

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### Hurricane Preparedness

Why would anyone in the North Georgia Mountains need to prepare for hurricanes? Isn't that a coastal problem? It's a good question, but after seeing the damage from Hurricane Debby last week, preparedness should be a consideration for anyone. Even though we live in North Georgia, we can still be affected by the high winds, severe thunderstorms, spin-off tornados and flash flooding.

June 1st was the first official day of hurricane season; however, it is never too late to prepare. Union County Emergency Management Agency (UCEMA) is continuously encouraging everyone to consider severe weather and hurricane preparedness.

As we all know, hurricanes weaken as they move off the coast and further inland, but they can still bring significant weather to our area. This can result in flooding, downed trees, and power outages. There are several things that you can do to prepare for these types of severe weather events.

The first is to stay informed. UCEMA has promoted the CodeRED notification system that provides emergency notifications for our area. This is a great way to stay informed of potential severe weather. We encourage everyone to register for CodeRED and update their information. The registration can be found at the county website at [www.unioncountygga.gov](http://www.unioncountygga.gov), or you can call the UCEMA office at 706-439-6091 for more information.

Building an emergency kit is also a great idea. Water and/or electricity could be out for several days or more after a major storm. You should have enough non-perishable food, water, and medicine to last each person in your family for a MINIMUM of one week. Also, make sure you have extra cash, a battery-powered radio, flashlights, and a way to charge your cellphone.

Everyone should also check their insurance policy. Call your insurance company or agent and ask for an insurance checkup to make sure you have enough homeowner's insurance to repair or even replace your home. Remember, standard homeowners' insurance doesn't cover flooding. Whether you're a homeowner or renter, you may need a separate policy for flooding.

Severe weather and hurricanes can affect everyone. We

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**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**

David Dyer



### Hatchet Man

The attorney sat in his car and wept. He was still parked in his friend Tom's driveway after an intense discussion. When he first arrived, he had no idea this visit would be a watershed moment for him.

Five years earlier, Tom Phillips had attended a Billy Graham event at Madison Square Garden. He was a successful engineer and businessman, but he hadn't trusted Christ until that night. It changed him. His friend, the attorney, noticed. So, when the attorney's world began to collapse, he sought Tom's advice.

As part of their conversation, Tom turned to a passage in C.S. Lewis's book, "Mere Christianity." He knew he was talking to a man who had all the trappings of power and success and was full of himself. "As long as you are proud you cannot know God," Tom read out loud. "A proud man is always looking down on things and people... As long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you." The attorney said later, "I saw myself as I never had before. And the picture was ugly." He realized what the Bible says: "Pride goes before destruction" (Prov. 16:18).

Before he could drive away, his bottled-up emotions burst forth as he sat in the car. He stumbled over words as he prayed, "I'm not much the way I am now, but I want to give myself to You. Take me!" He later wrote about this experience in his memoir, "Born Again." This man had committed crimes as part of the Watergate affair. But he was a changed man when he spent time in federal prison. His name is Chuck Colson.

Now for the rest of the story. Colson found new purpose in Christ. During the remaining 39 years of his life, he founded ministries and wrote books explaining the Christian gospel to the world. His newfound influence had a cascading effect at home. "My life was changed, too," his daughter Emily writes. "I gave my life to Christ. And then, my son gave his life to Christ."

It started with one man confronting his pride and hopelessness. He was "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). This recalls what Jesus told Nicodemus. "Unless one is born again he cannot

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**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



### Commissioner's Questions

I've been approached numerous times by people asking about the property millage tax rate and property assessment. These are the two main things that determine how much your County property taxes will be. Today I will share a few of the questions received and the answers provided.

**Q. What exactly is a property millage rate?**

A. The millage rate is an old term that refers to the tax rate levied on properties. Popularly called the mill rate, this tax rate is used in estimating the Union County portion of property taxes imposed on properties. Union County uses the mill rate as an ad valorem tax, under property taxation.

**Q. Who determines the County property millage rate?**

A. Union County's tax rate, or millage, is set annually by the County Commissioner. When setting the millage rate, many things go into the calculation, but the County budget is the primary determining factor.

