

Opinions

Everybody has one...

A footnote in history

On Wednesday, Feb. 19, I watched the mainstream news media hoping to hear something important. All I heard was the damnation of Obamacare, the impact of the Tea Party on the Republican Party, and how hot it is at the Sochi Winter Olympics in Russia. Not one word about the anniversary of one of the bloodiest battles in U.S. Military history. Wednesday, Feb. 19 marked the 69th Anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima, an anniversary that has regrettably become a footnote in our history. I actually covered a recognition ceremony last week about the bloody battle during which 6,821 Americans died, 19,217 were wounded, and one U.S. Destroyer Escort was sunk. At that event last week, held at Bear Meadows Grill in Hiawassee, three surviving members of that battle were on hand. They told their stories. Phil Gamache, a U.S. Marine corporal at the time, who now lives in Hiawassee, said he often wondered why God spared him during that epic battle. As it turns out, his brother and sister-in-law died seven years after the war. Phil and his wife would raise his brother's five children alongside his three children. "God had something more important for me to do in the future, so, I think He spared me for that duty," Gamache said. Todd Kimsey, who served in the U.S. Navy, told the crowd that he came home with the attitude that "war is indeed hell." Bud Johnson, a chief petty officer in the U.S. Navy, was aboard a Destroyer Escort as the battle was waged on the beach at Iwo Jima. He stood helplessly as one U.S. Marine after the other dropped dead or wounded on the beach during the first three days of fighting. "It was horrible, they just couldn't get a foothold," Johnson, now, 92, remembered. We remember so many things today. We know all the cool Apps on our iPhones, we know all the cool games on Xbox One and PS4, and we know where to get the best cappuccino. But, we somehow forget the battles that were fought that meant the difference between speaking German, Japanese and Italian, or saluting Old Glory. These veterans could tell you a lot of history. They still choke on emotion when sharing their stories. That's what happens when you see so many friends die on a battlefield. These are stories we need to embrace, stories that should be heard. If for no other reason, to make sure history doesn't repeat itself. There's another anniversary connected with Iwo Jima. March 26 marks the anniversary of end of that 35-day battle. The battle was etched in our memory by Joe Rosenthal's photograph of the raising of the U.S. flag atop Mount Suribachi by five U.S. Marines and one U.S. Navy battlefield Corpsman. The photograph records the second flag-raising on the mountain, both of which took place on the fifth day of the battle. It's a photograph we should always remember, it's a battle we should never forget.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



One Altogether Lovely

In the month of February we celebrate Lincoln's Birthday, Washington's Birthday, Valentine's Day, President's Day and Groundhog's Day. February is looked upon as Love month. Therefore, I think it appropriate to focus upon the One who is Altogether Lovely.

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



- The Lord Jesus Christ
- To the artist He is the Ideal Portrait.
- To the architect He is the Chief Cornerstone.
- To the astronomer He is the Bright and Morning Star
- To the baker He is the Living Bread.
- To the banker He is the Hidden Treasure.
- To the biologist He is the Life.
- To the builder He is the Sure Foundation.
- To the carpenter He is the Door.
- To the doctor He is the Great Physician.
- To the educator He is the Great Teacher.
- To the farmer He is the Sower and the Lord of the Harvest.
- To the florist He is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley.
- To the geologist He is the Rock of Ages.
- To the horticulturist He is the True Vine.
- To the jeweler He is the Pearl of Great Price.
- To the judge He is the Righteous Judge, the Judge of all Men.
- To the juror He is the Faithful and True Witness.
- To the laborer He is the Giver of Rest.
- To the lawyer He is the Counselor, the Lawgiver, the Advocate.
- To the newspaperman He is the Good News of Great Joy.
- To the philanthropist He is the Unspeakable Gift.
- To the philosopher He is the Wisdom of God.
- To the preacher He is the Word of God.
- To the railroad man He is the New and Living Way.
- To the sailor He is the Pilot of Life's Troubled Sea.
- To the sculptor He is the Living Stone.
- To the servant He is the Good Master.
- To the soldier He is the Captain of Salvation.
- To the statesman He is the Desire of all Nations.
- To the student He is the Incarnate Truth.

