

Opinions

October 13, 2021, Catahoula News Booster

Page 3A

Train of thought: Rocky Mountain High

By: Leo Chappelle

After a week in Colorado and Northern New Mexico I found myself still in my usual contemplative mood concerning the future of rural America and the implications that a dwindling population in the countryside might have for the direction of our nation.

In Southern Colorado they have for some years had a train ride many of you may have taken called the Cumbres & Toltec Railroad. It starts in either Antonito, Colorado or Chama, New Mexico. It's 64 miles one-way with a bus trip and a convivial bus driver-guide to entertain you on your way from your vehicle to the train's point of departure. Going over the Rockies is slow work so, even though the distance is short, the ride is leisurely, taking about eight or nine hours including a lunch stop. This particular railroad has been in use for 141 years starting in 1880.

Apparently, old trains are popular in Colorado and there are several operating to haul tourists bringing economic activity to areas that otherwise would have long since lost their appeal after gold played out and

beaver hats went out of fashion. Colorado is fortunate to have such a history and still retain the infrastructure of rails to capitalize on it.

The trend away from rural life to the cities that the latest U.S. Census has recorded demonstrates the need to develop tourism opportunities. Tourism will become much more important to a large part of our nation, Catahoula Parish included. Over half of the counties in America lost population between 2010 and 2020.

This shift in our national demographic profile will probably serve to increase the urge to "get away from it all" for city dwellers sick of urban crowding. Hopefully we will be fortunate enough to have someone with cash and ambition to capitalize on our tourism potential. Hunting opportunities alone are extraordinary, but like the movie, a river runs through it here, too.

There are special people here. The redoubtable Mary Edwards of Edwards' Motel who inspired the balloon festival in Jonesville comes to mind. Or Betty Gaither and her

Harrisonburg friends who just nailed down a grant to develop tourism and recreational opportunities in the Harrisonburg community. Such people with help from good neighbors like Ginger Breithaupt of LaSalle Parish have been the leaders in our drive to survive.

We should expect that kind of inspired effort from the folks we elect to public office and are actually paying to do work. Economic recovery and development should be the first thing on their mind when they wake up in the morning and the last thing when they go to bed at night. It's literally the future of our community and our children and grandchildren.

When I talk about this sort of thing, yes, I am looking at the Police Jury. But I am also looking at you, Senator Womack and you, Representative Riser. Riser has been around for a long time. Womack is new in the traces. But with the latest news from the Census Bureau, we are in a position similar to that line in the old Scots battle hymn, "now's the time and now's the hour".



JEB Tales

Old Time Open Range Cowboys, Part Two

Week before last I had room to write about only seven old time cowboys. They were Marshal Tingle, San Juan Tarver, Lee Dayton, Winnick Prudhomme, Bert Mason, Sam Mason and R.E. McGuffee.

When I wrote about Mr. Lee Dayton, I said Mr. Lee was fond of saying, "If I say a chicken dips snuff you could look under it's wings." I did not know what Mr. Lee meant by that saying and asked if somebody did. Shelby Ray Boothe called me from Alaska and told me the meaning of the saying. It is "If I say a chicken dips snuff, you can look under her wing and find a snuff box." In other words, Mr. Lee was saying he always told the truth. Shelby Ray also said that his grandfather Cooper had used that saying and you could always count on him to tell the truth.

Now back to the old-time cowboys. Number eight is Mr. Quitman Hodge. Mr. Quitman was an old bachelor with an old green Pre-1950 Chevrolet pick-up truck with wooden side boards, who specialized in milk cows. Sometimes he would haul a Jersey or Guernsey milk cow and calf around more than a week before he could sell the pair. Mr. Quitman would then go to the next sale barn to be open to look for another cow and calf or maybe a milk cow about to have a calf. Mr. Quitman was sometimes seen hauling a cow in the back of the truck with no side boards on the truck.

