

Opinions

Everybody has one...

The Search and Rescue

Union County had another major search and rescue mission from November 1st to the 5th. This was the third major search and rescue mission this year. As with all the other missions, I saw some extraordinary work from all the responding personnel and organizations who were involved. It makes me proud to be associated with these people and to be part of this community. The following is a brief description of the effort put into this mission.

The search and rescue mission involved a man who was hiking in the Gooch Gap area. His wife stated that he had been hiking on the Appalachian Trail for a couple hours each day for the last week and was usually home by 2 p.m. She stated that he had not returned today as expected.

The initial search began by gathering information and locating his vehicle. This was quickly completed and a hasty search was conducted of the trail that he was believed to be hiking as well as the surrounding area. This search lasted into the night but nothing was found and another operation was planned.

For the next couple of days, we investigated, planned, and searched the area. Searching involved using helicopters, drones, dog teams, horses, vehicles, ATVs, and ground searchers. The Emergency Operations Center and Field Operations were staffed each day. This brief description doesn't properly explain the hard work and dedication needed to complete this mission.

The search lasted for a total of four full days. The hope of finding him dwindled each day. The man was located on Tuesday afternoon. Some searchers had heard a noise in a nearby area. The noise was described as someone hitting a tree. Search teams and a drone was sent to the area where they found the subject. He was deep in the woods about 3/4 of a mile off the Appalachian Trail in steep terrain. He was in fair condition, dehydrated, and hypothermic. He was hoisted from his location by the Army Ranger Blackhawk who transported him to the hospital in Dahlonega.

We would like to thank the organizations that were involved in this search: UC E911, UC Sheriff's Office, UC Fire/EMA, UC CERT/SARA/MSAR, UC Government, GEMA, DNR, GSP, GSAR, Task Force 1, USFS, Camp Frank D. Merrill, US ARMY, Lumpkin Co. EMA, Lumpkin Sheriff's Office, White Co. EMA/CERT, Fan-

See Dyer, page 5A

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



All Is Gain

It was still dark when the flood waters leapt the banks of the river. Bill (not his real name) was in his house in a nearby grassy field. He lives alone, but he was not alone that day.

By the time he awoke that morning and peered out of a window, the water was deep beside his car. The swift and rising flood made driving or walking to safety impossible. It dawned on him that he could not leave. He was trapped. As the waters continued to rise, he looked out another window and saw tragedy unfolding. I'll spare you the details, but he witnessed what he realized could be his fate.

He watched as the muddy water swallowed his car. It marched up the back steps to his elevated deck. It was at the threshold. Then it was in the house. As he stood in the darkened house, the water became knee deep. His phone still worked, so he texted his brother. "All is lost. All is gain."

Clearly, Bill had come to terms with an imminent departure from this life. If you are not familiar with the words he uttered, it is a declaration of faith. A famous Christian was in prison, facing the death penalty. He wrote, "Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:20-21). To be able to say, "all is gain," when you expect to lose your life is to have a perspective illuminated by a secure faith. It stakes a claim to joy unmoved by dire circumstances. "No one will take your joy away." Jesus explained after He predicted His death and resurrection (John 16:22). The believer's joy is grounded in the hope and assurance that as death had no hold on Jesus, neither shall it hold you.

Bill survived. In hindsight, he can look back over this experience and take comfort in knowing that his faith was secure when tested to the point of death. "I have never felt such peace as when I sent that text," he said. He knew he was not alone. Jesus said to His followers, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27).

The time to prepare for the testing times in your life is now. If you can wrap your head around God the Son stepping into this

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All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Each Fall, my office receives calls concerning trees that appear to be leaning or about to fall. These trees become troublesome mostly when they threaten to fall across a roadway. There are many scenarios that could play out when this happens. This week's questions address those scenarios, and they discuss the situations when the county road department can help and when they cannot.

Q. If there is a tree leaning towards a county road, will you ask the road department to take it down?

A. If you see a tree that is dangerously close to falling on a county road, please call the Road Department at 706-439-6062. They may not cut every tree you call about, but they will inspect it and make the decision as to whether it really needs to be cut. If you are not sure, it is better to err on the side of being cautious. We aim to ensure that people driving on county-maintained roads are safe in the travels.

