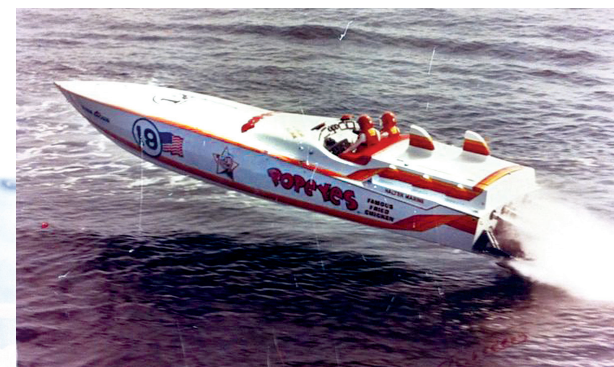




WHAT
HAPPENED

In April 1991, Al Copeland filed for bankruptcy and lost his Popeyes chicken chain.



THE AL COPELAND FOUNDATION PHOTOS

Al Copeland was considered over the top in a city that embraces extravagant behavior.



Al Copeland had to scale back his elaborate Christmas light display at his Metairie mansion after neighbors won a case against him in the Louisiana Supreme Court in 1985. More than 500,000 people would view the decorations each season.

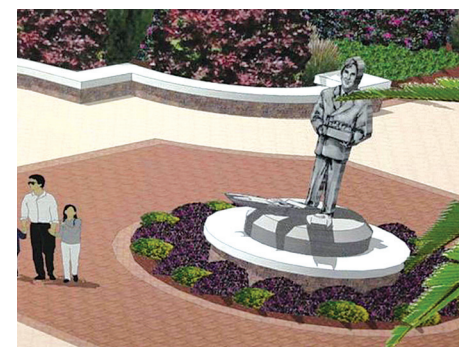


The first Popeyes franchise in Louisiana was opened in 1976.

Locally, Copeland was known as much for his speedboat races, sports cars, Christmas light displays and multiple weddings and divorces as he was for his fried chicken.

Copeland dropped out of school at 16, and in 1971, he opened a fried chicken restaurant, Chicken on the Run, in Arabi. The restaurant was a failure. Copeland modified the recipe, adding red pepper and other spices to the chicken, renamed the restaurant Popeyes, and the chain took off. Popeyes became the third most popular chicken restaurant in the country. But Copeland took on too much when he bought out Church's Chicken. The move eventually put Copeland into bankruptcy. Although Copeland retained the recipe to the chicken, he lost Popeyes to creditors in 1992.

That didn't slow Copeland down. He opened other ventures, including Copeland's Restaurants, Cheesecake Bistros, hotels and comedy clubs. He also tried and failed to get a gambling license, a battle that led to a physical fistfight with the winner of that license, Robert Guidry. He also got into a public brawl with author Anne Rice, who was appalled at Copeland opening what she considered a gaudy restaurant on St. Charles Avenue, which is now Copeland's Cheesecake Bistro. Copeland died in 2008 of cancer.



A memorial to Al Copeland was proposed for Lafreniere Park, but the concept was dropped because it was considered inappropriate for the public space.

Strava, on St. Charles Avenue, sparked a war between Al Copeland and author Anne Rice. Rice called the restaurant a 'monstrosity' and took out a full-page newspaper ad to blast the design.