

North Georgia News

4 Sections 28 Pages

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Blairsville PD recovers stolen Babe Ruth card

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Blairsville Police Department hit a grand slam last week when it recovered a stolen Babe Ruth baseball card – a one-of-a-kind “Advertisement Board Photogravure” from the Boston Herald’s 1915 Gallery of Red Sox.

After a slow start in the case, investigators got ahead in the count when the 1-of-1 card of the big-league slugging pitcher popped up on eBay mere days after being reported missing by its rightful owner.

Being the only known instance of this particular piece of sports memorabilia in existence, the value of the card is potentially in the millions of dollars, but it had been listed for auction at a steal of a price with a \$49.99 starting bid.

Through cooperation with eBay, Blairsville PD was able to trace the account selling the card to a local resident, resulting in the arrest of three individuals on felony charges of theft by receiving and being a party to a crime, Police Chief

Michael “Bear” Baxter said. Cassie Cooper, 24, was the operator of that eBay account, and she was taken into custody on Thursday, Sept. 22, alongside Tyler Meeks, 17, and Abbigayle Owens, 18, all of Union County. They have been charged only and are presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

So, how did such a rare item find its way online for less than the average price of a Braves ticket?

The owner of the card lives in Pennsylvania, and he shipped it to Blairsville-based company for grading and authentication, requesting that the card be shipped back to him once the task was completed, Assistant Police Chief Shawn Dyer said.

And that’s just what the grading company did on Aug. 31, only the owner never received his card because, somehow, the package containing it went missing after being dropped off at the Blairsville Pack & Ship at 281 Young Harris Street, Dyer said.

When the card owner called the Parcel Service a week after the shipment was

supposed to go out, the delivery company said the item did not appear to have been handled by their service, corroborated by tracking data showing that the package never left Pack & Ship, Dyer said.

At that point, fretting that such an invaluable piece of baseball history had met an illicit fate, the card owner reached out to the Blairsville Police Department, which prompted the opening of a police investigation, Dyer said.

Upon interviewing employees at Pack & Ship, Dyer said he and Officer Bradley Glass were told that Pack & Ship had gotten the package, but that it was picked up by UPS, which does not always scan items received from the store.

“We don’t really have evidence of a theft (initially),” Dyer said. “All we had was a missing package, which happens every day everywhere. So, we really had no reason to believe it was a theft at that point other than a missing or misplaced package.”

The trail went cold for about a week as Dyer checked on the tracking information

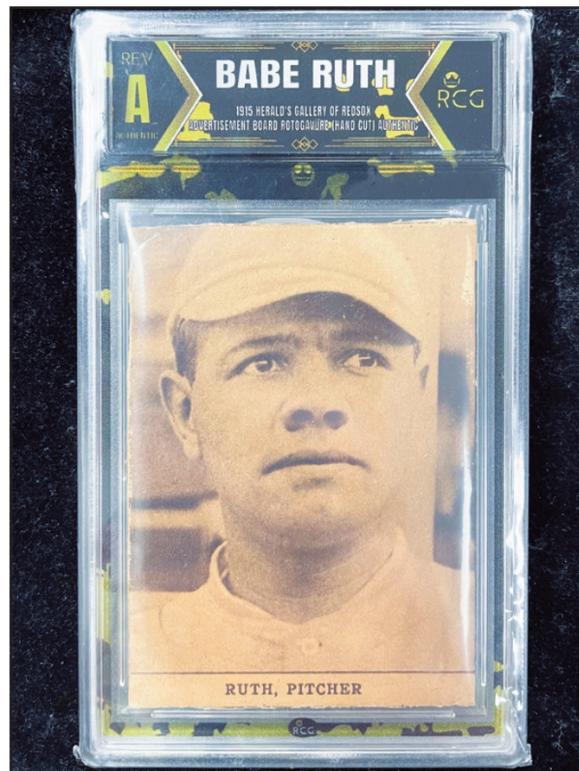
daily, he said.

In the meantime, the card owner kept a close watch on eBay to see if his Babe Ruth would turn up there. When it did, he again contacted the Blairsville Police, who were able to trace the eBay account to the Union County address where the card was recovered on Sept. 22, Dyer said.