Q. What do we do if a neighbor's tree is leaning toward our property, and we are afraid it will fall on us?

A. The obvious answer would be to first call your neighbor and see what they think. Like many other issues, people sometimes view problem trees differently. Some people are afraid of every tall tree near their house and some are not. Some people do not like pine trees or especially large white pines or hemlocks and want them all cut. Others love these trees and will not cut them. However, if there is no evidence of the tree being diseased, more than likely it is ok. You can contact the UGA Extension Office at 706-439-6030 or a Certified Arborist to come inspect the tree and give their opinion.

Q. Who bears the responsibility of a tree that could potentially fall?

A. If it is a tree that may fall on a power line, BRMEMC may be able to cut it. If the tree is threatening to fall in a county road, the Road Department may cut it. However, if it is on your property or that of a neighbor's, it is purely a local cost to one or both of the property owners.

Q. A tree on a neighbor's undeveloped property is leaning towards our private road. Will you ask the road department to take it down?

See Paris, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Every Age Has a Purpose

"Do not regret growing older... It's a privilege denied to many."

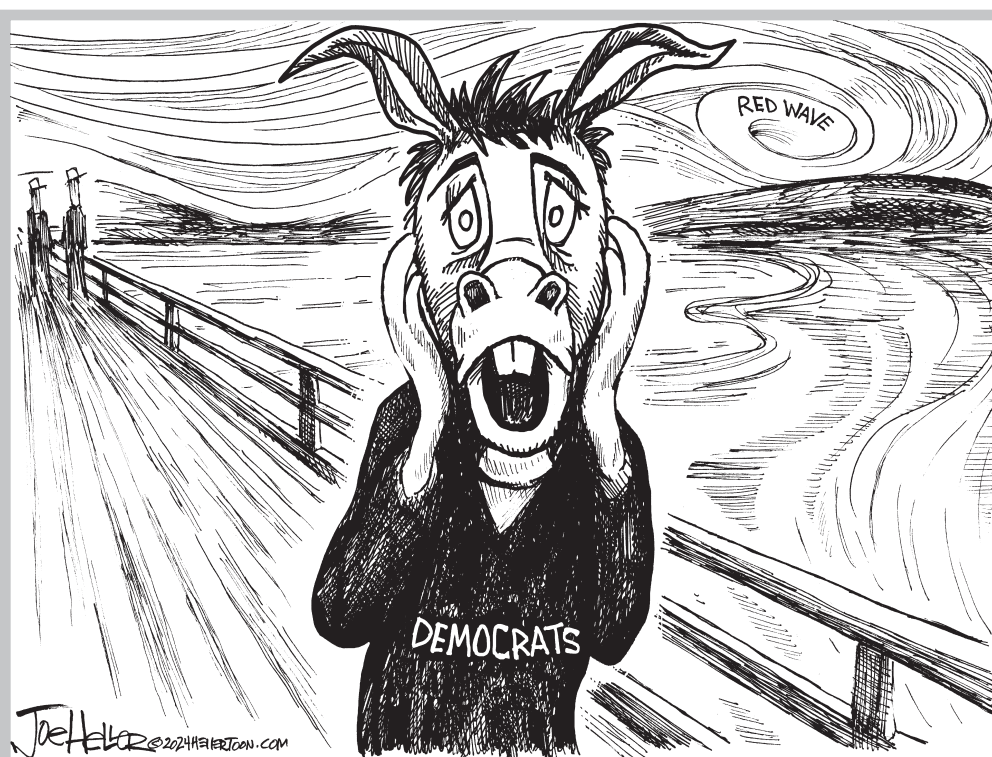
Each stage of our lives has a purpose! If we are in our adolescent stage, our purpose is to get our required education and pursue more opportunities. As we enter another decade of life, our life purpose takes on a fresh, new look. Even into our 80s and beyond, our purpose has to change because our lives require new meanings and challenges. Having such a different life purpose keeps us alert, challenged, and growing.

Sitting on the front porch, watching cars pass by hour upon hour, is dangerous because such sedentary behavior does not motivate the human brain to progress and function at its utmost. Our minds become toxic. The 3 pounds of the brain have to have a bona fide reason for existing and for productivity if the brain is to remain healthy and vibrant.

