

Thoughts from the Publisher

Making Lemonade Out of Lemons

By Dale Benoit
dale@plaqueminesthegazette.com

Sometimes you wonder what people were drinking when they came up with ideas that cost taxpayers money. That thought crossed my mind while considering the latest study on the possible joint use of the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NASJRB) in Belle Chasse, commissioned by the port.

The need for civilian aviation isn't new. Plaquemines Parish has been talking about a private airport for decades. I remember discussions about a site near Fort Jackson in the 1980s. In the 2000s, the conversation moved to building an airstrip in Myrtle Grove. Studies and proposals have followed ever since. The idea keeps coming back for a reason.

Plaquemines is a long way from convenient private aviation access, particularly once you get south of Belle Chasse. For someone flying a private or corporate aircraft, getting into New Orleans and then fighting traffic downriver just isn't attractive.

Apparently, plenty of private pilots already know that. I've been told that people consistently call NASJRB to request to land private aircraft there. And last year, one of the more interesting stories: Drew Brees wanted to fly into Belle Chasse for the Super Bowl.

That isn't just a good story about a famous football player. It illustrates the opportunity. A man with his own airplane wanted to land on a runway that already exists in Plaquemines Parish because it was convenient to where he needed to be.

When the Plaquemines Port commissioned a study on the potential joint use of the Naval Air Station, it focused on cargo.

One touted possibility was capturing the importation of flowers from Miami to Belle Chasse. I have nothing against flowers. But when you have a 10,000-foot runway sitting next to one of the largest industrial development corridors in the country, it seems a little underwhelming to conclude that our big aviation opportunity may be getting flowers here. And common sense tells us large flower imports will go to major consumption areas like Miami, Atlanta, or Houston, not New Orleans. We did not need to waste money to find that out.

Maybe we were asking the wrong question. The opportunity will not be about moving cargo since we will not have a container port. It may be about moving people. Imagine a first-class fixed-base operation at the Naval Air Station serving corporate and private aircraft. A businessman or woman could fly their jet into Belle Chasse, fuel up, get into a waiting vehicle, and be in South Plaquemines in less than an hour.

And what would they find when they got there? Some of the finest fishing in the world. They could stay at a lodge, eat at a restaurant, or head to one of our two outstanding marinas, Venice Marina or Cypress Cove. They could charter a boat, hire a fishing guide, buy fuel, groceries, or equipment. They might build their own private lodge in South Plaquemines, creating construction and property tax revenues.

That one airplane suddenly isn't just an airplane. It's a customer. And the money doesn't stop with the fishing guide. It circulates through the marinas, restaurants, hotels, fuel suppliers, mechanics, grocery stores, and all the other businesses that benefit when somebody comes here with

money to spend.

Fishing is only one part of the opportunity. Plaquemines also sits in the middle of an enormous industrial investment boom. Billions of dollars are being invested along the river, and executives, investors, engineers, and corporate decision-makers have plenty of reasons to come here.

Wouldn't it be nice if some of them could simply fly here? The Port's own 2023 market study noted that NASJRB has 6,000- and 10,000-foot runways capable of handling large aircraft. We didn't build it. We don't have to buy the land. We don't have to pour 10,000 feet of concrete. The federal government already did that for us.

Of course, there are hurdles. This is a military installation. Security comes first. The Navy has a mission. FAA requirements, airspace issues, access controls, and operating agreements would have to be worked out. But it's a valuable piece of infrastructure, and the Navy has already considered and, in theory, approved civilian use of the base runway.

I'm not suggesting it will be easy or, at this point, saying it will work. But I am suggesting it deserves a serious study—the right study. The previous study may have missed an opportunity. Instead of asking, "What can we ship through here?" perhaps we should have been asking, "Who would pay to land here?"

How many private aircraft would use a Belle Chasse FBO? How many corporate jets? What would they spend on fuel, parking, and services? What would an FBO operator be willing to invest? What would those visitors spend once they arrived in Plaquemines?

Those are the numbers that could tell us whether there is a real economic de-

velopment opportunity on those runways. New Orleans hosts major events—Super Bowls, concerts, championship games, Mardi Gras and conventions—that attract private aircraft from around the world. Lakefront Airport handles much of that traffic, but why shouldn't Belle Chasse provide another option?

Maybe instead of spending another decade asking where we can build an airport, we should ask whether we can make the airport we already have work for Plaquemines Parish. Talk to FBO operators. Talk to corporate flight departments. Talk to the people who have actually called the base asking to land there. Find out what they would pay and what they would use it for. And talk to the Navy, which has stated numerous times that they would like to see increased utilization of the base and would prefer that development south of the base be commercial rather than residential. Less encroachment and fewer noise complaints. Only then will we know whether there is a real opportunity or an idea that should move to the same filing cabinet as Fort Jackson and Myrtle Grove.

