

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Tennessee Trash

When I was a young man growing up here in Union County, more often than not, it was easier to get the Chattanooga television stations than the Atlanta stations.

Don't ask me why, we didn't have cable or satellite service in those days. We did however, have our ever dependable outdoor TV antennas.

I tell you this because they had an incredible public service commercial regarding litter bugs in Tennessee. There was this nasty guy wearing a wife-beater T-shirt. He had a stubble beard, hair all a mess and he was smoking, or rather, chewing on a cigar as he drove his white 1963 Impala convertible.

His car was filled with trash, it was blowing out, he was throwing it out, and he had a hideous laugh. He was just tossing out his personal garbage with reckless abandon.

The commercial was a paid advertisement by the Tennessee Tourism Association. It was meant to drive home a point that no one wants to come to Tennessee because of all the trash.

Well, that's a good point. Underneath the bridge across from our beautiful Meeks Park, there is a commercial waiting to happen. The best I can tell, there was someone living underneath that bridge for about two months. Complete with a tent, and camping gear, someone had set up household.

Well, they've moved on, but they forgot to pick up all the trash that they created during their staycation. Well, like the Tennessee Tourism Association said, "no one wants to mess with Tennessee Trash."

I grew up here, I was taught better than to just toss my trash around. I wasn't the only one who learned that lesson.

No one should be living under the bridges in Union County. There are enough Christian folks that are more than willing to help folks in times of need.

Second, if they are living underneath a bridge, they need a system of disposing of their garbage.

My Daddy had a saying, "you can't fix sorry." Well, he was more than right. It's just pure sorry to leave such a mess for taxpayers to have to clean up. Taxpayers will have to pay to have it cleaned up, because it costs taxpayers money to hire out state probationers to clean up the mess.

Inmates will have to clean that mess up, but they shouldn't have to because they didn't make that mess.

We live in one of the most pristine communities in America. Just this weekend, I experienced the Grace of God looking at a view I had never seen before in Union County.

I won't share where that view is because I don't want it messed up by folks who set up house without permission.

It upsets me that some folks just don't care what our community looks like.

Our commissioner, our civic groups and our Chamber of Commerce, and our residents work hard to keep their communities within the county nice and neat.

Which brings me back to the Tennessee Trash commercial. That commercial did more to get Tennessee cleaned up than any other media campaign.

Trash breeds trash. It also creates an unhealthy environment because of the vermin that it attracts.

No, I'm not talking about the people that created the mess. I'm referring to the wharf rats that come in after the mess is created.

Please care about our community.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Fishing and Preaching

When I was a young boy I enjoyed fishing. I loved to hear grown men tell of their fishing experiences and my thoughts were that someday I would be a skilled fisherman. But I must tell you that my luck with fishing was always bad. If it had not been for bad luck I would not have had any luck at all. The first fish that I ever caught, I did so with a straight pin fashioned as a fish-hook. Boy, was I thrilled. I put the fish in a gallon can of water that I had setting next to me. I knew my brothers would be filled with envy when they saw the fish I had caught. While I was trying to hook another fish, I heard a ker-plunk in the water. Looking over into my can I discovered my fish had jumped back into the creek. That was just the beginning of my fishing disasters.

Once my FFA class went on an overnight fishing trip to Blue Ridge Lake and while fishing from a boat, one of my fishing buddies hit me in the head with a plug that could have caught a whale. One of the hooks was deeply embedded in my head. We got back to camp and my teacher cut the hook off with wire-cutter pliers and pushed the hook out of my head. I didn't suffer any brain damage.

After I married and our son came along, I tried taking him fishing like every good dad should do. I would get his line, float and hook into the water. About the time I was ready to fish, he would say, "Here daddy, you hold my pole while I throw rocks." If you couldn't throw it, bat it, bounce it, or kick it, he didn't have anything to do with it. We moved to Louisiana and there was water and fish everywhere but I didn't go fishing once.

God sent our family to South Georgia to serve a church and almost every family had a lake on their property, plus Patrick's Ponds in Enigma, Georgia boasted 35 lakes and the world's largest bass. Although I fished there, I didn't catch it. One day our entire family decided to go fishing in a pond owned by one of our deacons. I situated my wife and our daughter on the bank with rods, reels and bait. Our son and myself were fishing in another area. My wife and daughter kept saying that

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It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Your tax dollars at work continued...

Q. Our homeowners insurance rates have gone up this year significantly and we want to know if the county can do anything to prevent this with new fire dept. equipment or employees or new water systems?

A. Unfortunately, some homeowner insurance companies have changed their policies regarding the ISO ratings of counties. While we do not know why, it is also obvious that increased rates with no increased risk equals higher profits. Previously, before the policy change, if a subdivision's entrance was within 5 road miles from a fire station, the whole subdivision was considered within 5 miles. The new policy is that the distance from the fire station must be measured from the station to the driveway of the residence. To receive a reduced rate you must be within 5 road miles from a fire station and to receive a further reduced rate you must also be within 1,000 feet of an approved water source. Unfortunately some insurance companies are now raising their rates and removing this exemption.

