

'Tis the Season

Thanksgiving is behind us and we are all looking forward to the Christmas season. We have already seen many lights and decorations throughout our community. Union County Fire Department always wants everyone to have a happy and safe holiday. With that in mind, we would like to remind everyone of the increased fire dangers that are associated with this time of year.

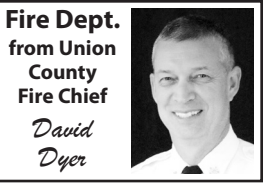
Christmas trees, especially live trees, can be a fire risk. Live trees can dry out quickly and must be watered regularly. Everyone has seen a video on how fast a dry, live tree can catch fire and burn. When choosing a location for the tree, do not place it near any heat sources. It should be at least three feet away. Make sure that the tree is set up correctly and on a stable platform. Trees can fall into a heat source if not stable. Christmas tree lights should always be turned off at night or when you are away. Christmas tree fires are not common but if they happen, they can spread quickly and can be very devastating to a home and the holidays.

Candles are associated with Christmas and the holidays. Increased use of candles, combined with an increase of combustible, seasonal decorations in many homes means more risk for fire. Seasonal is the peak time of the year for candle fires. Great care should be used around any open flames. Candles should be placed away from any flammable material. Children should not be allowed to have candles in their bedrooms or be allowed to use them. One third of the candle fires happen in bedrooms.

Electrical fires can be a fire risk during this time of the year. Lights, decorations, and extension cords should be inspected for frays or exposed wires before use. Overloaded electrical outlets and faulty wires are a common cause of holiday fires. Avoid plugging too many lights and decorations into an outlet. Overloaded circuits can overheat and start a fire. For those outdoor decorations, use Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets. Use lights that have a seal of an accredited certification agency.

These are just a few things to keep in mind when decorating and celebrating the holiday season. Union County Fire Department would like for everyone to be aware of the potential

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer

Why Christmas?

“To ask the right question,” said Psychiatrist Carl Jung, “is already half the solution to a problem.” People often ask a “why” question to solve a problem. Apparently, a certain young lady thought I was a problem.

I was serving in a major disaster area. At a community lunch for survivors and responders, I sat at a table with people from another organization. A young lady saw “Chaplain” embroidered on my shirt. “What is your role here?” she asked. By her tone, she meant, “Why are YOU here?” I said, “I am a chaplain,” stating the obvious. I continued, “At this moment, my role is to tell you that God loves you. Are you a woman of faith?” “Ab-so-lute-ly NOT,” was her emphatic reply.

My response to her also answers “why” questions about Christmas. Why did it happen? Why is it important? More to the point, why did Jesus come? Short answer: because God loves you. All other reasons we find to explain the mystery and purpose of God entering His creation as an infant cannot be separated from His love for you.

Christmas marked the advent (arrival) in human history of God’s eternal plan, which was for “the iniquity of us all to fall on Him” (Isa. 53:6). The prophet named the “child born to us” as “Mighty God” (Isa. 9:6). The angel told Joseph, who was betrothed to Mary, “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Mat. 1:21). Why Christmas? We need a Savior.

Jesus knew why He came, and said so. At his trial he told Pilate, “You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” (John 18:37). Why Christmas? We need to know truth. He said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Why Christmas? In a world scarred by strife, pain, and death, we need life and peace.

Jesus’ coming was selfless. He came “not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Why Christmas? To model humility and sacrifice

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All Things New
Wayne Fowler

Commissioner’s Questions

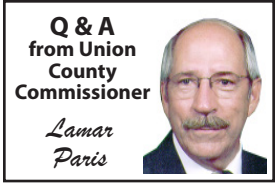
The sometimes brutal cold temperatures we see in the northern Georgia mountains impact our domesticated animals in different ways. Many factors enter into whether our pets are safe when the temperatures dip into the very low 10 and 20 degrees. This week’s questions and answers address some of the issues to consider as we go into these cold Winter months.

