

Opinions

You

Recall, if you will, that a couple of weeks ago I made mention in this column of a visit to the Police Jury by a gentleman whose job is as a demographer to the state of Louisiana. He studies population and related statistics. Such information is necessary and useful to plan for our governance according to however many of us there are who will both require and pay for government services, as well as for the apportionment of our representation. The principle finding of the latest national census concerning Catahoula is that we have lost another 14.4% of our population in Catahoula Parish over the last ten years.

While it is true that we have more government almost everywhere from Washington, D.C. to Harrisonburg, Louisiana, than we can afford (or need), just reducing the number of people whom we choose to represent our interests won't be enough to accomplish what will have to be done. It would be a start nonetheless and the Police Jury's failure even to discuss making such an obvious adjustment stands as a glaring indictment of their failure to take a realistic view of the circumstances. In fact, sometimes it has, in my personal opinion, the appearance of self-dealing.

It has been no secret for years that the parish's population is in steep decline and excuses of waiting to hear from the state have been disingenuous at their charitable best. Well, we've heard from the federal government; we've heard from the state, and now it's time to hear from the Police Jury. Someone needs to be talking in open meetings about what we plan to do in order to reverse, halt, or at least slow down the decline in our fortunes in Catahoula Parish.

It is again my opinion that too many things are discussed privately with respect to our local government as appears to me, at least, to be evident by the lack of debate in the regular meetings of the Police Jury. In fact, at one point in the past, it seemed as if the object of a police jury meeting was to see how quickly the whole thing could be ended without any constructive conversation or public interference.

Harold Sones has improved on that, but if it is to improve any more it will depend upon the other members of the Police Jury and the public who come to participate. We're past the luxury of government on a shelf.

The most difficult aspect of this situation is the lack of direct participation by the public whose lives and families are most affected by

the future of Catahoula Parish and its economic prospects. Will your children and grandchildren have to leave Catahoula Parish to be able to earn a living? Do you expect your children to be able to support their children here?

Let's face it: Representative government doesn't mean you can ignore what your representatives are doing. At any level. And the local level may be the most important of all because that's where the impact of government on your life and your family is most immediate.

If just ten interested citizens came to observe every meeting of the Police Jury, Catahoula Parish would change. One or two already do.

On Tuesday, December 21, 2021, at the oddly uninviting hour of 10:00 A.M. on a Tuesday morning, the Police Jury has scheduled its meeting to approve the 2022 Annual Budget. My hope is that you'll go to the courthouse in Harrisonburg, get a copy of the proposed budget and attend that hearing in room 104, the Police Jury meeting Room.

If you can't make that meeting, the Police Jury meets the second and fourth Monday of every month at 6:00 P.M. at the same place. Your family needs you to be there.

By Leo Chappelle

OFFICIAL ELECTION DAY BALLOT DECEMBER 11, 2021 - CATAHOULA PARISH

PROPOSITION(S)	SPECIAL ELECTION	PROPOSITION(S)
<p>Consolidated School District No. 10 Proposition (Bond)</p> <p>Shall Consolidated School District No. 10 of the Parish of Catahoula, State of Louisiana (the "District"), incur debt and issue bonds to the amount of not exceeding \$3,000,000, in one or more series, to run not exceeding 20 years from date thereof, with interest at a rate or rates not exceeding 6% per annum, for the purpose of financing capital expenditures for school purposes for the District, including constructing, acquiring and/or improving schools and other school related facilities, together with equipment and furnishings therefor, title to which shall be in the public; which bonds will be general obligations of the district and will be payable from ad valorem taxes to be levied and collected in the manner provided by Article VI, Section 33 of the Constitution of the State of Louisiana of 1974 and statutory authority supplemental thereto, with an estimated 21 mills to be levied in the first year of issue to pay said bonds?</p> <p>YES <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Police Juror</p> <p>District 3</p> <p>(Vote for ONE)</p> <p>Judia "Judy" Duhon ⁵ <input type="checkbox"/> No Party</p> <p>Deborah L. McCormack ³ <input type="checkbox"/> Republican</p> <p>John Tiser ⁶ <input type="checkbox"/> Republican</p>	<p>School District No. 25 Proposition (Tax Renewal)</p> <p>Shall School District No. 25 of the Parish of Catahoula, State of Louisiana (the "District"), continue to levy a special tax of five and fifty-six hundredths (5.56) mills on all of the property subject to taxation in the District (an estimated \$23,074 reasonably expected at this time to be collected from the levy of the tax for an entire year), for a period of ten YES <input type="checkbox"/> (10) years, beginning with the year 2022 and ending with the year 2031, for the purpose of construction, repair and replacement of equipment, and additional school support within the District? NO <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>SAMPLE BALLOT INSTRUCTIONS FOR VOTING</p> <p>1 Press the box <input type="checkbox"/> to the right of the candidate of your choice or YES or NO question; a green 'x' will appear to the left of the box <input type="checkbox"/> indicating your selection.</p> <p>2 To change a selection, press the box <input type="checkbox"/> again. The green 'x' will disappear and you may make a new selection.</p> <p>3 Make ALL selections, then press the <input type="checkbox"/> button located in the lower right corner. This electronically records all of your votes.</p> <p>4 Pull the curtain and exit the voting booth.</p>		
		<p>Machine Certified for Use in This State and Official Ballot Prepared and Certified by</p> <p><i>R. Kyle Ardoin</i></p> <p>R. KYLE ARDOIN Secretary of State State of Louisiana</p>

