

# Opinions

February 24, 2021, Catahoula News Booster

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## Ice Storm

On Wednesday, February 17, sometime around 12:20 P.M., August of 2020 came back. We were out of electric power again for another (so far) four days. At the time of writing, since a limb pulled the power head off of the outside wall of our house, I'm thinking that straightening this out is going to take a while. And since I'm not a mountain man in 1830 trapping beaver in the Rockies, or a soldier deployed in combat, going four days without bathing is not a habit to which I wish to become accustomed.

We had a visit Saturday from Detective Ben Adams and Pamela Aarons, daughter of the late Police Juryman Bo Aarons. They came along with a couple of helpful inmates to cheer us up. We got some good advice, and to tell the truth, it was all such an unexpected pleasure that I felt oddly reassured even though nothing had really changed. It was one of but a very few times a law officer ever visited me and left without handing me a ticket. Of course, Deputy Darron Cooper has stopped by for a cordial visit before, and I see Deputy Brad Bradly volunteering

on the Catahoula Economic and Industrial Development District board. So, our deputies do their share of good deeds.

Live oak limbs as big as small trees are hanging half broken twenty feet in the air. Internet service has been spotty. Facebook goes on without me, though. This pioneer life looks a lot like social distancing until we all arrive at the gas station. Then it looks like nine sisters decided to have a family reunion in a parking lot. Every household has its own riddle to solve.

The Town of Jonesville distributed water to provide some relief during the power outage and the Police Jury got some to distribute, too, I'm told.

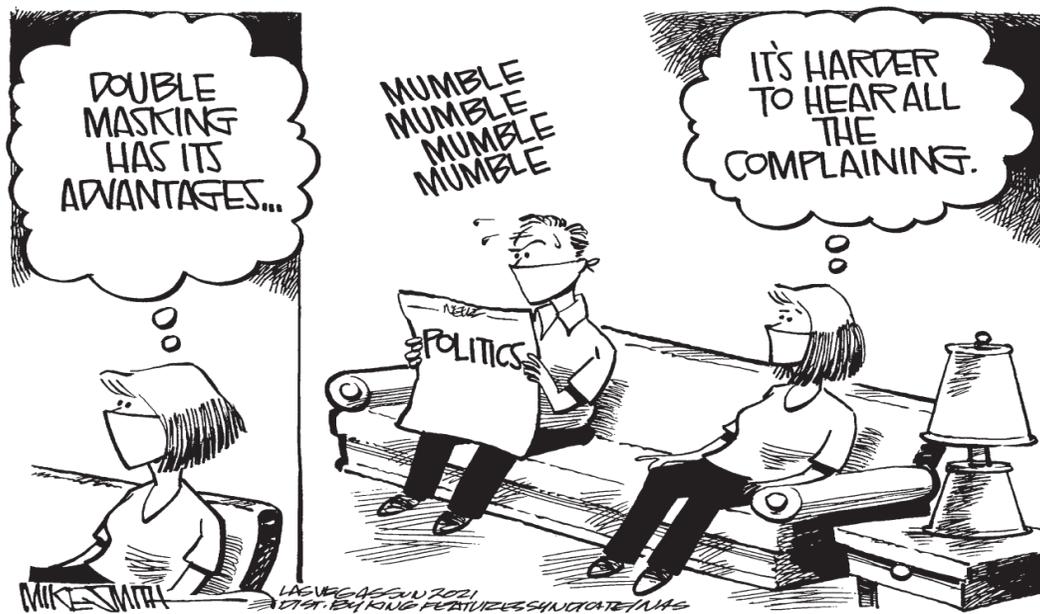
At a time like this, the discovercatahoula.com website that was built with private money donated by local businesses, could be a valuable asset if administered, as it should be, by people already in government. It takes only about \$2,300 per year to operate the website created to encourage economic development in Catahoula Parish. It could be a one-stop source of reference

## By: Leo Chapelle

material about the parish for prospective investors and tourism. In an emergency such as this latest one, it could be a clearing house of useful information updated daily for dealing with the situation. All departments of local government could communicate every day to the community in one place. But we can't find \$45 per week to connect our government with the people. In times like these, it would be awfully helpful.

The weather will soon warm and our memories of trouble will fade. But at some point, trouble will remember us and come again. As the parish shrinks, we may need to become more self-reliant. Keeping bottled water on hand before there is a need, maybe some canned goods and medical supplies seems reasonably wise. If you can afford it, a generator sure looks like a good investment. Just buy the extra gas before the rush begins.