Further investigation quickly resulted in accusations by police that two Pack & Ship workers, Meeks and Owens, stole the package, and that Meeks’ stepmother Cooper had facilitated the theft and put the card online for sale, Chief Baxter said.

Investigation is ongoing, and the chief is asking people to come forward if their packages have gone missing from Blairsville Pack & Ship in recent months, as his department believes the arrested individuals stole other packages, and that Meeks’ stepmother Cooper had facilitated the theft and put the card online for sale, Chief Baxter said.

“Investigation is ongoing, and the chief is asking people to come forward if their packages have gone missing from Blairsville Pack & Ship in recent months, as his department believes the arrested individuals stole other packages, and that Meeks’ stepmother Cooper had facilitated the theft and put the card online for sale, Chief Baxter said.”



This Babe Ruth card – the only one of its kind known to exist – was stolen locally before being recovered. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Veteran Cornwell honored for service to community



Harold Cornwell has been honored with a special plaque and challenge coin from Georgia Vietnam Veterans Alliance Chapter 1. (L-R) Ronnie Futral, John Bevich, Harold Cornwell, Painter Dickson Lester, Harold Hollingshed, Patrick Ultsch and Ron Levine.

By Shawn Jarrard
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A chance meeting of two Vietnam Veterans outside the Hole In The Wall Restaurant several years back led to a

friendship that resulted in a recent benefit for local impoverished children involved in the Wilderness Scouts of America and, by extension, community seniors in need.

The benefit came in the form of a donation made in

the Union County Historical Society’s Friday Night Concert Series on Sept. 16, when the Georgia Vietnam Veterans Alliance Chapter 1 of Marietta presented Wilderness Scouts Founder Harold Cornwell a

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

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Granddaddy Mimm’s named ‘Diamond Certified Distillery’

News Special
North Georgia News

In 2012, a local family had a crazy idea. In 2016, Granddaddy Mimm’s Distilling Co. opened its doors to the public and started making the first legal ‘shine that Union County had ever seen.

“We were just trying to honor my grandfather,” Founder and Owner Tommy Townsend stated. Through the years, Mimm’s Shine has won gold medals and was named the 2021 Best Distillery in Georgia by the Georgia Business Journal.

Well, they have done it again. Not only has Granddaddy Mimm’s expanded to 17 flavors of moonshine, whiskey and

vodka, with more products being released in late 2022, but they have just been named a Diamond Certified Distillery from the Distillery Awards.

The Distillery Awards is an association that judges distilleries all over the world, with entries coming in from Brazil, Mexico, Portugal, and the United States, to name a few.

Becoming a Diamond Distillery is one of the most prestigious awards given in the industry, and it is based on the entire portfolio produced by the distilleries. Of all of the companies that were entered, Mimm’s is one of five to receive this most elite classification.

“We know how great our products are, but it is really cool



to be recognized internationally for our hard work and family

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Tony Brown indicted in school shooting incident

By Shawn Jarrard
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Former Union County Schools maintenance employee Tony Brown, 64, has been indicted in connection with the August shooting incident at the Union County Primary School, according to court documents.

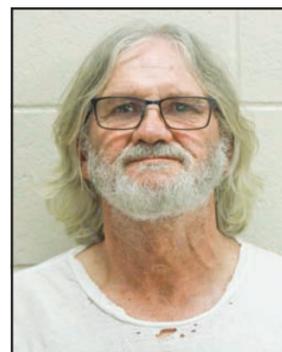
After Georgia testimony from the hearing Bureau of Investigation, Union County Grand Jurors handed up the indictment on Sept. 19, resulting in 10 felony charges against Brown: eight counts of aggravated assault, one count of interference with government property, and one

count of carrying weapons within certain school areas.

The incident took place the day before the 2022-23 school year was set to begin when Brown allegedly shot up a school maintenance van parked at the Primary School on Thursday, Aug. 11, prompting a nearly hourlong hard lockdown districtwide. Fortunately, no one was injured.

