Opinions

Snowmageddon

It's time to speak frankly about a touchy subject. There was a lot of snow that fell on Dec. 8-Dec. 10. And

yes, the power was out for a lot of folks in a five-county area. Yes, the weatherman has admitted that only one weather model projected this amount of snow. And yes, it was the least likely.

But just like a long shot horse riding into first at Churchill Downs, it's the one that hit. We must deal with this and move on. But, I've just learned that Glenn

Shooting Charles Burns is getting hate mail. Nothing Duncan Glenn or any other meteorologist

Straight

could have conclusively projected would have deduced that a worst case scenario would unfold on the second Friday in December.

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC is getting some unjust attention thrust its way as well. Just a reminder folks, they knew who was without power. It was just a matter of getting to each occurrence in a timely fashion. All that and working in sub-freezing conditions

What happened on that bright, white December morning was a winter storm that was backed by arctic air. It was a worst case scenario that came to fruition.

I have to admit, I'm one of those people that thought the ground would be too warm for any snow to stick. However, what hit our mountain range was a heavy snow that packed a wallop.

It was one of the heaviest snows I've ever seen. It stuck to the trees, the power lines and anything that it touched. In the end, it amounted to 12-to-14 inches in places, and more in the higher elevations.

It hit with such a vengeance that our roadways became almost impassable as soon as the snow hit the ground. No one predicted this; the weather forecasts were calling for a dusting of up to 1 inch of snow. The only areas of impact were supposed to be pastures and grassy fields.

Still, for some reason, and cold weather will do this, feelings were hurt. People felt neglected because they were with-

See Duncan, page 5A

Anti-Drug Coalition

Marijuana: Life Under The Influence

Marijuana is linked to lower grades, school failure, and poorer quality of life. Marijuana has negative effects on attention, motivation, memo-

immediate effects wear [off-especially in people who use regularly. Someone who uses marijuana daily may be functioning at a reduced intellectual level most or all the time, accord-

The mission of the Union County Anti-Drug Coalition is to support an overall safe community by providing information, education and support services to children, families, and community toward prevention of il-legal substance abuse. Visit and Like our Facebook page for additional articles and videos.

ing to a study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse

Marijuana is unsafe if you're behind the wheel. Marijuana impairs judgment and other skills needed for safe driving: alertness, concentration, coordination, and reaction time. Marijuana use makes it difficult to judge distances and react to signals and sounds on the road. Marijuana is the most commonly identified illegal drug in deadly crashes, sometimes in combination with alcohol or other drugs.

See Coalition, page 5A

Letters to the Editor

Thank you BRMEMC Linemen Dear Editor,

Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Members Coop. Thank you so much for all your hard work. Our Lineman began working on Friday in the cold with the snow still falling. A company truck first drove through our neighborhood on Saturday at 3 a.m. At that point our pole had not come down, but the trees near it were overloaded with wet snow. By 5 a.m., the pole was snapped in half. For days now, these very special people, we take for granted, our Linemen, worked day and night in sub-freezing cold and terrible conditions. Monday morning at 7:30 a.m. they arrived with a new pole and by 9:30 a.m., we had electricity. Thank you so much. Tom and Cindy Rafter

Christmas Invention

Actors Dan Stevens and Christopher Plummer weave quite a tale about Charles Dickens' writing of his classic "A Christmas Carol." The new movie is called, "The Man Who Invented Christmas." Great actors, and I'm thinking this ought to be good. The reviews are generally positive, but that name is a bit (probably intentionally) provocative.

Last year, Time Magazine pub-

lished research on the world of Dickens in 1843. Dickens began writing this story as a commentary on the sad state of the poor. The emerging industrial economy dehumanized the working class, and exploited child labor with long hours in sicken-



Everybody has one...

ing environments. He sought nothing less than societal change He believed the work houses that destroyed poor families were a scourge, and that business owners should take responsibility for their workers' well-being. Hence Scrooge's grand change of heart.

"A Christmas Carol" is about family, love, and hope. It also shows human failings, poverty's misery, and lost opportunity. Dickens weaves these together around the theme of Christmas and via the supernatural, the human heart is redeemed. The story still resonates, but Dickens did not invent the "good news of great joy which will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10).