Q. What is a good temperature to use as a benchmark for pet safety in the winter?

A. A dog’s normal body temperature is anywhere from 99.5 to 102.5°F. In general, cold temperatures should not become a problem for most dogs until temperatures fall below 45° F, at which point some cold-averse dogs might begin to feel uncomfortable. When temperatures fall below 32° F, owners of small breed dogs, dogs with thin coats, and/or very young, old or sick dogs should pay close attention to their pet’s well-being. Once temperatures drop under 20° F, all owners need to be aware that their dogs could potentially develop cold-associated health problems like hypothermia and frostbite.

Q. What factors should I consider when allowing my pets to go outside in cold weather?

A. Coat type – Dogs with thick, double-layered coats of hair tend to be the most cold-tolerant (think Siberian Huskies, Newfoundlands or Samoyeds). On the other hand, dogs who have exceptionally thin coats (e.g., Greyhounds and Xoloitzcuintli) suffer the most in cold weather. Coat color – On a clear day, black, brown, or other dark-coated dogs can absorb significant amounts of heat from sunlight, keeping them warmer in comparison to their light-coated brethren. Size – Small dogs have a larger surface area to volume ratio. Therefore, small dogs get colder more readily than do large dogs ... all other things being equal. Weight – Body fat is a good insulator. Thinner dogs tend to get colder quicker than do their heavier counterparts. Conditioning – We’ve all experienced this one. Fifty degrees feels quite chilly in October, but after a long, cold winter, a fifty-degree day in April can make us break out the shorts and t-shirts. Dogs who are used to cold temperatures handle them much better than do pets who aren’t. Age and Health – The very young, the very old,



Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris

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2024

Getting the Most Out of 2024
By **Yonatan Hambourger and Tzali Reicher**

We’re now deep into December, the last month of the year, and it feels like we’re trudging to the finish line of 2024.

It’s hard to believe how fast the year has gone by. It feels like just yesterday we were making bold resolutions, setting lofty goals, and mapping out how this year would be the one when everything changed. But then life happened. The excitement of January faded into the routines of February, the chaos of spring, the lazy days of summer when everything is pushed off till we’re back in the office, and the whirlwind of fall. Now, here we are in December, looking back at the plans we abandoned somewhere along the way and telling ourselves, “It’s fine, I’ll start fresh in January.”

But will we? January 1 has a seductive

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Echos from Sinai
“Torah for Everyone”
Rabbi Yonatan Hambourger

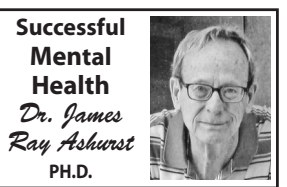


The Fun of Play

Are you fun to be around? Well, are you? Life is wide open for fun because your imagination and creativity have no limits or boundaries. In your imagination of fun, you can live in the most beautiful house you have ever seen or drive the fanciest car in the neighborhood or journey to the most awesome country in the world. Your imagination feeds your creativity without roadblocks. Imagination can plow through the roadblocks and come out ahead of the race. The same is true of creativity because it also has no boundaries. We can have a field day by permitting our imaginations to go wild and by letting our creativity show.

Through our imaginations and creativity, we allow our spirits of fun and play to run the entire race – from A to Z. However, our realities in life may cause us to be downers – especially those of us who once had the spirit to play and to have fun but have left them unattended. We allow our current responsibilities to overrun our

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

Beg Your Pardon

Joe Biden’s days in the White House may be numbered, but he’s not done breaking his promises to the American people quite yet.

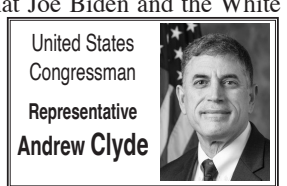
Despite repeatedly promising he wouldn’t pardon his son, Hunter, the President announced that he did just that over the weekend. Frankly, it’s not surprising that Joe Biden and the White House brazenly lied for months on end. The idea that Joe would leave office without pardoning his criminal son is absurd. After all, Americans know the Biden Crime Family is corrupt to the core.