Brown reportedly committed the shooting from inside his truck and quickly fled the scene, and he was taken into custody in Downtown Blairsville after a roughly 40-minute manhunt.

Per the GBI, Brown was a disgruntled employee who was



Dwight “Tony” Brown targeting a “specific unoccupied vehicle.” and not people. However, the indictment

See Brown Indicted, Page 2A

River City celebrates new location with ribbon cutting



River City Bank held a Grand Opening Ribbon Cutting Sept. 22 for its newest facility in the renovated Fatz Restaurant building.

River City Bank has been a part of Blairsville since October 2020, and now, with the Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting for their new location at 206 Hwy 515, the bank is ready to establish a more prominent place in the community.

On Sept. 22 at 4 p.m., bank officials, community leaders, and several of River City’s customers met up at the totally renovated former Fatz Cafe building to officially

celebrate the arrival of the move service branch, which moved into the location earlier this summer.

Market President Scott Nanne kicked things off by thanking guests for the incredible turnout, and First Baptist Senior Pastor Rickey Powell led an invocation that ended with a powerful recitation of John 3:16 to properly bless the grounds and the future of the company and its customers.

Nanne then shared the story of what led up to that moment, recalling that back in the summer of 2020, he and two other colleagues decided to take a chance and open a new community bank in Blairsville.

That chance has already resulted in the Blairsville facility operating at 25% of the capacity of the original branch in Rome, with steadily

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Babe Ruth...from Page 1A

Ship," Baxter said. "They have also been victimized, because these individuals have stolen other items, and that's where we need people to contact us."

"If somebody has taken something to Pack & Ship on Young Harris Street and the

item came up missing and never made it to its destination, we need them to call us, because we know for a fact there's other victims."

Importantly, Baxter stressed that the owner and management of Blairsville

Pack & Ship did not know anything about the internal theft of packages and were not involved in the currently alleged crime.

The current owner, Laura Mowell, operated the business for 13 years before selling it in March 2020. The business came back under her ownership in the middle of last month, and she was in the process of selling it again when Blairsville PD contacted her about the theft.

Mowell was distressed to learn of the allegations and said she wants the public to know that steps are being taken so that customers may "rest assured they can safely ship their packages with us."

"The management of Blairsville Pack & Ship has been working diligently with UPS recently to find customers' pre-labeled packages that had been dropped off for pick-up by UPS and seemingly lost in their shipping system," Mowell said.

Continuing, "We were shocked, angered and sickened to be informed by Blairsville Police just a few days ago that, unbeknownst to us, these packages had instead been stolen from our store. We are



Abbigayle Marie Owens

continuing to work with UPS and now also Blairsville Police to help identify all the missing packages.

"We know of no missing packages with a shipping label that was generated by Blairsville Pack & Ship - only pre-labeled packages dropped off for UPS. We want to assure our customers that the people that did this are in no way affiliated with Blairsville Pack & Ship and are permanently banned from entering the premises."

"We are implementing protective measures in the store which will prevent this from happening in the future. Customer service has always been our priority, and we want our customers to rest assured they can safely ship their packages with us."

"In addition, we are pleased to announce Blairsville Pack & Ship is being acquired by Mountainside Parcel and Post. Their location on the Glenn Gooch Bypass will



Tyler Cain Meeks

merge into our location next door to the Blairsville Post Office. We believe this will allow better service to our community and look forward to this change happening in the coming weeks."

The Blairsville Police Department is thankful to the Union County Sheriff's Office for assisting in executing the search warrant to reclaim the card.

"And I would like to commend our folks," Chief Baxter said. "Everybody really worked hard on this case, and thankfully, we got a very valuable piece of property back for the rightful owner, and hopefully justice will be served."

Upon learning the card had been safely retrieved, Dyer said the owner shed tears of joy over the phone, and Baxter said the card is being kept safe until it can be retrieved. As for the fate of the card, Dyer added that the owner said he has no plans of selling anytime



Cassie Anne Cooper

soon, no matter how much it's worth.

