

Opinions

No place like home

I've been back home five years now. But, I'll tell you what, it feels like I never left.

Being able to reconnect with my family and friends here has been a true blessing for me. It was never easy being away from home, but, being back here goes to show you that the person who said "you can never go home again," didn't live in Blairsville, or anywhere in Union County.

I treasure my hometown, and the people that accompany it.

Though I've been away, it's apparent that a whole new group of people are living here. Yes, there are a lot of folks still here that were here when I left, but, as is a fact of life, they've aged. I've aged too, but, somehow folks still recognize me despite the longer white beard I now have.

The best part about being back home for me is that sense of home. There's another saying "home is where the heart is." Well, my heart has always been here.

I've always been proud to say I was from Blairsville, Georgia, no matter where I was at. In Minneapolis, Minn., I told them I was from Blairsville. In Pawleys Island, SC, I told them I was from Blairsville.

I've been a reporter in a few cities over the past 20 or more years. Every once in a while, I got to come back here to report a few stories.

My favorite story, without a doubt, reporting that Glenda Gooch got a new heart for Christmas. I still get emotional over that story, thinking about it, and remembering it was my first chance to come back home and report a story.

I miss Glenda, and I miss her grandfather, Jack Lance. The comfort I get today, is that Glenda and Jack are sharing good times in Heaven. They still are two of my favorite people that I've ever met.

Before I get too emotional, I want to tell y'all something that I've been wanting to tell you since I returned to live in my hometown. I'm proud to be from Blairsville. It truly is one of the greatest places to live in all the world.

I've always told anyone that I've met that I'm from "God's Country," a true slice of Heaven.

I also want to thank the good people of Union County for putting forth a vote of confidence in extending the 1-cent sales tax.

A 70.31 percent vote of confidence speaks volumes for the folks living here. It's a vote of confidence that is important in keeping our community vibrant and alive.

That vote of confidence is another reason I love my hometown. You have the same sense of community that I share with this city and county.

Thank you for caring about Union County.

Letters to the Editor ...

No oversight

Dear Editor,

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC needs to be under the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commission.

As you open up your electric bill, you will be shocked to see that not only did BRM EMC raise your rate, but also raised your customer charge from \$14.69 to \$18.13.

My husband and I are senior citizens on fixed income. Our current bill shows we used 690 KWH on the digital "smart" meter. I called another EMC and was told that my bill would have been \$78.53, tax included, with them - instead of the \$93.10 with BRM EMC.

This comparison should be proof positive that BRM EMC is overcharging its customers.

Also, none of the EMCs have to answer to the Public Service Commission, as do other electric companies. If they were, you would have a resource to complain to.

I called the PSC and was told that, some years ago, the commissioners of the PSC were trying to gain such control over the Georgia EMCs, but that consideration is off the table.

The public can go to www.psc.state.ga.us and send an email to the commissioners telling them you want the EMCs to be under their control. If you have no internet access, you can call the PSC at 1-800-282-5813, and voice your concerns.

Also, you can call Georgia EMC at 1-855-816-9964 (toll free) and call in a complaint to them regarding any concerns you have about BRM EMC.

As you all know BRM EMC completed their state of the art building in October 2012.

See Heimanson, page 5A

Please respond

Dear Mr. Doug Collins,

I have a couple of concerns about the methodology of your poll and therefore the implications of the results.

How were the participants selected and contacted for the poll. I am a registered voter in your district as is my spouse. I received a request to take the poll, he did not.

How did you acquire the email addresses to send out the poll request? What percentage of responses did you receive? What were the demographics - age, gender, income bracket, education, political affiliation of the respondents.

Since the Republican Party has done nothing but propagate misinformation about the Affordable Care Act including the disturbing letter you sent (at the expense of taxpayers) to me when I signed up for Medicare it is hardly surprising to see your poll results, particularly if you sent the initial poll to any sort of limited pool of potential respondents.

I am a healthcare consultant employed by a firm that focuses on helping hospitals improve their financial performance by improving quality and reducing waste so I am more familiar than most with the critical need for healthcare reform and the benefit of the ACA to all Americans.

Please rethink and research your position for the benefit of your constituents whose opinions have been formed by the skewed "information" they have been repeatedly fed by your party.

Sincerely,

Janet Sanders

Everybody has one...

Disappearing Disciples

In this modern day it seems many Disciples of Christ and of the "straight and narrow" have turned from disciples to deserters. Due to the opposition of darkness against the light, and evil against what is good, and falsehood against truth, it is apparent that this relentless battle has been too much for some disciples and many have become casualties in God's army. Several years ago at the Southern Baptist Pastor's Conference, one of the speakers read an article by an anonymous writer. I believe this article speaks to our day.

