music has always had a big place in our newsletter. This is not just because this is a topic I know and love, but because music is very often the means by which Americans (and other non-Bretons) first discover Brittany. Articles in Bro Nevez have introduced over 20 festivals in Brittany; presented musical instruments such as the biniou, bombarde, clarinet, and harp; introduced the Breton national anthem, a number of Breton composers, the work of Dastum and Le Chasse-Marée; and we have alerted our readers to tours by Breton musicians in North America such as Kornog, Dan ar Bras, Alan Stivell, Bleizi Ruz, Vents d'Ouest, Pennou Skoulm, and Yann Fañch Kemener, among others. And we have also tried to present American musicians performing Breton music and opportunities to hear Breton music on the radio in the U.S.

But it has been through the regular inclusion of reviews and notes about Breton lps, cassette tapes, CDs and now DVDs and videos that readers have had the chance to learn about the rich wealth of music in Brittany. 308 reviews have presented 25 traditional singers, 29 pairs of bombarde/biniou or bombarde/organ, 19 bagadoù, 168 Breton singers/musicians/groups with a variety of instruments and styles, 10 classical and choral recordings, 44 collections or samplers including hundreds of Breton musicians of all styles, and 14 recordings of non-Breton musicians (mostly Celtic) and collections of Celtic music including a small sample of Breton performers. In a column usually called "Heard of, but not heard" short notes have presented an additional 534 recordings – 43 of traditional song, 22 of bombarde/biniou or bombarde/organ, 45 bagad recordings (including collections which include dozens of different bagadoù), 308 of Breton singers/musicians/groups, 20 classical/choral CDs, 88 collections or samplers including a variety of different styles, and 8 non-Breton recordings.

All in all, Bro Nevez readers were introduced to over 800 recordings.

Portraits

Through both books and music recording reviews, readers have been able to meet a large number of Brittany's writers and musicians. Biographical notes and articles have often been included in Bro Nevez, and readers have been introduced to over 100 notable Bretons in the 99 issues we have produced so far. Some of these are from Brittany's past but most have been people active in support of the Breton language and culture in more contemporary times. Sadly many introductions were through obituary notes for Bretons who have passed away during the past 25 years. These have included: Alan al Louarn, Yann Bouessel du Bourg, Christophe Caron, Vefa de Bellaing, Raymond Delaporte, Bernard de Parades, Leon Fleuriot, Maodez Glanndour (Loeiz ar Floc'h), Glenmor, Marc'harid Gourlaouen, Alan Heusaff, Ronan Huon, Manu Kerjean, Herve Kerrain, Jakez Konan, Dorig Le Voyer, Arnaud Maisonneuve, Ivona Martin, Denise Megevand, Polig Monjarret, Yann Poëns, and Maï Trevidic.

Some losses of very loyal members of the U.S. ICDBL have also been noted in the pages of Bro Nevez: John Callahan, Margot de Chatelaine, Donald Hare, Jean Le Gall, Henry Martin, and Thomas Standeven. And we marked the loss of Yann Plunier, who pioneered the Canadian Branch of the ICDBL.

A Wealth of Other Topics

It is difficult to present the wide range of topics that have been included in the pages of Bro Nevez, so I have taken the easy way out and appended the topic listing for the Index at the end of this report. While sometimes we touch upon a topic just briefly, I think we can say that all the contributors to this newsletter over the years have offered a wealth of information about Brittany to our readers.



Action! – Some Highlights in the History of the U.S. ICDBL

While the publication of Bro Nevez has been at the heart of our activity, individual members and officers of the U.S. ICDBL have undertaken a number of initiatives during our past 25 years. The following are the examples I have been able to dig out of my files. This does not take into account the day-to-day action individual members have taken to support the Breton language by helping Americans become

better aware of both our concerns and the richness of Breton culture.

July 1981: Letters are sent to Alain Savary, Ministre de l'Education Nationale, and Prime Minister of France, Pierre Mauroy, in support of the creation of a Licence de Breton at the Université de Haute-Bretagne- Rennes II.

April 1982: We send letters to President François Mitterrand, Minister of Culture and Communication Jack Lang, and Minister of National Education Alain Savary expressing our concern that the government's good words about regional languages are not being followed up with any action.

January 1983: We write and distribute widely a "Fact Finding Report on the Breton Language" co-authored by Lois Kuter, Lenora Timm, Laurie O'Keefe Fadave and Anne Habermehl. This included observations from four independent trips to Brittany during the period of July to November 1982 – a total of 122 days in Brittany for the four of us.

From the report: "We regret to conclude with this report that despite continued government promises and encouraging statements made by the current French government, serious efforts are not being made by them to insure the future of the Breton language. Inaction on the part of the government is especially critical in the realm of education and public media."

A number of U.S. ICDBL Members have traveled to Brittany – some more frequently than others – to forge friendships and extend our wishes of support to Bretons working for the future of their language. Some of those who have been good will ambassadors to Brittany include: Susan Baker, David and Monique Brûlé, Roparz Carre, Matt Cosgrove, Karl Halaj, Richard and Valarie Herr, Kathi Hochberg, Natalie Novik, David and Rebecca Pugh (who now live there), Kevin Rottet, Mary Turner, and Jan Zollars. And myself, Lois Kuter.

Spring 1983: We send a letter to some 70 U.S. university professors asking for them to sign a petition in support of the creation of the CAPES degree for Breton at the University of Rennes. Over 50 professors from some 30 institutions sign the petition which is addressed to President Mitterrand.

March and April 1984: A petition is circulated to the general public in support of the CAPES degree. Close to 1,000 signatures are collected in 19 different states of the U.S. from people of all walks of life.

February 1985: A letter is sent to President Mitterrand from U.S. ICDBL President Lenora Timm. It read in part: "While educational and media support for Breton has improved since the 19th century, we find it difficult to

understand why government actions of recent years have been, in general, token in nature. There is a good deal of talk about promoting 'regional cultures' but the government fails to do anything really effective to allow Breton and other regional languages of France to prevent their attrition and ultimate demise. Where is the 'historical reparation' you speak of? Is this just so much more political rhetoric? Is it a game? If so, it is one with morbid consequences for France's regional minorities. Outside observers cannot help but to wonder if cultural and linguistic genocide – through an unstated policy of 'laissez-mourir' – is not, in fact, your government's hidden agenda."