As early as our 20s, we have much to give

See Ashurst, page 5A

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



A Nation of Innovation...

A Nation of Innovation and Resilience
By Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher

When the world looks at Israel, it often sees a country defined by conflict, resilience, and survival – a nation that has weathered wars, terrorism, and the occasional bout of political instability to defend its existence. This view is only reinforced by Israel's recent struggles, with the brutal Hamas invasion, massacres, and kidnappings of October 7, 2023, marking a painful chapter in a year spent defending against multiple fronts and rogue states.

Yet Israel is so much more than its conflicts. Beyond the struggle, it is a powerhouse of global innovation – an engine of solutions that improve lives far beyond its borders, even as attempts to delegitimize the country through the BDS movement persist.

BDS, or the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, works to undermine Israel by promoting the idea that it should be isolated while imposing economic sanctions. Per Wikipedia, "Boycotts are facilitated by urging the public to avoid purchasing goods made by Israeli companies, divestment by urging banks, pension funds, international companies, etc. to stop doing business in Israel, and sanctions by pressuring governments to end military trade and free-trade agreements with Israel and to suspend Israel's membership in international forums."

But the irony of these calls for boycotts is that they overlook a profound truth: Israel is a country that not only survives but thrives, pioneering technologies that have become essential to modern life. In Israel, necessity drives invention at a pace unmatched by most developed nations. From agriculture to AI and healthcare, Israel's advances reach far beyond its borders, benefiting millions in ways that can't simply be dismissed or ignored.

Take healthcare, where Israeli innovation shines in addressing real-world needs. Nuvo's Invu, for instance, is a groundbreaking wearable device that allows expectant mothers to monitor their pregnancies from home, reducing hospital visits and offering critical peace of mind. It's a profound example of how Israel doesn't just solve local challenges – it creates solutions that resonate globally, improving lives in areas with limited healthcare access. BDS, however, seeks to ignore such contributions, overlooking the impact of these technologies on the very people it claims to

Echos from Sinai
"Torah for Everyone"
Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger



Speck Fishing

One of my favorite enjoyments is called "Speck Fishing." Speckled Trout derive their name from the specks that cover their body. In other parts of our country the fish are called "Brook Trout" or "Brookies." The fish generally require cold, clean water and they do not tolerate "Rainbow Trout" well. These tend to prey upon the Specks. These little fish are Georgia's only native trout. As a matter of fact when John Muir traveled through Trackrock Gap all those years ago, he noticed many smaller Trout in the creeks in the area. Later it was determined these minnows were actually Specks.

Since that time the territory of our native Speckled Trout has decreased significantly. The introduction of Rainbow Trout and the development of much of our land have both decreased our water quality and placed extraordinary pressure upon our only native trout. Now to catch this species you must travel into the high coves and above waterfalls underneath many of our high mountains. My good friend Patrick Fix loves to Speck fish as much as I, and this is a story from his childhood.

Patrick, his cousin and his father, Bill Fix, were Speck fishing somewhere on the south side of Low GAP. Patrick said he can still remember watching Dad walk through the rhododendron thickets. He carried a small fishing rod and on his back was a day pack containing water and a small frying pan. When the trio caught enough fish they would grease up a pan and build a fire. Next all the fish were rolled in corn meal and fried along with some potatoes. What a way to spend a day with your son and nephew!

Late in the afternoon the trio came to a long cascading waterfall. The falls were not free falling, but, more of a long chute with potholes placed intermittently through the 100-foot drop. Actually, the waterfall was in the shape of an s-curve much like a water slide you might see at an amusement park. Bill Fix looked at the two young boys and said, "That blue granite is too slick for my liking, so I am going around this fall to the bottom and fish that big hole." So, Bill and his nephew disappeared around a point while Patrick sat looking at a pothole halfway down the waterfall.

I don't think Patrick has ever met anything he is afraid of, and the more he looked at the pothole the more he wondered if it contained a record "Speck." So, carefully he crept through the boulders navigating his way down the waterfall to the pothole. At one point he

Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings



Well Water

Most people in Georgia have well water in their homes. Here in the mountains, many people enjoy fresh mountain water as their primary drinking source. Therefore, it's very important that people be aware of potential issues with well water and things that they can do to mitigate issues. Let's talk about some well issues and things you can do to prevent those issues from occurring.

