

Opinions

December 22, 2021, Catahoula News Booster

Page 3A

A new budget and the Harrisonburg Sesquicentennial

By the time we go to press, the Police Jury will have approved its budget for 2022 at 10:00 A.M. on Tuesday morning last. The event is most remarkable for the fact that it's scheduled to take place at a time guaranteeing that most tax payers will be occupied earning the money on which the budget will depend. Being otherwise occupied myself, I chose to skip the formality as well. Next week there may be more to say about it.

A preliminary investigation of the budget draft shows that we received substantial enrichment from the state through the Community Water Enrichment Fund (CWEF) and the Local Government Assistance Program (LGAP), as well as other grants. These annual appropriations from the state supply needs otherwise unfunded by state or federal monies. This past year they made up almost 16% of our budget in the General Fund that finances the Police Jury, our local court, and the registrar of elections' office. The proposed budget for 2022 does not anticipate this assistance but that doesn't mean there won't be any. We can't get by without it.

The Hard Surface Fund and the Road and bridge Fund are projecting deficits of roughly

\$87,000 and \$79,000 respectively. There are three ways to close these budget gaps: raise taxes, don't do the work, or borrow money. The Police Jury has already raised taxes for the Sanitation Fund. Claims that the "garbage fee" is not a tax is an insult to the intelligence. That claim is so obviously false that making it calls into question the intelligence and integrity of those who make it.

Catahoula Parish isn't projecting deficits because we have suddenly adopted a lavish lifestyle. We have lost dramatic numbers of taxpayers. It's frankly bizarre to continue as if nothing has changed. But the Police Jury has shown no sign of a willingness to adjust to this new reality.

If the voting public does not demand it, it will not happen. We should start by changing the form, and reducing the size of our local government. The 2020 Census showed that seven of the parish's nine wards require adjustment anyway. If the current Police Jury cannot re-evaluate its mission, a new Police Jury that is willing to do so will have to be elected. A citizen's initiative could force the issue, but it would be easier if the people's elected representatives did the job of reorganization themselves instead.

By: Leo Chappelle

On the flip side, the Village of Harrisonburg Service League has consistently demonstrated the talent, intelligence, creativity, and initiative to organize and produce the several events that they do annually. When I sat in on a meeting recently, I watched them begin planning to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the incorporation of the community. That happy event is to take place on Saturday, April 23, 2022.

This first planning meeting started with a video of the 100th Anniversary from 1972. Andrea Cruse was drafted to be the "champion" of the celebration, but she will have plenty of capable help. If you also wish to help, they're looking for a slogan to use in publicizing the occasion. My suggestion is "A river runs through it", but somebody may have a copyright on that.

In addition to a slogan, the planners want to identify businesses that have been around for 20 years or more, organize shuttle tours, a parade, schedule an actual concert, blast off fireworks and generally celebrate all week. After all, you only get to do this once in 150 years.

The proper name for a 150th anniversary is a "sesquicentennial". If you can pronounce and spell it correctly, you get in free. Just kidding. Everybody gets in free anyway.

Merry Christmas!
From all of us to all of you.



My boat rental story

One year, I think maybe 1951 or 1952, my Grandfather, Roy McMillin, asked me to mind his boat rental place on Sandy Lake. His was the only boat rental place on the lake. Those who liked to fish knew the lake well and were regular customers. I would be on my own there all day. And I had my horse to ride over and back.

I was only ten or eleven, and I eagerly said yes without knowing what all it involved.

Grandpa built his own boats from cypress trees that he cut and hauled to the sawmill himself. Some of the trees were huge with solid rough-cut cypress boards eighteen inches wide and one inch thick and near twenty feet long. Grandpa would haul the lumber back to the barn from the sawmill and build the boats himself with nothing but a hand-saw, hatchet, hammer, and nails. Once finished, he would caulk the joints as best he could and haul each boat to the lake on a crude horse-pulled sled he made.

Once at the lake, he would make sure the boats soaked up as much water as they could so they would swell enough to fill in any spots that might leak. Most of the time they were leak free, but leaks were normal and were not a big deal.

The boats were very heavy and were expected to last a long time.

My grandfather said leaks were good for the boat because it kept the boat wet. What that meant, of course, is that the boat had to be bailed out frequently by the fisherman who rented it, or the boat renter (that would be me) when it was returned.

