

C.B. Forgetston: He Could Not Have Loved Louisiana More

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No doubt surprising to many, there are among us in Louisiana a tiny number who have loved our state nearly every day of their lives. This rare breed of Louisianans go to work for us in their teens. Among them I have known and worked with more than a few, with none more remarkable than C.B. Forgetston.

Oh, yes, these are dyed-in-the-wool LSU sports fans. We read T. Harry Williams' *Huey Long* not long before or after *Catcher in the Rye*, and while intending no slight to Mr. Salinger, *Huey Long* speaks more directly to our hearts. Heck, many have carefully preserved their vinyl of Randy Newman's *Good Ol Boys*, and can to this day recite, if not sing, "Rednecks," and "Louisiana 1927," and "Kingfish." On the radio, Irma Thomas, Doug Kershaw and Aaron Neville put our souls to music.

These of us, northern and southern, Catholic and Protestant, country and citified, stand out in our measure of caring about Louisiana, and the next calamity always and certainly just ahead. Going back to Huey Long at least, up to and including John Bel Edwards, these can name our governors, in order. They not only know that the "W" in Governor Edwin W. Edwards' name stands for "Washington," they know Governor Edwards. These have hands scarred and callused by politics and government, the true, and often awful, test of this commitment.

These are our very own endangered few. They work for no pay, no matter how full-time the job. There are almost none of these waiting their time and turn to work for Louisiana. Such is fact for many reasons, not the least of which are the costs of loving too much when so outnumbered.

These Louisianans are almost never in any way honored because they are not politicians. They are, in fact, anti-politicians. They know more than others, yet never cease their studying. Thus armed, they come out firing names and acts of those who so terribly damage us from within. No, there is no Hall of Fame for these. If we cared enough, perhaps there would be. Then and certainly, the first inductee would be C.B. Forgetston.

Regardless that most Louisianans did not know him, he was working for all of us, all the time. He lived - *lived* - his hope for a Louisiana which would, at least, care enough to save itself. I was blessed, truly, to be his friend and fellow laborer. What he knew about us was encyclopedic. How much he cared about our place was epic.

C.B. loved Louisiana enough to fight for it. Yes, *fight*, for it. He did not hide in the relative safety of merely umpiring our unruly contest for Louisiana's heart and soul, he batted and caught and ran the bases ... *then* called the balls and strikes. No one I have known in a lifetime here ever did more, or did it with more love of what Louisiana has been before, and could yet be again.

No, C.B. never ran from our can-to-can't fight for a decent Louisiana future. He was thus attacked from every one of the 360 degrees of our political and governmental compass. To their regret, I trust, he was as likely to be disrespected by some in our news media as he was disrespected by the army of those in politics and government who, after they fake their Oaths of service, never give us meaningful thought. Their studied self-service is our curse, and no one knew that better, or fought it harder, than C.B.

We the people of the Louisiana who C.B. so loved, cannot replace him. That, to those who care, is his measure.

Very soon, we will say our last goodbyes to this remarkable man. I will do so with certain knowledge that I have never known a person who loved Louisiana and its people more.