**Q. How does this impact my tax bill?**

A. Your property tax is a tax based upon the value of your property. The millage rate is applied to that value to determine your tax bill. Real property is defined as land and generally anything that is erected, growing, or affixed to the land. Property taxes are charged against the owner of record of the property on January 1st, and against the property itself if the owner is not known.

**Q. Does the County Commissioner have anything to do with assessment values of properties?**

A. No, the County Commissioner has absolutely nothing to do with assessment values of properties. Instead, Union County Tax Assessors and appraisers interpret what is happening in the marketplace. The appraised value is simply Fair Market Value of the property. The State of Georgia REQUIRES all counties to maintain assessed values that reflect current market rates.

The assessors use standard approaches in setting the value on all real and personal property. There are three approaches to value:

Cost Approach: The cost approach uses actual replacement

**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**

Lamar Paris



### God-Sent Friendships

I believe that friendships are sent to us by God. I don't think that relationships are just happenstance. My belief is that God brings people together for a purpose. I see relationships in a spiritual light. Each person contributes a specific purpose to the other person. It may be for entertainment, support, ego-boosting, or all of these. The individual is a dynamic factor in the well-being of another person.

**Successful Mental Health**  
Dr. James Ray Ashurst  
PH.D.

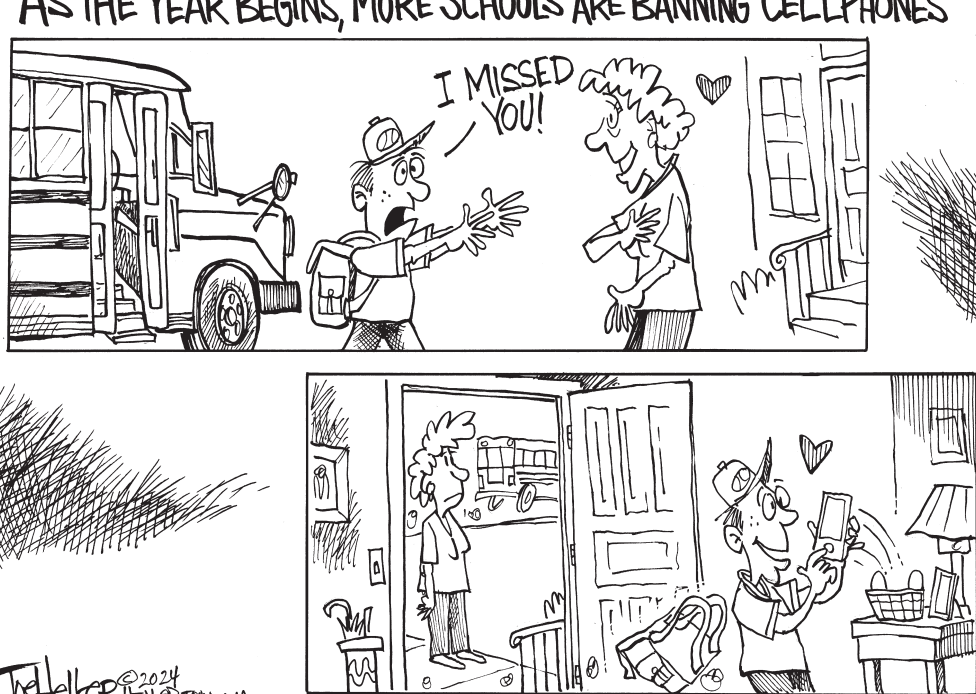


There is no question that life for all of us is filled with unbearable stress and heartaches at times. Life circumstances can be a huge challenge - on a good day. On a bad day, some situations are totally overwhelming - sometimes defeating. Many individuals do believe in a "higher power." Whatever one specifies as God, a solid belief that one is under His watchful care in regards to bringing particular individuals into one's daily life can be uplifting and comforting.

What is God's purpose for bringing two

See Ashurst, page 5A

### AS THE YEAR BEGINS, MORE SCHOOLS ARE BANNING CELLPHONES



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### Chamber of Commerce

As we step outside, I hear lots of people comment on how hot it is. But, the truth is that we are blessed to live in the North Georgia Mountains where it is cooler than many other destinations in the State. As we look at the Chamber calendar, it is clear that cooler weather is just around the corner.