In their many years in law enforcement, neither Baxter nor Dyer have ever worked a case involving such a rare item. People who suspect their pre-labeled package to have been stolen recently from Blairsville Pack & Ship should call the Police Department at 706-835-1692.

Widely considered the greatest baseball player of all time, Babe Ruth is best known for his affiliation with the New York Yankees, though he got his start in America's favorite pastime in Boston.

"Ruth made his Major League debut as a left-handed pitcher with the Red Sox in July 1914 and pitched 89 winning games for the team before 1920, when he was traded to the New York Yankees," per history.com. "After Ruth left Boston, in what became known as 'the curse of the Bambino,' the Red Sox didn't win another World Series until 2004."

Brown Indicted...from Page 1A

reveals that three individuals were in the vicinity of the van Brown targeted with a .223-caliber rifle, noting that Brown shot "toward the direction" of these individuals, hence the multiple counts of aggravated assault.

Following the shooting, Brown's employment was terminated with the Union

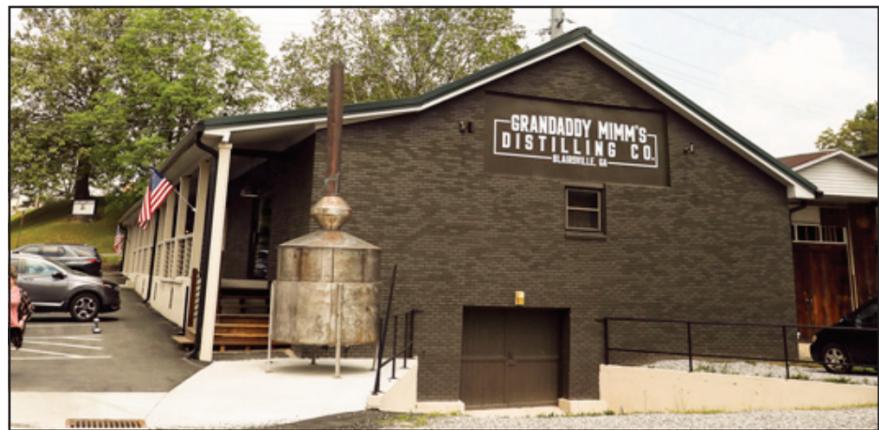
County School System, where he worked for 16 years. He remains in custody at the Union County Jail without bond and has been charged only, being presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

"An arraignment date will be set relatively quickly for the entry of a plea of guilty or not guilty," Enotah Judicial

Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley said regarding next steps in the case.

"If no attorney has been hired then an application for an appointed attorney will be offered at that time," he continued. "The final GBI report on the incident has not yet been completed. No trial date has been set."

Granddaddy Mimm's...from Page 1A



Granddaddy Mimm's Distilling Co. is located just down the street from the Blairsville Square at 112 Wellborn Street.

recipes," Townsend explained. You can catch Granddaddy Mimm's Distilling Co. in

Downtown Blairsville at 112 Wellborn Street, open Monday-Thursday from 11

a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday-Saturday 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., or go to granddaddymimms.com.

July Term 2022 Grand Jury Indictments, continued

The following individuals were indicted during the July Term 2022 of the Union County Grand Jury, which met for a second time earlier this month:

Casey Hugh Vining, possession of a Schedule II controlled substance; simple battery; obstruction of an officer; giving false information to a law enforcement officer; possession of drug-related objects; pedestrian under the influence.

Dwight Anthony Brown, eight counts aggravated assault; interference with government property; carrying weapons within certain school areas.

Sarah Eliza Payne, aka Sarah Eliza Weaver, two counts fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer; driving under the influence (less safe) (alcohol); reckless driving; failure to maintain lane; distracted driving; driving on wrong side of roadway.

Jonathan Dominic Ledford, false imprisonment; battery, Family Violence; simple assault, Family Violence; hindering an emergency telephone call; criminal trespass, Family Violence; cruelty to children in the third

degree.

Tyler Jacob Holloway, two counts terroristic threats; aggravated battery; aggravated assault on a peace officer; three counts obstruction of an officer; escape; interference with government property; criminal trespass.

