

Opinions

Everybody has one...

A true blessing

Having just experienced my 57th Thanksgiving, I must express the many things that I have been blessed with my entire life. I'm thankful for my friends and family. Also, I am a native of the most beautiful county in the state of Georgia. My folks settled here in 1833, and the majority of my deceased relatives are buried in the Owltown District - Coosa Cemetery and Duncan Cemetery. Yes, I was away from here for a number of years, but, my heart has always been in Union County.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



I'll have been back here for 10 years in October 2018. I'm thankful for the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald*, and the extended family that has been like blood family to me from the first time we met.

I have endured a lot of sickness over the last few years. I'm recovering daily from those bouts and I thank the many healthcare professionals who have treated me, and friends, family and prayer groups that have kept me lifted in prayer during this ordeal.

We should all know that we can't walk alone on this journey through life.

I remember a column by Rev. Danny Parris. He wrote that the tradition of giving thanks is far older than the national holiday. Thanksgiving has its roots in the Holy Scriptures. There are many things for which to be thankful. Rev. Parris reminded us that Charles Lowery, a minister, writer and counselor said, "If you can't find anything to be thankful for, be thankful for your nose. Be thankful God put it on right side up. What if God had put it on upside down? If it rained you would drown and if you sneezed you would blow your thankless head off."

I am especially grateful to the Georgia Bulldogs for winning the SEC Eastern Division and looking forward to them beating Auburn in the Conference title game.

Now, we turn our focus to Christmas, and making sure those youngsters within our borders don't do without.

First, call to sponsor a foster child in Union or Towns counties, or make an inquiry as to how to help. Call Pat Elliott, (706) 896-3749 or Richard Paolillo, (706) 745-1190.

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Perseverance

For children on your gift list I suggest a book by an authentic cowboy who spins yarns about the Head of Ranch Security, "Hank the Cowdog." If they like it, they can choose from about 70 other tales in print and audio formats.

For full disclosure I have not read these children's books, but I have read about the author, John Erickson. It's his story of perseverance that commends his writing.

Except for the few years he spent pursuing his education, Peterson worked all of his life on a ranch, and today he owns a 9-square-mile spread. He has endured brutal cold and searing heat, long days and grueling work making a living with horses, cows, and dogs. Such a profession demands perseverance.

So does writing. For a while Peterson fancied himself the next Hemingway, but he finally realized, "It might be important for somebody who wants to write about the human experience to know a little bit about it" (as told to Marvin Olasky of World News Group). So after his studies at Harvard Divinity School in the 1960s, he became a cowboy again.

But publishers did not want his stories, no matter how authentic. In his cowboy vernacular, "It was like being in a dog-fight every day or getting bucked off a horse every morning." But he persevered. With borrowed money he established Maverick Books, and in 1983 he began publishing "Hank the Cowdog." He has sold over 9 million books.

Peterson's mother was the first storyteller he ever knew. She told stories of her West Texas ancestors and read him Bible stories. "Years later, when I was getting hundreds of rejection slips from publishers, what kept me going was nothing I had learned in a college classroom, but rather those two simple sentences spoken by my mother: 'John, God has given you a talent. You must guard it and use it wisely.'"

In March 2017, Peterson lost his home and studio in a prairie fire. His response was that of Job. "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord"

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



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Commissioner's Questions

Thanksgiving is on my mind this morning. I am having to get the Q & A ready for the newspaper and turned in today, so I am working on this Thanksgiving morning while my family prepares for the Thanksgiving meal.

I just returned last night from attending a family funeral in a distant state. This morning has reminded me how much I have to be thankful for. At the same time, a couple of weeks ago our church asked us to list three items every day between now and Christmas that we are thankful for. While we all could think of things that we would like to have, such as better health, more money, or a better job, when you really concentrate on what we actually have to be thankful for, it can become an impressive list. So even though you are reading this the week after Thanksgiving, we want to wish each of you a Happy Thanksgiving, a special time of year to really remember what all we have to be thankful for.

Q. How much time does it take for you to prepare your Q & A each week?

A. It varies, but usually a couple or three hours.

Q. How do you come up with the Q & A?

A. Sometimes it is easy since I try to take questions that I or my staff hear from the public. Some other times, I will try to educate you on an issue that I think is important.

Q. Do you ever make up questions?

A. Sometimes I do, especially when I am talking about basically one subject and want to educate you on the subject. But, I do not make up questions. Some people tell me, "I can't believe someone asks you some of the questions you respond to." I only include these questions if they are ones that I have actually been asked.

