

Caution, honor and make a difference

I'm working on something different this week. I'll write about more than one specific topic in my column. Rather than devote all my word space to one story line, I want to spread things out a bit this week.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



That's because I've got a few different things to discuss. First, I want to offer a bit of advice. Be cautious when answering emails. I've noticed a couple of suspicious ones this week. It has to do with persons inquiring about a job. It looks more like phishing for information than job inquiries.

In both instances, it requires downloading resumes. In this day and age, I don't know who is phishing for personal information. You'd think the hackers would have all the information that they needed after hacking Equifax. However, they may be after some additional information, and they're being slick in their presentations.

The moral of this story: don't download suspicious emails. Moving on, it's almost Veterans Day, and it's been quite a while since Mrs. Monteen Poteete Purdie has visited her native home in Union County.

Monteen, born in the Ivy Log Community, has the distinction of being the oldest living Gold Star Mother in the United States. A Gold Star Mother is a parent whose child was killed in a military action. Her son, Cpl. Robert David Purdie, a 22-year-old U.S. Marine, was killed in late August 1968, in Quang Tri Province, Vietnam.

David Purdie is buried in Los Angeles National Cemetery. Monteen is 102 years old, and she hasn't let advancing age hold her back. She's climbed the tallest mountain in the contiguous United States, and hiked 40 miles into the Sierra Nevada Mountains, carrying her own pack.

Monteen, who lives in California, learned to speak Spanish in her 80s, and at the age of 88, she rafted down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. Five years ago, she spent three weeks in Paris, France, on an extended vacation.

Her greatest joy is waking up every single morning. Save the date: on Nov. 4, 10 area dance teams will vie for the North Georgia title of the local version of Dancing with the Stars.

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A Statement

The New Yorker magazine recently published an article in which they interviewed a prominent politician's family. One of them made an unusual statement that likely expresses a common thought, and is worth exploring.

Here it is: "Religion is the most important thing in our lives. But we don't take it seriously. I don't proselytize." I suspect that more people hold this view than would admit it publicly. It is a curious contradiction, but a concise statement about a belief system and its implications.

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Religion is built around truth, ostensibly as an aid to faith. But it can obscure and subvert faith. The Bible warns of the dangers of man-made religion replacing truth. "Not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3). Pluralism adds to the confusion today, holding that all religions are valid despite the illogic that mutually exclusive claims can coexist. Just how important should religion be, really?

If religion is a form of godliness that denies its power (2 Tim. 3:5), no wonder it can't be taken seriously. If it is willing to acknowledge God's existence without embracing His righteousness, that is no different than demons (Jas. 2:19). If religion prescribes belief without changing behavior, "faith without works is dead" (Jas. 1:26). Right belief leads to righteous living, including obedience to God's moral code and humble service to others. Such service means offering the same hope that you have received, even if you are accused of proselytizing.

"Proselytize" is freighted with negative baggage. If it is a condescending, pushy argument to coerce a belief change, no wonder it is considered boorish and unwelcome. But to conclude "I don't proselytize" could be more about an inconsequential belief system than about politeness.

What if God has revealed something about you (a sinner) and Himself (willing to bear your sins on the cross) that is true and of consequence for this life and the next? That is a gift important and serious enough to share by word and deed.

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Commissioner's Questions

Smoke Detectors Part I

Q. Does Union County Fire Department still have a program where they can furnish smoke detectors?

A. Yes, and this is the most important time of year to prepare your home for the winter. The Fire Department has installed over 220 smoke alarms in 90 homes this year.

Q. How does the public make contact to receive a smoke alarm?

A. Residents can request smoke detectors by contacting the Union County Fire Department Headquarters at (706) 439-6091 or by visiting the county web page at www.union-countyga.gov. Click on Departments at the top of the Home Page and then click on Fire Department from the drop-down menu. Then to the right click on Smoke Alarm Request Form.

Q. Who is eligible to receive smoke detectors and what is the cost?

A. Smoke Detectors are provided to any resident of Union County, but especially for those families who may be elderly, unable to check current detectors, and/or to those families who may need assistance either with installation or cost. The smoke detectors are free.

Q. What if we are not sure if we need smoke detectors or batteries or do not understand how to check them?

A. That is a service available to all our citizens who need assistance in any way. The Fire Department not only installs smoke alarms but can inspect your current alarms. We do not want anyone to go through the winter without knowing if their smoke detectors are functioning or not. Contact the Fire Department with questions or need of assistance.

Q. If we are not sure about our smoke detectors, is there a way we can check them without having to bother the Fire Department?

A. Yes, smoke alarms should be tested monthly. Pressing the "test" button on the alarm will determine if the detector is working and will sound. However, if you have any questions or concerns, PLEASE contact the Fire Department for assistance. Losing your

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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Letters to the Editor

The Human Condition

Dear Editor,

Since this is Halloween time again, it may be helpful to some people to know what the Bible says in connection with man's condition in death and what really happens when a person dies.

When God created mankind he had access to the Tree of Life located in the Garden of Eden. But when man disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit, he was banished from the Garden of Eden and lost his access to that Tree of Life, which was intended to perpetuate his life.