Charles Bradley Stephenson, aggravated battery; three counts obstruction of an officer; two counts terroristic threats; disorderly conduct; driving under the influence (less safe) (alcohol); criminal trespass; failure to maintain lane.

James Wesley Love, identity fraud.

Tony Randell Guy, theft by conversion.

Eric Eugene Pearce, possession of methamphetamine; two counts possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony; driving under the influence (less safe) (drugs); driving under the influence (controlled substance); driving under the influence (less safe) (combined influence); driving under the influence (per se); failure to maintain lane.

Sherry Lynn Shorette, possession of methamphetamine; two counts

possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony.

Bobby Eugene Huggins, possession of a Schedule II controlled substance.

John William Turner, serious injury by vehicle and leaves the scene; hit and run.

Van J Evans, two counts aggravated assault; possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony.

Devin Kyle White, aggravated assault; rape.

Lane Danny Lee, eight counts child molestation.

Justin William Kamper, false imprisonment; two counts battery, Family Violence; two counts criminal damage to property in the second degree; two counts criminal trespass; two counts cruelty to children in the third degree.

Joshua Roger Morrow, five counts aggravated stalking.

Theodore Van Denny, possession of methamphetamine; possession of marijuana, less than an ounce; giving false information to a law enforcement officer.

The above individuals have been charged only and are presumed innocent until found guilty in a court of law.

Union County Historical Society honor contributors September 28th



The Union County Historical Society will honor the

following citizens for their lifetime of contributions to Union County by hosting a reception for them on Wednesday, September 28 at 12 noon in the Mock House.

The public is invited to attend.

Honorees are: Sue Collins, Mary Seabolt, Barbara Davenport, Sue Souther, Mamie Rogers, Odetta Colwell, Blanche Candler, Roy Hamby, Shirley Miller, Josephine Rowan Akins, Jenelle Sullivan and Clyde Harkins.

Cornwell Honored...from Page 1A

\$1,000 check. Alongside the donation, Cornwell received the organization's prestigious President's Award and rarely given Challenge Coin "for exemplary commitment, conduct and dedication to those children, the elderly and many veterans as well."



GVVA President and Mars Hill Porch Pickers band leader Painter Dickson Lester presenting one of his organization's rare Vietnam Veterans challenge coins to Harold Cornwell in the Old Courthouse Sept. 16. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Lester met Cornwell for the first time outside the restaurant about three years ago, having recognized him as a fellow Vietnam Veteran by his telltale patriotic ballcap. The two struck up a conversation and welcomed each other home – a custom among Vietnam Vets aimed at rectifying the poor treatment many soldiers experienced upon returning home from war. Following a brief chat, they wished each other well and went their separate ways.

accepted the invitation to see the band play but said he had no idea about the honor he would be receiving, an honor for which he is truly grateful.

Cornwell, a Navy Special Forces veteran, started the Wilderness Scouts as a way to enrich the lives of poverty-stricken children growing up in circumstances that he knew all too well from his own childhood.

Scouting activities were kept to a minimum the last couple of years over the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly taking place in the front yards of individual scouts' homes, but today, Cornwell and the children are back to meeting as a group.

Cornwell teaches the scouts survival skills and points their moral compasses north as they cut firewood and prepare hot meals of Springer Mountain chicken for the elderly, many of whom are veterans, and the group is always making things by hand and learning to be self-sufficient.

As mentioned above, since starting the organization some 38 years ago, Cornwell has mentored thousands of scouts – boys and girls between the ages of 3 and 16 from numerous states who, like the seniors and families they assist, come from impoverished circumstances.

Currently, Cornwell and the Wilderness Scouts need funds for a new computer and other supplies. Unfortunately, their last computer died and a file containing the group's donation drive database was lost, meaning fundraising efforts have been hampered, so any assistance is much appreciated.

People may mail donations to 29 Crystal Drive, Blairsville GA, 30512.

"I would like to challenge

everyone in North Georgia to get to know Harold Cornwell's Wilderness Scouts of America cause and donate to help keep it going, just as we did, to help save more children from going down the wrong paths of life," Lester said.

