



**WHILE SUMMER** seems to last nine months on the Bayou, in Alaska, it's just the opposite. Near 24-hour-daylight makes for little sleep and a lot of activity as Alaskans pack into three months what they won't be able to do during nine months of snow and inconceivable cold. Pictured above, just after sunset at 12:32 a.m., June 7, is Mount McKinley, known as "Denali," North America's largest peak rising above the union of three rivers just a short stroll from downtown Talkeetna, Alaska. (Photo by Sharon L. Corsaro)



**AFTER RECORD HEAT** broke out across Alaska with endless sun through all of June, the Fourth of July parade came with Fall-like rainy cold that was very similar to January on the Bayou. Pictured above is a local library's "Dig into Reading" Fourth of July parade float passing through downtown Talkeetna, Alaska. (Photo by Sharon L. Corsaro)

## Letters to the Editor

### Johnson Bayou gets high praise

Dear Editor:

While nearly 4,500 miles away from Cameron Parish, in a tiny town built for gold miners, trappers, mountain climbers, fishermen and modern tourists, near the foot of Mount McKinley in the far north of Alaska, on the Fourth of July this year, I was fondly reminded of the wonderful times I had in Johnson Bayou.

I would have to say that, while nestled deep in the south, where the waters of the marsh meet the waters of the sea at the edge of the great Gulf of Mexico, I was embraced by angels this past winter, at Johnson Bayou's library.

I cannot sing praises enough for the gracious manner in which I was received in Johnson Bayou. Honestly, I would have been "left out in the cold" had it not been for the wonderful services at the library.

Part therapy, part tourism,

part traveling office, information portal, and definitely the book, video, internet and news hub of activity, the Johnson Bayou Branch of Cameron Parish Library was the place to get everything you could need, even food some days, in a community that lost so much to hurricane damage not too long ago.

I left the Bayou quite a few times after my first discovery in September 2012, but I always returned like a boomerang, because I loved the place so much, and my visits all together would have been far less likely, without the library's help and support.

Far more than a library, I witnessed and experienced what felt like a welcoming committee, and ambassador for the whole region, that was definitely great for the community.

As time passed, I spent many days learning about the place and the services, while becoming good friends with the library staff and enjoying some heart-warming fun times. One day in May, one staff member shared a song

she made up to motivate young patrons during the upcoming summer reading program, "Dig into Reading."

While we all had a great laugh picturing sharing the little ditty with the kids, the new made-up-tune planted itself in my mind just as a great advertising jingle would aim to do. So this summer, while thousands of miles away in the far north, when I saw a "float" in a Fourth of July parade here in Alaska promoting "Dig into Reading," I immediately was transported in my mind, back to preparing for summer reading at the library in Johnson Bayou.

When I reviewed my photos from that Alaskan parade, I realized that the signage on this particular "float" was indeed an Alaska version of the same summer reading program I'd learned about in Johnson Bayou. I knew I had to share those photos with my friends at the library. When I did, they asked me to write a story to share my experiences here in Alaska.

Instead, that prompted me to do what I had planned long ago, to publicly express my deep gratitude for the most

gracious warm welcome I received this last winter, from you all in Johnson Bayou, and especially, from the most wonderful library and its spectacular staff.

Though I love this tiny place in the far north, I found Johnson Bayou while traveling the Gulf of Mexico looking for a new home in the south. After a very long search, I think I may have found the new spot I can say this much for sure, I know once I get back to the Bayou, I will not want to leave the amazing waters of that ocean, where the most wonderful people live, in the hidden haven of beauty known as, Johnson Bayou.

I am grateful to the library, as ambassador, great friend and super information hub, as I am grateful to the whole community of Johnson Bayou for embracing me as I stayed along your beaches taking in the healing waters and amazing calm of that gorgeous gulf ocean you get to hold as backdrop to your daily lives.

I am happy to share photos from the north, as it gives me opportunity, to send back great thanks for you all in Johnson Bayou. I am blessed to have been embraced, by you.

/s/ Sharon Corsaro

Talkeetna, Alaska

*(EDITOR'S NOTE--"Dig into Reading" is the theme for this year's national Collaborative Summer Library Program which Cameron Parish Library participates in each summer to promote literacy and encourage people to read. A new patron of the library, Sharon Corsaro is a creative strategist, coach and writer who travels extensively, helping others learn to create what they want by embracing creative solutioning for personal, business and community endeavors. Sharon can be reached at info@growing-gold.com.)*

### E. J. Dronet was WW II survivor

Dear Editor:

Reading Sunday's *American Press*, a story of the survivors of our last United States Naval Ship to be sunk by a Japanese sub on July 30, 1945. I recall hearing this news then on the radio.

I entered the U.S. Army on my mother's birthday, Aug. 7, 1945. I didn't realize it being her birthday, until she told me as I was leaving.

Many years after retirement from the Army, I heard of a book that was written (true account) by one Naval Officer who was there, titled "We Were There - the USS Indianapolis Tragedy" by LCDR Peter Wren.

I, having not been in our U.S. Navy, but having experienced much sea time aboard troop ships, crossing the Atlantic ocean twice and the Pacific once, also riding out one storm for two days and nights, gave me much thought of what happened to all those aboard the USS Indianapolis.

Reading the first hand report of that tragedy inspired me to purchase more of these books, three each to the Library here in DeRidder, also to Leesville. I was so inspired, I tried to write a book review in my non-journalistic way to inform people. I got two responses. One was a phone call from a lady in Anacoco. She told of her brother who was one of the survivors, when she told me his name, Grover C. Carver, I recalled reading his name in the book. She said he was alive and well in California.

About two weeks after this contact, I received a phone from her brother Grover. He

was back home and was preparing for a family reunion at the First Pentecostal Church in Leesville. He invited me to attend; I gladly accepted.

The second contact from my book review came from Jerry Wise, Editor of the *DeQuincy News* and *Cameron Pilot*, telling me of another survivor from this tragedy, Joseph E. (E. J.) Dronet, then a Bank President. I called the number Jerry Wise gave me, E. J. answered, and we had a nice conversation. I learned that at the time of this tragedy, he was only 17 years of age. Several months after we talked, I saw E. J.'s obituary.

The Captain McVay was held responsible in the news media. Capt. McVay did everything right, but still was condemned. This book is and should be an informative real account of what happened to the last U.S. Navy vessel sunk in the WWII era.

/s/ Jack L. Daniels  
CWO USA Ret.

*(EDITOR'S NOTE--The late E. J. Dronet once served as president of the Cameron State Bank--now Iberiabank. He was leading civic and business leader in Cameron for many years. He attended one or more of the reunions of the Indianapolis survivors.)*

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