

# Opinions

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Page 3A

## Garbage in the sunshine

Government business should be transparent. The Police Jury office is very cooperative when I request public documents. It may take a few days and usually fifty cents a page, but I get them.

Unfortunately, since the program that generates the monthly budget report has no line for the monthly garbage fee, the accounting for taxes collected by JCP Management are available only with permission from the Police Jury office and in a separate report. To say that report is unsatisfactory is a major understatement. If JCP Management can do no better job of detailing their monthly tax collections, then we need someone who can.

The JCP report contains only a single number: the total amount of money collected in the period. It does not show how many Catahoula households were billed, nor does it tell us how many paid or are in arrears in their payments. In fact, their reports are not even dated. They give a much more detailed report to the Town of Jonesville when reporting their billing results for the water and sewer system, so I know they can do better.

On the regular monthly budget report, one may see how much revenue has been budgeted, how much has been collected year to date, how much has been appropriated to spend, how much has been spent year to date and so forth. To properly understand these reports, one must realize that figures over and under budget are affected by how collections are scheduled.

All the JCP report provides, or at least the report given to me, is a total amount collected for a certain period. But what period? The report isn't even dated. The date ascribed to the report was handwritten on it. But even that is incorrect. The billing, as anyone receiving the invoices knows, runs from the 15th of one month to the 15th of the next month. And it is due two weeks in advance of the service period billed. The reports were hand dated from the first of the month to the 30th.

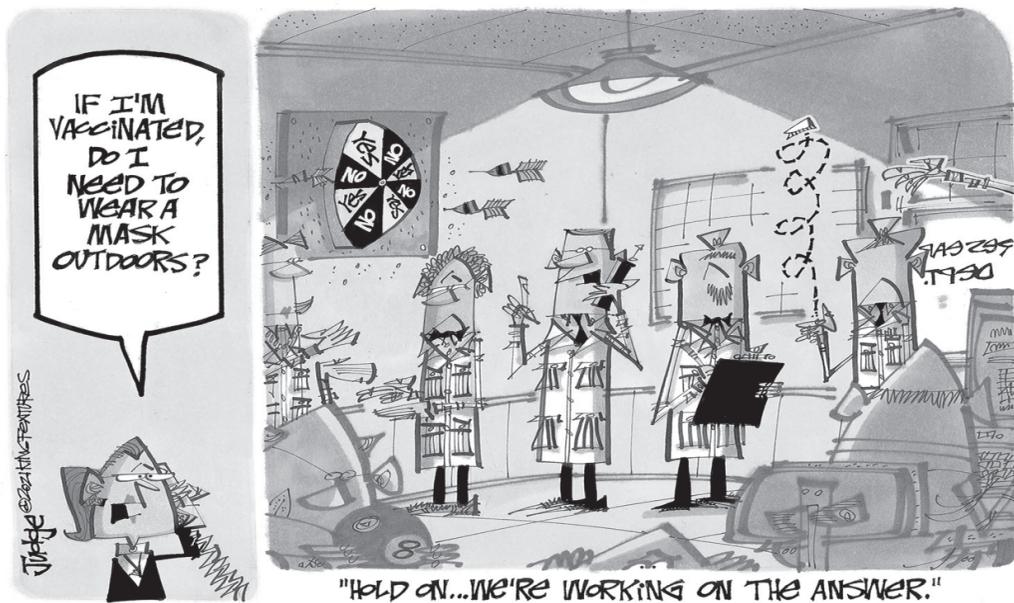
It's interesting that while the service periods (at least according to the dates on the reports) were of equal length, the amount of money collected in April was 4.5% less than the previous month. Are collections going down?

## By: Leo Chappelle

From the documents I have seen, I don't think we can be sure, but that's a remarkable change between two consecutive periods of putatively equal length. Remember, this tax isn't based on how much service you use. It's a flat rate. It should be the same every month if everyone pays. I doubt that a couple of hundred folks left the parish in only a month.

The legality of this tax has been in dispute. (And calling it a "fee" is preposterous. That changes nothing.) If people are starting to question what was done by Ordinance No. 2975, and a decline in revenue may suggest as much, this will have to be revisited. If that becomes necessary, then the simplest fix would be to repeal the ordinance, forgive the arrears, credit those who have paid, and schedule a referendum. That may seem complicated, but it will be better than a tax payer revolt and the fiscal chaos that may be developing now.

The Police Jury is struggling to deal with a progressively difficult fiscal situation. They need to hear from you to help improve our policy in this.



## JEB Tales

### State Troopers

In 1955 when I was thirteen years old my dad sent me to Mr. Babin's Ford tractor dealership in Jonesville to get some part for our old worn-out Ford tractor. The last thing Dad said was, "Don't mess around, I need that generator put on before dark so you can ploy tonight." I jumped in our old blue surplus Ford air force truck and took off.