October 1986: We send a letter to François Léotard, Minister of Culture, protesting the decision by the Regional Director of Cultural Affairs of Rennes to withhold state money for support of Breton cultural associations. Lenora Timm noted in the letter: "There is perhaps no better way to fight the standardizing effects of the mass media (all too often 'made in the USA') than to contribute to the maintenance of authentic regional cultures within France."

June 1987: Lenora Timm sends a letter to President Mitterrand protesting French government backing away from support of Diwan teachers. The letter states in part: "We urge you, in the spirit of your own pronouncements on the right to cultural difference, and in the name of the responsibility of a great nation to ensure its citizens full civil rights and the dignity of their various traditions, to re-examine recent government decisions regarding Diwan and other efforts within France for bilingual education."

March 1989: Lenora Timm writes to Lionel Jospin, Minister of National Education, to note our support for the creation of a DEUG university degree for Breton. The letter includes the following thoughts: "For much of this decade the ICDBL has been supporting the right of Bretons to take positive measures to ensure the survival of their Breton language – Diwan and the CAPES are two salient examples of such measures. Yet at nearly every step toward achieving their goals, the Bretons have been met with silence, intransigence, or hostility on the part of public authorities in Paris, who have the power to deny their requests, and who, more frequently than not, do just that."

Fall 1992: Lois Kuter sends a letter to President Mitterrand expressing hope for the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. A letter is sent to U.S. ICDBL members urging them to also write to President Mitterrand. The excerpt which follows is from a two-page letter in French sent by John M. Jones, retired assistant professor at Rowan College, New Jersey: "L'opinion mondiale va juger sévèrement la France ... si elle n'accepte pas l'éthique historique de l'ère ou nous vivons aujourd'hui qui exige la disparition

des menottes tyranniques impose aux faibles par les forts dans une 'nation' compose de plus d'un seul people." [World opinion will judge France severely ... if she does not accept the historical ethic of this era in which we live that demands the removal of manacles imposed on the weak by the strong in a 'nation' made up of more than one people.]

November 1992: Lois Kuter is honored with an invitation to become the "godmother" of Skol Diwan Landerne, the Diwan Breton language immersion school for pre- and grammar school children in Landerneau. She invites the U.S. ICDBL membership to join her in this role.

June 1994: Thanks to member Susan Baker, the U.S. ICDBL sets up an information stand at the Potomac Celtic Festival – the first of 12 yearly presences at this big festival. Other ICDBL members have performed Breton tunes and songs (4 members in the Welsh musical group Moch Pryderi, multi instrumentalist John Trexler, and Breton dance teacher Jan Zollars). Philippe Berthier has proudly carried the Breton flag in the parade of clans and societies. While the Potomac festival has gathered dozens of U.S. ICDBL members in the Washington D.C. area, others throughout the country have created a presence for Brittany at Celtic festivals – most notably Natalie Novik who has been extremely active in Alaska!

September 1995: Lois Kuter is recognized for her work for the Breton language and culture by being inducted into the Order of the Ermine in Brittany.

January 1996: A letter is sent to President Jacques Chirac urging the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in followup to a speech in which he stated: "Chaque culture est précieuse et une culture s'exprime au travers d'une langue. C'est la raison pour laquelle ces langues doivent être aussi considérées comme précieuses." [Each culture is precious and a culture expresses itself through a language. That's why these languages must also be considered precious.]. A response from the President's office notes that Chirac has asked his Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister charged with European Affairs to study – with the authority of the Prime Minister- the conditions required to sign the Charter.

January 1998: With our encouragement, Jeffrey O'Neill relaunches a Canadian Branch of the ICDBL.

February 1998: A call goes out to U.S. ICDBL members to write to President Chirac and Prime Minister Jospin urging France to sign the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This call is also sent to two dozen Celtic associations in the U.S. The following is drawn from a letter sent by U.S. ICDBL member Nan Donald: "These languages [regional languages of France] are a priceless cultural heritage to France, and definitely add to

the cultural appeal to your country. Now these languages are threatened by inroads of mass American culture. Helping to preserve the linguistic diversity of France must surely help to protect France from the barrage of US 'cheeseburger culture.' The diversity of culture and language in France is unparalleled in Europe, and working to preserve it would, I believe, help to strengthen rather than undermine France's international image. France's minority languages are no less national treasures than the Impressionist paintings hanging on the walls of the Louvre."

May 1998: Bro Nevez announces in its pages the creation of a website for the U.S. ICDBL, hosted by Breizh.net thanks to the work of Mary Turner, our first webmaster. Jacky Faucheux would take charge of this task in more recent years.

June 1998: We send a petition for France's signing of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages signed by 67 individuals from 8 states at the Potomac Celtic Festival in Virginia.

November 1998: A petition is included in Bro Nevez – "Galv Arzourien, Skrivagnerien ha Kefredourien / Call from Artists, Writers and Intellectuals" for the European Charter. The charter is finally signed in April 1999, but has yet to be ratified by France.

October 2003: A letter introducing the U.S. ICDBL and the Diwan Breton immersion schools is sent to 15 French immersion school teachers and directors listed on the Frenchculture.org website of the Cultural Services of the French Embassy

October 2003 and January 2004: A mailing about the U.S. ICDBL and invitation to join is sent to 700 college teachers who are members of the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF). While this brings only a handful of new memberships, the plight of the Breton language is brought to the attention of hundreds of French professors across the U.S..

April 2004: Letters are sent to the President of the General Council of Brittany and newly elected Regional and Departmental Council Members to urge their action in support of the Breton language and culture.

November 2004: Lois Kuter is invited to publish an article on Diwan in the newsletter of the American Council on Immersion Education.

October 2005: The U.S. ICDBL board signs an on-line petition (as a group and as individuals) in support of the Merville Bilingual School (Lorient). We also send letters to Ouest France and Le Telegramme newspapers (and our letter was printed in some editions). The Merville school won its petition to get a teacher for the preschool

and were appreciative for our effort (among many others) to support them.

November 2005: The U.S. ICDBL Board sends a letter to the newly elected Commissioner for Human Rights (Hammarberg) of the Council of Europe. He does not take office until April 06 but our letter was acknowledged.

