

Opinions

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Your budgets are available

Get ready for a surprise: Catahoula Parish has money. Drop by room 104 on the first floor of the courthouse in Harrisonburg and get a copy of the budgets for 2020 and 2021. They don't cost much. But if you subscribe to the Booster or steal it off the newsstand, you will probably see them summarized in the paper soon anyway. They're our look into the general condition of the parish, and every Catahoula resident has a stake in that.

The first thing that pops up is that one sees what appears to be a miracle of fiscal prudence in the Hard Surface Fund and the Sanitation Fund. The Sanitation Fund is projected to run a deficit this year of only \$1,000. But that's because of a voter approved transfer of \$100,000 from the Health Unit Fund to buy time to solve the garbage disposal crisis we discussed last week. Whether the proposal to charge a \$12 per month "residence fee" with no means of enforcing payment will work remains to be seen.

Likewise, there's more than meets the eye in the projected year ending surplus of almost \$215,000 in the Hard Surface Fund.

This is despite an original budget that at the beginning of the year anticipated a revenue shortfall of \$45,000. And unlike the Sanitation Fund, there wasn't any other money coming to the rescue.

But never mind. In particular, there has been only about \$15,000 spent to put down asphalt when \$200,000 was budgeted. Furthermore, over \$100,000 less was spent on gravel than planned. Your road didn't get paved? Now you may know why: It appears that the work wasn't done anywhere. However, the amount spent on payroll is projected to be a mere \$3,000 less than budgeted at about \$173,000 versus a budget of \$176,300. Was it because of COVID? Why did everybody get paid anyway? I frankly do not yet know.

In any case, problems in the Hard Surface Fund don't seem to stem from a lack of revenue. In addition to spending \$215,000 less than budgeted, we collected \$38,000 more in sales taxes than expected according to the budget. Unlike the Sanitation Fund, here is a fund in which the money was there, but the planned work was not accomplished.

By Leo Chappelle

The people certainly deserve an explanation and probably there is a good one. We look forward to it.

We certainly need more transparency and better communication. I think Harold Sones and the other jury members would appreciate the public's guidance, but there are fundamental problems here.

The first of these problems is actually regional in scope. Several parishes around us are either not growing, like LaSalle, or shrinking, like Tensas. This is moving opposite to the state of Louisiana which has shown at least modest growth. Unfortunately, our region of the state is not participating in that growth. Consequently, it occurs to me that we may need to look higher up in government to find where the problems are.

That doesn't let anyone at home off the hook; there are still things we can do for ourselves. Things we must do. But I am beginning to wonder about the quality of our representation at higher levels also. We may need to cast our net both wider and higher for answers.



JEB Tales

Featuring Shirley McGuffee Bartmess

Jeb was looking at a cookbook that my sister Melba Bradford had made for me some years ago. In the table of contents, she had written, "I hope you enjoy this book as much as I have enjoyed doing it for you. You are incredibly special to me, Love Melba." This book is extra special to me now because on July 19, 2020 I lost her to COVID. It was hard for me because she was the only sibling I had left. I talked to her every day and sometimes more. She had made this book for me on my birthday. I guess it is one of my most favorite gifts. She was incredibly special to me and I loved her very much.

It is a book of family recipes and I wrote on a lot of pages about the recipe and memories I had of the people and stories that I remembered from them.

I am the only one in my immediate family that is left. My grandparents were J.W and Minnie Bell Allbritton McGuffee. My uncles, aunts, cousins, and siblings are all gone. When I was growing up it was like the Walton's. My grandmother Minnie Bell lived with us and took care of me while Dad and Mom worked in the fields. I loved my childhood and have so many good memories because there were always cousins and aunts that stayed with us.

My Mom, Ida King McGuffee was one of the best cooks in the world. She fed the preacher and his family almost every Sunday and visiting preachers too.

One of my favorite memories was fishing trips to Kennedy Creek, sometimes called Canady Creek at Woodyard Swamp. We would leave early and take my Grandmother to spend the day with Aunt Mag and Uncle Albert. They were like my grandparents too. Dad, Mom, Melba, Slagle, Henry, and I would meet Uncle Lonnie, Aunt Leila, and Virgie at the creek. You could bet it would be a fun trip if Virgie Bell were with us. She loved to have a good time. She could have told our experience better than me, but she is no longer with us. So, I am going to tell it the

way I remember it. We would take tomatoes and pork and beans in case we did not catch any fish although I never remember us not catching any. Mom would bring potatoes to fry and fixings for hushpuppies and of course a big onion. Dad would build a big fire and would put a big truck rim around the fire and put a big black skillet on top of it while Uncle Lonnie supervised. Mom and Aunt Leila would take over and do the cooking. Mom always used Mrs. Tucker shortening to melt in the skillet. But first we had to catch the fish which was the best part of the whole day. Dad always had fishing poles because we had a cane patch on our place. We fished with worms we dug, larva from wasp nest or grub worms. We knew where the best fishing holes were.

I remember my Dad talking about when he was younger that he and his brothers, Uncle Lonnie, Uncle Earnest and Uncle Spencer McGuffee would go and camp out.

To go to Woodyard Swamp you had to go down a steep hill to get there. His old truck didn't always have good breaks so they would tie a large log behind the truck to help slow it down. I always loved to hear things my Dad did in his younger years. He and J.Y McGuffee did a lot of horseback riding just for the joy of it. They would ride in the Aimwell hills and Sherwood around Springridge Church.

Dad's horse was pretty lively and I think he loved to show off a little and aggravate Mom. I saw it jump a pine pile one time which upset Mom. He had a squirrel dog named Jack that went everywhere he did. We had cows and hogs in the woods that Dad kept a close watch on. Dad would snap his fingers and Jack would jump on the front of the saddle and go with him. One time when he snapped his fingers Jack caught the horse in the shoulder, needless to say the horse threw my Dad in Rock Creek by our house. He came home bleeding and skinned up. Luckily, he didn't have any broken bones.

Horse back riding was one of our favorite

By John Ed Bartmess, Jr.

pastimes when I was growing up.

I hope my girls had as much fun as I did growing up and I believe they did.



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