I would like to take just a minute to introduce everyone to our new Events Coordinator, Savannah Farrington, who has hit the ground running with lots of great ideas for our upcoming events. Speaking of events, I hope everyone is keeping an eye on our calendar for Power Lunch, Business After Hours at Merchants Walk, the 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony, Blairsville Business Expo or our Sporting Clays that benefits our veterans. If you have questions or need more information, give Savannah a call or speak to any member of the team to get registered.

Don't forget about the Mountain Heritage

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**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**

Steve Rowe



### Letters to the Editor

#### Union County Gun Range

Dear Editor,  
I had not fired a gun in several years. When the Union County Gun Range opened up last month, I decided to try it out. I took a couple of handguns out Friday, Aug. 2, and popped some caps on the handgun range. I had so much fun I went out the next day with a rifle and fired on some targets at 100 & 150 yards. I was anticipating a long wait because it was Saturday. Surprise! I was actually the only shooter there at noon on Saturday. What a pleasant experience. Range Manager Craig Davenport and his team of trained and dedicated Range Safety Officers were very supportive and helpful. This is a first-class facility and another first for the residents of Union County!

See Bible, page 5A

### Letters to the Editor

#### What Sets America Apart

Dear Editor,  
I understand that America is not just an idea. It is a land where citizens are born and raised. Land they own. Land that they worked, fought and died for.  
My relatives settled in Boston before the Revolutionary War. They traveled in Conestoga wagons under great hardship halfway across the continent to settle in Kansas. I have the hutch they built by hand and carried with them in parts over rivers and hills on their way west.  
They lived in sod houses, dusted snow off the foreheads of newborns under windows made of cloth, and farmed a recalcitrant land. My family has had a long history in this country going

See Harvey, page 5A

### The Swimming Hole

My grandfather, Columbus, was raised with a bunch of his cousins and friends just outside of Phil Campbell, Alabama, in a little community called Trapptown. The people of this little community were extremely close, and they managed to enjoy life even though the country was in turmoil due to the Depression. The boys of the family enjoyed playing baseball, fishing in the creek, coon hunting and in the summertime they swam at the mill pond on Cummings Creek.

During the 1930s, parents were very conservative with their children. You never saw a girl wearing a pair of shorts. Young men and women didn't go on dates by themselves. Boys and girls didn't go swimming together. The young people around the little community of Trapptown had different swimming times for the "Swimming Hole on Cummings Creek." Actually, the boys didn't even wear bathing suits. So, the boys swam from 1:30 until 3:30. After the boys left, the girls would swim until 5:30. This arrangement allowed the boys and girls to swim for the same amount of time, and it worked well for most of Coon's teenage years.

But, then Coon began to notice girls. There were three girls in the community who were sisters. Even though the girls had been a part of Papa's life since he could remember, he'd never noticed them. But, one day all of a sudden Coon noticed the Lauderdale Girls, and they were beautiful. That is when the trouble began.  
One particularly hot day during the Dog Days of August the boys were having a great time at the swimming hole. When it came time for the boys to get out of the water so the girls could swim, they refused. The girls hollered at them from the top of the bluff, "Your time is up. It's time for us girls to swim." Papa said, "We just laughed and kept swimming." The problem with these girls was this, not only were these girls pretty, but they were also smart.

While the boys were still swimming, the Lauderdale Girls slipped down to where they had left their clothes. The eldest girl knew Papa was the ring leader of the boys. So, Sarah placed her underwear in the bib pocket of his overalls. After a while Coon and his brothers got out of the water, put on their clothes and made their way home. By the time they got home, it was supertime. When Papa and his brothers walked into the house, their mother Laura told them to take off their dirty clothes and place them on the back porch. Coon was mad about leaving items in his pocket. So, his mother went through his pockets after he had left them on the porch. She

