Remembering Denham Springs

Readers share their memories of life in the sleepy little Livingston Parish town

By LAURIE SMITH ANDERSON

DENHAM SPRINGS — To experience a "Train Station Thursday" here today is to imagine what this fast-growing metropolis must have been like as a sleepy hamlet half a century ago.

Families set up lawn chairs on the street that runs alongside the railroad track. City police blockade the side street and help people cross Range Avenue. Volunteers pour lemonade. Nearby antique shop owners stand in their doorways, visiting with pedestrians.

As the sun goes down, sweaty boys still dressed in dirty baseball uniforms played tag through the crowd as teen-aged girls roll their eyes and pretend not to notice. Toddlers wonder free from adult surveillance. Occasionally, a train roars through. Engineeers smile and wave at the nostalgic scene and the band plays on.

We asked our readers to tell us what Denham Springs was like in years past. We got more than two dozen responses, some from lifelong residents and others from natives who have since moved away but look back with fond memories of happy childhoods spent fishing in spring fed creeks, drinking five-cent sodas at James Drug Store and taking in feature films at the Carol Theatre.

To trace Denham Springs' history back even further, see the article on page 3 about Lionel Rebeul, a local historian who wrote a book titled "Benton's Ferry."

ABOVE: Downtown Denham Springs in 1956 included numerous businesses on Range Avenue as seen in this street scene. Today, the Historic district houses mostly antique shops.

RIGHT: Denham Springs Elementary School first-grade teacher Carolyn Pearson Steinhuller stands with her class on the school steps in 1949.

RIGHT: From left, Marion O. Sanders Sr., F.O. Denham and Ogden Hall pose for a picture outside of Hall Denham Hardware Company on Range Avenue in 1950. At left are some items for sale including a manual lawn mower and a ringer-type washing machine.

FAR RIGHT: John P. Brashears, his wife, Sara, and their sons, Murray, of Denham Springs travel by horse and buggy on a dirt road to the Amite River in this 1910 photo.