May 2006: A letter is sent to Dihun, an association of parents in support of bilingual Breton programs in the Catholic schools of Brittany, to express our support for Yannig Baron who was on a hunger strike to protest administrative inaction to advance bilingual programs despite demands of children and parents. Yannig Baron ended his strike after 22 days and a meeting with administrators to plan for steps to improve programs in the Catholic schools.

To be continued ...

In speaking out as individuals and as an organization which has united hundreds of people who care about the future of the Breton language, the U.S. ICDBL has made an important contribution. We have not worked any miracles or swayed the minds of stubborn politicians in Paris, but we have made the message clear that the world is watching and expects France to live up to its boasts as a land of human rights. And we have tried to make the message clear to people in Brittany who have worked for the future of their unique language(s) and culture, that we support them.



A Few Words from U.S. ICDBL Members

From: **Richard Herr**
Professor of History, emeritus
University of California, Berkeley, CA

Thanks to the ICDBL my wife and I had a most instructive visit in 1999 to the Skol Diwan Landerne. That visit and Bro Nevez have provided valuable material on the Breton struggle to protect their language and culture, a key case in my forthcoming history of the different kinds of communities in modern Europe and America.



From: **Robert Felix**, Columbia, South Carolina

When I learned of the U.S. ICDBL some years ago I hastened to join and I have enjoyed reading Bro Nevez ever since. It is broad in scope and I can almost always find something of particular interest to me, particularly items dealing with Breton history or the Breton Language. I admire the care and editorial judgment that go into producing it.

My interest in Brittany is partly a matter of inheritance and partly a fascination with history and languages. My mother was Breton, born in Pontivy in the Department of Morbihan. We spoke French at home as I was growing up in Cincinnati (my father's family was Alsatian) and I picked up a few words of Breton, which my mother knew.

Over the years I have been to Brittany a number of times. Bro Nevez helps span the time between trips to France and gives me incentive again and again to try to learn the language.



From: **Joanne Gagnon-Ketchen**
Publisher, Celtic Beat
Nashua, New Hampshire

Discovery of several ancestral roots in Brittany and a long time interest in Breton music initially prompted me to join ICDBL last year--and what an inspiration it has been! Through articles read in Bro Nevez (along with my own research), my interest in Breton culture and language has greatly increased. Coming from Native American ancestry also, I fully understand the cause to fight for one's native language and identity and Breton language and culture has every reason for continued growth and survival.

Congratulations to ICDBL on its 25th anniversary, and great job on Bro Nevez!



From: **David Pugh**, Bannalec, Brittany

I fell in love with Brittany over 40 years ago whilst on a cycling holiday. Being Welsh, the similarities were compelling – and the food significantly better! It is hard to define an exact moment during that trip as being decisive; it was much more that, despite

extremely limited French, no Welsh and no Breton, the sense of hospitality from the people was overwhelming.

After moving to the US, I eventually became aware of the U.S. ICDBL and began sharing Bro Nevez with my wife. She made her first trip to Brittany in 1990, and many more followed. We decided to retire there and have spent the last six years renovating an old, small, manor house in Finistere. We moved there permanently in 2005 and the house is now almost fully ready. Sadly, my travel has prohibited one of my goals, which is to learn Breton, but we enjoy our local Fest Noz events and my wife lives in hope that my two left feet will one day join her on the dance floor.

Our most special moment came this August when, with the encouragement of our Mayor, and others, we renewed our wedding vows during the town festival, in Breton (with translation into French to be sure we knew what we were doing!), and in costume. My wife's was specially made for her and at times we debated whether it would be the costume or the house that would be finished first.

Despite now being resident in Brittany, new editions of Bro Nevez are welcomed and continue to be our best source for keeping up to date with the efforts to keep the language alive.



The following note was printed in the monthly Breton-language magazine **Bremañ**. While we can be proud to publish a 100th issue of Bro Nevez, Bremañ has printed over 300 issues – full of news of world events and peoples, as well as news about Brittany. The following note is from Nivrenn (Number) 301, miz Du (November, literally “black month”) 2006.

Bro Nevez

E miz Du 2006 e vo embannet 100^{vet} niverenn *Bro Nevez*, kannadig trimiziek Skourr amerikan ar C’huzul etrebroadel evit kendalc’h ar brezhoneg (US ICDBL), renet gant Lois Kuter. Er c’hannadig e kaver keleier e saozneg diwar-benn ar stourm evit ar yezh, roet e vez un tañva eus sevenadur Breizh, hec’h istor... E 1981 e oa bet krouet en-ofisiel ar gevredigezh. Ouzhpenn 100^{vet} niv. ar c’hannadig saoznek, e vo ivez lidet 25^{vet} deiz-ha-bloaz an US ICDBL. Izili ar gevredigezh zo strewet e 35 Stad eus ar Stadoù-Unanet, eus Alaska da Florida, en ur dremen dre Hawaii, ha n’eo ket aes evito en em gavout holl asambles. 100^{vet} niv. ar c’hannadig a zistroio neuze war oberoù ar gevredigezh er c’hard-kantved tremenet.

Evit gouzout hiroc’h : lkuter@fast.net.



100^{vet} niverenn... da zont

Well Wishes to the U.S. ICDBL on its 25th Anniversary and 100th Issue of *Bro Nevez*

From: Professor **Claude Sterckx**, International Chairman of the ICDBL (and new member of Brittany's Order of the Ermine), Brussels, Belgium

Thirty years ago, I discovered that the need for the stewardship and struggle to insure the survival of Breton language was not only for the preservation of a part – whatever its size – of our universal heirloom, but most importantly, a matter of human rights and personal respect. Because of that, I tried to be ready to take any democratic actions necessary to assist, and that was the reason for my involvement in the founding and subsequent activities of the ICDBL. I am now glad to celebrate the important role played by the US Branch and its team led by Lois Kuter. The regular issuing of "Bro Nevez" has been both a very effective source of information about the problems facing Breton, and an invaluable signal to the Breton people that the "old language" is not so worthless as many pretend. For, all around the world, to far distant countries and in the mighty USA, men and women without personal ties to Brittany are anxious and feel concerned about the future of the Breton language.