In the last 2,000 years, mankind has invented many Christmas traditions, such as special services, gift giving, and holiday songs. But those, including "A Christmas Carol," are only the trappings. The first Christmas was part of God's "eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:1). The angels explained it to Mary and Joseph and proclaimed it to the night time shepherds. The star lighted the way for the gift-bearing, eastern Magi

Bethlehem was neither the first nor the last episode in the story. Jesus didn't begin as, nor remain the Babe in the manger. His purpose all along was to implement the eternal plan. He separated from his heavenly home to take on the weakness of humanity and to suffer at the hand of those he loved. He bore all of our sins so that he could offer the greatest gift of all, eternal life. He

See Fowler, page 5A

Commissioner's Questions

Boil Water Advisory – Part 3

Q. Does Union County provide water or sewer service? A. There was a lot of confusion in the past weeks regarding water and sewer services within Union County and the City of Blairsville. Union County Government DOES NOT provide water or sewer. The City of Blairsville provides water and sewer

within the City Limits of Blairsville and these services do extend outside of the city limits in some areas. Notla Water Authority and Coosa Water Authority provide water to customers who are within their service areas. Union County government has no input or control over any of the three water providers.



Q. Since I get my drinking water from a county water system, why don't you, as county commissioner, know all about it.

A. There are THREE public water systems in Union County. Since we are not involved with any water systems, our concentration is on operating Union County Government. The Blairsville Water Department furnishes all the drinking water in the City of Blairsville and in the adjacent part of the county near the city limits. Notla Water Authority has most of the water North and West of Blairsville and Coosa Water Authority provides water mostly down the Blue Ridge Highway and part of Owltown. We leave that to the professionals.

Q. Why was the advisory only for City of Blairsville Water customers?

A. The City of Blairsville operates water and sewer within the city limits of Blairsville. Their service area extends out of the city limits in some areas. The cleaning of the tanks for the City of Blairsville's Water system had no impact on the other two water service providers, Notla Water and Coosa Water. They are three totally separate water operating systems with completely different raw water sources.

Q. Why did the boil water advisory not include Notla Water and Coosa Water?

A. Notla Water and Coosa Water are their own entities. The See Paris, page 5A

Merry Christmas

Merry Christmas from the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce! To all who believe, there is truly something magical about this time of the year. I think this was captured so well in the recent performance of The

Polar Express which was a joint performance of the Band, Theater, and Chorus Departments. The performance captivated the entire au-



dience. I would like to commend all the students along with Mrs. Covington, Mr. Stafford, Mr. Adams and their student teachers for the excellent performance. Yes, I am partially biased as our son Nathanael was in the play, but I am not alone in sharing my gratitude for the hard work that everyone put into these performances and how enjoyable it was.

In one of the scenes, the children were shouting and waving with unbridled excitement and enthusiasm desperately wanting to meet Santa. After all, they had made the long jour-

See Allison, page 5A

Camellias

I love a good fluffy snow and cold winter weather, but lately I've heard a lot of people already wishing our summer temperatures were back! Though it might be a few months before we can go outside without gloves and hats, we

can still have a taste of spring with our brightly From the winter-blooming ca-**Ground Up** mellias.



The Snow

Snow. Some people get so excited to hear the word. They see "Snow Days", beauty, and fun. However, others are filled with dread. They see cold, work and inconvenience. No matter which side you take when it comes to snow, there is no stopping it, and the pre-

The Streak

I began high school with much apprehension in 1973. I had heard my grandfather talk about going off to high school in the town of Phil Campbell. Like him, I was a country boy with little knowledge of towns. Papa told me that at the end of the

Around

ry, and learning that can persist after the drug's

The Virgin Child

Dear Editor,

When I start reading about the birth of Jesus and how an angel came down to the Virgin Mary and said to her. "God has found favor in you, for the Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will give birth to a baby boy and you will call him Jesus." I know this story to be a fact, for all of the evidence has been documented by the inspired Word of the Holy Spirit. Now I have never objected to any man or woman saying that he or she does not believe in the Virgin birth. A person has the right to disbelieve, on the other hand I do have two definite objections: First I do not think that a preacher should deny the Virgin birth of Jesus Christ and if he does, then he ought to get a job selling insurance and deal with births in a different way. Secondly, I do object to anyone saying that the Bible does not teach the

See Combs, page 5A •

Please Slow Down

Dear Editor,

To the person that "blew" the red light at HomeDepot/Post Office at 4:05 pm on Monday the 11th. I was in the Buick stopped in the right hand lane for the RED light, waiting for the traffic to clear coming from Home Depot. I don't know how you missed the Home Depot car, the car coming from the post office and the right hand lane car going to Home Depot. I witnessed a miracle; all three drivers were alert and saw you coming.

If any one of them had not stopped just in time, you would have T-boned them and it would probably have been an accident with fatalities; and you might have been one of the fatalities. Is it really worth it? I wonder if you even saw

See Driskell, page 5A

pared. Last week's snow put some of us to the test as to just how prepared we are.



winter event last week is something that we wouldn't call a surprise, but we would say that there were some things that were unexpected. We had been watching the weather briefings and we knew that there was a possibility of snow. At first, we were told that it was all going to be south of us and if we had any snow, the amounts would be low. Then, drastically, it changed on Thursday night. They stated that we would have snow; however, the amounts were uncertain. As we all know, 9-10 inches of snow was not expected.