Q. How long have you been doing the Q & A column?

A. I started the column after I first took office in January 2001. It was a few weeks later that I began the Q & A idea and as far as I know, I have not missed a week in at least 16 years. That

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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Anti-Drug Coalition

Does marijuana lead to other drugs?

Long-term studies of high school students' patterns of drug use show that most young people who use other drugs have first tried marijuana, alcohol, or tobacco. For example, young people who have used marijuana are at greater risk of using cocaine than those who have not. We also know from animal studies that rats given repeated doses of THC show heightened behavioral responses and altered brain activation not only when further exposed to THC, but also when exposed to other drugs such as morphine.

What are other risks related to marijuana that my child should know? As with most drugs, marijuana use interferes with judgment, which can lead to risky behaviors. For example, the person may drive under the influence or ride with someone else who is intoxicated and get into a car crash, or engage in risky sexual behavior with consequences of STDs or unplanned pregnancy.

In addition to psychosis, regular marijuana use has been linked with increased risk for several mental problems, including depression.

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Letters to the Editor

Slowpoke

Dear Editor,

O.C.G.A. § 40-6-184. Georgia "Slowpoke" Law. How many of you in Blairsville know what this law entails and why?

From experience, my guess is not nearly enough. Since this law was put into effect in 2015, I've had a sign on the tailgate of my truck urging motorists to "Keep Right Except to Pass, It's The Law."

Many constantly approach me, after seeing the sign, to ask if this law really exists! This tells me that drivers are unaware of the law. Some have taken pictures of the sign, but all have commented on how they wished this law were enforced. Why isn't it enforced? Manpower? Funding? Lack of interest? Because the law is not enforced, we all pay the price, in many ways. Violation of the Georgia "Slowpoke" Law encourages negative behavior by other drivers to include, tailgating, aggressive driving, and speeding. It incites anxiety in other drivers.

See Wallace, page 5A

Business as usual

Dear Editor,

I just read Mr. Duncan's article in the *North Georgia News*. Maybe someone can clarify this issue for me.

We now have "open" board meetings however there is a policy to follow to gain entry to the meeting, and admittance to the monthly meeting isn't guaranteed.

Plus the truly open meetings of the past have been discontinued.

Nothing has changed. The business of the BRMEMC will continue, as in the past, behind closed doors.

Jerry O'Connell

Thanks from a Marine

Dear Editor,

I'm writing to say thank you to the Seniors, and all students who organized, staffed, spoke, and presented their Veterans Day celebration on Friday, 10 Nov. in the school and at the stadium.

It was a display and presentation, like none other I've ever seen, of patriotism that would be hard to match, anywhere.

The music and songs sung by the very large chorus and played by the band, were most meaningful especially for the hundreds of Veterans who were their honored guests.

Starting the morning with a served break-

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It takes planning

To me, there are two types of people in this world, planners and non-planners. I am a planner.

I like to have an idea of what we need to do, how we are going to do it, and most importantly, why.

I like to plan things out in order to have a guide for future actions and to reveal any potential obstacles.

However, not everything goes as planned. As Gen. Eisenhower once said, "In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable." We use plans to give us direction.

Every November, we sit down and update our strategic plan. We start with a SWOT analysis where review our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

This measures our progress and makes us aware of any changes that must be addressed. We then review last year's objectives and measure our progress.

Objectives that were completed are expanded upon as needed. Objectives that were not completed during the year are evaluated. They are then either scrapped or moved to the next year.

Once the review is completed, we look into the future and develop goals for the next five years concentrating mainly on the upcoming year.

Objectives for the next year are then created.

Two major elements that branch from the strategic plan are programs and projects. These are created to fulfill our goals and objectives.

A program is something that is on-going. We have several programs started including Training, Retention & Recruitment, Pre-Incident Plans, ISO Reduction, Public Education and Smoke Alarms.

A project is something that has an ending date. Examples may include apparatus purchases or building of fire stations.

We create goals and objectives for each program or project and evaluate/update them each year along with the strategic plan.

The overall strategic plan is an all-encompassing, broad view of how we would like to see the department in the future.

Does everything go as planned?

Sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't. The environment may change and priorities change with it. However, we are continuously looking into ways that we may improve and better serve the community.