Continuing, "Harold and I have a special bond now in our service to Veterans, the elderly and children, and I hope to continue it for years to come."

"I want to learn more from him to pass on and teach our 300-plus kids in our Kenya Connection for Kids, International, located in the center of Kenya 4,400 feet above sea level in a small town named Chuka run by God and served by Rev. Humphrey Muthengi Kanga."

Lester would like to thank several people who helped make the Sept. 16 presentation special, including Cora Bauman and Sam Ensley of the Historical Society; Loretta Durden, mother of Hole In The Wall owner Mark Cox, for calling local veterans service organization to attend; Chris and Colleen Urbaniuk of Seasons Inn for promoting the show; and others.

Also attending were Georgia Vietnam Veterans Alliance Chapter 1 Board Members Harold Hollingshed, John Bevich and Patrick Ultsch. Donations to the veteran organization may be made payable to "GVVA-1" and mailed to P.O. Box 414, Kennesaw GA, 30156.

The Mars Hill Porch Pickers are Painter Dickson Lester, Steelman Borden, Ronnie Futral and Ron Levine. Together, they put on a terrific bluegrass concert attended by more than 100 people, at least a dozen of whom were veterans that received recognition and applause for their service.

River City Bank...from Page 1A



River City Bank Market President Scott Nanney addressed a sizeable crowd during last week's Grand Opening celebration.

increasing business. Using over two decades of experience, Nanney looks forward to building up a rapport with – and earning the trust of – River City's customers.

"When you call us, we answer the phone, and when you have a birthday, you get a handwritten letter in the mail – a birthday card – that says, 'Hey, Happy Birthday,' signed by all the staff," Nanney explained, offering examples of the personalized experience that makes community banking different from the norm.

Also attending, Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce President Steve Rowe said that "it seems like just the other day" that River City opened a mortgage and loan office at its initial Blue Ridge Street location, and it has grown to a full-service bank branch in less than two years.

"When you say 'community,' this fits right in," Rowe said of the bank. "And when you walk in, you see all the smiling faces, you see people you know, and it's just so refreshing to come and see what y'all have done here, and we're excited for the future."

It was then that River City Bank President and CEO Jamie Tallent, who was one of the founding members of the Blairsville location along with Nanney, took the floor. Tallent introduced staff alongside other

important figures who played a role in getting River City to where it is today.

"We embarked on this journey together," Tallent said, later revealing that he believed River City was "blessed to have a location like this here in Union County."

Tallent also expressed that River City could have no better leader than Scott Nanney, who "is very passionate about what he does ... is very passionate about his team, is very passionate about Blairsville and Northeast Georgia," from the businesses here to the residents themselves.

After the introductions and thanks, the big moment arrived to officiate River City Bank as another option for personal and business financing in Blairsville. Staff gathered outside the building alongside anyone else, customer or otherwise, to cut the ceremonial ribbon.

To finish up the evening, everyone was welcomed to fellowship and sample refreshments courtesy of local businesses like Jim's Smokin' Que and Melissa's Custom Cakes, the latter providing sugar cookies decorated intricately with frosting in the shape of River City's logo.

Among those who stayed for the afterparty were plenty of customers who were happy to share how pleased they felt about their banking

experience. Dick and Sandy Bell, for example, were quite satisfied with their six months of knowing River City.

"They could have left the bar that was in the restaurant previously," Dick joked, quickly adding the genuine opinion that River City is "a well-run bank with a nice new facility." Sandy agreed, saying that she was impressed with the polite, kind staff.

"River City, they're the best bank around," said Jackson Burks, who's been a loyal customer for about a year and a half. "I've had a really good experience for me and my family."

"The thing that drives people to Blairsville is that local experience of community and family, and that's one thing you really get out of River City, is that sense of community. They do a great job."

Similarly, Chamber President Rowe was quick to offer his own opinion to potential investors, saying, "We've got a lot of good banks, and if somebody's looking for a bank, I'd recommend that they stop by and talk to the team here at River City."

For more information on the bank and available services, including checking, savings, credit cards, loans and more for personal and business needs, swing by the new location or visit <https://www.rivercity.bank/>.