

Four area businesses frolic in the snow with SnowWizard!

COOL TASTE OF SUMMER

Cream of crop keep snowballs coming

By **EVA BARKOFF**

It's just after 1:30snoball21787@aol.com on a recent Monday afternoon and a man tapped on the tiny window of the bright pink building to get the attention of Shirley Robert.

"I'll have one for \$1.25," the man said, sweat pouring down the side of his face. "Today I'll have ice cream with chocolate syrup."

Robert covers vanilla ice cream with rich, brown syrup and hands it to the man, who said, "Miss Shirley, don't ever leave here. I won't go to anyone else for a snowball or ice cream. You have the best of everything."

For 33 years, Robert has operated Ro-Bear's, 6869 Jefferson Highway, Harahan.

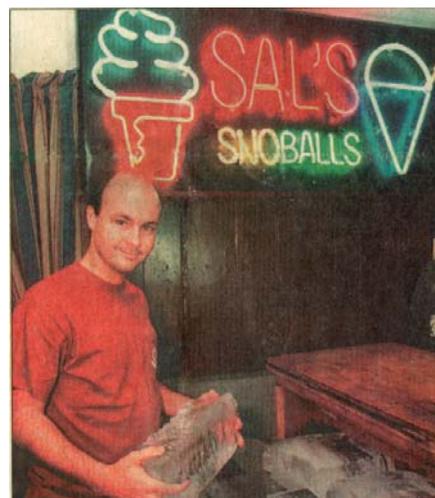
"I have been at this since I was 40 and I love it," said Robert, 73, while pouring nectar supreme over softly shaved ice for the next customer. "If I retired, I don't know what I would do with myself. I think I'd get to lazy. So why retire? I have good health and can run this place on my own."

Robert, the mother of six, has more than 50 flavors on



Shirley Robert, owner and operator of Ro-Bear's Snoballs on Jefferson Highway in Harahan, has been in business 33 years. Here she reaches for blueberry syrup to flavor a snowball.

Steven Bel, owner of Sal's Snoballs at the corner of Metairie Road and Helios Avenue, holds one of the blocks of ice that is used to make the snoballs. He uses more than 1,100 pounds of ice in a day.



hand, all of which she makes herself. She sells a variety of other cool, sweet treats including ice cream, malts and sodas—and hot tamales.

“I probably sell more chocolate, nectar supreme and strawberry snowballs than any other kind,” Robert said. “And honey, I have the best chocolate in the world—I don’t care what anyone says.

“I open this place in March and close on Oct. 30. I rest and travel a bit those four months I’m closed but I’m always ready to get back to work. I love what I do because of the people. And I just love to work.”



Steven Bel has been a fixture at Sal’s Snoballs since he was 8 years old.

“I used to help sweep and pick up trash around the stand when I was a little kid,” Bel said. “When I got a little older, I helped fill the bottles with the different snowball flavors. I did a little bit of everything.”

And for the past seven years, Bel has owned Sal’s, a fixture in Old Metairie at the corner of Metairie Road and Helois Avenue since 1960.

Sal’s is named for the snowball stand’s original owner, Salvator Tolluto. Bel, 32, said he opens the stand the first week of February and closes around the third week of October.

The more than 50 different flavors at Sal’s are made on the premises daily by Bel. He said the most popular flavors are the Joker and chocolate.

“The Joker is a mixture of all the berry flavors,” Bel said. “And the chocolate has always been a popular flavor.

Cypress logs dot the front of the area around the stand, a site familiar to Sal’s regular customers.

“There was an old cypress tree behind the stand that had to be taken down,” Bel said. “Rather than just grinding the stumps away, Mr. Sal thought he could use the logs around the snowball stand for people to sit on while enjoying their snowballs. Having a snowball while sitting atop one of these logs is a tradition around here and is part of the history of Sal’s.”



With every customer that comes to the window, the same greeting can be heard over and over again.

“Welcome to Droopy’s,” says owner Lana Guercio. “What can I get you today, dawlin?”

The bright blue building at 6560 Jefferson Highway in Harahan has been home away from home for Guercio, her husband Johnny, and their son, Jay, for the past seven years.

“We’re here every day from March 1 to Oct. 31,” Johnny Guercio said. “And for those eight months, we spend as much time here as we do at home, maybe more.”

One menu item Droopy’s is famous for is its stuffed snowball.

“A stuffed snowball is whatever flavor snowball you want, then whatever flavor ice cream you want and then a little more snowball,” Johnny Guercio said. “It’s a very popular combination.”



Johnny Guercio, left, Jay “Droopy” Guercio and Lana Guercio of Droopy’s Sno-Balls on Jefferson Highway in Harahan. Jay holds the Droopy flavor of snowball syrup, which was named after him.

Other favorites are strawberry and several of the cream flavors including one called “Droopy’s.”

“This is our own special flavor and we’re proud of it,” Johnny Guercio said, adding the name Droopy’s came from a nickname penned by the friends of Jay Guercio.

“I can’t tell you how much the people who come here mean to us,” Lana Guercio said. “Our customers are always so nice; they make coming to work a pleasure.”

Barkoff, Eva. “Cream of crop keep snowballs coming.” *Kenner Picayune*. July 5, 1998. 1D1, 2D1.

Snowball stand is Kenner fixture

By CHRISTINE BORDELON

Whether it’s finely shaved ice snowballs, nachos and cheese, or pig’s lips, C&J’s Snowballs stocks what it takes to satisfy the appetites of its south Kenner neighbors.

In the 19 years since Josephine Smith opened C&J’s at Hanson Street and Kenner Avenue next door to her home, the stand has become a fixture in the neighborhood for youngsters and seniors alike.