Thereafter, man would live out his days and then return to the dust from which he was made. See Genesis 3:19, also Psalm 146:1-4.

Notice that in that very day that man's body dies, man's mind also dies along with his body. See also Psalm 104:29. There are other texts on this, but this much is enough for now. A Bible Concordance will provide more on this subject.

In Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6 it says, "For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything; neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also

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Walmart intersection

Dear Lamar Paris,

I wonder if the dangers posed by the Walmart cut-off won't be magnified when the Murphy Highway (project) is completed.

I received a four-page defense of proposal from DoT detailing the Garden of Eden which the new highway will ostensibly create — most notably for the sake of vehicular and pedestrian safety.

When (if) completed, the Murphy Highway will expand to four lanes, divided, with four roundabouts at what are deemed to be critical intersections.

The expansion will end in a roundabout

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Response to George Mitchell

Dear Editor,

Thanks for the copy of your letter to the North Georgia News in reference to the Murphy Highway Project. I will try to clear up a few points for you from my viewpoint. This does not mean that you are wrong, just that I may see some of the issues in a different light.

1. Union County is going to continue to grow. With growth comes more traffic and with more traffic comes more congestion and resultant traffic accidents. As we now know, distracted driving is the number one cause of accidents eclipsing alcohol and drugs. That is sad, but is what cell phones have done to our society.

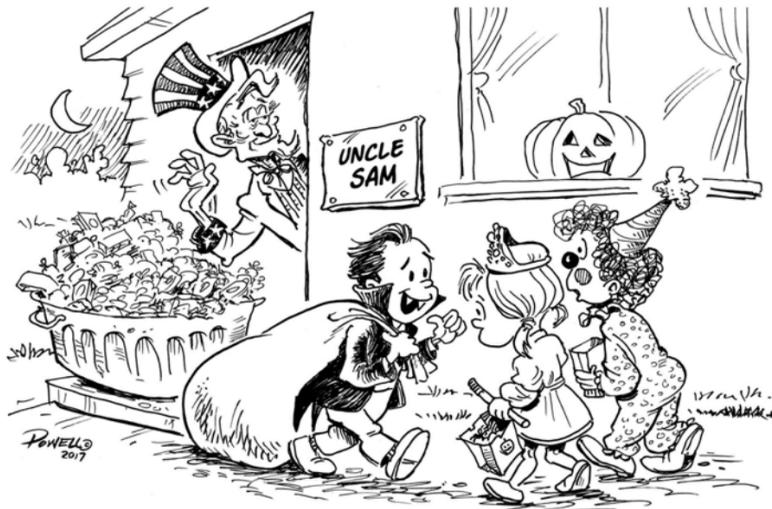
2. If the Georgia Department of Transportation and Union County do not continue to look at and try to plan for the future of this growth in traffic, and expand some highway lanes, it will only become even more congested and dangerous for all people alike, especially the older adult population.

3. The Murphy Highway Project has been delayed by at least two years, so we do not anticipate the beginning of Right of Way acquisition for another two to three years, then two to three years for construction. So, the new Murphy Highway will probably not even be a factor until 2024 to 2026.

4. Round-a-bouts have two purposes. First to allow orderly and safe movement around an intersection usually with four or more access points, and the main reason is to slow traffic down so that it is so much safer at the intersection.

In contacting the Union County Sheriff's Office and the Blairsville Police Department, the only two round-a-bouts in Blairsville are the Historic Courthouse square and the Walmart entrance just above Georgia 515. Neither has suffered a traffic injury and they could only remember two fender benders at Walmart since

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"Hey, that guy will give you all the candy you want! Says he just adds it to something called the National Debt!"

There Is a Need

As the Chief, I try to stay informed about the latest trends and happenings in the fire service.

I go to monthly regional chief meetings and attend several conferences each year to gather information and to discuss issues with other chiefs from all over the state. I read Firehouse, FireRescue, and other similar magazines that provide national insight.

One of the most pressing issues today is the declining number of volunteers and the increasing number of calls.

Departments have discussed this issue for many years and have known that it could become a problem, maybe even a crisis. Now, many experts are saying that the crisis is here and we must do something to ensure that when an emergency happens, firefighters will be available to respond.

Volunteers make up approximately 70 percent of the fire service. According to the National Volunteer Fire Council, there were 823,650 volunteer firefighters in 2005 who responded to 23,251,500 calls. In 2015, there were 814,850 volunteer firefighters who responded to 33,635,500 calls!

Volunteer firefighters decreased by approximately 10,000 firefighters, but the calls increased by more than 10 million. So from a business standpoint, there are fewer employees (volunteer firefighters) who are essentially performing more work.

Union County Fire Department is made up of volunteer and career firefighters and our numbers are similar. In 2005, the department had 78 volunteer firefighters and nine career staff (three per day) who responded to 894 calls. In 2015, we had 61 volunteer firefighters and 12 career staff (four per day) who responded to 2,070 calls.

There are many reasons for the decline in volunteers, but the numbers speak for themselves; there are less people to do more work. What do we need? You guessed it, we need more volunteers.