Making cane syrup story

By Leroy McMillin, Jr.

Farm life never ceased to amaze me. There was something new to learn every day. Sometimes it was boring but most of the time it was something I would have never experienced had I not spent my summers on my grandfather's farm.

One year, instead of planting corn in the field just north of the barn, my grandfather decided to plant sugar cane.

I didn't know it at the time but he did this every few years in order to rotate the crop. That allowed the land to recover from 'over-farming,' something I probably would have learned had I taken the farming classes in school. But I just couldn't see myself as a farmer so I took typing instead.

By the end of the cane-growing season, the field was lush with tall sugar cane. It had to be maybe three acres of the stuff. Then one morning it was time to cut it.

My grandfather and my dad were already by the first row of cane when dawn first made a crack. The horse was harnessed to a really crude sled my grandfather had made and as soon as we could see, we started stripping the stalks of cane leaves, and then cutting the stalk at its base with a cane knife.

I had a machete that my dad bought me at an Army Surplus store in Alexandria. The cane knife was definitely better for the job, but we only had one. So I tried to keep up with my machete. I couldn't so my dad took over while I stacked the cane stalks on the sled.

If you've never cut sugar cane with a cane knife, you really can't appreciate modern mechanized cane-cutting machines. That has to be some of the hardest work I ever did in my life.

Within minutes, I had blisters on both hands. To make it even less fun was the thousands of

flies that smelled the cane sap and made life miserable for us. Add to that the leaves of the cane are sharp and if you don't have leather gloves, your hands will be cut and bleeding, making your hands sticky with blood. I had no gloves and my hands were soft from being a 'city boy.' I was hurt'n really bad, but I didn't dare stop.

We kept cutting and piling the cane on the sled to be taken about a hundred yards away out behind the house where the cane press was located.

Eventually, all the cane was cut and ready for pressing the cane juice into a bucket which would be transferred to a huge vat that looked like it had seen better days.

A fire was started under the vat and an effort was made to clean away the rust, spider webs, dirt dobber nests, and anything else that looked bad enough to keep out of the syrup.

Meanwhile, the horse was harnessed to a long wooden pole that was attached to top of the cane press, which was mounted atop a tall post structure that was sturdy enough to hold it while a horse walked around in circles driving the press.

Men standing close to the press were there to continuously feed the cane into the press where it would be crushed, with the cane juice dripping into a small tub under the press.

The tub would be swapped with an empty one now and then, and the cane juice poured into the big vat where it would soon start cooking down to a thick molasses consistency.

This went on all night and well into the morning until all the sugar cane stalks were pressed.

The old mashed stalks were used to feed the fire.

My job, which didn't last very long, was to make sure the horse did what it was supposed

to – walk in a circle. I was tired and went to bed.

The next morning the men were ladling fresh homemade cane syrup into quart size and gallon size shiny metal paint-can type buckets. Apparently, each person got to take home several buckets or cans of the syrup they helped to make.

We had some of it drizzled over grandma's biscuits with 'crock-cream' poured over all of it. Heaven! I could eat three big biscuits that way then and could probably eat three right now.

In fact, I have a bottle of the same kind of homemade cane syrup in the pantry. If we go to the grocery I'll get some heavy cream and make some biscuits for breakfast.

Some things just can't get any better.

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Catahoula News Booster

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