From: **Fañch Peru**, Breton language author,
Berc'hed, Brittany

D'ar 16 a viz Here 2006

Mignoned ker,

Da geñver pempvet deiz-ha-bloaz warn-ugent skourr Amerikan ar c'hengor etrevroadel evit difenn ar brezhoneg ha kantvet niverenn e gannadig trimiziek, Bro Nevez, em eus ar blijadur da gas deoc'h va gwellañ gourc'hemenoù evit al labour ingal hag efedus kaset war-raok ganeoc'h e-pad ar bloavezhioù tremenet. Bez ez eo "Bro Nevez" ur benveg dibar evit skignañ en un nebeud pajennoù ur bern keleier diwar-benn ar stourm evit ar brezhoneg e Breizh hag e lec'h all, diwar-benn ar vuhez sevenadurel en-dro d'ar brezhoneg, al levrioù nevez, ar pladennoù nevez hag ur bern traoù all c'hoazh ne gaver bodet e kelaouenn ell ebet. Ur vengleuz titouroù e gwirionez! Preder ha kennerzh ouzhpenn. Ul liamm start eo ar c'hannadig-mañ etre difennerien ar brezhoneg met ivez ur garg pounner evit ar skipailh a ra war e dro. Trugarez deoc'h, eta, ha kalon evit kenderc'hel gant ho skoazell ken pouezus evidomp.

Buhez hir c'hoazh da (v)Bro Nevez.

16 October 2006

Dear friends,

For the 25th anniversary of the American branch of the International Council for the Defense of Breton and the one hundredth issue of its quarterly newsletter, Bro Nevez, I have the pleasure of sending you my best compliments for the steady and efficacious work that you have carried out over the past years. "Bro Nevez" is an unparalleled instrument for disseminating in just a few pages a large amount of news about the battle for Breton in Brittany and elsewhere, about cultural life surrounding Breton, new books, new music and a lot of other things that are not brought together in any other periodical. A veritable goldmine of information! Care and encouragement in addition. This newsletter is a solid link between the defenders of Breton but also a heavy responsibility for the team that makes it happen. So, thank you, and good luck carrying on with your help which is so important to us.

May Bro Nevez enjoy a long life.

From: **Dr. Yvo Peeters**, Deputy secretary general ICDBL, Founder European Bureau for lesser used Languages. Expert for Minority languages to the Council of Europe
Brussels, 6th November 2006

From Brussels, the capital of Europe, I want to extend my sincere congratulations on the occasion of the publication of the 100th issue of "Bro Nevez", journal of ICDBL-USA. The American Branch of the Committee has always been most active, not least thanks to the tireless efforts exerted by its chairperson, *Louis Kuter*.

The ICDBL was founded 32 years ago in Brussels by pioneers Henri Lecuyer, Yann Fouéré and other friends of Brittany, most of which worked at the European Institutions.

It is now hard to imagine how the situation was of minorities in Europe in the seventies. The excesses of wartime National Socialism and fascism still threw their shadow over many attempts to safeguard minority languages and cultures. In Spain, Portugal, Greece and Turkey, military and authoritarian regimes repressed civil liberties in general and cultural-linguistic rights of minorities in particular.

Nationalist/autonomist movements fought for more rights or self determination - some using violent means as in Armenia, Kurdistan, South Tyrol and Basque Country. It was therefore even more frustrating for the defenders of language rights that in one of Western Europe's great democracies such as the French Republic, authorities had developed and maintained a severe repressive system against all minorities and their cultures. By law, or by juridical sentences, the use of Basque, Catalan, Italian (Corsican), German, Dutch, Occitan and Breton was prohibited in public administration, education, justice and even in the media, save for some symbolic minutes. Of the seven so-called regional languages used in France, five had an international dimension, being also present in neighbouring countries, which made them even more "dangerous" for Paris. Even Occitan, with an extremely limited number of speakers spread over a large territory was overflowing in Monaco, Spain and Italy, where at the end of the seventies it gained some recognition. The unique position of Breton as an alone standing language spoken in an - even smaller - restricted territory in Western Brittany, is clear to everyone.

If France could wipe out the Breton language, this would mean the total disappearance of an age-old European language, bearer of unique historical, cultural and ethnological features, part of European heritage.

Every other language somewhere had a supportive country or region, a safe haven where books, journals and other media were produced. The remaining Celtic languages in the UK were themselves struggling for survival each on its own level and even in the only "Celtic" State, the Republic of Ireland's language policy was more tokenism than anything else (e.g..compulsory knowledge of Irish for civil servants, was abolished in 1974).

Therefore the creation of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language was a strategical important event. It soon had correspondents in 25 countries, which were committed to relaying and enhancing on a world wide scale the discriminatory policies of France toward Breton speakers. For many it was an eye-opener. If anything, the French authorities are sensitive to image, prestige and their position as a leading State in matters of language and culture, be it only French language and culture of course.

With its modest means, but a lot of voluntarism, the ICDBL has made dozens of interventions in the past decades and has surely irritated the French government and its presidency on many occasions. So be it. But above all it gave the Bretons a feeling of not being alone in their struggle for linguistic survival. The American branch of ICDBL has beyond doubt contributed most to this feeling of solidarity.

From: **Jan Deloof**, Representative for the ICDBL with the Comité voor Vlanderen, Poet and author of several books of Breton language poetry in translation. Zwevegem, Belgium

Dear Lois:

Your letter of September 23 was a complete surprise. Already a quarter of a century! It's almost unbelievable. What a zest for work, what a perseverance and what a goldmine of reliable information as a result. Sincere congratulations and my best wishes for the future!

For this very special occasion I've translated a beautiful poem by Alan Botrel, and I would be proud if you could give it a place in the November issue (N° 100!) or in a later issue.

Evit ma vevo Breizh atav.

Alan BOTREL - Alan Botrel (Plouay, Morbihan, 1954) studied philosophy, linguistics (Paris X, Nanterre), Celtic philology (Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris) and Breton (Université de Haute Bretagne, Rennes II). He teaches Breton at Rennes II. A fine poet himself, he also translated poetry from modern Greek into Breton. His poem "Irha ema in ri" refers to both the finiteness of mankind and the precarious situation of the Breton language, in a concise, utmost compact way. This terse style makes translating in another language an almost impossible task.

