

# Who is really to blame for potholes?



JICKA ON JACKSON

by Sarah Riley Jicka

If you've ever lived or driven in Jackson, you know that there is a significant problem plaguing the city streets: potholes. These lurking gaps in the pavement love to wreak havoc on the innocent Suburban or Camry. The good news, however, is that these sudden divots do not discriminate between the young or old, the rich or the poor. Instead, potholes hand out flat tires and broken axles right and left, throwing caution to the wind. What causes these craters may be a mystery to some, but I believe

that I have cracked the code.

Some say that poor city management is to blame for the terrible roads, but I believe that they were simply handed a problem caused by the historical and geographic characteristics of the city itself. Yazoo clay, a red dirt that lies exposed throughout north-east Hinds county, southern Madison county, and western Rankin county, is a main source of the problem. The clay expands and contracts rapidly with any rainfall or temperature change, result-

ing in cracked roads. After the roads have cracked, it is only a matter of time before a pothole appears. They develop when rain seeps through the cracks in the road, and the Yazoo clay absorbs the water between its plates. The clay may even slide, causing roads to decay further.

Another issue plaguing Jackson streets is the proximity of aged water lines to the roads. Some pipes date back to the 1910's and 1920's and are prone to leaks and breaks. In order to repair these pipes, construction crews must dig up streets, disturb the expansive clay underneath, fix the water leak that causes the Yazoo clay to expand, then pave over it. The clay will eventually dry, shrink, and cause potholes to develop.

As a result of these pub-

lic nuisances, Jackson's streets get a bad reputation compared to the roads of Madison, Ridgeland, Pearl, and Brandon. I believe that those who mock Jackson's streets will soon regret their foolishness. Because the suburbs put down new roads in the past 20 years, it is only a matter of time before they become tormented by the same problem. Already, Highland Colony Parkway in Madison county is on par with the worst streets in Jackson in terms of potholes and shoddy repairs.

So, my fellow central Mississippians, embrace your potholes. Create a game "don't touch the pothole filled with hot lava" or plant a victory garden in your neighborhood sinkhole. I implore you to rest easy knowing that your city government may or may

not repair the potholes in two weeks to three years. And afterwards, IF they repair it, it will rain unfailingly for three days. This will wash out all the fresh asphalt as well as drown your dreams of owning a low-profile sports car.