Instead of asking how we can get flowers from Miami to Belle Chasse, let's ask how we can get people from everywhere to Plaquemines. Because the next private plane that wants to land at Belle Chasse may not be carrying flowers, but it may be carrying an investor, a corporate executive, a fisherman, a concertgoer, or maybe even another celebrity athlete like Drew Brees. Wouldn't it be nice if, next time, we were ready for him?

The last port study was a waste of money. Perhaps the port can make lemonade out of the lemons by hiring a firm to study this idea.



We finally have a community cookbook from Delaware! Ever since we have begun adding community cookbooks to our database, we have longed for a book from Delaware. It was the only state not represented on the shelves. We have over 2000 community cookbooks, and it seems that we continue to receive more as people donate their cookbooks to us. We welcome them.

We received the Delaware cookbook in the mail. It was sent to us by a reader who responded to our plea for a cookbook from Delaware. And I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to that donor. We can now say that we have community cookbooks from every state in the US and the territories. We even have a community cookbook from Canada. Our community cookbook holdings go back to the 19th century, when creating community cookbooks was used by women as a means to raise funds for various causes.

Our Delaware cookbook is called Delaware Favorites: A Cookbook of Recipes from 4-H Families and Friends. It is from 1993, published by Delaware 4-H Foundation, Inc. Besides containing the history of the 4-Hers in Delaware, the book is sprinkled with important people and

places in the history of the state. The recipes have been contributed by people from around the state. And the recipes have nutritional information like calories per serving, salt, protein, and fiber information.

With 28 miles of coastland, Delaware does offer lots of crab recipes. I thought that it would be interesting to try one. The seasoning and prep is different from Louisiana recipes. You be the judge of which you prefer.

If you or relatives or friends have cookbooks, pamphlets, old menus, or other remnants of our food culture, please consider donating those things to the Nunez Culinary Research Center when you clean house or do a purge. Our goal is to amass the largest and best culinary research center in the country right here in St. Bernard Parish. Help us grow this unique resource in St. Bernard Parish.

Want to join us in the quest? Just get in touch with me and we'll find a way for you to participate. Write to me at lizwillia@gmail.com

Here are just a few of the collections:

- Community and Family Cookbooks
- Wine
- Cocktails
- Cakes and cake decorating - our collection of cake toppers is lots of fun
- Food history
- Business - everything from opening your own restaurant or bar to how agricultural products are sold
- Health and Nutrition

And many more. . . Please come and browse.

Crab Imperial

(Submitted by Alison Halderman from Harrington, Delaware)

Yields 6 servings
Preheat oven to 450 F
Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon margarine
- 1 tablespoon flour
- ½ cup milk
- 1 ½ teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2 slices white bread, crusts removed, cubed
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons margarine
- 1 pound backfin crab meat, cleaned, flaked
- Paprika to taste

Directions:

- Melt 1 tablespoon margarine in a medium saucepan. Blend in flour. Add milk slowly, stirring constantly. Cook over medium heat until mixture begins to boil and thicken, stirring constantly. Add the next 3 ingredients, stirring well. Cool. Fold in Mayonnaise, lemon juice, salt and pepper; remove from heat. Melt 2 tablespoons margarine in skillet. Add crab meat. Cook for several minutes, tossing to coat. Stir into sauce mixture. Spoon into a greased 1-quart baking dish. Sprinkle it with paprika. Bake at 450 F for 10 minutes or until hot and bubbly.

Louisiana Army National Guard Implements Site Enhancements at Woodlands Preserve

Woodlands Conservancy is excited to have been approved for assistance from the Innovative Readiness Training Program. The Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) is a collaborative program that leverages military contributions and community resources to multiply value and cost savings for participants. Communities typically provide materials and basic services while military units contribute personnel and training resources. IRT missions are designed to produce mission ready forces, civil-military partnerships, and stronger communities.

The projects approved for Woodlands Preserve include a variety of site enhancements.

Thus, far the LAARNG have constructed a bird banding/multi-purpose pavilion along the Upland Trail, installed a culvert, removed the trees that were growing out of the top of all ten WWII ammunition Magazines, righted the interpretive kiosk near the Ammunition Magazines that was impacted by a fallen tree during Hurricane Ida and a variety of other small enhancement projects. "We are extremely grateful to the LAARNG for their assistance in providing the labor and expertise to complete so many improvement projects. These could not have been completed without the generous support of the Keller Family Foundation, Chevron Oronite and TC



From left: The interpretive kiosk by the WWII Ammunition Magazines; IRT signage posted at the trailhead at Woodlands Preserve; One of the WWII ammunition Magazines after the top had been cleared of trees.

Energy for funding supplies needed to complete the IRT projects," said Katie Brasted, Executive Director.

The next group to be deployed to Woodlands Preserve will be working on infrastructure improvements for the Coastal Forest Center to be constructed at Woodlands Preserve. If you or your business is interested in furthering the establishment of the Coastal Forest Center and other IRT improvements at Woodlands Preserve, please contact the land trust at info@woodlandsconservancy.org.