Irha ema in ri*

(* This is the oldest known inscription in Breton, dating from about AD 690. The text means approximately "in glory is the king".)

Komz an dar e tav ar bez.
Pe henour ennañ o c'hourvez?
Skeud na roud na hirvoud hez.

Words in stone, yet silent tomb.
Who was the ancient hero buried here?
No shadow, no trace, no wailing.

Tra ne van e kleuz an arc'h
eus kedern un hen diernac'h
nag a'r ri, n'e veli arc'h.

Nothing in the hollow grave
of a fierce old lineage,
nor the king, nor his kingly majesty.

Pe da goun, ar gerioù noazh,
'vel dargan yezh wan hon annoazh?
Kavell. Bac'h. Ha bez arc'hoaz.

What do these naked words recall,
if not the swan-song of our feeble tongue?
Cradle. Jail. And to-morrow's grave.

C'hwezh an netra, gleb, er c'havell;
hun an hoal en teñval trell.
Ned eus heklev `met tevel.

The smell of nothing, humid, in the cradle;
the sleep of time in blinding darkness.
Here is no echo other than silence.

From: **Pierre-Yves Moign**, Musician and Composer, Plouguerneau, Brittany

Chers Amis,

Mon anglais souvent défaillant m'oblige à vous écrire en français. Il ne me permet pas non plus de lire tous les articles de "Douar Nevez". Cependant, l'arrivée du journal est toujours ressentie par moi comme une immense bouffée d'air frais.

Que des homes et des femmes, pas forcément attachés à elle par les liens affectifs ou des souvenirs d'enfance, defend notre culture en peril, est d'une valeur inestimable. Ils peuvent ainsi juger des faits en toute impartialité et surtout selon des critières différents. Et s'ils défendent notre langue, c'est au nom de valeurs universelles.

Défendre une langue, c'est défendre une manière de sentir et de penser le monde, c'est defender une culture. C'est vouloir situer les homes et les femmes de cette culture dans le temps et dans l'espace afin qu'ils ne soient pas instrumentalisés par les puissants; c'est barrer ainsi le chemin qui nous mène à la "définitive fourmilière."

Défendre une culture, non par tolérance mais par la reconnaissance de sa seule presence au monde et par le respect que chacun doit aux autres surtout s'il s'agit de la vie intérieure, c'est défendre le patrimoine de l'Humanité et chercher l'équilibre entre son développement et ses richesses. C'est le problème de notre temps.

Les circonvolutions et les doubles langages sur le sujet n'y changeront rien.

Merci à vous pour votre action.

(our translation)

Dear friends,

My often faltering English forces me to write to you in French. It also prevents me from reading all the articles in "Bro Nevez." Nevertheless, the arrival of the journal is always felt by me like an immense breath of fresh air.

The fact that men and women, who are not necessarily attached to it through affective ties or childhood memories, defend our threatened culture, is of an inestimable worth. It allows them to base their judgments on facts, without bias, and above all, according to different criteria. In fact, if they defend our language, it's in the name of universal values.

To defend a language is to defend a manner of perceiving the world and thinking about it, it is to stand for the defense of a culture. It is to place men and women of that culture in their time and place so that they are not become instruments in the hands of the powerful; it is to thus block the path that leads us to the ultimate conformity.

To take the defense of a culture, not out of tolerance, but just in recognition of its mere presence in the world, and with all the respect that everyone owes to others – especially when it concerns inner life – is to defend humanity's heritage, and to search for an equilibrium between its development and its riches. This is the challenge of our times.

The circumvolutions and double talk on the subject will change nothing.

Thank you for your action.

From: **Jacques Le Tallec**, Pluneret, Breizh

La langue Bretonne – Nous sommes tous concernés.

La langue Bretonne est et sera toujours intimement liée et reliée à sa tradition orale parlée, chantée et contée. Elle sera toujours accompagnée par la musique sous toutes ses formes et par toutes formations.

Sans cette vie intense qui entoure et encadre la jeune génération d'enfants qui apprennent la langue bretonne, il serait inutile de la faire reviver et perdurer.

Il nous appartient à tous, chanteurs, conteurs, musiciens, artistes en tous genres, instituteurs, professeurs, toutes et tous garants du langage Breton, de le faire connaître et de le diffuser, tant les Bretons sont sur toute la terre.

Ils ont besoin de nous, de nous voir, de nous entendre, de nous écouter dans ce que nous pouvons leur offrir de plus beau, de plus fantastique, de plus professionnel, de plus respectueux envers nos anciens vivants ou disparus.

J'en appelle à ce monde nouveau, en pleine mutation planétaire, aux fédérations, associations, festivals, aux sociétés et entreprises, aux politiques, d'accompagner ce (revival) culturel.

Nos enfants alors Bretonnants y trouveront après nous, toute la matière dans grand langage, image, poétique, écologique et précis.

Et nous, nous aurons fait notre travail.

The Breton language – it concerns us all.

The Breton language is and will always be intimately linked and bound to its oral tradition – spoken, sung and in storytelling. It will always be accompanied by music in all forms and styles.

Without this vibrant life which surrounds and frames the young generation of children who learn the Breton language, it would be useless to revive and perpetuate it.

It is the duty of all of us – singers, storytellers, musicians, artists of all media, teachers, professors, all guardians of the Breton language – to make it known and to spread it, as long as Bretons are on the earth.

They [the children] have need of us, to see us, to hear us, to listen to us for what we have to offer them – the most beautiful language, the most fantastic, the most professional, and the most respectful of our living or lost elders.

I call to this new world in full planetary change, to federations, organizations, festivals, businesses and enterprises, and to politicians, to join this cultural rejuvenation. Our children – thus Breton speaking – will receive from us all the materials of a great language – one that is full of imagery, poetry, ecology, and precision.

And us – we will have done our work.

From: **Paul Chérel**, Editor, L'Avenir de la Bretagne
Plouharnel, Breizh

With its 100th issue Bro Nevez will also celebrate the 25th anniversary of the incorporation as a non-profit organization of the U.S. Branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language.

As soon as I learned of the existence of this surprising organization, not much before the end of the 20th century, I was very much interested in its work and its very good acquaintance with Breton life – past, present and even future.

