

Opinions

Everybody has one...

So long dear friend

The news was swift and painful. One of Blairsville's most respected men - ever - had passed away on Sunday.

The news of the passing of Jack Lance Sr. came Sunday night and left me shocked and saddened. Jack was a longtime friend of my family, he was a man who believed in his community, he was a Community Icon.

There are many stories about Jack. Of course it all begins with his love of basketball. Incredibly, Jack passed away during March Madness. Jack was Mr. Basketball in Union County for more than just his athletic prowess. He passed along his basketball genes to his children and grandchildren, and a Jack Lance descendant has been a part of many basketball victories for the Lady Panthers and Panthers.

Jack was a star long before he fathered his first prodigy. He led Union County to win after win, and was a huge part of the Young Harris College basketball glory and story.

Jack also was a huge part of his community's glory, serving as one the county's two pharmacists for many years at Hill-Lance Drugs.

Jack was known to diagnose an illness or two in his days at Hill-Lance Drugs. One case I remember most was determining that a young lady of 13 years old might just be a juvenile diabetic. As it turns out, she was and he saved her life.

Jack also played a role in the history of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, serving as one of its board members for more than 26 years. He was a board member at the time of his death on Sunday.

He was also involved in many other community aspects. Since I came back home, I had a few occasions to run into Jack at the grocery store, a time or two at Meeks Park, and once or twice at a county office.

I cherish those moments of being able to catch up with him, talk a little basketball and catch up on how his family was doing.

I remember talking with Jack years ago when I wrote a story for *The Times* in Gainesville about his granddaughter Glenda Gooch as she recovered from her Christmas Day heart transplant.

I know this, community icons like Jack Lance Sr. come along just ever so often in our lifetimes. I don't know of anyone that ever had a bad thing to say about this incredible man.

His children, like their father, have been key contributors to our community. My thoughts and prayers go out to them as we remember this iconic individual and what he meant to Union County.

If you've taken the time to read this column today, please say a prayer of peace for the Lance family. They are an incredibly tight-knit family, and the loss of the family patriarch leaves them with great sadness.

We miss you already Jack Lance Sr.

Letters to the Editor ...

No breaks for paying early

Dear Editor,

To promptly pay one's bills is evidently no virtue, at least as far as utility providers are concerned. While all customers are given a grace period in which to pay and a penalty levied after the due date, those of us who pay immediately upon receipt of our bills are given no pat on the back by way of a discount.

Example: I received my latest electric bill in the mail on Saturday, March 16, covering the meter reading of March 11. The payment due date was listed as April 5; the penalty thereafter would be \$11.80. When I placed my check in the mailbox on Monday, March 18, I was theoretically paying nineteen days before the due date; yet, I was not privy to a discount equivalent to \$11.80 for my promptness. Another example of where being a responsible citizen carries a penalty and irresponsibility is rewarded.

NPR News reported the other day that U.S. consumer debt is now the highest ever recorded. What could one expect, when our country itself is the greatest debtor nation in the world, and seems intent on keeping or surpassing that dubious record.

See Ramsey, page 5A

Tired of wasteful spending

Dear Editor,

Now that the continuation of the ESPLOST is a done deal, perhaps you will print my letter explaining why the Union County Republican Party opposed this tax. Republicans are absolutely NOT opposed to education, taxes to support education or the technology needed to keep pace with the modern day education system. In fact, the majority of Republicans are highly educated, informed citizens who understand and support our Constitution. What it is opposed to is the removal of \$ 21million, in this depressed economy, from our citizens and merchants.

That money is to be given to a school board which hasn't shown fiscal responsibility with taxpayer money in the past, and who will not produce an accounting of where every penny of the taxpayer's money has been spent. Every time I pass the school and look at the months' long project of moving dirt, grading, building mounds, grading them down again, I would like to know WHY? How much money did that folly cost? Where is the magnificent Performing Arts Center we were promised with the present ESPLOST? I understand there is approximately \$4 million left from that "temporary, one-time tax needed for special projects" which is enough to pay for 10 new school buses, a new roof on the school and \$2.5 million left over to pay for upgrading security, all "hot button issues."

So, why \$21 million more? None of this money is for teachers or for salaries. It is all to be used by a five members of the school board which won't even let the taxpayers ask a question at their meetings without a prior "appointment" scheduled. ESPLOST money to be spent with "input from the community?" Sure. Makes as much sense as calling 2,000 voters the "majority of citizens."

The major principles of the Republican Party are: limited government (the citizens are better stewards of their own money, lives and future than the government), free markets and fiscal responsibility.

See Honea, page 5A

What Think Ye Of Chirst?

Holy Week extends from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday and Christians all over the world turn their thoughts to Jesus and to the events that took place in Jerusalem over two thousand years ago. In fact, the entire world is faced with the question, "What think ye of Chirst?"

This was the question that Jesus directed to the Pharisees in Matthew's gospel (Matt. 22:42). This is a personal question. "What do you think of Chirst?" All of us must answer this probing question. As you consider this question I would like to share with you what others thought of Jesus.