In fact, according to reports, the President held discussions about pardoning his son with White House aides since Hunter’s conviction of felony gun charges back in June. Yet they agreed to publicly claim there wouldn’t be a pardon.

After years of lying on everything from inflation to the President’s health, the White House’s latest bold-faced lie isn’t shocking in the slightest. However, it’s the extent of the pardon that’s raising eyebrows across the aisle and throughout the country.

The devil is in the details. And folks, the details reveal just how corrupt the Biden Crime Family really is.

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United States Congressman Representative Andrew Clyde

Christmas Presents

My Favorite Christmas Presents

Can you remember all the Christmas Presents you have received in your lifetime? People place a lot of emphasis on giving and receiving presents. We want to give the one that a person will remember for the rest of a lifetime. As I think back across the years I can remember some Christmas Presents that stand out from all the others I have received.

During my fourth Christmas I received a pair of Cowboy boots from my Uncle Bud. I still have a photograph of me posing in those boots. I think I have owned at least one pair of Cowboy boots continually for the past 48 years. I also remember a .410 gauge shotgun I received from my Dad when I was about 12. I killed a bunch of squirrels over the years with that gun. I remember my Dad getting me a toy battleship that ran on batteries. He got the thing all put together and turned it on, but could not turn it off. Mom said he had to take it out on the back porch to keep from waking me up.

I remember one year in which I wanted an electric football game. I think I was 10 and everyone in my family knew I wanted this football game. Around 11 p.m., my brother got up for a drink of water and ran back into our bedroom. He woke me to tell me he had caught Dad playing with an electric football game. I jumped from bed and ran down the hall to find Dad tossing a football up and down while he was watching a Bowl game on TV. I thought my little brother had lost his mind until the next morning. Dad just grinned at us as we played that electric football game.

Some of my favorite memories include nothing more than candied orange slices, apple sauce cake and peppermint candy because they represent memories of my grandmother. My grandfather always took us boys squirrel, rabbit or coon hunting around Christmas. Another wonderful Christmas was the year my wife and I became engaged. Through the years she and I have many wonderful memories concerning Christmas. I was reminded of some of these the other day when we pulled out a box of LEGO building blocks.

We usually spend Christmas Eve with some friends, and one of their sons enjoys building things with LEGOs. So, we decided to get out these LEGOs and find the pirate ship we gave our youngest son on one Christmas. This LEGO pirate ship has 43 pages of instructions. That should tell you something about how many pieces were a part of that ship. My

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Around The Farm
Mickey Cummings

Cold, Cattle and Horses

With cold temperatures well upon us I wanted to take some time to talk about livestock needs in cold weather. Cold temperatures mean that animals require more energy to maintain their body temperature, ice can become a problem, and the way that you care for your animals will change some.

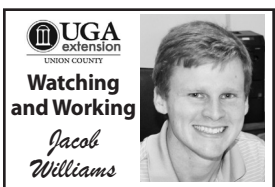
Windbreaks can help reduce the affect of cold winds on animals and therefore improve the ‘feels like’ temperature. Cattle are generally cold tolerant and are comfortable down to 20 degrees. Horses are generally comfortable down to about 18 degrees. Horses can be blanketed when temperatures get low to help them handle the cold. It’s best to use a well-fitting blanket. As these animals are using more energy to stay warm, be mindful of how much energy you are providing them in feed. Building a shelter for animals to take cover in is also a great way to help keep them warmer.

It’s best to have abundant feed available to help animals maintain body temperature in cold temperatures. If the total digestible nutrients (TDN) of your hay is low, there may not be enough energy in the hay to sustain the animals for a long period of time. High quality hay has a TDN of >58%. Low quality hay is 45 to 52% TDN. A simple hay test will tell you the TDN of your hay. Cattle and horses don’t have unique vitamin requirements during the winter compared to the rest of the year.