See Cummings, page 5A

**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



### Copperhead Road Mystery

Dear Editor,  
This past May, mysterious events began to occur on Copperhead Road! Strange symbols and numbers in colors of red, orange, blue and white appeared on the pavement. They were followed by enormous machines (some of which were totally unfamiliar), huge rolls of black and orange cable, and sturdy young men with shovels. Mystery solved! At last, fiber-optic broadband was coming to this area of Union County via Windstream. After years of SLOW internet connections - sometimes less than ONE megabit - I could dust off my laptop and actually begin using it! Furthermore, this would not result in additional monthly cost to us customers for

See McKellips, page 5A

### I'm Weird

Dear Editor,  
Hello Friends and Neighbors. I hope this Op/Ed finds you all well. Last week, the Harris/Walz Campaign and their preferred "Pravda"-like media outlets started calling the Trump/Vance Campaign "Weird." Let's examine that.  
I guess, if it's weird to want a strong and sovereign nation, I'm Weird. I guess, if it's weird that I want low inflation, low food and fuel prices, and a strong economy, I'm Weird. I guess, if it's weird to want a nation with a secure border, I'm Weird. I guess, if it's weird to want a nation that doesn't embolden and enrich terrorist organizations and nations, I'm Weird. I guess, if I want a nation where law enforcement arrests and confines the career criminals who attack and

See Rains, page 5A

### Yes, We Love Our Grandchildren

Dear Editor,  
As a friend of Dick Bell, I have witnessed many times the unquestioned love and dedication he and his family have for the community. His love for his grandchildren is obvious. Yet, Dick is dead wrong about Congress raiding the Social Security trust fund.  
As a retired career employee that worked for the Social Security Administration for nearly 40 years, this is a common legend that has been around for years. The SSA program's asset reserves have been invested in government bonds since its inception in the mid-1930s. These net cash surpluses, which have accumulated over the years, are required by law to be invested in government bonds. While there are valid concerns about the financial health of Social Security, it's essential to recognize that no party has misappropriated any funds from SSA.

See Barber, page 5A

### If it's not broke...

Dear Editor,  
I am happy to live in Union County. It is certainly a beautiful county with much to offer. It is apparent that Commissioner Paris has done a good job in operating our county.  
Recently, I was asked to sign a petition to change our county form of government from a sole county commission to a multi-man commission. I did not sign to change anything because I had been a resident of another county that changed from a one-man commission to a three-man commission. After the change, there was consistent bickering between the three commissioners and a 2-to-1 split on almost every issue. It became much harder to get things done, and our board of commissioners became very dysfunctional.  
More people do not necessarily mean better government. There are 535 elected represen-

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## North Georgia News

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See Williams, page 5A

**Paris... continued from Page 4A**

ment cost of the building, less general depreciation, plus the value of the land.

**Market Approach:** The market approach involves analyzing sales of similar properties to predict the likely selling price of unsold properties.

**Income Approach:** the income approach is used for income-producing properties.

It involves capitalizing the net income to arrive at a probable selling price for the property.

**Q. How does the Math look? When a millage rate is raised or lowered and applied to the property value, how much money are we talking about?**

A. We can use an easy home assessment amount as an example:

<b>2022 Union County Mil Rate</b>	
\$ 100,000 = Taxable value (40% of Property Value)	
x .005113 Millage rate	
<b>\$511.30 Total due for County Taxes</b>	
<b>2023 Union County Mil Rate (Millage Rate Went Down)</b>	
\$ 100,000 = Taxable value (40% of Property Value)	
x .004286 Millage rate	
<b>\$428.60 Total due for County Taxes</b>	

As you can see, given a constant millage rate, when property values are higher, taxes are higher. The same can be said for the Millage rate.

However, the County Commission does have control over the millage rate and can adjust it up or down as is necessary in order to balance the County budget.

It is important to keep

the millage rate as low as possible without negatively impacting Union County's ability to provide services for its residents.

**UNION COUNTY DOES HAVE THE THIRD LOWEST COUNTY PROPERTY TAX MILLAGE RATE IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA – AND DESPITE THAT, IT REMAINS DEBT-FREE.**

**Ashurst... continued from Page 4A**

individuals or more into a dynamic relationship? First of all, there is a wonderful magical connection within the relationship. Whether it involves only one person or more, the magic is present. It's as if one can read the thoughts of the other, or can feel what is going on, or even predict the actual behavior of a friend. The dynamics are vivid and vibrant. It is a marvelous relationship.