See Parris, page 5A

Questions and Answers

- Q. How much has the population in Union County increased since the 2010 census?**
A. The 2010 census figures for Union County were 21,256 and the 2012 population estimate was 21,451. For the time period April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2012 that is a .4 percent increase.
- Q. What is the size of Union County?**
A. Land area in square miles is 321.93 square miles. The actual acreage is 210,546 acres; persons per square mile are 66.3.
- Q. How many acres in Union County are owned by the government?**
A. The USFS (Forest Service) owns 97,935.19 acres. TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority) owns 829 Acres plus Lake Nottely adds another 4,180 acres. State of Georgia (Vogel) owns 96 acres. So the total acreage owned by other government agencies protected from ever being developed is 103,040 which makes up about 48 percent of the county's land mass.
- Q. How much were the lottery sales in Union County last year?**
A. We don't have last years' numbers yet but we do have the 2012 Lottery sales. The total dollars expended in Union County, according to the Georgia County Guide, for the purchase of lottery tickets, was \$6,948,990. That is equal to \$329 per person, (man, woman and child in Union County), which is an unbelievable number.
- Q. What were total property taxes collected in 2012 for the county government only (not including the school)?**
A. To date, the total collected on the 2012 county government only property taxes is \$5,975,858.57. Yes, you are correct if you did some quick mental calculations. There was almost a million dollars more collected in this county from Lottery ticket sales than for the collection of county government property taxes.
- Q. What are some other statistics about Union County?**
A. If you are interested in viewing some of the stats for Union County you can go to this website: <http://quickfacts.census.gov>.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



See Paris, page 5A

A Look Ahead

One thing I love about my job with the Chamber is that things are always progressing. New ideas are abundant, opportunities often present themselves, and the impact that we are making on our member businesses and our community is never hard to see. As promised last week, I want to share a couple of exciting announcements made at our recent Membership Meeting. The Chamber strongly believes in the economic impact of tourism. Tourism creates and retains hundreds of jobs in Union County and pumps valuable sales tax dollars back into our local economy. This helps everyone. With this in mind, the Chamber is planning to add a Tourism Director position in the near future. This new staff member will work diligently to promote the benefits of travel to Union County. Whether it is for leisure or business purposes, we want to tout Union County as a great travel destination.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



See Williams, page 5A

The Winter Games

While Alaskan aristocrats view the Olympics from their verandas, the rest of us in the good ole USA have to watch TV in order to catch our hockey team dim the lights of the Russian ice puck roster. I can remember a time when "winter games" meant my family all got together after a bone warming dinner of my mom's homemade stew (um-um... with the big white fluffy dumplings steamed on the top) to play a very spirited and competitive game of Monopoly. It was on Sunday afternoons, when there was more football to keep us sane in the frozen tundra of Western New York, where we'd make Jiffy popcorn on the stovetop and play a marathon of Scrabble. When I was a wee little one, on winter Saturday mornings, after I had my fill of Hercules cartoons, a Tarzan movie and at least three episodes of the Bowery Boys (I loved those guys), my sister would entice me to play a few games of Candyland. We didn't play for pennies or first dibs on the last bowl of Captain Crunch. We played for the rights to lick the board. Yes, undaunted by warnings on the box that licking the pictures on the board could be hazardous to you health, the winner took her badge of honor and tasted each fruit gumdrop, peppermint candy and striped lollipop on the playing surface. It was better than any gold medal. I still love to play games. Poker is my game of choice. If I were to aspire to be an Olympian, I'd dream of winning the gold bracelet at the Texas Hold'em World Series of Poker Tournament. I have to exhibit a great deal of restraint in order to not get together with poker friends and play much more often than I do. Instead, these winter months find me playing canasta or cribbage with a friend. I can also be found occasionally sneaking in a game of "Shoots" on my smart phone. "Shoots" is a video basketball game, one of those free apps that can overtake your good sense. Before "Shoots", I was a sucker for "Pop A Shot". That's the game at the County

Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



See Leone, page 5A

Letters to the Editor ...

Who lives here?

Dear Editor,
If a newcomer or visitor should just arrive in Union County, and thereby read most of the Letters to the Editor section of the North Georgia News, he could easily get the impression that he had landed in the Peoples Socialist Republic of Union. Those writers are actually a small minority of the folks that live here or were born here. Union County is one of the reddest counties in one of the reddest states in the nation. Just look at the last few elections. Locally, for old timers, you could throw the divide between Democrats and Republicans to the wind knowing that the vast majority of Independents carry the day. These folks are God-fearing, church-going, conservative and caring, and they believe in an honest day of wages for an honest day of work. The aforementioned writers, whose names I often cannot pronounce, seem to want to convey an air of superiority and intellect that native folks don't have. I beg to differ on that assumption. As to politics, I realize that I cannot change the mindset of the liberal, big government, nanny state, gun control, abortion rights, gay marriage desires of the left. On the other hand, they cannot change my mindset for Christian values, less government control and regulations, the Right to Bear Arms, personal responsibility, equal opportunity - not equal government hand-outs, the free enterprise system, and the Constitution as the Founders have written it. I would bet that these illustrious writers have never met a payroll, never served our country and are sadly lacking in their support of charity or church or in their individual support of a neighbor in need.

Bill Smith

What's this world coming to?

