

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### In defense of our commissioner

It's just a few hours from Christmas morning, and I thought I'd give our Sole Commissioner an early Christmas gift. I've been away for a while. Yes, I've been in the hospital. I'm facing a triple bypass surgery at the Ronnie Green Heart Center in Gainesville. However, I couldn't let them start work on my heart without answering a couple of letters to the editor taking pot shots at Lamar Paris.

First, Richard D. Tully argues that Commissioner Paris is more worried about saving tax dollars than saving lives. He points out that a red light is needed at the intersection of Murphy Highway and Pat Colwell Road.

You'll get no argument from me on that one, or from Commissioner Paris. A traffic light is definitely needed at that location.

However, that decision must come from the state. It is a state roadway and Commissioner Paris has no say in the matter of whether a signal light is needed at that location.

Second, Mr. Tully points out concerns about the layout of Georgia 515. The blame of the way the highway system works is pointed at Commissioner Paris again. Georgia 515 is a part of the federal highway system. Commissioner Paris has no say in that matter either.

And then there is George Mitchell. He tries to shame our newspaper into running his nonsensical letters to the editor. I assume he has imaginary friends who give him insight to how the county works.

He tries to attack Commissioner Paris over use of the Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax. He acts like it's a huge secret that after SPLOST dollars are spent to build infrastructure, that the cost of maintaining those structures isn't included in the SPLOST; that taxpayers must foot the bill for maintenance.

That's true, however, taxpayers saved millions in the cost of the construction of the infrastructure. It's a carefully veiled lash out at the Commissioner.

As I prepare for one of the most difficult times in my life, I hope and pray that y'all have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Straight Shooting**  
Charles Duncan



### A Child is Born

Charles Jennens helped make his friend rather famous. That wasn't his intent, as he had far loftier goals for what he wanted them to produce together.

As a devout Christian, Jennens was concerned about cultural trends. The questions raised by opinion-makers challenging traditional values were causing church goers and even church leaders to doubt the authority of the Bible and the truth claims made by and about Jesus Christ.

So Jennens approached his German friend, an entertainer, with an idea. He wanted to use the medium of popular music to present lyrics based on the King James Bible, to tell the story of Jesus in an uplifting and powerful way in secular settings. He reasoned that an authentic Christian voice was needed to counter the cultural mood of the day. So with Jennens selecting the words and his friend composing the music (in just 24 days), they produced a work that accomplished their purpose, and ensured that history would never forget them.

The year was 1741. The friend was George Handel. The work they produced was an English-language, three-part oratorio called Messiah. Now you know the rest of the story.

Handel originally intended the Messiah for Easter, as he introduced the new oratorio near that holiday in 1742 in Dublin. However today it is more associated with Christmas because Part 1 emphasizes fulfilled prophecy of the Messiah's first Advent. A Chorus in Part 1 presents this profound text:

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6).

The more famous Hallelujah Chorus concludes Part 2 amidst a selection of texts about the crucifixion, resurrection, second advent, and the day of judgment. Enlightenment philosophers in the 18th century challenged these truths and the deity of Christ as do skeptics today, mythologizing the idea of a Creator born into His creation. Yet without Bethlehem, there is no Calvary;

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



### Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

First, I want to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. While there is always plenty to worry about in our country, we should always remember there is also much to celebrate. We still live in the best country in the world, protected by many dedicated military and law enforcement personnel. This is also the special and exciting season of the year that we celebrate the birth of Christ and a good time to count our many blessings.

January 1st will mark the beginning of my 16th year as your commissioner. It is an honor and has been a privilege to serve you. I will admit that I never look forward to the election season which is coming up next year because it is a very stressful time of year, not only for me, but my family and friends. There is one thing that I have found out after many years in politics and that is it never seems to matter what you have accomplished or how hard you have worked at your job, there is always someone that wants to only look for the worst. Unfortunately, that involves some of the questions that I am dealing with this week and next.