Secondly, even if you have a special someone from the early grade of kindergarten, I believe God's hand brought you together. It was as if a magnet drew you together and has kept you in contact all the years since.

Relationships have a

spiritual side in them even for those who believe otherwise. Because a friendship is so involved, one's soul and heart are vital ingredients in the relationship. Our very depths interact with those of another. Two (or more) individuals take the risk of being vulnerable and trusting of one another. One's spirituality in the friendship is not to be ashamed of, embarrassed about, or hidden. It is a vital part of who we are.

When our friend is having some life difficulties, at times we tell him or her that we will remember the person in our prayers. At such point, we have involved God. He is not a foreign being. He makes up our personal spirituality.

**McKellips... continued from Page 4A**

speeds up to one gigabit (1,000 megabits).

So, another mystery: who is footing the bill for this huge project? A phone call to Windstream, a Google search, and review of an excellent front-page article in the April 26 edition of the North Georgia News revealed the answer: cooperation between public and private; federal, state and local governments; Republicans and Democrats.

Federal funding from President Biden's American Rescue Plan Act is the source

of \$11.2 million in state funds that Georgia provided to Union County, which is using it to fund its partnership with Windstream to provide installation of fiber-optic cable. Windstream is investing \$8.9 million and will also cover all cost overruns, and Union County is contributing \$500,000 in matching funds.

I applaud this example of cooperation at all levels of government and by both political parties, to provide needed services to citizens.

**Judith McKellips**

**Barber... continued from Page 4A**

Here's the truth – lawmakers on Capitol Hill can't agree on how best to fix SSA's long-term fiscal health. Although there are plenty of proposals, neither Democrats nor Republicans have been willing to find common ground with their opposition. The longer this congressional stalemate goes on, the costlier it's going to be for working Americans to strengthen Social Security.

For example, if Congress required approximately 6% of workers making more than \$168,600 to continue to pay the SSA payroll tax, it could easily prevent any future SSA fiscal shortfall. But this is not a "popular" option. Finally, Trump's Doctrine, also known as Project 2025, that proposes shifting many policies back to

our state government will certainly not allow our children or grandchildren to have a better life standard.

The civil rights currently guaranteed to us by the Constitution and the federal government in the areas of education, medical care or marriage rights will be determined by what state we live in. State Rights versus Federal Rights were settled in America in 1865 after the death of nearly 750,000 soldiers, along with an undetermined number of civilian casualties. We are the United States of America and need to work as a united country. It is time to end division and work together as Americans for those of us that love our children, grandchildren and country.

**Lamar B. Barber**

**Harvey... continued from Page 4A**

back generations, and I have lived and worked here all my life, so yes – this land is my land.

But I also know that America is more than a land. It is an idea which sets it apart from every other country in the world. The idea that all are created with equal rights no matter where they come from.

I fear that in our zeal to defend America as a homeland we are in danger of forgetting that idea, and if we do, we will become like any other country, turning against those who do not look like us, pray like us,

think like us, and love like us. We will, as we have done in the past, turn on each other.

I know it is easy to be cynical about American politics which has turned ugly, and to reinforce that cynicism by saying – as one writer recently did in this paper – that it has always been this way, but we are better than that. When we vote this fall, let's remember the land we cherish – its traditions, history, and promise – but not lose sight of what sets America apart: the idea of equality.

Best wishes,  
**Steven Harvey**

**Rains... continued from Page 4A**

assault innocent bystanders instead of arresting those same innocent bystanders for just defending themselves, their families and their property from those same criminals, I'm Weird. I guess, if it's weird to not want a country where dangerous sex hormones and sex change surgeries, excuse me, "gender-affirming care," are allowed to be given to children as young as the fourth grade behind their parent's backs and without their parent's consent or knowledge, I'm Weird.

So y'all, according to

the Harris/Walz Campaign, I'm Weird. That revelation came as a shocker to me, since it's the Democratic Party to which Harris and Walz belong that regularly can't and won't define what a woman is. You will have to excuse me, Ms. Harris, Mr. Walz and the DNC, but I find THAT extremely Weird.