Body condition scoring (BCS) is important to monitor during the winter. BCS is a tool to help you evaluate the health of your animal, and determine if they getting enough feed and energy. The scoring ranges from 1 to 9. 1 is severely emaciated, and 9 is extremely obese. 5-6 is generally the desired score for cattle, while a score of 5 is ideal for horses. On cattle that are 5-6, the spine and the ribs are not visible and the tailhead and brisket have no fat. On horses a 5 will have a level back, the ribs are not visible but can be felt, the withers are rounded, and the shoulders blend smoothly into the body. Animals that are too flat or too thin can have health issues. In the cold, maintaining a good BCS will give you a healthier animal.

Outdoor water tanks will need to be cleared of ice under extended cold conditions. Cattle need about 1 gallon per hundred pounds of weight during cold weather. A 1000-pound horse will need 10 to 12 gallons of water each day in the winter. In the growing season grasses contain lots of water that horses can use to satisfy their water need. However, in the winter horses eating dry hay will need to drink extra water. If the wa-

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Watching and Working
Jacob Williams

Letters to the Editor

Me and My Colors

Dear Editor,
In a season so brightly lit with green, red, gold, white and blue colors, it is easy to forget the other colors of ME. By ME, I mean those memorable experiences we never forget. But let us not lose sight of those around us that may be surrounded by painful memories. By visualizing the colors of the rainbow, and thinking out of the box, we may have the ability to open our hearts and minds to what makes sure our holidays really are a time of giving rather than receiving.

First, let me take you back to your childhood where colors expressed feelings and teachers and professionals helped us channel these in appropriate ways. Here are quick examples: Red... Anger... pound clay with your hand, get that NRG out... it is OK to feel the way you do... a smile is catchy...

Yellow... helpless... get out and draw/write... get a tulip... give a kiss to your pet...

Blue... despair... think happy days are here again and the sky’s the limit...

Green... an array of feelings overshadowed by other, brighter colors... you are no better, but you are just as good... take a walk in your yard, garden... appreciate nature to take your mind off your thoughts...

Purple and Red... negativity thinking... turn these colors into a positive picture... go out and watch the sunset...

Orange... think the glow surrounding you is gone... you just have to look at albums/pictures of all the Halloween and other fun holidays where you helped make it fun for others...

Brown... you need to take care of yourself... take a nice bubble bath and plant a tree for someone you love... feel the brown soil in your hands...

Black... unable to see through to the light... this too shall pass... Give yourself a pat on the back because you can have your thoughts, you understand you need others to feel better... with the right help, you will be able to reflect on happier days... be proud of yourself that you want to get better... one night, you will wake up to the morning sunshine only to tell others of a wonderful dream or memory you had.

Just an added note to this...Elton John just revealed that he is losing his eyesight. Elton is looking forward to learning how to navigate his way into this next chapter of his life so he can still reach his audience. Be thankful you can see...

From my family to yours, we wish you all good times ahead blessed with everything you want for your family and friends. Happy holidays.
Lisa Kramer

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and the sick are not as able to regulate their body temperatures in comparison to healthy dogs in the prime of their lives, and they therefore need greater protection from the cold.

Q. How can I tell if my pet is too cold?

A. The great rule to follow should always be: When in doubt, keep your dog indoors. The last thing you want to do is put your precious pet in danger of getting frostbite or hypothermia. Depending on the severity, symptoms of hypothermia can include: Weakness, shivering, inaudible heartbeat, and trouble breathing. If your pet experiences any of these symptoms after being out in the cold, it's important that you give your vet a call right away. Keep your pet in a warm area and cover them with warm blankets/towels (avoid using heating pads, as these can burn your pet). Then take your dog to the vet as soon as possible.

Q. Who do we call when we see animals in danger?

A. If you see an animal that you feel is in danger or is sick, you should call Animal Control at 706-439-6052. However, if you simply see a stray animal, there are several rescue groups in Union County. Here are a few: The Mountain Shelter Humane Society

(706-781-3843), Castoff Pet Rescue (706 487-4539), Valley River Humane Society (828-837-2304) and the Whiskers Project (888-872-9330). There may be a few more scattered throughout north Georgia. Animal Control often receives calls about dogs left outside in dog houses during the cold winter months. Please keep in mind that many households provide heaters and heating blankets in their dog houses. It may appear that an animal is left to the cold elements when in reality, they have access to a warm doghouse.