Union County Fire Department ~ Our Family Protecting Your Family ~

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief

David Dyer



A new pair of shoes

After his understanding developed with his cousin, Junior, Paul decided to try out for the Phil Campbell Varsity Basketball Team. The team was coached by a very young coach. Coach Newman was a little All-American at Florence State College and this was his first job as a coach and teacher.

The previous year Dad had played in Chicago for Wells High School. The center on that team could dunk the ball and went on to play with the Harlem Globe Trotters. Coach Newman was a good coach and a great motivator. He watched this young Cummings fellow play and knew he was good. He also knew the young man was over confident to the point of being cocky.

So, after a few days of practice, Coach told the young man, "I really don't think you can make this team there is too much talent ahead of you." Many people would have quit and walked away. However, this made the stubborn young man angry and he decided he would just show this new coach that he was the best player on the team. The Coach now knew he had someone special. So he told him if he expected to make the team he would have to stay late and practice one on one with him.

The first day of these extra practices taught my father a valuable lesson. Newman faked the ball and faked to his right. Paul took the fake and moved to the right. The Coach's elbow came up and caught his nose. The coach told the young man, "If you can't take the heat stay out of the fire." This only caused the young man to work harder. He practiced with the coach for 5 straight days after the regular practices. Then he had to jog the 5 miles home to the family farm in Trapptown. During their final extra practice session he showed his Coach a thing or two.

He had the ball and faked to his left then raised his elbow and moved right catching his Coach in the nose and knocking him to the floor. The Coach jumped to his feet and reached for the young man. The player said, "If you can't take the heat stay out of the fire. There is no way I am quitting this team. I will be playing point guard for the Bobcats real soon." The Coach grinned and realized the young player was nearly ready.

The next Monday, uniforms were passed out to the team except for Paul. He was told a jersey was coming, but, he would have to use his old shoes. The team traveled to Leighton for their first game and the young Paul found himself sitting on the bench next to Coach. A young man named Rod was the starting point guard. Leighton won the tip-off and drove the

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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Thanks for the memories

I hope all of you had a wonderful Thanksgiving with family and friends. I wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you for your continued support of the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce and our community.

Without the support of our members and the community, it would not be possible for us to host all the events and programs that we do throughout the year.

It has been an honor and privilege to serve you as the President/CEO of the Chamber. Thank you for all that you have done for me and the entire Chamber team. After much prayerful consideration, I have decided to resign my position and will be leaving the Chamber at the end of December to spend more time with my family.

As my husband Stephen and I have been helping our oldest son, Thomas, look at colleges, it only reinforces how precious this time is

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison



Christmas Trees

While some opt for the ease of an artificial tree that can be used year after year and passed down to kids and grandkids, there is just something about a real tree that brightens up the home at Christmas. If you choose to purchase a cut tree, make sure you follow steps to keep it as healthy as you can for as long as possible.

First, decide an appropriate place to put the tree. Do you want it to be seen from all sides or would you rather it against a wall or window? Always make sure that heat sources, such as TVs, fireplaces, radiators and air ducts are nowhere near the tree, and put the tree in an area that doesn't interfere with doors or common foot traffic. Always measure the height and width of the space you have available in the room where you want the tree to go. Nothing is worse than picking and paying for the perfect tree and hauling it home on top of your car or in your truck, only to find it will not fit anywhere in your house. Have a tape measure handy to determine the height of the tree you want, and always bring some extra cord to tie the tree down with in case the tree farm does not have any extra.

Many trees sold on retail lots may have come from out of state and been exposed to harsh conditions on the journey to their destination. They may have been cut weeks prior to when they are sold, and they are probably stressed by the time they are sold. It is always good to know whether the trees are delivered once at the beginning of the season or are they delivered at different times during the selling season. The earlier and fresher you can get a tree, the better. Fresh trees have a healthy green appearance with very few browning needles. The needles should be flexible but not fall off if you run them through your hand. You can also raise the tree off the stand a little and let it drop. If a bunch of needles drop off, it might not last as long as you want it to. However, it is totally normal for a few needles to fall off and some near the trunk may be brown. The majority of the tree should always be bright green and fragrant, though. Don't forget to check for little hitchhikers as well! Bagworm moths and scale insects are common on Christmas trees.

When choosing your tree, keep in mind the place you've decided to put your tree and choose a tree that's appropriate. For example, if you want to place your tree against a wall, it is okay if some branches on one side are a little damaged, or there is a bald spot. If you place it in a corner, you may even want more branches to be toward one side or another. This approach can

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UGA Extension From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee

