

## Water hook-up plan hits snag

By Bruce Murray

Vermilion Bureau writer

ABBEVILLE — Getting safe water to residents on South Henry and Gooch streets will not be as quick and simple as initially planned.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had pledged to have all of the residents near the former Broussard Chemical disposal sites hooked up to city water.

Six residential homes stand immediately next to the three clusters of large, above-ground tanks found to contain hazardous levels of arsenic, acids, bases and benzene, among other chemicals.

"Originally, when we first looked at it, we thought economically it would be better to just hook them up, but we've hit some snags," said Robert Sullivan, the EPA emergency response coordinator.

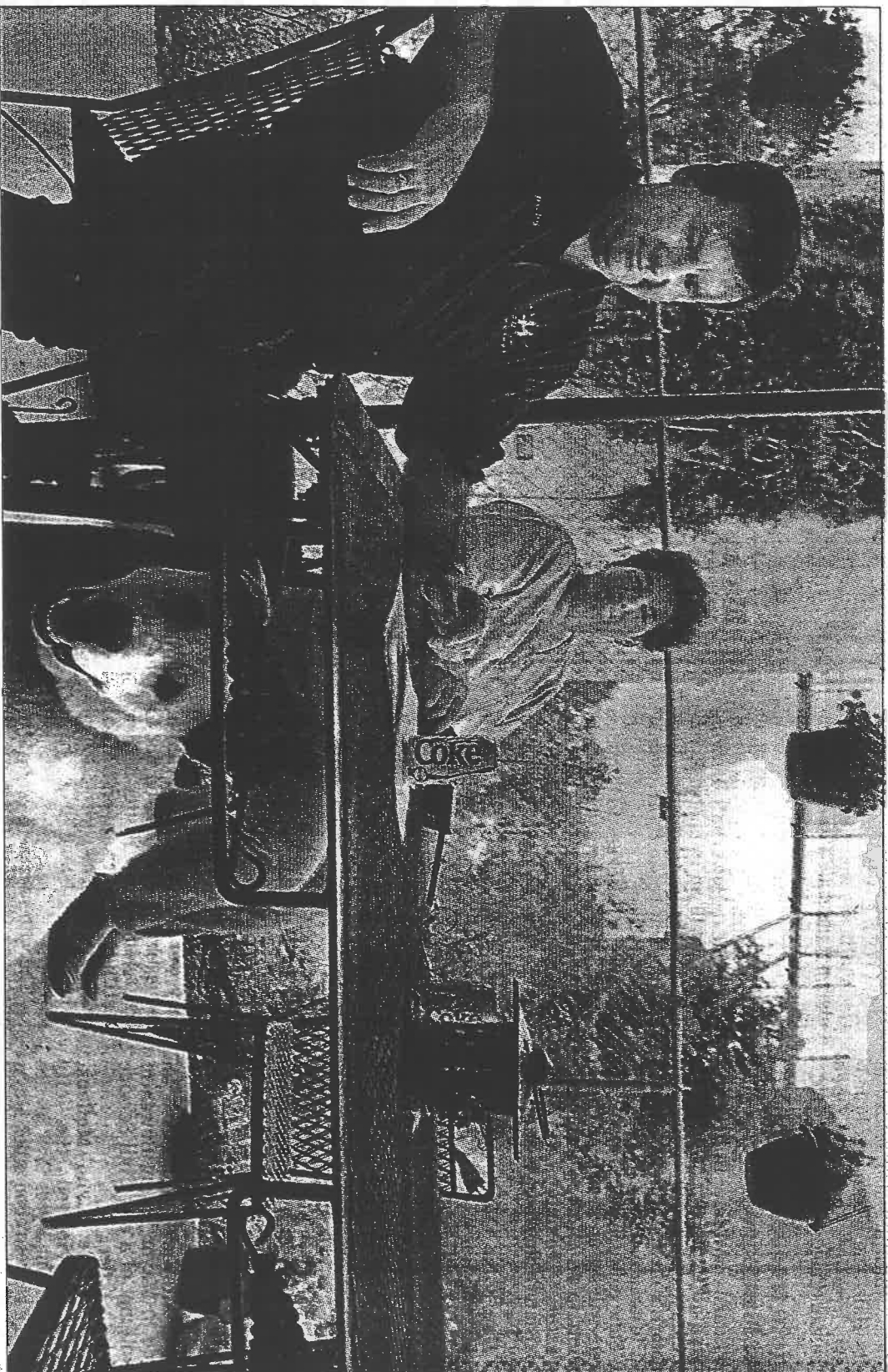
"The predominant problem is that they are outside city limits...and the rural water district does not have a line out here," Sullivan said.

Mayor Brady Broussard reiterated that the area is outside of Abbeville city limits.

Broussard said he believes connecting the area to the water district would be the best alternative. "That would be the most logical thing to do," the mayor said.

"They (the water district) can get grants. But if they couldn't do it, I would do my best to get it (water) to them," Broussard said.

Please see Plan, A-3



Rena Menard and her neighbor Ricky Upton with his dog Tanner, sit on Menard's porch which is located next to two large tanks known as the 'Rose Bowl' containing hazardous chemicals.

### Plan:

The closest area served by the Southeast Waterworks District No.2 is Perry. The nearest line ends at the corner of Pumping Plant Road and La. 335.

Gerald Menard, president of the water district board, said immediate efforts are being taken to get the money necessary to install a water line on South Henry Street. The district is applying for a grant from the Farmers' Home Administration, the agency that assists such water districts, he said.

"If the EPA helps us with this grant (application), it could speed up the process," Menard said. "We are looking at possibly two years through the bureaucracy at the ordinary speed. With the EPA's help, it could speed up the process to less than a year."

Sullivan pledged his assistance.

"We will work with the district to apply for the grant," he said. "They can utilize information we have."

Menard said the grant application will be for \$200,000.

"That's what it will cost to do it properly," he said.

In addition to serving the residents near the Rice Bowl and Rose Bowl, Menard said the new line could serve a total of about 60 people on South Henry Street.

"All of the people there are in dire need of help because they are all downstream from the Rice Bowl and Rose Bowl, and they are concerned," Menard said. "They are crying for help."

In addition to the grant for South Henry Street, Menard said the district is applying for grants that would allow it to serve about a mile of La. 335, down from Pumping Plant Road and another mile of La. 86 up to Lee Pierce Road.

In the meantime, residents near the former Broussard Chemical sites await test analysis results of their wells. Wednesday, the EPA tested the wells of the six residences and the Texaco service station on South Henry.

"If there is a problem, the EPA will act accordingly," Sullivan said. "If the water is contaminated, EPA would immediately put them (the residences) on bottled water, and then we would work to get them hooked up to some sort of long-term solution."

# Quality Over Quantity

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## Toxic site neighbors angry

By Bruce Murray

Vermilion Bureau writer

ABBEVILLE — Residents of South Main Street are not pleased with their toxic neighbor.

The "ceramic shop" at 230 South Main has been identified by federal authorities as an illegal hazardous waste storage site.

Substances stored at the site include arsenic, components of the herbicide Agent Orange, and acids and bases.

"I'm not worried about Khadafi manufacturing poison gas in Tripoli — we've got it right here on South Main Street," said Main Street resident Ken Lanier with angry sarcasm.

"We just can't believe it. Whoever is responsible for this should be severely punished."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has identified the facility's operator, John Broussard, as the most immediate responsible party. Broussard, former owner of

the now bankrupt Broussard Chemical Co., also operated three hazardous storage sites on South Henry Street.

Robert Sullivan, EPA emergency response coordinator, said both the civil and criminal divisions of his agency are pursuing the matter.

As of Friday, no criminal charges had been filed.

Officers from the State Police Transportation and Environmental Section were investigating at the scene on South Main Street Tuesday.

Discovered in the warehouse was a cache of about 120 barrels of toxic chemicals that were leaking, bulging and in danger of exploding, according to authorities.

"It's just a terrible situation," said a resident who lives two houses from the site. "We've all been worried about it."

Sullivan said the situation is in hand, and the most immediate threat has been removed.

The cleanup will continue for 10-12 weeks, he said. Residents said they are happy

the EPA is cleaning up the mess. However, they wonder how it got to this point.

"The real tragedy is something like this has been going on right at our back door, and it was never monitored by the authorities. How long has this been going on? Nobody knows," Lanier said.

Said resident Allen Leby, "I'd like to know what the problem is with the DEQ (Department of Environmental Quality) — they're supposed to be the regulatory agency."

Harold Davidson, who lives next to the cleanup sites on South Henry Street, said he was not altogether surprised at the situation.

"I worked for Broussard Chemical for 14 years, so I am not surprised at all of the problems we are having," he said.

He declined to elaborate. However, several residents on both South Main and South Henry streets said they have seen tanker trucks make late-night visits to the facilities.

Sullivan said the EPA will not only go after Broussard, but all of the individuals and companies it can identify that brought waste to Broussard's facilities.

"It would have been their responsibility to know that they were disposing their waste in an appropriate facility and that the waste was being properly managed," Sullivan said.

"It is a potential liability if companies sent their waste to an unlicensed facility."

Broussard never had any permits to dispose of the chemicals found at the sites, according to Sullivan.

Meanwhile, the people on Main Street are bewildered about what has happened on their quiet downtown street.

"I don't like it," said Jeri Bienvenu.

"I have a 1-year-old baby, and I didn't expect this. It's everyone's job to protect the environment."

"It's our children's future. If you run a business, you have to take care of it and follow the rules and regulations," she said.