"I am a soldier in the army of my God. The Lord Jesus Christ is my commanding officer. The Holy Bible is my code of conduct. Faith and prayer and the Word are my weapons of warfare. I have been taught by the Holy Spirit, trained by experience, tried by adversity, and tested by fire. I am a volunteer in this army, and I have enlisted for eternity. I will either retire at the rapture or die in this army, but I will not get out, sell out, be talked out, or be pushed out. I am faithful, reliable, capable, and dependable. If my God needs me I am there. If He needs me in the Sunday School to teach the children or work with the youth, if He needs me to work with the adults, He can use me because I am there."

"I am a soldier! I am not a baby. I do not need to be pampered, petted, primed up, picked up or pepped up. I am a soldier! No one has to call me, remind me, write me, visit me, entice me or lure me. I am a soldier! I'm not a wimp. I am in place, saluting my King, obeying His orders, praising His name, and building His kingdom. No one has to send me flowers, gifts, food, cards, or candy and give me handouts. I do not need to be cuddled, cradled, cared for, or be catered to. I am committed. I cannot have my feelings hurt bad enough to turn me around, and I cannot be discouraged enough to turn me aside. I cannot lose enough to cause me to quit."

"When Jesus called me into this army I had nothing. If I end up with nothing I will still come out ahead. If I win my God is the reason, and He will continue to supply all of my needs.

See Parris, page 5A

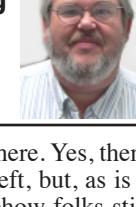
It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Coast2Coast

Q. How do you feel about the results of the SPLOST sales tax election?

A. I feel great, elated and thankful. I appreciate that 70 percent of the voters realize what is best for Union County. It reminds us of how beneficial it is to allow a significant number of people that do not live here, but are visiting here, help us pay for our infrastructure and facility upgrades.

Q. Did SPLOST pass by as much as you had hoped it would?

A. In this day and time, anything 60 percent and over is considered a landslide, so I would certainly consider 70 percent a landslide and I am very proud of our citizens' positive vote for SPLOST. Did I expect this large of a positive vote - NO - and I am very appreciative.

Q. Is the large positive vote for SPLOST an indication of your popularity?

A. While some of it may be that my administration is respected for fulfilling our SPLOST project list as much as possible, I think in a SPLOST election, people are primarily making a decision on the way they perceive the SPLOST money has been spent in the past and the fact that they DO NOT want to see their property taxes increase drastically.

Q. When will any new SPLOST projects begin?

A. Please remember that we still have about 15 months remaining on our existing SPLOST and will not be collecting SPLOST IV funds until April of 2015. We are allowed to begin projects early, but we would have to evaluate the funding to be able to do that.

Q. Will the county bond (borrow) any money on the front end of the SPLOST in order to go ahead and start projects?

A. That is something we will evaluate later after consultation with our financial advisers. In order to do any future bonds, it would have to be publicly advertised and go through the court system to be approved. Right now, we want to concentrate on completing as many of our current SPLOST projects as possible.

Q. Do you think that those who worked against the SPLOST had much of a negative impact?

A. It would appear from the election returns

See Paris, page 5A

Wintertime is Fun in the Mountains

The following article was written by Tobie Chandler, Office Administrator for the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce.

Feeling blue? Think there is nothing to do in the winter time? Well, guess what? There is plenty to do in the mountains. Sometimes it's challenging to motivate for outdoor fun when it is so chilly outside. However, being active outdoors is a great way to enjoy the mountains in a whole new way. Not only is it less crowded, but there are no bugs to contend with! To make the most of your outdoor fun and not be cold and uncomfortable, layer your clothing so you don't wimp out and head back for the house. Here are a few ideas to keep you active during our winter months:

1. Winter Hiking – There's no better place to take in the beautiful mountain sky than from Georgia's highest peak - Brasstown Bald.

2. Winter Camping – Build a bonfire, roast some marshmallows, and enjoy a hot cup of cocoa.

3. Winter Picnic by Helton Creek Falls – Take blankets, sandwiches, and hot soup in a thermos.

4. Photo Expedition – Snow, ice, and the

See Williams, page 5A

Santa Claus is Coming to Town

Yes, Virginia, Santa Claus comes to Blairsville, too, especially in the early days of December, when he can hear the wishes of the children residing in the North Georgia Mountains. This year he makes his appearance at both Friday evening and Saturday, during the days of the 4th Annual Kris Kringle Market.

This year, the Union County Farmers Market is bringing back some of the favorite happenings from past markets and then adding some of the allure of the European Markets, as well. There will be live entertainment, including choirs throughout all hours of the Market.

There will be a "peasant" roasting and selling chestnuts. We are working on a train ride for kids (well our adaption of the Polar Express), and of course, there will be over 60 vendors selling everything from citrus to seasoned pecans, soaps to quilted purses.

On Friday night, from 4:30 till 7:30, there will be a bonfire with free s'mores for all who attend. Both Friday evening and Saturday there will be special readings of both the Christmas Story and the Night Before Christmas. On Saturday, we will be bringing back the Big Tent for Kids, where not only will they be able to get free balloons, but every hour they will have an opportunity to participate in a free craft class where they will make a Christmas gift item.