“We come here every day,” said Cora Dillworth of Kenner who brings her son, Joshua, 4, to get a snack in the afternoon. “The people are friendly....It’s more like family here. Some snowball stands are like, ‘What do you want?’ But here, they care about you.

Smith said she opened her business to give her sons, Christopher and Juvernia, something to do in the summer while she worked in the post office. While it’s named after them, Josephine Smith has been the driving force behind the business.

From the beginning, she’s made her own snowball flavors by boiling down the sugar with water and adding the extracts. Her top-selling flavor, ice cream, beckons customers from across the Mississippi River, she said. And while her recipe is a secret, she did divulge that this flavor is made in a way similar to the way homemade vanilla ice cream is made.

Another top-selling flavor is chocolate. Smith said her version has condensed and canned milk with Hershey’s chocolate syrup and chocolate extract to give it that “creamy flavor.”

Following in her sons’ footsteps, her daughter Vivian, a recent high school graduate, has been working in the business. She assists at night and on weekends and even concocted the new African orange flavor this year.

While C&J’s opened with just snowballs, its menu today includes ice cream, candy, snack items such as chips and popcorn, smoothies, pickles, pigs’ lips and soft drinks.

A unique aspect of C&J’s is that it stays open all year.

“People buy snowballs year-round,” Smith said. “Snowballs are not in demand as much in the winter, but if the weather is warm, people buy ‘em.”



Josephine Smith, owner of C&J’s Snowballs in Kenner, keeps an eye out for customers as she refills some of the colorful bottle [sic] of flavored snowball syrup.

To increase sales at the stand in the winter, Smith added hot dogs, chili, and nachos and cheese. Customers can order any combination of these items and even put chili and cheese on Fritos. This pseudo-lunch fair has attracted employees from the nearby New Orleans International Airport.

Mostly, C&J's attracts the neighbors who wait patiently to order their favorite menu item as an occasional train or plane goes by.

Smith said working in the stand has enabled her to meet people and receive compliments on the success of her flavors. While she has retired from the post office, she doesn't plan on giving up this job any time soon.

"It's hard work, but I enjoy doing it."

Bordelon, Christine. "Snowball stand is Kenner fixture." *Kenner Picayune*. July 5, 1998. 1D1, 2D1.

Readers pick favorite Jeff snowball stand

By EVA BARKOFF

The East Jefferson Picayune has asked readers to tell us in the past three weeks where the best snowball be could [sic] found in Metairie, Kenner, Jefferson, Harahan and River Ridge.

We received almost 200 letters from readers and the top three vote-getters were Sal's Snoballs on the corner of Metairie Road and Helois Avenue, with 37 votes; Droopy's Sno-Balls, 6560 Jefferson Highway, Harahan, 32 votes; and Ro-Bear's Snoballs, 6869 Jefferson Highway, Harahan, 30 votes.

"Sal's Snoball stand is the best in town because their shaved ice is superfine, like snow," Kay Frey wrote. "Their flavors are delicious, unique and homemade."

John Stuebben, formerly of Metairie and now a resident of Alexandria, Va., said he and his family miss Sal's.

"Sal's has been a favorite of ours for many years," Steubben said. "Our favorite flavor is chocolate and condensed milk with a dab of soft ice cream."

Diana Carson called herself a "Droopy's addict."

"If I don't have a snowball from Droopy's every day, I go crazy," Carson said. "My favorite flavor is the spearmint-stuffed snowball with chocolate ice cream. The ice is very fine. It is like going to the Alps."

W. Wirt Ludwick says the "best snowball in Harahan—in fact, in all of Louisiana and in the entire South—is Droopy's."

"The texture of the ice is such that I believe Droopy's must import it from Aspen or maybe even the North Pole," Ludwick added.

Dr. Freeman Garrett of Kenner said the "best snowballs in the South and perhaps the entire nation can be found at Ro-Bear's."

"The flavors are not watered down and they are unique and creative," he said. "My favorite is chocolate."

Terri Burke has been going to Ro-Bear's for snowballs since she was a child.

"To this day, I still crave grape snowballs," Burke said. "No other flavor and nothing on top. And during the last week of October, I make my annual winter run to Ro-Bear's to get 10 grape snowballs for my freezer. I zap it 30 seconds in the microwave and presto—a snowball during winter."

Some of the other snowball stands readers chose as their favorite are:

- ▶ Frosty's Ice Cream and Sno-Balls, 3400 Cleary Ave., Metairie, 17 votes.
- ▶ Uncle Sam's, 820 N. Howard Ave., Metairie, 14 votes.
- ▶ Little Kastle, 3620 Veteran Memorial Blvd., Metairie, 13 votes.
- ▶ Sno Biz, 3846 Johnson St., Metairie, 10 votes.
- ▶ Dino's Ice Cream and Snowballs, 4524 S. Interstate 10 Service Road, Metairie, nine votes.
- ▶ Casey's Snoballs, 4608 West Esplanade Ave., Metairie, seven votes.
- ▶ Lou Lou's, 734 Papworth Ave., Metairie, five votes.
- ▶ Costanza's, 5211 West Napoleon Ave., Metairie, four votes.
- ▶ Gerry's, 4213 Williams Blvd., and Sunny's Ice Cream Parlor, 3437 Florida Ave., both in Kenner, received two votes each.

Barkoff, Eva. "Readers pick favorite Jeff snowball stand." *Kenner Picayune*. July 5, 1998. 1D1, 2D1.

Photo credits:

Ro-Bear's, Sal's, and Droopy's—Donald Stout
C&J's—Chris Granger