**Q. We understand that the county is and has done many things with the SPLOST funds and as you like to say, improve our quality of life, but you do not tell us about the expense involved. Every time you build or purchase something new, it means that you are also increasing cost of maintenance and upkeep since that can not be covered with SPLOST funds. So why do you continue to spend this money anyway?**

A. First, after 15 years in office, I have assumed that what you are asking is just plain common sense and did not require me to spell it out for you. If we never spent any money in this county because we knew that we were going to have to spend more to maintain and improve something, that would be pretty silly and we would never get anything done. It is true that SPLOST sales tax funds can only be utilized to make new purchases and build new structures, but it also still allows a lot of flexibility. When we built the new jail and courthouse, our utility bills increased as did our staff and upkeep. Should we not have built them? We built the Community Center and the Farmers Market and Fire Station and Library and many others. Each time there is an increased cost of operation which should be common sense. However, at the same time we make all these improvements to our county and improve our quality of life, we also have been able to pay for

Q & A from Union County Commissioner  
Lamar Paris



### Letters to the Editor...

#### Roadway dangers

Dear Editor,  
I have a question for the sole Commissioner of Union County. Please tell me sir, how many people are going to have to be killed or injured before you will find a way to put a stop light at Murphy Highway and Pat Colwell Road? I've already heard all the reasons why one wasn't installed when the roadway was improved. None of them were enough to convince anyone from believing we shouldn't have one there. As usual you were cowed by the state officials and their reluctance to recognize the need for our safety.

Today I was turning left from Pat Colwell Road onto Murphy Highway. I had looked left and then right and the road was clear to go. I started to advance when a motorcycle with no headlight came around the bend from the north at a high rate of speed. Had I not been able to slam on the brakes and stop one of us would probably be dead or in the hospital with terrible injuries.

I'm sick of this attitude that we can't put up stop lights because it offends the old timers and locals. Traffic has more than doubled over the last five years and this intersection is just one of several that are in need of some changes. Now I know that this Commissioner can't take a breath without having to have a grant or an outside method of payment for everything. SPLOST comes to mind. And it's always his excuse to keep from having to do anything that may upset the powers that be, spend a buck, or raise taxes.

See Tully, page 5A

#### "Refugee Plan"

Dear Editor,  
I have a plan for the refugees. All males between the ages of 18 to 50 will immediately be inducted into the US/Cdn army and sent to basic training. After basic, they will be loaded into aircraft and flown back to their home country and on arrival given their weapons and ammo and told to go reclaim their country and when they have accomplished that we will send their wives and children and any other countrymen and women back to them at no cost. They will be paid the same as our soldiers while fighting for their country and their dependent/s will receive the same benefits as our soldiers' dependents. If they are not willing to do this then they and their families can find another country to take them. We should not have to send our military to fight for their country if they are not willing to fight for their own.

Sue Smith-Maxwell

#### Did you know?

Dear Editor,  
The next time that Lamar Paris raises the absolute necessity of reapplying SPLOST, I'll resubmit this piece to you.  
If you won't publish it, I'll buy advertising space.  
If you won't allow me to buy advertising space, I will share it through other Internet sources.  
In the meantime, I will share what I've learned with the local Tea Party and with the voters on my e-mail list.  
It's a shame that We, the People, are being deprived of full information by the very organ which ought to function on behalf of We, the People, and not as an agent of protection and enhancement for elected politicians.  
More's the pity.  
Cordially,  
George A. Mitchell

To repeat:  
A friend of mine — who is In The Know of All Things Union County — and I periodically have lunch together.  
During those times, he shares some of what's going on behind the scenes, out of the Public Eye.