Resources were put on standby right away. We were all out early Friday morning trying to determine what will happen. The situation changed quickly from clear roads at approximately 6:30 a.m. to heavy snow and covered roads by 7. The EOC opened and the road department went to work right away. Dispatch was flooded with calls. Reports were coming in that roads already cleared were covered again within an hour. Traffic was picking up and we had a total of approximately 46 accidents on Friday alone.

The EOC remained open Saturday and Sunday to coordinate resources. Saturday was the day of falling trees and power outages. The snow was heavy on trees and they were falling everywhere, as well as on power lines. The situation was dangerous to the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC workers due to the weather and continuously falling trees. Just as one area of the line was being repaired, a tree would fall in another.

Power outages and low temperatures were causing concerns about heat. Some people did not have an alternate heat source. It was at that time we determined to open a shelter for people with no power, no alternate heat, and/or had an emergency medical device that required power. Roads were still hazardous and transportation was a concern.

Between the accidents, the power outages, and the cold temperatures, winter preparedness is a must. We hope that people will take some time to be better prepared. During winter weather, people should stay informed, have an emergency kit on hand, and have a plan. For more information on how to prepare for winter weather, visit

classes he and his brother would make a mad dash through the little town of Phil Campbell because all the town boys would hide out

along their way home. Some of the boys would throw rocks at Papa and his brother while others would try to ambush the Cummings brothers to try and fight with them.

Anyway, after three weeks of bruises and black eyes, Papa had enough and quit school and I think Uncle Pick quit a year later. So, as I began classes in September of 1973 I was almost sick with worry. However, I had it much easier than Papa. I knew many of the kids in my classes and one particular class I really enjoyed. Mr. Chappell taught American History and I enjoyed his stories about the colonies and the revolution. The class was a mix of students from different grades and I enjoyed being the only freshman in the class. Audie was one of the 11th graders in the class. I really admired Audie because of his hair. I remember our school having a rule about the length of a boy's hair. As I recall the boy's hair could not be touching his ear. For most of the year, Audie never got a hair-cut. But, his hair did not touch his ear. Audie was the only kid in school with an afro. Audie would have to turn sideways to walk through the front door. I admired Audie because he was a lot like our founding fathers. Audie rebelled against our school administrators like George Washington rebelled against England.

There were many seniors in the class including Greg who played football and threw the shot-put on the Track Team. Stony was a forward on the basketball team. Also, on the basketball team was a guy named Bob who played center. He was the tallest kid in our school. Like Audie, Bob was a rebel. Bob was always trying to see how far he could push the envelope of society in Chickamauga, GA. Sometime in 1973 streaking became popular in the United States. I remember seeing editorials in our local paper denouncing the practice of streaking. For the life of me I couldn't understand why a person would take off their clothing and run through a crowd of people. I could never muster enough courage to try something like that. I guess that is why I admired Bob. He could and did in the spring of 1971.

One Monday in April, word got around that everyone should plan on being on the town See Cummings, page 5A

Camellias are large, broad leaf evergreen shrubs that



are known for their beautiful blooms that are present through winter. The most common cultivar is the Japanese camellia. It can grow up to 25 feet, but more often is maintained between 6 and 12 feet. The leaves are a deep green and the flowers range from white to red. Depending on the variety, blooms could appear between September and April and come in many different forms such as single, double, semi-double, and

even peony. These different forms describe the number of petals present on the flowers. Single will be a bloom with one round of petals with the center easily visible, while double and peony type flowers will be very full with many rows of petals. Japanese camellias grow very slowly but can live for upwards of a hundred years. The camellias surrounding the emperor's palace in Japan are known to be over 500 years old!

While some varieties do grow faster than others, camellias in general are very slow to grow and establish. They require well-drained soils and thrive in areas where they are protected from full sun and winds that may dry out their shallow roots. Because they are so slow-growing, it is best to remove as much competition as possible from their root system. Plant them in a protected area with plenty of room to spread. Dig a large, deep hole and remove any roots that are found, and break up any tough clumps of clay so the roots can easily spread. Fill the hole partially with loose soil, and plant the shrub shallowly. Cover the roots with 2-3 inches of mulch to conserve moisture and prevent winter injury to the roots.

Dropping buds is incredibly common in camellias as many will set more buds than will actually bloom. However, if you notice that the majority of buds are dropping throughout summer and fall, it can actually be a sign that the plant needs more water. Camellias need very little pruning beyond the most basic of maintenance. Dead branches or leggy branches can be removed to preserve the overall pleasing shape of the shrub. If a camellia is heavily diseased or damage, rejuvenation pruning may be done between Valentine's Day and May 1st, where the entire plant is taken down to almost noth-See Mattee, page 5A

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