Q. Is there anything that we as a homeowner can do to help?

A. We would ask that you call the Office of Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner (800) 656-2298 if your insurance company tries to go up on your homeowner insurance rates based solely on their change in policy related to ISO ratings. We have been told that not all insurance companies are changing their policies, so if your insurance company is raising your rate, we suggest that you check with other companies who have chosen not to raise their rates. If that does not work, we will be glad to contact your insurance company on your behalf to explain further about the value of our professional Fire Department.

Q. What is the ISO rating and who controls it?

A. ISO stands for Insurance Services Office, Inc. ISO evaluates three major elements of a community's fire-protection program. Forty percent of a community's assessment is based on the community's water supply. Ten percent of the assessment is based on how well the fire department receives fire alarms and dispatches its firefighting resources. Fifty percent of the assessment is based on the fire-protection capabilities of the fire department. Our county and most rural counties spend hundreds of thousands of dollars trying to reduce our ISO ratings so

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Spotlight On Debra Edwards

This week I want to put the spotlight on Debra Edwards, Information Specialist at the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce. Debra is always a smiling face and a wealth of knowledge in the Welcome Center. Debra and I sat down for a Q & A session and here are her responses.

Q: When did you start working with the Chamber?

A: October 31st - Halloween in 2006

Q: Tell us your favorite thing you do in your position?

A: I have the best seat in the Chamber, because my desk is located in the lobby area of our Chamber. To my right I can see out across the beautiful Butternut Creek Golf Course. Straight ahead I can see the fireplace in the Butternut Creek Golf Pro Shop, and it is ever inviting when it is lit. To my left I can see the southern mountain range. I enjoy assisting visitors with activities, where they can eat, or maybe they're looking for places to shop. I meet people from all over. I love finding out where they are from and where they are going. The important part of my job is making sure that I always represent our chamber in a positive way, because I'm often the first person with whom our visitors connect. I always want

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Push-mowers, Ked's, swamp rats, & Southern justice

Butler, GA the small town where I grew up back in the 60s, was a non-descript rural town in middle Georgia that had no industry, no shopping centers,

and no fancy restaurants, but it offered the citizens a quiet, and peaceful place to live and raise a family. We didn't lock our doors, we let our dogs run free, and kids just had to be home before dark. Everybody had gardens and "put up" real organic vegetables for the winter. The Western Auto store was where we bought hardware, BBs, 22s, and our "Wizard" push-mower that PaPa bought every couple of years when we wore out the old one. We actually had to push it to cut the acre of grass at our house and when PaPa bought a mower that was self propelled, we thought we had seen the end of technology.

My sister, Sissy, had a lawn mowing business around the neighborhood where she pushed the mower to the neighbors houses and cut lawns for a couple of bucks. Sissy used her money to buy material and patterns for my mother to make dresses for her and Judy. We were not poor, but had to be somewhat self sufficient because we couldn't jump in the old Volkswagen and run 50 miles over to Macon to pick up a few things. We had Coolik's Dry Goods where, before school started, we would buy our new high top Ked's... never could figure out why I couldn't wear them out of the store, some sort of law I guess. We would ride our bicycles to Walker's grocery store to get bread and milk and Miss Linney would "charge" it with a paper ticket that they put in a big cabinet until the end of the month.

There were plenty of choices of churches, Methodist, Baptist, and Nazarene in town and many smaller churches scattered around the county where on Sunday morning and night, and Wednesday night you were expected to be. Kids understood that they would be in church come "Hell or high water" unless they could fake a good stomach ache.

Our gang, Bubba, John, Bobby, Pin Ball, Benny, and yours truly was the "Swamp Rats"

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Letters to the Editor ...

Environment Trumps Human Life

Dear Editor,
A few days ago the North Georgia Mountains, except for the grace of God, would have claimed two more of our aviating comrades. Thankfully, they both walked away from an aircraft that will never fly again. All of us who fly know that when the wheels leave the ground we become "foreign objects" in our new environment. Accidents happen, not just to aviators, especially in mountainous terrain. We trust when misfortune visits, the EMTs will be there post haste to aide the stricken.

But it appears saving human life takes a back seat to protecting the environment! So say the bureaucrats! Evidence, a statement from the issue of the *North Georgia News* which reported the details of the crash quoted as follows: "The plane crashed on the Appalachian Trail, making the rescue that much more difficult. Because the area is Federal Mountain Wilderness, the rescuers had to hike to the McCarters. No ATVs are allowed! It was a two-hour or so hike to find them," Chief Worden said.

Suppose the crash victims were hemorrhaging from their injuries, suffering from life threatening internal injuries, etc. where immediate treatment to assure survival was of the essence. Suppose it was a hiker with a heart attack. The statutory restrictions to save the environment at all costs, evidentially with no exception.

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Classroom chaos?