Q. Should I report any unidentified animal that I find in my yard?

A. Please remember that just because you see an animal running around without a collar, does not mean that they are strays. There are many community dogs and cats as well and there are some that simply roam from their home temporarily and then return home.

Thank you to Union County Animal Control, Mountain Shelter Humane Society, petmd.com and intermountainpet.com for contributions to these answers. We are very appreciative of all the animal/pet organizations that help us to keep our pets safe in Union County.

Cummings...continued from Page 6A

mind went back to that morning when Wade was 10 or 11. He unwrapped that ship with a bucket full of enthusiasm. My wife spent hours helping him to build that ship, and when it was finally complete the boys ended up tearing it apart and asking us to help them put it back together.

As I recall all these Christmas presents I have received or gave in the last 66 years, it occurs to me that it wasn't the actual gifts that provided so much happiness. It was the people around those gifts. All these gifts were centered on people that were important to me. People like my grandparents, my uncle, my

Mom and Dad, my wife, my two sons and my friends. So, during this Christmas season, take time to enjoy the people who are close to you.

The giving of gifts began with the gifts to Christ from the wise men 2,000 years ago. Today we give gifts to people we love and appreciate. So, give the gifts and take time to make some memories with those people you love. Because at the end of your time you may not remember all the gifts you receive, but, you will remember the ones which gave them to you.

Also, remember the real reason for the season!

Hambourger.. continued from Page 6A

promise: a clean slate, a fresh start. Yet, deep down, we know the truth. The calendar changing doesn't magically transform us into more disciplined, driven, or organized versions of ourselves. Meanwhile, the precious time we have now – this very day, this very hour – slips away unused.

The truth is there's still time in 2024 to make things happen. These final weeks of the year aren't just for coasting or wrapping things up; they're for taking action. Waiting for January to kick things into gear is like spotting the finish line of a race and deciding to slow down. Why limp into the New Year when you can fly into 2025 with momentum already on your side?

The Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, was the most influential rabbi in modern history, and he often emphasized the irreplaceable value of time. During an address he delivered in 1951, he opened with these words: "I don't want to say that our time is short, rather that our time is precious." Time isn't about scarcity or abundance – it's about how we use it. Every moment we're given carries potential, a mission waiting to be fulfilled.

This idea isn't just theoretical; it's deeply practical. On the Rebbe's eightieth birthday in 1982, thousands of admirers celebrated his remarkable achievements, marveling at how much he had accomplished in his lifetime. But instead of reflecting on past successes, the Rebbe spoke about the value of every second:

"People worry for their monetary losses but care not for their precious time. Money comes and goes, but time never returns! Every moment that a person is granted carries a unique purpose, a mission from G-d. If time passes without it being utilized, that moment in time is lost forever!" The Rebbe demonstrated that we can do more in less time than we often believe as long as we use the time allotted with purpose and focus.

What if we adopted this mindset for the rest of 2024? What if, instead of seeing these last few weeks as time to wind down, we saw them as time to gear up? Imagine using December not as a month of excuses but as a month of action. Start tackling the goals you set back in January. Revisit the resolutions you've ignored. Even if you only make small progress, you'll

be building momentum that will carry you into the New Year.

It's not about overwhelming yourself with a frantic to-do list. It's about making the most of what you have. The time is there – you just need to use it. That project you've been putting off? Start it now. That phone call you've been meaning to make? Make it today. The gym membership collecting dust? Lace up your sneakers and go.

And don't underestimate the power of even a single action. The Rebbe often emphasized that every moment carries a mission, and even a small, positive step can ripple outward in ways we can't predict. The time we spend working toward our goals today is an investment – not just in our future, but in the here and now.