Everything went well until I got back to Harrisonburg. The Louisiana State Police had set up at the junction of Louisiana 124 and Louisiana 8 checking for driver's license. Trooper J.Y. McGuffee was on the left side of the road so I rolled my window down, slowed down, and told him, "I'll be right back" and kept going. When I looked back to see if he was coming after me, he was just standing there scratching his head. I circled the courthouse, got back on Highway 124, and headed to Jug Bend. The next time I saw trooper McGuffee he and Dad were really having a good laugh about something.

In 1956 when I was almost fourteen years old my older brother and I entered a calf scramble in Alexandria, Louisiana. George had a driver's license, so Dad let us go in the almost new 1955 GMC pickup. George must have been confident of a win because he put the side boards on the truck and put hay in the bed of the truck for the calf he planned to win. There were over one hundred boys and girls in the calf scramble and sure enough George won first place. He did not win the calf he pulled across the finish line but got to choose from a pen of registered Hereford calves that had already been weaned and started on feed. George chose a heifer calf. I caught a calf at the far end of the arena but could not get it across the finish line before two older boys got their calf across. I was close but won nothing.

The next year I entered that year's calf scramble in Alexandria. I still had no drivers license so I rode with Mr. Rodney Ewing the assistant county agent who was the 4-H leader for Catahoula Parish. On the way to Alexandra, I started planning my strategy.

I knew not to catch a calf too far from the finish line, so thought I might wait right in the middle of the arena and let the calf come to me. It worked!

The bigger calf in the scramble did not try to go

around me, he decided to go over me. He almost knocked me down, but I got a halter on him and we crossed the finish line in first place. There was some confusion when they called my name out and someone said I could not win because I won last year. After Mr. Ewing explained that the winner last year was my brother George not me, I was allowed to pick out the most beautiful, registered Hereford bull calf in the bunch. He had a long name on the papers, so we just called him Scramble.

Since I had not taken a truck to bring my bull calf home with me, I got up early the next morning and got George's driver's license out of his blue jeans while he was still sleeping. I also got a five-dollar bill to fill up the GMC.

I got my bull and headed home. Everything went well until I got to a little town called Pollock. The Louisiana State Police were checking for driver's license. I was now very worried! I ha an older brother who was not as big as me but a whole lot meaner than me and by now he would be missing the five-dollar bill.

It was a few years before I had any more experiences with Louisiana state troopers. State trooper J.Y. McGuffee was now Sheriff McGuffee and helped with the only two tickets I ever got. A few years later, my brother-in-law Joe Tom Trunzler became a state trooper. So, when a state trooper turned his blue light on behind me on the road from Jonesville to Jena, I thought it was Joe Tom wanting to talk to me. It was not and the trooper did not want to talk very much. He just wanted to write. So, I had to pay.

Now many years later I realize I should have let my wife Shirley do the driving. No, she is not a slow driver, she usually lets the hammer down. I always buckle up and hold on. But she is an expert on not getting a ticket. When we had Jim Bowie's Relay Station many state troopers ate with us. Once while going to Monroe on U.S 165 Shirley got pulled over doing well over the speed limit. The trooper looked at her license smiled at her and said, "Mrs. Bartmess you were doing eighty miles an hour, please slow down." "And by the way that was the best ribeye steak I have eaten at your place last Saturday night." Another time when Miss Shirley was going to get something in Monroe, she tried using Jim Bowie's as a way to get to the trooper. First, she told him about Sheriff Fewell from Ouachita

## By John Ed Bartmess, Jr.

Parish who often ate with us and went to church with our daughter Jodie in West Monroe, next she told the trooper about former Sheriff Laymon Godwin who played music for us. The trooper was still not fazed so Miss Shirley played her trump card and said, "Sheriff Steve May eats with us all the time and is a close personal friend." As the trooper handed her the ticket he said, "Mrs. Bartmess, I know three sheriffs who are going to be mighty disappointed in you."

Would you believe the district attorney wrote Mrs. Shirley, known to her family as "A.J. Foyt," a letter telling her, I reduced your ticket to fifty dollars. Please slow down." It worked for a while. However last Saturday we had a great granddaughter, Emma Rae Carroll, participating in a dance recital in Monroe at 10:00 a.m. We also had another great granddaughter, Hattie Grace Givens, in a dance recital at 5:00 p.m. in Monroe. Miss Shirley announced we could go to Ruston between the two events and see our granddaughter Hannah Grace's new furniture. When I told Miss Shirley, we did not have the time for all that, Miss A.J. said, "We can if you let me drive:!"

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