Hot Wells “Miracle” Water Heals La. Man

By Jerry Humphries
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When Pat Colligan was about nine years old, he was stricken with a crippling disease that puzzled a number of doctors. He was near death when his family decided to take him to Hot Wells for mineral water baths.

And a wise decision it was, he said.

After 15 days of treatments, he was well on the road to recovery.

To say conclusively that Colligan was healed by the waters of Hot Wells is impossible.

But all evidence indicates he was. And he firmly believes it.

Today, at 68, the Belle Chasse banker is the picture of health.

He carries no signs of the unknown disease that hit him 59 years ago.

Colligan, interviewed recently at Hot Wells, recalled vividly the "horrible pains" in his left hip and the horrors of his left leg being "all twisted" and his left arm "beginning to twist." For days he ran a temperature of about 105.

At the time, Colligan was living with his grandparents at Church Point.

"Sen. Homer Barousse was a friend of the family. He went to Hot Wells on a regular basis in those days. He told my grandfather to 'take Pat to Hot Wells. You've tried everything else.'"

Colligan was taken to Hot Wells where he experienced what he called a miracle.

And he still makes periodic trips to the place, where he believes healing waters enabled him to regain his health.

Although it was a long time ago, he remembered clearly that first trip to Hot Wells.

"They got me on a train at Church Point and from there I went to Melville and on to Boyce. A jitney was running. I was loaded onto a stretcher. It was at night. And they brought me on to Hot Wells," he recalled.

"We stayed at the old Register Hotel on the creek. From my room I could see turtles on logs sunning."

The next morning, he continued, was when he received his first mineral water bath. With him were his father and grandmother.

"I was so attached to my grandmother that they took me through the ladies' section. After a couple or three baths they convinced me to go to the men's side where they increased the heat," he said. My father carried me in his arms or on a stretcher."

Colligan said about 15 baths he was able to walk again.

"As I understand it, 21 baths (one a day) were needed, but we didn't have the funds at the time," he said. "We could only afford 15."

Although his left leg was "still crooked," he was able to walk.

As he stepped off the train that took him home, he could hardly wait to see his grandfather.

And as he approached his home his grandfather saw him coming.

"He stood up and, being a devout Catholic, made a sign of the cross," Colligan recalled.

He said his grandfather told him, "This is a miracle. I never believed you would come back alive."

Colligan started making regular trips to Hot Wells. He missed one year of school but continued to "get better and better."

For years he thought he had suffered from polio but he said about two years ago a surgeon who removed his spleen advised he had probably been stricken by a blood disease.

There were a number of years in his adult life when he was unable to go to Hot Wells because the state-operated health resort was closed.

"As soon as Earl Long started the place up again I started to go back. I go back every opportunity I get. I think the place is one of the nicest in the state," he said.

But, he emphasized, the Central Louisiana community and public officials don't seem to "give a dam" about improving or promoting it.

Colligan said he returns to Hot Wells whenever he can, not because of any pressing health needs. He goes back because he enjoys the baths and massages, the quiet atmosphere and early morning strolls in the wood near the picturesque health resort located in rolling hills west of Alexandria.

Colligan said Hot Wells has much to offer the state, that's he's known of persons leaving...