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# Caddo Lake cafe owners struggle to reopen after flood

By ROBIN Y. RICHARDSON - Associated Press

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UNCERTAIN, Texas (AP) - The husband and wife owners of a restaurant that has fed people in the Caddo Lake area off and on for 90 years say they have no doubt the business will reopen after recent flooding.

The Shady Glade Cafe has been around the lakeside town of Uncertain since 1926 and in its current location since 1950. James "Todd" Arnold and his wife, Becky, bought the restaurant just three weeks before the area began flooding March 9.

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“This is a community restaurant,” James Arnold told the Marshall News-Messenger (<http://bit.ly/1Us37if>). “There are big restaurants here, but this is where the community eats. When you get up at 6 in the morning, this is where everybody comes to get their coffee and eat, so we gotta get it back open.”

The couple, with help from family and friends, last week were gutting the restaurant and giving it a deep cleaning in hopes of reopening soon.

“Nobody expected it - nobody,” James Arnold said of the high waters, which rose to about 5 feet inside their buildings, saturating walls, floors, doors and windows.

To get into the restaurant, situated on Caddo Lake, the lake level had to rise to a flood stage of 176 feet, he said.

“But it got up to 189 (feet), so you know what kind of trouble we were in,” he said.

Normally, when it floods, he said the water just creeps in the corner first, which is what the couple were expecting this time.

However, “it got over the counters,” James Arnold said. “It got all the way almost to the top of those windows. It was a total loss.”

“We were catching crawfish in here. Snakes, too,” he said, chuckling. “We’re just coming in, ripping it out and starting over. We can’t (just abandon it).”

After the flood, Becky Arnold set up a pavilion to make sure Caddo Lake area residents had food to eat.

Becky Arnold worked in the restaurant as an employee for a couple of years with the previous owner before she was offered the chance to purchase it.

“We got the money to get it, and then (a few) weeks later, it floods,” James Arnold said. “All of us are walking around, so (we’re thankful).”

The restoration effort started paneling being pulled off the walls.

“It was all wet, and you’ve got insulation behind it, and that insulation never let it dry, so you have to pull the insulation out before the water leaves all the mold and you’d get everybody sick, so we had to come in and bleach everything,” he said. “A lot of it we may have to replace, like the paneling itself. Just a lot of work (ahead) . but nothing we weren’t born to do.”

The Arnolds experienced the same destruction to their home, which also is on Caddo Lake.

James Arnold said they stayed in Louisiana with his wife's parents, waiting for the water to recede so they could get back home.

"We just drove back and forth every day," he said. "It was really nothing you could do but wait till the water goes down."

Becky Arnold said the possibility of flooding comes with living on the lake, but she never would have imagined experiencing such devastation.

"We know how to clean it, and we expect floods, but this was unimaginable," she said. "We did not expect it to be this high."

"We've lived out here our whole life," James Arnold said. "We never thought it'd get in our house. Our house is 6 feet off the ground; we got 3 feet (of water) in our house."

"I've never seen it get like this. The problem was (the water) came up so fast."

He said conditions were so bad that even their cousin's house, which sits seven feet off the ground, also was ruined.

James Arnold said he and his wife have had to rip the interior of their house out just like they've done at the restaurant.

"That's all you can do till it dries," he said.

One thing the couple is certain of is the restaurant will be back up and running soon, offering their favorites - homegrown catfish, 8-ounce chicken fried steak and homemade breakfast.

"This is the heart of Uncertain," said Becky, adding that people like to come dine and then take lake tours. "We've got to have it back. Everybody's missing everybody."

"This is the meeting place, the coffee place, the gossip place - all of it. It's just a small place, family home and they like it," her husband added. "So, we're going to get it back open."

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