As the final days of the year slip away, we have a choice. We can limp toward the finish line, exhausted and unmotivated, waiting for January 1 to give us permission to start over. Or we can use this time to take action, to build momentum, to make these last days count. By the time the clock strikes midnight on December 31, we won't just be starting 2025 – we'll already be running. There's still time in 2024 to make progress, to make changes, to make things happen. Let's seize this time, cherish it, and use it to its fullest. The New Year is coming – but we don't need to wait for it. Let's make these last weeks of 2024 our strongest yet and fly into 2025 ready for whatever comes next.

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@tasteoftorah.org.

Fowler...

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for those who follow Jesus. My last example is the most magnificent. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Why Christmas? So that by faith you can be righteous before God.

"Why Christmas?" is the right question. The love of God is persistent and prevalent. That is why my final word to that young lady was, "God still loves you, even if you don't believe He's there."

Clyde...continued from Page 6A

President Biden's pardon grants Hunter sweeping legal protection for any crime he "has committed or may have committed" over a nearly 11-year period, extending from January 1st, 2014 to December 1st, 2024.

Hunter Biden committed felony gun charges in 2018 and carried out felony tax charges between 2016 and 2019.

So, why extend his pardon all the way back to 2014?

Well, that's the year Hunter Biden started working for Burisma, the Ukrainian energy company at the center of

one of the Biden Crime Family's shady foreign business schemes.

In other words, this pardon has nothing to do with Hunter's firearm or tax charges – but everything to do with protecting the Big Guy and his crooked family. For decades, the Biden Crime Family has abused political power for

profit – to the tune of billions of dollars. Now that they've reached the end of Joe Biden's political career, they're providing themselves cover for the nefarious crimes they've committed.

This scheme is pure corruption, plain and simple.

Thankfully, sunlight is the best disinfectant. I'm confident that President Trump and his top-notch teams with

new leadership at the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation will provide the American people with the accountability and the transparency that they deserve. Rest assured, my conservative colleagues and I are ready to help the Trump Administration deliver this long-awaited justice. After all, we can't let the Big Guy and his remaining family members off the hook.

Williams...

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tering trough has frozen over the animals can't drink from it. The ice may need to be broken up with a hammer or have a heater put on the water.

If you have questions about the impact of cold weather on your animals contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Dyer...

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fire dangers during this time of the year.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Chamber...

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Society preserve and restore local structures for future generations.

Tourism plays an important role in our local economy by providing over \$100 million in visitor spending each year (information provided by Explore Georgia). This spending has allowed our local businesses to no longer have to close three months of the year, and we can "SHOP LOCAL" without having to travel to find items we may want or need. When you drive through Downtown, you will see that our buildings are occupied and we continue to maintain the charm that we have grown to appreciate. Another benefit from tourism is that it generates an estimated 825 jobs each year. Based on the economic indicators, tourism provided over \$7 million in various State and Local taxes to the county government resulting in an average savings of \$686 per household in taxes. In 2023, for each \$1,000 in Hotel-Motel Tax spent by the Chamber promoting tourism, Union County received \$13,500 in State and Local taxes. Tourism helps provide for a thriving local economy while visitors contribute to the county funds helping to keep our tax rates some of the lowest in the State. Thank you for supporting our local merchants, restaurants, and venues that not only contribute to our local economy but provide jobs and help to save Union County residents on taxes. Working together, we can keep Life Better in Blairsville.

Ashurst...

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spirit of play and of fun.

Each of us has the gift of imagination, and by giving ourselves 15 minutes daily, we can allow our spirit of joy to thrive. As a result of just 15 minutes each day, our creativity and imagination can go wild with all sorts of ideas. When I think of my own family having fun, my memory goes to my father. He was a hoot to be around. Whether it was singing his beloved gospel songs, fishing, bowling, riding a jet ski, preparing fish fries for friends, motorcycle riding, playing pool, or just kidding around with my mom, my brother, and me, he set the tone for whatever the activity. He lived into his 90s and never lost his spirit of fun, love, and play.

Again the question: Are you fun to be around?

Behind every great man is a woman rolling her eyes. (Jim Carrey)

**Bell Ringing Union
County Old Courthouse**



December 2, 2024
In loving memory of
Larry Ashley
on his birthday

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