It isn't necessary to be a full-fledged "prepper" to have a little extra toilet paper on hand. Just being careful, right?



## JEB Tales

### How to Go to College When You Are Broke

It was a cold and windy Friday, January 13, 1962 I had been rough necking for a small drilling company since October 1961. I had even worked derrick one night when the derrick hand did not show up. This night we were tripping, which is pulling all the pipe out of the hole being drilled and stacking it back three joints at a time. The driller had lost count of the number of joints we had pulled out and suddenly, the last stand of pipe along with the drill bit popped out and knocked me off the drilling floor. Thank goodness the mud had not frozen and I was not hurt.

Before I could get up, an old four-wheel drive army type truck topped the hill and I saw the relief crew. We had been iced in the night before and had worked all night because we could not get out and the relief crew could not get in. The tool pusher had located this old truck and sent it to get the relief crew in and our crew out of the drilling site which was about twelve miles back in the Mississippi hills. While I was laying in the ice, snow, and mud I decided, "I'm going to college".

As my driller from Waldo, Arkansas handed me my check, I told him, "Smitty if you can find someone to take my place, I'm going to college." He smiled and said, "John Ed you're the sorriest derrick man I ever saw, of course you're laid off, go to college!" I found out later why he used the term "laid off". It meant I could sign up for unemployment insurance. I never did because I found a job at Sears and Roebuck service station mounting tires and automobile tires, the second day we arrived in Monroe.

Shirley and I had postponed college because my father, Big John Bartmess, had broken his back the year before and I had agreed to put off college and help him farm.

First there was a spring flood that took about half of the cotton and beans. Then there was a drought. By the end of September, I told Big John that if he could get the rest of the crops

out, I would not take my share and I would go to work in the oil field.

Now, after three months in the oil field, it was time for college to start in a few days. By the time Shirley and I paid off our trailer, Terry Hardware, Leroy Mcmillin Grocery, Earnest Guinn's Service Station and paid a car note we were broke. Dead Broke!

What to do? First, I sold my registered Hereford bull which I had won in a calf scramble four years earlier. When Mr. Emmitt and Mrs. Inez Haygood heard we were going to college they sent us some money and Mr. Emmitt signed a note for me at Catahoula Bank in Harrisonburg. Mr. Son and Mrs. Doretta Boothe gave us some money. I went to see State Senator Mr. Sonny Gilbert who had one fifty-dollar scholarship left. Senator Gilbert divided it between me and my brother George. I went to Northeast State College and applied for a National Defense loan which I got. I paid the last installment on that loan the year my daughter Jackie started college. Shirley's mom and dad, Coy and Ida McGuffee helped us. Shirley's Uncle J.D. and Aunt Juanita Blackmon helped us. My dad Big John and mom Marcella Bartmess helped us.

We were still short, so I called one of the best friends I ever had, Leo Boothe. When I had told Leo in September 1960, I was going to ask Shirley McGuffee to marry me, He said, "John Ed, if you get married you will never go to college." My response was, "I'll bet you 100 dollars I will." Leo said, "It's a bet!" So, I called and told him if he would go ahead and pay me, I could go to college. Two days later Leo hitchhiked all the way from LSU at Baton Rouge and handed me a 100-dollar bill. He had worked all day and one night to earn that money for my tuition at Northeast Louisiana State College. Now you know why I love Leo and all the others that helped Shirley and me raise money to go to college.

We now had enough money for tuition, one month's rent for a space in Deluxe Trailer Park

## By John Ed Bartmess, Jr.

and enough to fill up the tank of Dad's old one ton truck to pull our eight foot by thirty-six foot "M" system house trailer to Monroe, Louisiana. So, at 4:00 a.m. Sunday January 21, 1961 we started our higher education journey.

Something I would like to share with you that I did not know at the time. Shirley's Aunt and Uncle Alice and Robert Winegart had agreed to pay Shirley's tuition and dormitory fees at Northwestern State College in Natchitoches, Louisiana. For me she gave this up so she could work on a broken foot filling orders sat a wholesale drug company while expecting our first child. Also, she not only worked full time she always cooked our breakfast, dinner, and supper, kept the house spotless and packed me a lunch every day.

As I've mentioned before, "It's amazing what two people working together can accomplish."

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