Let's ask God what He thinks of Chirst and He says, "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). If you ask the angels in heaven their response, "Unto you is born... a savior which is Chirst the Lord (Luke 2:11). Let's ask John the Baptist and he declares, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Ask impetuous Peter and he cries out, "Thou art the Chirst, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16). Disbelieving Thomas, when asked his opinion would loudly announce, "My Lord, and my God" (John 20:28). The poor sinful Samaritan woman who had lived with six different men, invites us to "Come see a man... Is not this the Chirst?" (John 4:29). Nathanael, a man in whom was no guile, testified of Jesus, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God" (John 1:49). Paul, the forgiven persecutor of Chirst's followers, gladly proclaims his revelation of Chirst when he confesses, "I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Chirst Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8). John the Apostle, records in the last book of the Bible that Jesus is "The bright and morning star" (Rev. 22:16). That Roman Centurion helping to carry out the execution of Chirst declared with a broken heart, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39). The Ethiopian Eunuch when asked what he believed joyfully confesses that "Jesus Chirst is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). Pilate, the governor, weak and spineless, admits that "I find no fault at all" (John 18:38). Lastly, the very one who lived and

See Parris, page 5A

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



What Happens When It Snows?

Q. With the education sales tax (ESPLOST) election over, are you pleased with the results?

A. I certainly am pleased. It really demonstrates to the world that our county is willing to continue to look after the education of our youth in a very responsible way by allowing everyone making a purchase in our county to assist in the payment for our school system.

Q. How does Union County build and maintain so many wonderful facilities in the county such as the library, community center, horse arena, Farmers Market and cannery, Meeks Park, remodeled Civic Center and the high quality county road system with such a low property tax rate?

A. It is all possible because of one main thing, SPLOST sales tax. Thanks for recognizing our facilities and how special they are. Second, like the school system, much of our SPLOST funding goes to make improvements to our infrastructure. We use it for all new paving and road projects. We use it to make major improvements to our facilities and for major equipment purchases. These are all items that would have to be accomplished with or without our SPLOST sales tax. So the money to make these improvements would have to come out of property tax dollars if it were not for our SPLOST sales tax program.

Q. Does the county have a sales tax program similar to the one the school system just passed?

A. Yes it does. The school system program is called ESPLOST (Education - Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax). The sales tax program for the county government is called simply SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax).

Q. Is the city a part of the SPLOST sales tax program?

A. Yes, they are a very important part. If the city and county go in together and agree on the division of the proceeds as we did in 2009, then the length of time of the sales tax that we vote for is 6 years instead of 5 years. The sales tax proceeds are vital for both the city and county government.

Q. When will the county have another election for our SPLOST sales tax that provides all the wonderful facilities we have in Union County?

A. We have a choice and a lot of different factors will play into that choice. By law, we have three options for dates coming up. Our current SPLOST ends March 2015; however, we always try to have the election for the next SPLOST about one and 1/2 years out to give us a chance for

See Paris, page 5A

Leadership: A Measurable Competency

The following article was written by Chamber Board Member, Patrick Malone of The PAR Group.

In this article, he shares a valuable lesson in leadership.

For decades, experts have said that leadership is an intangible

that is un-measurable. But if you look at any great leader, you see that leadership is clearly measurable. Leaders are determined by their followers. No followers. No leader.

In business, leadership occurs at all levels - from the executive suite to the shop floor - and at every level in between. Influential leaders, no matter what title they have or role they play, are those with willing followers.

Leadership is merely getting whole-hearted followers for a given course of action. Unfortunately, too many potential leaders ignore followership and focus instead on being more engaging, more convincing, or more interesting. Successful leaders, on the other hand, are interested.

In the extreme, unsuccessful leaders rely on their positional and/or economic power and end up with followers that have agreed, complied or surrendered. This lack of wholehearted commitment never results in optimal business results.

Whole-hearted followers imply leaders have engaged their followers emotionally and intellectually - both in the heart and in the head. Whole-hearted also implies that the follower makes the decision. The follow-

See Williams, page 5A

A Treasure From The Free Box

There's been much talk this week of replacing the groundhog as the all knowing barometer of the emergence of Spring. I know what "Indian Summer" is all about, and I've gotten pretty familiar with "Blackberry Winter", since having moved to the mountains. I'm real confused by daytime high temperatures colder than my refrigerator, just the week prior to Easter.

Despite the icy gusts of wind that have you scrambling after the mail you thought you had a grip on, when the calendar says "Spring", we have certain little alarms that go off in our brains. In order to turn these warning beeps off, we need to take action. For some reason, we can no longer leave sticks on the ground. The winter clothes have to be put to the other closet. The crockpot is stored in the cabinet because soup is not a daily staple once the planets lineup for the spring equinox. The cord of wood gets its final fill and a cover tossed over it, readied for the next winter. The basket holding the garden gloves is unearthed from under the jumper cables that were left out for convenience sake when the 18 year old Volvo station wagon your grandmother left you won't start when the temps are below freezing.