First of all, how could one not be surprised to see that our small country called Brittany and its unique cultural identity would interest so big a country as the States? Even if Bretons know quite well that they have "cousins" all over the world, they know too that very few of those "cousins" take a real interest in the destiny of their compatriots who have remained in their native country, even if they suffer a little home-sickness for their remote fatherland.

Even considering the relatively recent progress in telecommunications – the internet in particular – it is also surprising to see how well the pages of Bro Nevez reflect an awareness of the cultural life of a country several thousand miles away from its site of publication. And distance is not the only obstacle since one needs to account for the different languages and translations necessary for the production of this quarterly newsletter of 28 pages.

How very glad we would be to see the same fervor for the defense of the Breton language and culture among the 4 million Bretons living in Brittany and the 6 other million scattered across the whole world.

Now, the question is: What can people outside of Brittany do to support the Breton language and culture? The answer is not easy, because Brittany is actually a part of France, and France is not prepared to defend the languages which have always existed within its own borders. France would preferably do the contrary; that is to say, eliminate them or let them die. Action could be attempted at the European level, but this would be difficult for Americans due to the many known and hidden conflicts between European states and the U.S. – especially given the strength of countries like France in the Council of Europe. Europe now undertakes action to protect "minority" European languages, but only to the extent these languages have obtained an official existence within their own country. France denies that it has minority languages or peoples within its "hexagon." France is a Republic, "one and indivisible."

From: Josette HENRY (Spezet, Brittany -Aix en Provence)

J'ai connu Lois KUTER, à Spezet (Finistère) en Bretagne quand elle préparait son mémoire sur l'identité bretonne dans les années 70, sa passion pour la Bretagne m'avait impressionné. Je me souviens aussi particulièrement d'un diner à Brest, que j'avais organisé, avec Charles LE GALL, Donatien LAURENT, Pierre LOQUET et Roger CHARLES. Ce fut une soirée passionnante pendant laquelle nous avons dialogué sur l'évolution de la langue bretonne avec ces éminents spécialistes de la culture bretonne.

Je remercie Lois KUTER d'oeuvrer pour la Bretagne. Je pense aussi que sa revue BRO NEVEZ qui paraît en anglais est un véritable atout pour la défense de la langue bretonne, s'adressant ainsi aux Bretons et sympathisants du monde entier. Je la félicite aussi pour avoir reçu le collier de l'hermine, haute distinction bretonne.

Trugarez Lois

(our translation)

I knew Lois Kuter in Spezet (Finistère) in Brittany when she was preparing her Doctorate thesis on Breton identity in the 1970s; her passion for Brittany impressed me. I particularly remember a dinner in Brest that I organized with Charles Le Gall, Donatien Laurent, Pierre Loquet and Roger Charles. This was an exciting evening during which we discussed the evolution of the Breton language with these eminent specialists on Breton culture.

I thank Lois Kuter for working for Brittany. I also think that her review Bro Nevez, which comes out in English, is a true asset in the defense of the Breton language, as it addresses Bretons and sympathizers of the entire world. I congratulate her also for having received the Collier de l'Hermine, a high Breton distinction.

Thank you Lois

From: **Gwyn Griffiths**, Kuzul Etrevroadel evit Kendalc'h ar Brezhoneg (Cymru)

Congratulations - A few words from Wales

To us Welsh people Brittany has a certain romance – not least because of the onion sellers from Roscoff who visited us every Winter, selling strings of red onions which they transported on the handlebars of their bicycles. "How come this strange character talks to you in Welsh?" I asked my mother. "He's from Brittany and their language is just like ours," she replied.

When I first spent time in Brittany exactly 40 years ago I found it was not exactly so. But from time to time I came across Breton-only speakers and with the aid of gesticulations and speaking our respective languages we got on fine. Especially when I talked to farmers. The words for trees, crops and animals are mostly the same. It was a lovely – if somewhat impoverished - country full of delightful people.

My first book on Brittany was published in 1977. Looking at it again it reflects my view of a somewhat backward, rather poor country, folksy in culture. A rather grey land despite its sunny nature and beautiful countryside. I was reminded of some of Jakez Riou's short stories where people lived eked out miserable lives in a land where

the sun shone, streams sparkled and birds sang. My second book on Brittany was published in 2000 – there were others in between and subsequently on various aspects of Breton life. This book, like the first, looked at Brittany – it's culture, economy, the state of the language. Much had changed for the better, especially to someone from Wales. The countryside, towns and villages looked a lot more prosperous.

For this prosperity the Bretons themselves must take most, if not all, the credit. Their willingness to co-operate, the readiness of farmers to back with hard cash the vision of Alexis Gourvenec and establish Brittany Ferries and the Societe d'Initiative de Cooperation Agricole (SICA), has contributed hugely to the appearance of contemporary Brittany. In Britain supermarkets screw the farmers; in Brittany the SICA, play the supermarkets off against each other and ensure a fair deal for the farmers. Brittany Ferries provides swift transport for Breton agricultural produce doubling up as a convenient, friendly service for tourists.

The company also sponsors Breton artists and sculptures – their works given prominence on all the boats. It all adds to the positive image that Brittany now enjoys throughout France, a complete turnaround from the time when I was researching and writing my first book. Thanks to the machinations of the French government in the 60s and 70s, Nantes and the Pays de Retz no longer belong to the administrative department of Brittany. Yet, more than ever the people of these parts celebrate their Breton identity and history. On a recent visit to Pornic, on the westerly coast, south of the Loire, I noticed the Breton gwenn ha du flying over the tourist office. Many of the villages and towns in this ancient area of the Breton marais display the Breton form of their names, too. This in a part of Brittany that has not been Breton-speaking for a thousand years.

Le Clerc, one of three major French supermarket chains established – incidentally – in Brittany, is a positive promoter of Breton produce, as well as insisting that a substantial percentage of the goods on its shelves is local produce. Welsh farmers would give their eye teeth for such favourable consideration. There's a confidence that was lacking in the 70s. As a Welshman I can only envy the number of publishers, and books and magazines published in Brittany (second only in number to the Ile de France).