Dear Editor,
A full year before students around the nation submit to the new Common Core standardized tests, the federally-backed program is already causing chaos and confusion at local school board meetings, in the classroom and at the dinner table.

As critics fear Washington is poised to take control of what and how local districts teach kids, school administrators are adopting new curriculum in an effort to ensure their students outperform their peers and parents worry that their children are being used as academic guinea pigs. As the program gets closer to full implementation, a full-blown backlash is developing despite assurances from supporters that it is merely a test aimed at establishing a national standard.

"Common Core is forcing districts to re-think math curriculum. And in cases like ours, they are making poor decisions." -- Kelly Crisp, parent from Fairfield, Conn.

"It's just now reaching their school dis-

Mitchell continued...

...Mitchell continued

tricts and their children's schools and they want to know, "What is this, and why is it being forced on us?" said the Cato Institute's Neil McCluskey.

When 90 percent of states signed on to subject K-12 students to the Common Core math and English standards being pushed by the federal government, the program looked like an unqualified success. Kids around the nation would be tested once a year in grades 3-8 in math and English language arts, and once in high school, either in the 10th or 11th grades. Finally, students throughout the country could be measured by the same yardstick, long before taking college entrance exams. Local districts that excelled at educating children could be singled out, and ones who lagged could also be identified in order to address problems.

But if what happened in New York and Kentucky, two of the 45 states that have signed on to the Common Core State Standards Initiative, is any indication, the chaos has only just begun. Those states administered their own standardized tests aligned with Common Core, and the results were disastrous. Just 31 percent of New York students in the third through eighth grades were deemed proficient in math and English on the new tests, down about 50 percent from the traditional test given the year before. Kentucky, which also implemented its own Common Core-aligned tests, experienced similar declines in scores.

Other states are waiting until at least 2014-15 to implement Common Core tests that are still in development. But at the state and district level, educators are tinkering with the curriculum in the hopes of having students prepared for the new tests -- sometimes with disastrous results. In the affluent town of Fairfield, Conn., the school district last year adopted a new math curriculum for eighth- and ninth-graders called College Preparatory Math, with an eye toward the looming Common Core tests. But a year later, standardized test scores dipped and, according to one parent, Kelly Crisp, kids who had always done well in math were left disillusioned with the subject.

Five parents filed a complaint with the state over use of the new Algebra 1 book, and, after a protracted battle, forced the district to establish an "instructional online interactive forum" for Algebra 1 students and adopt new regulations for pilot programs as part of a settlement on the controversy over use of a textbook. Crisp said she worries about some 800 students who spent a year studying from a textbook hastily adopted in the frenzy to align with Common Core. The district later disavowed the book.

"Common Core is forcing districts to re-think math curriculum," Crisp said. "And in cases like ours, they are making poor decisions."

McCluskey said school districts are "flailing to try to adopt curriculum that will prepare students for Common Core, but there is no real standard."

"What we're seeing is the market flooded with curriculum that claims to be Common Core

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The Great Robbery

I would imagine that a young man moving from Alabama to the Windy City of Chicago felt out of his element while walking among sky scrapers and driving on paved roads. He was a little out of his element and probably on the naive side. The young Paul went to work for a finance company and soon found himself in the management training program. The young man graduated the program and soon found himself the manager of a small office in a suburb of Chicago called Cicero.

Barbara, a young woman from North Carolina, was a part of the staff. The staff also consisted of a lady by the name of Linda and a man named Johnson. One morning as Dad walked into the front door of his office he met a man walking out the door. Dad looked at the man asked if his visit had been enjoyable. The trench coat clad man said, "It was a very enjoyable visit with your staff". Dad smiled and held the door as the man walked through it.

When Dad came in the door he noticed that Barbara was passed out in her chair. Johnson was lying on the floor with his hands covering the back of his head. Linda was pointing at the door. She finally stammered, "Robbery". Dad turned and ran out the door screaming "robbery". As he ran through the door he reached for his trusty pocket knife and as he pulled the knife from his pocket he ran into a policeman. What else would the policeman think? He had heard someone scream robbery and next he was almost knocked down by a young man wearing a suit and tie.

Before he knew what was happening Dad felt the blow of a Billy stick to his head. It took 5-10 minutes, but, the policeman was finally convinced by Dad's staff that this young man was not the robber. Dad's head throbbed for a day after the incident. And for days the staff was extremely jumpy. Each time a stranger entered the door Barbara would almost cry. Johnson would immediately hit floor if a door slammed. Finally, the staff began to relax. Then one week to the day of the robbery it happened again.

A man walked into the office wearing a trench coat and asked to fill out a loan application. While he filled out the form Johnson asked Dad if he were ready to go through another robbery. Dad laughed and stated, "I am from Alabama and not afraid of anything". It was the custom of the manager to interview the applicant after a loan application was completed. So, after the man turned in the application Dad called the man into his private office. Dad opened the door and allowed the man to enter. As the man walked into the room Dad turned

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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