Let us not forget the loudest alarm of all, the one that buzzes in your head to "de-clutter" every nook and cranny of your home, garage, attic and basement. Time to throw out the boots that leaked three years ago, but you never got around to getting another pair. No more need for the leaf blower that you bought 6 years ago for 5 bucks at a yard sale, only to realize, after you got it home, that it wasn't gas operated after all. It was just that the electrical cord had been severed at the base. You finally

See Leone, page 5A



For God so loved the world...

John 3:16

ESPLOST a good investment

Dear Editor,

After reading the letters last week from the two disgruntled ESPLOST gentlemen, I felt compelled to write this letter. But first a disclaimer. I am not connected to the Union County School System in any way - except through taxes. Like most everyone, I'm not a fan of paying taxes more than those required to provide us with a robust, financially responsible government and school system. But to accuse the local school system of spending with "reckless abandon" flies in the face of their astute handling of previous ESPLOST revenue. The school board has been so responsible with the money that they ended up with a \$2 million surplus from the last ESPLOST and no debt. We elect the school board to make sure our children get a quality education (which is more than just reading and writing) and at some point we need to trust that they understand the needs of our children more than we do. To provide our youth with a better quality of life is more than worth the extra penny I spend.

If the letter writer is so concerned about school property taxes then I would like to see him lobby the local Republican Party and our local Republican representatives to introduce legislation to stop the confiscatory policies of the state in sending over \$5.8 million dollars of our tax money to other school districts. This redistribution of income is very costly to our

See Fitzgerald, page 5A

Such a talented band

Dear Editor,

WOW! To our very talented and accomplished Director of Bands, Kerry Rittenhouse, thank you for teaching our band students to be the best they can be! It was with great pleasure to have the privilege of attending the Young Harris College and Union County High School combined concert on Thursday evening. To our citizens who didn't attend the concert, I can only say that you missed a grand evening! Every government dignitary, every member of the school board, and every member of the Chamber of Commerce should set aside the next date and time to attend the wonderful, and I might add, FREE, concert with the Union County High School Band. It is one of our "unsung heroes," so to speak.

I was one of the Union County citizens who voted "yes" for the ESPLOST and I'm encouraging our officials to give top priority to building a much needed fine arts building for our talented high school band. When I think of the possibilities of such a place, it is overwhelming, to say the least. It would be a structure that would benefit all of Union County and the surrounding communities, as well.

Again, thanks to Mr. Rittenhouse for showing our students and community the professionalism that we deserve to have.

Joan Taber

I Brought RC Weeks to His Knees

I met RC Weeks for the first time when I was 4-5 years old. My Dad's hair style was typical of the 1950s and early 1960s. He had a flat top haircut and he kept mine buzzed.

We went once a month to the barber. One particular Saturday we were visiting my grandparents in Alabama. So, we made a visit to the Phil Campbell Barber Shop.

You remember those Barber Shops. There was a revolving candy cane by the front door. Inside there were four chairs all of which were filled on a typical Saturday. The waiting area was comprised of farmers all of whom were busy talking about their crops, politics or telling fishing stories.

We were seated in the Barber Shop waiting our turn. Dad got up and walked over to the chair. He told the barber he wanted a flat top. When he was through he placed me on a booster seat and told the barber to give me a flat top as well. Both cuts cost us \$2 and when we walked out of the shop we looked like actors off the set of Happy Days. Before going home we went over to the Phil Campbell Pool Room.

Dad bought me a pack of peanuts which he opened and poured into a bottle of Grape Nehi. We referred to this soft drink as a grape bellywash. Anyway, I was in heaven. This was good stuff. While I was enjoying this treat Dad began to shoot a round of pool. He had played a game or two with some friends when another man walked up to the pool table. This other man was RC Weeks. He had married my father's first cousin, Polly.

The two men slapped each other's back and talked a few minutes and everything seemed cordial to me. But, then as RC placed a cigarette in his mouth he began insulting my Dad. Now, understand that he was joking with my father. But, how is a 5-year-old boy supposed to know that an insult was actually a joke.

As RC brought the lighter toward the cigarette another insult came from his mouth. I stood up and walked over toward this man with my little fist I hit RC Weeks as hard as I could swing. I was not tall enough to hit an adult above the waist. But, you can imagine where my punch landed.

As RC bent over in pain, he came face to face with me. I looked at him and said, "Nobody, talks bad about my Daddy." The young men in the pool room erupted into laughter.

For years I was the talk of the town. I was referred to as the "young'un that brought RC to his knees."

RC and Polly were good people. Later in

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



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Editor

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Todd Forrest
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Lowell Nicholson
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Website: www.nganews.com
E-mail: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com
Mailing: POBox 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514



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Phone: (706) 745-6343 Fax: (706) 745-1830 * P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514