Overall, it's a rosy picture. Until we consider the state of the Breton language. The last of my monoglot Breton-speaking friends died twenty years ago. The last time I had a long conversation with someone in Breton was in 1997 – which, admittedly, is more of a reflection of the shortcomings of my Breton than an indication of the general state of the language. With any minority language I believe you need 80 per cent fluency before people will converse with you for any length of time. As a fluent Welsh-speaker I know how difficult it is to persevere with a struggling learner and how tempting it is to switch, for example, to English. Yet, I find nowadays that there is more goodwill towards the language than I can ever remember. And many Bretons bitterly regret that the language was not passed on to them. This Summer in Provence I spent many mornings walking and talking to Jean-Yves, a potter and ceramics artist in Bonnieux. Jean-Yves's parents, as his name suggests, were Bretons. His wife is from Provence. He is furious that Breton was never passed on to him. His daughter regrets that she never received any of the linguistic heritage from either the Breton or Provencal side of the family. I don't blame the families. Whereas the Bretons have managed to improve their economy – with remarkable success – the French education system is so centralised that I cannot see how it is possible for them

to save the language without pressures from the outside. Our experience in Wales has shown how vital it is for Welsh to be taught in schools, and particularly used as the medium of education as in the Welsh medium schools – the equivalent of Diwan. But Welsh medium schools are state schools, not schools organised on a voluntary basis. Their success is built on remarkable academic achievement.

Breton must be given proper status and particularly in schools. The French state will not accede to such demands without external pressure. I salute the work of Dr Lois Kuter and the US branch of the International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language. I am envious and delighted at the information provided by Bro Nevez – it is an admiration shared by my friends in the cultural movement in Brittany. The Breton language can only be saved by making the world aware of the disgraceful way in which France treats its minority languages.

A few years ago we celebrated the first twinning between a town in Wales and a town in Brittany – St Pol de Leon and Penarth, near Cardiff. Not perhaps an ideal twinning – St Pol a town in a Breton speaking area, and Penarth a very Anglicized little town on the outskirts of Cardiff. Since then over 30 twinings between Wales and Brittany have been established – many far more appropriate and suitable than that between St Pol and Penarth. The effect has been to draw the attention of people in Brittany, and particularly local politicians, to what is happening in Wales; and the people of Wales to the unfairness of the state of the Breton language. We all have a role to play if Breton is to survive.

Thank you, Dr Kuter, for 25 years of sterling service. Knowledge is power. May your valuable contribution continue for many, many years to come.

Well Wishes from, and an Introduction to, a Breton Writer, **Mikael Madeg**

19 October 2006

To Lois Kuter, as editor of Bro Nevez, and the U.S. Branch of the ICDBL,

I received the last issue of Bro Nevez and had a thorough look through it, as I always do, and thank you for your work and the attention paid to our language. It always feels better knowing that outside Brittany there are people who care and are prepared to go to some length to help us.

As you are kind enough to mention some of my books when you hear about them, I suppose I could let you know a bit more about my activity as a Breton writer. At least this will prove to your readers that such a thing as a Breton writer exists. I was promoted to write to you all the more by a bit of coincidence. "Bro Nevez" will soon see its 100th issue published, and it so happens that this summer my 100th book was published. At least, the 100th book my name was on, as a writer mostly, or, occasionally, editor and translator. Actually at the very moment I am writing to you I had two other books published since that 100th and the 103rd is being printed and probably when you get this letter will have been so. Of course, not all these books are 200 to 300 page affairs, and as so many people take care to remind me, quantity and quality are, or can be, two separate things.

These of course are books published. As far as books written are concerned the figure is above 150. I actually finished one yesterday (about river names in Bro Leon).

I usually write in Breton, but I sometimes write in French as well. But of the 102 books I mentioned, 85 are totally in Breton, the rest being in French with on exception which is bilingual Welsh-Breton.

For most of them, I am the sole author, the only important exception being a whole collection of coastal place names (15 books about these all along the coasts of Bro Leon), the research and the writing of which involved two other persons. But, since I taught them all they needed to become thorough researchers in linguistics (on, Per Pondaven, is a marine biology specialist, the other Yann Riou, a mathematician), I suppose nobody would object to my signature being on that collection. I initiated the whole idea, did the first third or so of the research (all of it field research) and did more than half of the total writing.

My activity as a writer can be separated into two parts. One is what could be generally called research. More than half of my books have to do with spoken traditions I collected, or at least edited, in Breton. First, I extensively recorded the live speech of some 130 native speakers of Breton from everywhere in Bro Leon and of many different trades. I made selections from these recordings usually about one particular topic – for example, I have a book about hedge-making, another about seaweed cutting activities. These are published with a word-by-word transcription for advanced learners to get a better grasp of the real language, and the books are accompanied by a copy of the recording (cassettes so far, but CDs now). I already published about 90 of these and my next one is going to be about “wrecks, wreckers and wreckage” in Bro Leon of course.

Next I became a specialist of nicknames, by pure chance so to speak. This is the only topic for which thorough research was not limited to just Bo Leon, and the only one for which I done any amount of writing in French. So far 99 of my books about nicknames have been published: collections of a selection of those I collected on a geographical basis. Since I started, more than 30 years ago, I collected more than 30000 individual nicknames, mostly in Brittany but one of my books (in Breton) is about Scottish Gaelic nicknames, and another (in French) is about Welsh nicknames. I live fro 9 years in Wales and speak Welsh fluently, or at least I did when I was there.

Otherwise I am a bit of a specialist in legends as a side line. I collect them, most of them, from written sources, although I heard hosts of very local ones during my research. All these I write in Breton, in French only for example, or I transcribe. Currently I have a collection of almost 700 of these about Bro Leon. I have had 6 books of them published in Breton, 4 others ready to go, and one book in French which I started using more recently has been published so far.

I’ve had a few other books of research about other topics as well, for example, one is about raising children in Breton or bilingually. But another p[art of my activity is what could be called “general literature” I suppose. All of this is in Breton and so far mostly novels and short stories. I had about ten books of each category published. Most of my collections of short stories tend to be about one central theme which I explore from different points of view.

Well, I suppose this is quite enough for a letter. At the very moment I’ve had a lot of English finishing a test which I’m supposed to mark later [Mikael Madeg is also an English teacher].. Because, of course, professionally I am a writer. And to prevent anyone from getting worried about my health, I never write at night (when I usually am quite happy sleeping) – always during the day.