The US Geological Survey keeps track of water aquifer levels. The nearest test site for us is in White county. Because of the high amounts of rainfall that we receive each year, our aquifers drying out is not a concern like it is in the Western US.

The aquifer we access is the Blue Ridge aquifer. It's a crystalline rock aquifer, which means that the gallons per minutes that you get from a well here is going to most likely be in the 5-10 range. Wells can be pretty variable in yield in North Georgia because of the variations in the fractures in the ground. Basically, for well drilling here, you put the well in and hope that you cross some of the fractures where water is present.

You want to make sure that your well is located at least 50 feet from the septic tank and 75 feet from the septic system's drainage lines. You also want to make sure that your well cap is at least 8 inches above the ground. This is going to keep surface water from getting inside of your well. Surface water can carry bacteria and debris that you want to keep out. It's also a good idea to have a well cover to protect the well cap. A well cover makes your well more visible so that it's less likely to be backed into by a vehicle or run over by the lawn mower.

Always be on the lookout for changes in the water. If you see a difference in color, a new odor, new taste, or particles in your water that's a clue that your well has become compromised. There's a lot of water tests that the Extension Office can assist you with to find out what is going on with your water. By knowing the symptoms, when the issue started, where the septic system is, what kind of construction might have gone on nearby, among other factors can help narrow down the range of issues that we are dealing with.

Shock chlorination is a common treatment that is effective if bacteria are present. Shock chlorination won't be effective if the source of the contamination is not removed. Sources of contamination could include a septic system, absence of well cap, or a cracked well casing. You'll want to use three pints of ordinary bleach for 100 gal-

Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Letters to the Editor

A Predictable Response

Dear Editor,
The following excerpt was written by Hayes Brown, an opinion writer for MSNBC:

"The one thing that might soften that blow (of Trump's landslide victory) is how much Trump had to lie to do it. He had to lie about where he stands on abortion. He had to lie about migrants posing a threat to American communities. He had to lie about the many criminal charges against him. He had to lie about how great the economy will be under a disastrous tariff policy. He had to lie about trans kids and crime rates, and his claim in his conventional speech that he was offering 'a hand of loyalty and friendship' to every American was an obvious falsehood. Lying is a well-established

See Ripma, page 5A

An Open Letter to Georgia's Congressmen

Since nearly all politicians in Congress seem to agree that \$400,000 per year is the salary point where tax issues should be applied, I formally request, as a 48-year payer of the mandatory Social Security tax, that all three of you co-sponsor a bill immediately to increase the Social Security tax cap from the \$176,100 limit that takes effect on January 1, 2025, to a new limit of \$400,001.

In 2024, \$1.51 trillion was collected by the tax at the \$168,600 limit. Increasing the limit to \$400,001 would immediately infuse an additional \$2.6 trillion annually into the Social Security fund, and thoroughly eliminate any need for benefits cuts, eligibility restrictions or concerns about any lack of surplus funds.

This increase would have absolutely no impact whatsoever to any American making less

See Lawrence, page 5A

Poll Watching

Dear Editor,
A very large and successful turnout in Union County for the 2024 Presidential Election. YAY! US! Very happy with the early voting, and even though I did not do any poll watching during that time, I have not heard of any problems during the voting. However, I did see and hear of problems during poll watching at my Precinct.

During L & A (Logic and Accuracy testing), paper Test Ballots are used and then removed from the BMD's (Ballot Marking Devices), but there were still Test Ballots in one of the BMD's on Election Day. So, two of our voters had voted on Test Ballots! Where is the L & A on that? Carelessness on the part of the Board

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North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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Publication No: 001505

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ment to take it down?

A. Some people do not want to belong to neighborhoods with homeowners' associations. Actually, I've spoken with many who feel very strongly against these types of organizations. While that view is very much respected, there is a downside. Homeowners' associations usually address such things as dangerous conditions within a neighborhood. In the scenario above, "private property" and "private road" are the two key terms that in conjunction determine what the county can and cannot do. The word "private" means exactly that. Union County cannot go on private property and take down a tree that could potentially fall on a private road. The owners of the property with the leaning tree are responsible for their property – including any danger that is imposed such as leaning trees. The owners of property that are accessed by the private road are responsible

for the road to the degree that is agreed upon by the property owners.