Since there was no dock or ramp, the boats had to be pulled up on the muddy shore to wash out the mud and smelly fish bait, and sometimes, fish parts left by fishermen who wanted to clean their catch right there in the boat. Grandpa didn't like people doing that.

We later 'punched' a hand-pump well down to the water table and built a cleaning-table for those who wanted to clean their fish. It was located out in the woods about a couple of hundred feet or so from the boat landing.

I helped put the well in. First we had to find a spot where water would be. Grandpa walked around a bit and after a while he stopped and said, "Right here!!!"

It all looked the same to me, but if we drove the pipe and well-point down to a dry hole, we couldn't bring the pipe and well-point back up. So it had to be the right place the first time. And at the proper depth: too shallow or too deep we might miss the water table and have to buy new pipe and well-point to start over.

I was too young to handle the big log they used to drive the pipe into the ground. First

they whittled out a couple of handles to nail to the side of the log. The handles were to lift it and drop it on the 2" galvanized steel pipe cap again, and again, and again, and again, etc for what seemed like half a day, but more like an hour or two..

After so many feet we would have to remove the pipe cap and install another joint of pipe, and replace the cap before hammering the pipe further down. After a while, my grandfather decided to check to see if we were in the water table yet. He screwed on the well's hand-pump and poured some priming water in the top, and started pumping. We got a little water but not what he wanted. We went back to pounding the pipe. A few minutes later though, the water came up and out really easy.

We pumped until it was clear then tasted it. It was ice cold and tasted a little like rusty nails. We splashed some of the water on our faces to wash away the sweat. It felt good, just like the pump on the porch back at the house a mile away.

Anyway, back to the job of me having to clean those messy boats.

There was only one way to do it and that meant I had to get into the water to tilt the heavy boat on its side so I could splash water into into it. And most of the time, the mud and fish guts were sun-glued to the boat's floor and sides. So it took a while to get it clean, usually because I had to rub everything with a wet rag first, then rinse again twice, all the while balancing the boat on its side, before I was satisfied that it was clean. Only then I could right the boat to keep the hull wet.

By the end of the day I was soaking wet, sunburned, and smelled horrible. Even my horse didn't like me.

For my full day of work, skinned knees and elbows, prune-looking hands, muddy from head to toe, clothes and all, I got four-bits (50¢) a boat, half the boat rental fee.

And I loved it.

I never once rented over three boats in one day, and some days none.

No customer ever brought a motor to put on the boat while I was renting them. Few people, besides commercial fishermen, even had motors for their boats.

One very slow day two men rented a boat and asked if I would like to paddle them around the lake so they could cast lines toward the lake bank.

My grandfather had dragged trees into the water along the bank all around the lake to keep commercial fishermen with nets from seining the lake when no one was around, sometimes at night.

By: Leroy McMillin, Jr.

Anyway, these guys said they would be happy to pay me \$1.50 to just paddle them around among those trees so they could cast artificial lures in amongst them. Not thinking, I jumped at the chance.

"Trolling" they called it. I didn't care what they called it as long as they paid me to paddle.

I sat at the rear of the boat off to the right side. That was the best place for me, a right-hander to paddle. All I did was slowly swishing my short stubby paddle back and forth in the water, hardly making a sound or a ripple getting them right where they wanted to be. I had learned to do that as a Boy Scout one summer at Scout Camp up in Monroe, Louisiana. But that was in a canoe, not a heavy, water-soaked, wooden boat with two men and their bait boxes.

By the time we made it all the way around the lake my arm felt like it was going to fall off, but they caught some nice fish and were happy enough to pay me \$2.00. They called the extra 50¢ a "tip." I didn't know 'tips' were money, but I liked it. My arm didn't hurt so much that night.

After that, the fishing season was pretty much done for and school was starting again, so I moved back to my parent's house in Harrisonburg.

That was just one story in a spectacular summer of stories for me. This one I learned how to rent boats, clean boats, punch wells, and get tips for paddling boats. Never once did I think my youthful ignorance was being exploited.

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-\$35.00 annually, elsewhere in Louisiana-\$45.00 annually, out-of-state-\$55.00 annually Catahoula News-Booster, 103 3rd Street, P.O. BOX 188, Jonesville, LA 71343. 318-339-7242