Well, ha gant va madeka gourhemennou, Mikael Madeg

[Editor’s Note: I have made only a few very small changes in the wording to this hand-written letter. My apologies to the author if I have misinterpreted his meaning or hand-writing!!]

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BRO NEVEZ

Newsletter of the U.S. Branch of the
International Committee for the Defense of the Breton Language

This is an index to articles, short notes and book and record/CD reviews which have appeared in the quarterly newsletter of the U.S. ICDBL. With issue 13 (November 1984) the newsletter acquired the name Bro Nevez ("New Country").

The index is divided into three sections: **I. General Topics**; **II. Book Notes and Reviews**; **III. Recordings of Breton Music – Notes and Reviews**. Major topics in the general section are in bold letters; subtopics are underlined. Unless alphabetical order is important articles are listed chronologically. When an author is not printed in the newsletter, but known, he/she is listed within parentheses. Articles are listed under the category of their major focus. Many are listed under two topics and cross referencing is done as much as possible. Contents have been listed below to orient users to the index and give an idea of the range of topics presented. - Lois Kuter, Editor

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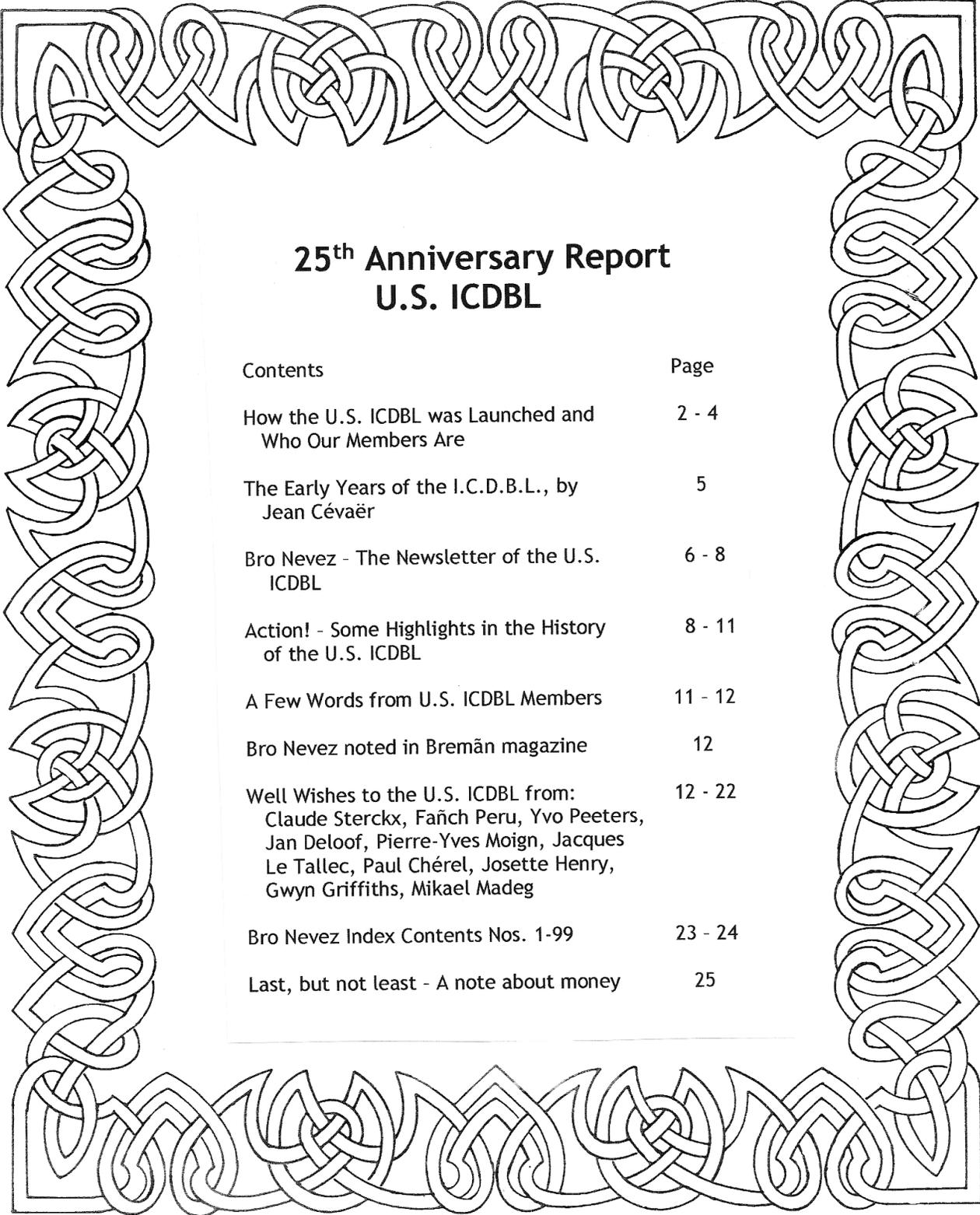
Needless to say, there are no paid staff hired to do the work of the U.S. ICDBL or any other work of the ICDBL world wide. We are all volunteers. There is an expression "time is money" and if members of the U.S. ICDBL tallied up the hours they have contributed to the cause of the Breton language and culture, the contribution would be significant.

We are not a fund-raising organization and have operated on a budget of \$2,000 to \$2,500 each year. Most of this money is spent to produce and mail Bro Nevez. Annual Members' dues and subscriptions to Bro Nevez are a modest \$20, and we try to keep this as low as possible so that those who struggle to pay their bills can still consider supporting the ICDBL. And many of our Members have quite a few other causes to support as well. Our membership does not include the fabulously wealthy, but many U.S. ICDBL Members are generous in adding an additional contribution to their dues. By keeping costs of producing Bro Nevez low, we are able to send close to 100 copies of each issue to individuals and organizations in Brittany (and Europe) on a complimentary basis.

Since 1984 we have added a line to our membership form giving people the option to add a bit extra to go into a special fund for the Diwan Breton language immersion schools. Over the years we have sent over \$15,000 to Diwan. This is not a huge sum of money, but we hope that it shows our support of these very important and innovative schools.

Lois





25th Anniversary Report U.S. ICDBL

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