Q. Is there any scenario whereby the Union County Road Department might take down a tree on private property on a private road?

A. I cannot think of a scenario where the County can take down a tree in a totally private scenario. The volume of requests of that nature could potentially impact the Road Department's ability to handle County-related business. However, should a tree actually fall across a private road - blocking the road, the Road Department could be dispatched to cut up the tree so that emergency vehicles would have access in the case of an emergency. In this case, the Road Department would not remove the tree or its cuttings. It would only provide ingress and egress, leaving the remainder of the tree to decisions made by the property owners.

Williams... continued from Page 4A

lons of water in the well.

Annual testing of the water in your well will start to build data on what your well normally is like. If you do run into problems with the well, then you'll have data to look back at to see what's changed. It's best to test in the spring, because that is generally when our aquifers are recharging.

If you would like to test your well water contact your local Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. We can assist you by providing the resources to test.

Lodes... continued from Page 4A

of Elections in checking the BMD's before they are put out in the Precincts.

Also, one of the BMD machines malfunctioned at least twice that I could see, so that it had to be shut down and not used. If we had not had the great and huge early voting, that could have caused a backup in voters having to wait longer to vote.

And last, but not least, someone removed all of

I am hosting a well water program for people who have questions about their wells. It will be on November 19, 2024 at 5:30 pm in the Pat Haralson Memorial Civic Center. This program is free and open to the public. The University of Georgia is an equal opportunity, affirmative action, veteran, disability institution. If you need a reasonable accommodation or language access services, reach out using the contact information provided, at least three weeks prior to the program date.

Trump signs from the Precinct that were placed there overnight and then proceeded to remove the new ones again during voting. Then they (whoever) removed all the political signs around the polling place before 1 p.m. again. I believe this happened at several polling places. Bear in mind that all these signs were more than 150 feet from the polling place.

Marsha Lodes

Hambourger... continued from Page 4A

support.

Agricultural technology is another area where Israel's ingenuity benefits people worldwide. In a region with limited arable land and scarce water, Israelis developed drip irrigation – a method now used in drought-prone regions globally to conserve water and increase crop yields. More recently, innovations like BeeHero's Pollination Insights Platform tackle the global pollinator crisis, helping ensure food security as bee populations decline. Such advancements address challenges faced not just by Israel but by the world at large, making it clear that efforts to delegitimize these achievements are both misguided and counterproductive.

Israel's achievements in artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, too, are undeniable. Aporia Guardrails, an AI management tool, helps companies monitor and prevent real-time AI risks, showing how Israeli innovation prioritizes safety and responsibility in an era when technology is often deployed without oversight. These contributions are indispensable to Fortune 500 companies and startups alike, yet BDS proponents would have us overlook these impacts, as if isolating Israel could somehow erase its vital role in our interconnected digital lives.

But Israel's impact doesn't stop with its technology exports. Waze, the navigation app created in Israel, revolutionized how we commute, and Mobileye's driver-assistance technology has saved countless lives by making roads safer. The influence of Israeli tech is woven into the fabric of everyday life worldwide, underscoring the absurdity of calls to isolate or erase these contributions. Even as BDS tries to diminish Israel's influence, millions continue to benefit from Israeli solutions daily.

The absurdity of BDS's agenda becomes even clearer

when we consider that Israel, despite facing constant security threats, is a leading global humanitarian responder. Israeli NGOs and aid organizations are often the first on the ground in crises, offering medical aid and resources to disaster-stricken areas worldwide. From earthquake zones to drought-afflicted regions, Israel has consistently provided expertise, equipment, and care to those in need – regardless of political or national affiliations. Ignoring this spirit of compassion does a disservice to the people whose lives have been touched by Israel's efforts.

Ultimately, BDS fails to recognize that Israel's story is not one of mere survival but of thriving against all odds. The words of the prophet Isaiah, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law," reflect Israel's modern mission to bring knowledge, solutions, and hope to the world. Whether through lifesaving health devices, sustainable agricultural practices, or world-changing technologies, Israel's contributions improve lives on every continent, regardless of the political narratives surrounding it.