Dear Editor,
On Jan. 1, 2014, the "Affordable Care Act" cut nearly \$22 billion from Medicare home health over four years. That means an estimated 3.5 million poor and ill, homebound, senior citizens woke up on New Year's Day to discover that Obamacare had slashed funding for their home health program. Last year, Medicare home health services were delivered to approximately 3.5 million Medicare beneficiaries. According to the federal government's own data these seniors are older, poorer and sicker than the Medicare beneficiary population as a whole. Many of these seniors also reside in rural communities where home health care is especially important because other sources of treatment are often located many miles away. According to the Obama Administration's own statistics, "Approximately 40 per-

See Mitchell, page 5A



Wildfire & Firewood

As I write this week's article, I am on the "other" coast in Calabasas, CA attending a National RC&D workshop for RC&D Council leaders who facilitated the 16 Wildfire, Safe, & Code Smart Wildland Urban Interface Building Code workshops held last year all around the U.S. The workshop that Chest/Chat facilitated was in Hiawassee in August and was attended by 42 representatives of various agencies from around the state. The purpose of the WSS&CS workshops was to present the new Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) building code that has been adopted by the State of Georgia. The WUI building code if adopted by a county can be used as a guide for those who build their houses in the WUI. This code describes suggested types of materials, building methods, and landscaping that can reduce the risk from the wildfires that can happen right here in our North Georgia Mountains. The group includes representatives of RC&D councils from California, Virginia, Idaho, New Mexico, Oregon, Alaska, Hawaii, and Georgia. Yes, they even have wildfires in Hawaii. The common theme around the table is that all of our RC&Ds are constantly looking for ways to create programs that can protect the citizens that we serve from events that can cause economic harm and loss of lives. The event that we are all most passionate about is wildfire, which not only can cause loss of homes and businesses, but community infrastructure and can destroy recreation attractions that will cause people to take their vacation dollars elsewhere. There are things that we can do to lessen our risk from this kind of loss and one of the most effective ways is by using good management in the forests that are all around us up here in North Georgia. Good forest management reduces wildfire fuel by several tried and true methods that have been used for many years and are proven to work. The most economical and effective method is prescribed burning which eliminates wildfire fuel under controlled conditions. Another is thinning the trees to reduce tree mortality from infestations of insects and diseases which if left unchecked can wipe out a lifetime of growth in a very short time and create wildfire fuel. Most of the insects that have wiped out many of our native trees are "foreigners" that were brought in as stowaways on many types of transportation. These foreign invaders are brought in and spread on people's clothes, in vehicles, on building materials, packing materials, and even firewood that are hauled from one region to another. There are many precautions that we can take to lessen this risk of invasive insects and one way is described in the following article

Executive Director of RC&D

Frank Riley



See Riley, page 5A

Papa and Pick's Reputation

When I was little Papa told me a couple of stories that emphasized this to me. Papa's brother was called Pick. When Pick was in grade school he got into some trouble at school. The school teacher whipped him with a hickory limb. The whipping was so severe his legs bled. Pick went home and told his daddy about the whipping and assured his dad that he had done nothing wrong. His daddy told him that his name and reputation had led the teacher to believe that Uncle Pick had been the cause of the trouble. You see Uncle Pick was known as being mischievous. My great grandfather, Lon, always taught his family to tell the truth in dealing with others. My grandfather experienced this lesson first hand as a young teenager in the late 1920s. One of the things my grandfather most looked forward to each year was the ripening of watermelons. His daddy, Lon, had the best watermelons in the community. Their patch of melons was down over the crest of the hill from their house. The melons were usually ripe around the last week of July. Papa was so anxious to eat a melon he began asking about the melons in late June. Finally, Papa sneaked down to the watermelon patch and plugged some of the watermelons to determine if they were ripe enough to eat. Plugging a melon involves cutting a small round hole in the melon and pulling out a slice of melon. After the melon is plugged the slice of melon is replaced into the melon. Papa plugged 10 melons and could not find 1 that was ripe. Five days later his dad, Lon, went to the field of melons to find one for the family. Papa said that his dad came back to the house and didn't say a word. Papa was so nervous he didn't even go out to meet his dad to ask about the melons. Lon found all 10 of the melons that had been plugged. Each was rotten because it had been cut open. He knew the melons had been plugged and he knew which one of his sons had plugged them. Finally, Papa went to his dad and told him what he had done. Lon looked at his son and told him he knew all about the plugging. He also explained to Papa the importance of telling the truth at all times. It is important for the Farmers Market to maintain its reputation as well. Therefore, the following system has been designed to help us through the reservation process this year. Farmers and vendors of agriculturally related products may sign up Monday through Friday, March 17 through 21 from 9 a.m. until 12 noon. Reservations can be made in person at the Union County Canning Plant Office located behind the Farmers Market on Old Smokey

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



See Cummings, page 5A

North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m.

Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - 1 Year \$35.00. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 10, 1987 at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. Advertising and subscriptions can be paid by cash, check or credit card.

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