Do you have a favorite holiday baked good you make every year, that you'd like to enter in our 1st annual Holiday Baking Contest? Applications can be downloaded on our website. No charge to enter in any of 6 categories, but we will be giving cash prizes to the winners.

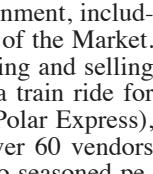
All season long, at the Market, we celebrated events every Saturday. Those that attend each week now miss the spirit of the Market after we closed at the end of October. The Kris Kringle Market gives all a chance to rekindle the Spirit of the Market as well as the holiday season.

Our Kris Kringle Market will be held,

See Leone, page 5A

Farmers Market Moment

Jeanne Leone



London Fog, Penny Loafers, Madras, Ping Pong

I have reminisced here several times in the past about my days growing up in the 60s in Butler and these days my mind drifts back there more and more when I see and hear all that is going on around us in the world today.

I listen to talk radio sometimes while traveling, but after a while it just makes me mad because I can't tell which side to believe so finally I just turn on Country Music

to put my mind at ease and start daydreaming about how we grew up back in the 60s in the small town in the middle of nowhere.

The sign that I saw recently said "don't look back because you're not going there again" makes logical sense, but I like to look back because it's a lot more pleasing than what we are facing today. I wish I could take my grandchildren back to those good ole days to experience the times that we had when we had

nothing to worry about except keeping the old folks happy and having fun with our gang, no high technology to keep up with, the only cell phone that we knew about was Dick Tracy's wrist radio in the Sunday comics...we had no

dangers to worry about except the dirt clod that

came out of the bushes as we rode our bicycles down the paths, and the only standards that some worried about was whether their jacket was a real London Fog or from Belk's... mine

came from Belk's but it looked the same and it was a jacket after all... or if our madras pants were real and would bleed when they got wet, or if our penny loafers were Florsheim or some imitation, but at least back then the imitations were made in America not China.

My best friend, Thurman, or Bubba as we called him, was our fashion leader because he had an older sister who made sure he had the correct labels showing, but we just threw dirt clods at him anyway. Butler was so small that the only ball games that mattered was basketball because we didn't have football. Kids today can't imagine life without football and that we actually grew up without it!

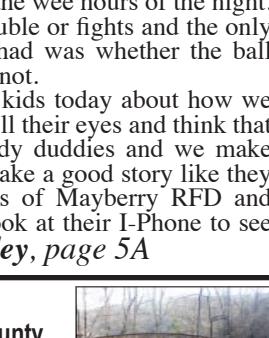
After the ball games we didn't have anywhere to hang out so everybody gathered at the Riley house. My parents, Sarah and Frank Sr. (PaPa) were very involved in their kid's activities especially when my two sisters were state basketball champs 5 years in a row, PaPa liked that.

Our friends would bring their dates over to our house after ballgames to play ping pong and Sarah would serve lemonade and cookies and we would play into the wee hours of the night.

Nobody got into trouble or fights and the only arguments that we had was whether the ball was over the line or not.

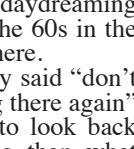
When we tell kids today about how we grew up, they just roll their eyes and think that we are just old fuddy duddies and we make these things up to make a good story like they have seen on reruns of Mayberry RFD and they can't wait to look at their I-Phone to see

See Riley, page 5A



Executive Director of RC&D

Frank Riley



A Chicken Frizz

The Chicken Frizz was a custom in the hills of North Alabama. The event was a chicken stew and social gathering for teenagers. It was a time for young men and women to come together while under the supervision of young adults.

And yes, some of the same things happened in those days that happen nowadays. Usually, romance was in the air during a chicken frizz.

My father remembers a Chicken Frizz being held at his home when he was very young. Dad was around 11 and my Uncle Bud was around 9 when Papa and Granny invited 15-20 of the youth from the Traptown area to come to the Cummings' home for a Chicken Frizz. Dad remembers many kids being present. But, the primary characters were Vera Wynn and Mitch Wynn.

My grandfather and grandmother, Columbus and Glenna Mae Cummings, worked all day to get ready for the Chicken Frizz. The family killed and dressed 8-10 chickens. Glenna asked her sons to get out the big black cook pot and build a fire under it.

Teenage kids came from all across the community to the Chicken Frizz at the Cummings home. Vera and Mitch did not have to travel very far to get to the event. Herman Wynn lived just across the cotton field from the home of Columbus and Glenna Mae Cummings. Herman was a short, jovial and slightly rotund individual. He was quite possibly the finest man in the community. His daughter, Vera, and son, Mitch were the first teenagers to arrive at the Cummings home. The Wynn children were 16 and 15 years of age, while Dad and Uncle Bud were 5 or 6 years younger. Dad and Uncle Bud knew everyone at the Chicken Frizz and this presented a slight problem.