In boycotting Israel, BDS doesn't just miss the point – it actively advocates against the solutions that enrich lives worldwide. Rejecting Israel's achievements isn't a stand against politics; it's a stand against progress itself. The world needs more of the hope and creativity that Israel provides, not less. In an era defined by shared challenges, Israel's resilience and innovation are gifts to the global community – proof that even amid struggle, light shines from Zion.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer serving spiritual seekers of all persuasions on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. Tzali Reicher is a rabbi and writer serving communities throughout the regional South. You can reach them at y@tasteof Torah.org.

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

was standing on a flat-topped boulder about 3 feet wide and 30 feet tall with nothing but other sharp boulders below him. Finally, he found himself above the pothole. He noticed there was no soil around this waterfall, only the wet blue granite. As he stepped onto the wet rock he remembered his Dad's words, "That blue granite is too slick for my liking."

As his foot touched the rock he slipped and fell launching his body into the pothole. It was only a 3 foot drop and he thought he would be able to catch himself before going into the chute.

Fowler...

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world, dying on the cross for your sins, raising Himself from the grave, and inviting you to a repentant life of faith, then you, too, can say with confidence, "All is gain."

Ashurst...

continued from Page 4A

the younger ages about what we have experienced – the good as well as the bad. And we keep growing in experiences whose lessons we can offer to others. The possibilities of impacting others in a positive way are endless. The question we must ask ourselves is, "Are you taking what has been given us to help others?" We need to share our histories, our experiences, our hopes, our freedoms, and our possibilities with others.

"You can't possibly enjoy growing older until you make peace with where you are right now." (anonymous)

Dyer...

continued from Page 4A

nin Co. Fire/Rescue, Pickens Co. Dog Team, Cherokee Co. (NC) Rescue, and many other volunteers.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Chamber...

continued from Page 4A

small trees still available – so be sure to secure yours before they are gone.

Finally, thank you to all of our local leaders who step up to serve and help make life better in Blairsville and North Georgia. We appreciate your dedication!

Ripma...

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lished part of Trump's brand by now."

It is obvious that Hayes Brown fixates on Trump's supposed lies while overlooking the actual falsehoods from Kamala Harris and her allies in the media. Clearly, the Democrats and their media supporters are more interested in creating a false narrative than reflecting reality. Just look at how they concealed Joe Biden's dementia. They are showing no interest in listening to American voters and even less in addressing our real concerns. So, for Brown and his fellow "woke" journalists, softening the blow of Trump's victory is their pathetic way of licking their wounds. What a telling – and predictable – response.

John Ripma

St. Lawrence...

continued from Page 4A

than the 2024 limit, or the new 2025 limit. The 2024 average income is \$59,428.

There is no downside whatsoever ... except those making between \$168,600 and \$400,000 would pay the additional 6.6% that they aren't paying now.

We've been hearing about the Social Security deficit and political scare tactics for decades. It's now time to stop talking and take positive action. Enough with the meaningless, insincere rhetoric and bogus campaign promises.

Given that members of Congress pay NOTHING in Social Security or Medicare tax, it's long past the time for them to put up or shut up.

I'm talking to you, Senators Ossoff and Warnock, and you, Representative Clyde.

Gary St. Lawrence

NGTC Board Meeting

North Georgia Technical College's Board of Directors will meet on Wednesday, November 20 at 11:30 a.m. on the Clarkesville campus. For more information, contact 706-754-7702.

downs and had to make my way down the mountainside to the creek where I could hear a waterfall. I crawled through the thicket and popped out in the small creek and there was the long chute

into which my friend, Patrick, had fallen. Even though I was not a witness of this event my mind revisited the scene and I laughed out loud as I heard the war hoop and saw the stunned look on the face of Bill Fix.

Flag Burning Ceremony Nov. 16th



The Ira Weaver American Legion Post 121 of Blairsville invites all veterans and their families along with the public to attend a Flag Burning Ceremony on Saturday, November 16th at 10 AM at 78 Blue Ridge Hwy., Blairsville, GA. This event is to respect, honor and retire flags no longer able to represent their nation.

Refreshments will be served. Hope to see you there.