So, in conclusion, I'm voting for Trump/Vance because, according to Kamala Harris, Tim Walz, the DNC and their "Pravda"-like media outlets, they're Weird like me.

**Claude Rains Jr.**

**Cummings... continued from Page 4A**

found the girl's underwear in his pocket. She grabbed the first thing handy which was a broom and marched into her son's bedroom.

There stood her son trying to put on a clean pair of britches. Later he told me, "All I heard was Columbus Cummings. I looked up and was struck across the top of my head with a broom handle." After striking him she held up the Lauderdale girl's underwear and shook them at her son. He tried to explain what happened to his mother. But, each time he opened his mouth he was struck with the broom again and again. Later that evening Lon came into Coon's room to give him "the Father and Son talk." Many years later he told me that his Momma and Papa always believed that he was guilty. But, he always maintained his innocence.

He told me he had five to six knots on his head where his Momma had struck him with the broom. And that he and the other boys were for-

bidden to go swimming for the rest of that summer at their favorite swimming hole. Each time he would meet the Lauderdale Girls at Church or at the Store in Trapptown, Sarah Lauderdale would smile, saying, "Coon, the water is mighty fine down at the creek," while smiling and tossing her auburn colored hair over her delicate shoulder. You would think he would be mad at this gall. But, he always said that she was too pretty to be mad at very long.

**Williams... continued from Page 4A**

larly or deeply enough when we had no rain, you could still see blossom end rot.

Tomato plants are going to get diseases and die. It is inevitable. Your goal should be to keep them alive long enough so that you can get tomatoes off of them. Spacing plants out and staking them so that good airflow happens will help reduce disease. Removing and destroying all plant debris, including roots, each season will help. Using seed

from reputable companies and only saving seed from healthy plants is important. Rotate the plants in your garden so that pathogens don't build up. Plant varieties that have good disease resistance. Finally, there are fungicides that can be used to slow the spread of disease.

If you have questions about tomatoes, contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

**Fowler... continued from Page 4A**

see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). "Born again" is not a special category of Christian. It is another way to describe how one becomes a Christian. It is repenting of your pride in who you think you are and what you have accomplished and humbling yourself before Almighty God. It is being made new with the love and character of Christ. If God can give Nixon's hatchet man a new life of hope, change, and purpose, He can do it for you. [www.mountain-christian.net](http://www.mountain-christian.net)

**Dyer... continued from Page 4A**

want to encourage everyone to consider preparing for these types of events because a prepared community is a benefit to everyone. For more information on hurricane preparedness, visit [www.ready.gov/hurricanes](http://www.ready.gov/hurricanes).

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

**Bible... continued from Page 4A**

I am very grateful to Governor Sonny Purdue, Union County Sherriff Mack Mason, Union County Commissioner Lamar Paris, Union County Gun Club President Paul Clark and a lot of other folks that have worked diligently for the past six or seven years to put this facility together. Be proud and take a bow.

**Dennis Bible**  
Union County Gun Club  
Charter Member

**Donaldson... continued from Page 4A**

tatives in Congress, and they have a difficult time getting anything done. A good person doing what is right and best on each issue is what's important, regardless of political party. I sincerely believe that Commissioner Paris does exactly that.

If it's not broke, don't try to fix it. We need to be extremely careful in changing our form of government. We could get something much worse.


**Robert Donaldson**

**Chamber... continued from Page 4A**

Festival hosted by the Union County Historical Society beginning August 31st going through Labor Day. There will lots of vendors, but you don't want to miss the exhibitions presented at the Mock House.

Stay safe and thank you for helping make life Better in Blairsville!

**Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse**



**August 2, 2024**  
In memory of  
**Charles E. McGraw, Jr.**  
on his birthday  
By Allyson McGraw

**August 14, 2024**  
In memory of  
**Larry Ashley**

**August 26, 2024**  
In memory of  
**William T. Meeks, Sr.**  
on his birthday  
By Ginger and Terry Meeks

**Bell ringing information at 706-745-5493**