The number nine old time country cowboy is Stevie McGuffee, who is R.E. McGuffee's brother. Stevie married an Enterprise girl named Judy Prudhomme, who was Winnick Prudhomme's sister. Judy was an excellent athlete who had been a very good basketball player at Enterprise High School. Stevie got a job working on the Duty Ferry and he and Judy started a family. Two sons, Greg and Brian were born to the couple.

However, there was just too much cowboy and cowgirl in Stevie and Judy. Stevie quit being a boat captain and moved to Bossier Parish

where he ran 250 head of cattle. He also worked in the Livestock Producers sale barn. Next Stevie went to a ranch in Lufkin, Texas where he rode horses and penned cattle.

Stevie always had and used Catahoula Cow dogs. At one time Stevie worked for the Louisiana Public Service Commissioner, Mr. Foster Campbell. Stevie and Judy raised two very fine sons who are also excellent cowboys. Stevie McGuffee now has a ranch of his own.

Old time cowboy number ten is Mr. Lawrence Stutson. Mr. Lawrence had a two and half ton truck which was pretty high off the ground. Therefore, you had to have a loading chute for him to pick up or bring you any cattle. Mr. Lawrence had a reputation as a man who could look at a cow of any kind and tell you how much it weighed and how much it would bring per pound.

As Mr. Lawrence got older, he started using younger cowboys to help him. My brother-in-law, Slagle McGuffee helped Mr. Lawrence for a couple of years and said he had learned more about cows and horses than he had the rest of his life.

Next, I want to write about Mr. Roy Sargent. Mr. Roy and Mrs., Dorothy had a very nice place on Sargent Lake. They farmed the good, fenced land around the lake and ran open range cows on the rest of their land which was not fenced. Mr. Roy was an excellent cattle man who did not own a horse. However, he could take a bucket of corn and put his cows anywhere he wanted them.

Mr. Roy also had an old John Deere tractor that ran on tractor fuel not gasoline. He also owned an old stationary hay baler that set in one place, and you had to bring the hay to the baler. This was done by an old hay rake that had originally been designed to be pulled by a team of mules or horses. The bales of hay were tied with haywire by hand. To keep from wasting haywire the bales were rather large. You also

By John Ed Bartmess, Jr.

put the hay into the baler with a pitchfork. Mr. Roy and Mrs. Dorothy had three children: two beautiful girls, Carol, and Mamie and one boy, Bill. Those three could haul more hay to the barn than some of the big old boys who hauled hay for us. The two girls and one young boy would not haul a very big load, so they kept hauling while the big boys were picking up and reloading hay that had fallen off of the truck.

When it was late in the summer and the Ouachita River was really low, Town Lake which joined the Sargent property, would get so low the Sargent cows would walk across Town Lake and go to town. Once a teacher asked Carol or Mamie why didn't the Sargent's fence their cattle in? She answered and said it would be easier to fence the town of Harrisonburg.

Editors Note: The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by various authors do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Catahoula News Booster or any employee thereof. The Catahoula News Booster is not responsible for accuracy or completeness, and will not be liable for any errors, or omissions. All opinions are provided on an as-is basis and have not been edited in any way.

Catahoula News Booster

The Catahoula News Booster is the Official Journal of the Town of Jonesville, Village of Harrisonburg, Village of Sicily Island, Catahoula Parish School Board, Catahoula Parish Police Jury, and Tensas Basin Levee Board. POSTMASTER: Send form 3579 to Box 188, Jonesville, Louisiana, 71343. Periodical class postage paid at Jonesville, Louisiana. Kim Cloessner, Publisher Identification Number is SECDUSPS556-720. Published every Wednesday. Subscription rates: By mail in Catahoula Parish-\$25.00 annually, elsewhere in Louisiana-\$30.00 annually, out-of-state-\$35.00 annually Catahoula News-Booster, 103 3rd Street, P.O. BOX 188, Jonesville, LA 71343. 318-339-7242