Most people think that they can't be a firefighter but they can. The truth is that the department responds to many different calls including medical calls, car accidents, wildland fires, and searches. Structure fires are few and most firefighters do not go into the burning house. They support the firefighters that do go in by pumping water or working outside the structure.

Is there a need? Yes, there is a need for more volunteers. Union County Fire Department could use at least 40 more people who are will-

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Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



Ronald

The year of 1975 gave many special memories. Not the least of which was a young man by the name of Ronald. Ronald had just become engaged to his future wife Annie. Ronald came forward one morning to receive Christ and asked my father about being baptized into our church.

Ronald and Annie were baptized and became staunch members of Center Grove Baptist Church. After the two were married the young couple began teaching our youth Sunday School Class. Every kid in the class loved Ronald and Nancy. They were special people and all of us looked up to Ronald and Annie. After he began teaching our class Ronald offered me a job working in his tomato field. So, from July to mid-August I picked tomatoes for Ronald.

I had a wonderful summer the year I worked as a tomato picker.

As time went by Ronald became more and more involved with our church. He was there each time the door was open. One Sunday morning Ronald came forward at the end of our service and with tears streaming down his face he announced to the congregation his calling to the ministry. So, the church set aside Ronald as a potential minister. During this time Ronald was counseled and taught the Southern Baptist doctrine. After a time he was also asked to give his very first sermon as a minister. The church wanted to hear the young man give a sermon.

Before we get to the sermon please let me remind you of what happens to a young man after he marries a good cook. When Ronald married he weighed 175 pounds. But, every day Annie made biscuits for breakfast and by the end of winter Ronald had gained about 45 pounds.

So, by the time of his first sermon at Center Grove Church Ronald had become quite pudgy. Ronald stood up behind the pulpit and was so nervous he dropped all of his notes at the beginning of his first message. The young minister bent over to pick up his notes and everyone in church heard the splitting of the seam in his pants. The seam ripped from the front button of the pants down past the zipper between the legs and up to his back belt loop.

The only thing holding his pants together was the belt. There was only 1 person in the church of 250 people which did not hear the pants ripping. That 1 person was Ronald.

Annie was sitting beside my mother when Ronald's pants split. The look on her face was priceless. After the initial shock was over she began making hand gestures to Ronald. She eventually held up a note with big letters which

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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North Georgia Stars

Get ready for a great evening of entertainment to support a wonderful organization in our community. It is time for Dancing with the North Georgia Stars Towns/Union 2017! It is being held at the Union County Fine Arts Center on Saturday, Nov. 4th.

The doors to the Union County Fine Arts Center will open at 6:15 p.m. There will be a pre-show beginning at 6:20 p.m. The show/dance competition starts at 7 p.m.

Each North Georgia Star is paired with a professional or semi-professional dancer from the region to present a variety of dancing genres from modern jazz to classic ballroom. Each team will perform choreographed dance routines before a live audience. We would like to thank this year's dance teams:

1. Darren Harper and Laurel Adams; 2. Loretta Durden and Matthew Temples; 3. Kris Berron and Angela Puleo, 4. Rebecca Medori

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison



Fall Colors

Without a doubt, one of my favorite times of year in the mountains is the beginning of autumn when the air begins to turn crisp. Festivals are every weekend, the air has a nice spice to it, and the trees begin to look like watercolors across the skyline.

While we are never wanting for scenic views, some years offer more vibrant fall color than others. We achieve peak color when we have bright sunny days, cool nights, and the perfect amount of rain.

Though most plants, including evergreens, do have a fall leaf or needle loss, it is only deciduous trees that offer us a striking color show. This is because deciduous trees such as oaks, maples, birches and poplars all have what is called an abscission layer on the stems of their leaves. As day lengths shorten and temperatures drop, the cells in the abscission layer cut off nutrients to the leaves so the tree can store them for the winter. Chlorophyll, which gives leaves their green color, quickly breaks down and is no longer replaced as it has been throughout the spring and summer. Chlorophyll is important because it absorbs light and aids in creating much needed sugars. However, there are several other pigments in leaves that also assist in this process.

Carotenoids and Xanthophyll pigments are two other leaf components that help to create food for the plant. Beta-carotene is the most common carotenoid and gives leaves a brilliant yellow and orange-yellow hue. Lutein is a common xanthophyll pigment and produces the bright yellow seen in plants such as common sweetshrub. These pigments also break down as the abscission layer closes off the leaf from the rest of the tree, but they do so much slower than chlorophyll, causing the color gradient that autumn is so well known for.

Tannins are also present in deciduous trees and shrubs. These are the substances that give coffee and tea their bitter flavor. They are found in many plants and are used as a defense against deer and other creatures that would nibble their leaves and cause stress. These are responsible for a golden color, such as early autumn witch hazel, and the brown color found late in fall because they take the longest to break down.

Finally, anthocyanins give us the bright reds and purples seen in many of our maples and oaks. They are anti-oxidants and protect leaves from light damage. They are made from the processing of stored glucose in leaves and break down faster than tannins.

The wide variety of plants and their pigments contributes greatly to our colorful landscape.

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UGA Extension From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



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