See Mitchell, page 5A



### Community rewarded

Dear Editor,  
Just a short retort to the Editorial regarding the book-signing of my book recently, which castigated my efforts to use the newspaper as "free advertising" for an event to be held at the library—which Ms. Ramsey felt was in poor taste. First of all, the library hosts a dozen book-signings each year, and all the proceeds of sales of my book are donated to charity.  
Most significant, perhaps, is that I am friends with people whose opinions are quite different from mine, and we enjoy one another's company and have respect for one another. In fact, one friend offered to help set up the room for me, and our political and religious stands are totally opposite. She once told me she is a "yellow-dog Democrat," and you might guess that I am not. Nevertheless, she sat through my presentation and later said she thoroughly enjoyed it. That's how folks are supposed to act with one another.  
And that's 'nuff said! I wish all readers of this editorial page a most Merry Christmas, if that is how they celebrate the "Season;" and if not, just have a warm cup of tea and relax with happy thoughts.  
Arlene M. Gray

### Not happy with Ruth

Dear Editor,  
This is in response to the December 16, 2015 letter to the editor by Ms. Ruth Elizabeth Ramsey. I don't normally get involved with controversies in the community, but I have to take issue with Ms. Ramsey, since she seems to want to denigrate the integrity of someone I personally know to be of the highest moral caliber, and who has volunteered significant amounts of her time and treasure in furthering good causes in Union County {and in particular, the library}.  
Ms. Ramsey stated in her comments: "I consider myself fortunate in having parents who made clear that there are things in life one does and one does not do. To my mind, using a public library to sell one's wares is something one does not do. It is chutzpah of the first order, comparable to the money-changers in the temple."  
There are a few facts, that Ms. Ramsey may not be aware of. First, as a matter of course, book signings are routinely done all over the country. Just a quick search on the internet indicates recent book signings at public libraries in Chicago, Kansas City and Nashville. In fact, the book signing at the Nashville Public Library was done by none other than former President Jimmy Carter. Also, I think it would be safe to assume that this event was publicized in the local newspapers. Being the altruistic person he is, we could probably also assume that President Carter probably donated all or part of his proceeds to charity. Is Ms. Ramsey aware that the person she takes issue with also donated all monies from the sale of her book to charity?

See Evans, page 5A

### My Favorite Christmas Presents

Can you remember all the Christmas presents you have received in your lifetime? People place a lot of emphasis on giving and receiving presents. We want to give the one that a person will remember for the rest of a lifetime. As I think back across the years I can remember some Christmas presents that stand out from all the others I have received.  
During my fourth Christmas I received a pair of Cowboy boots from my uncle Bud. I still have a photograph of me posing in those boots. I also remember a .410 gauge shotgun I received from my dad when I was about 12. I killed a bunch of squirrels over the years with that gun. Another memory of mine is a toy battleship that ran on batteries. Dad got the thing all put together and turned it on, but, could not turn it off. Mom said he had to take it out on the back porch to keep from waking me up.  
I remember one year in which I wanted an electric football game. I think I was 10 and everyone in my family knew I wanted this football game. Around 11 PM my brother got up for a drink of water and ran back into our bedroom. He woke me to tell me he had caught Dad playing with an electric football game. I jumped from bed and ran down the hall to find Dad tossing a football up and down while he was watching a Bowl game on TV. I thought my little brother had lost his mind until the next morning. Dad just grinned at us while we played that electric football game.  
Some of my favorite memories include nothing more than candied orange slices; apple sauce cake and peppermint candy because they represent memories of my grandmother. Reminders of my grandfather include standing on top of a ridge and feeling the cold December winds biting into my face and the sound of a distant treeing coon dog in the early morning before a sunrise because we always began our coon hunting seasons at Christmas time. Another wonderful Christmas was the year my wife and I became engaged. Through the years she and I have many wonderful memories concerning Christmas. I was reminded of some of these recently when we pulled out a box of Lego building blocks.  
The Legos reminded me of my son Wade and the pirate ship we gave him one Christmas. This Lego Pirate ship has 43 pages of instructions. That should tell you something about how many pieces comprised the ship. He unwrapped that ship with a bucket full of enthusiasm. My wife spent hours helping him to build that ship and when it was finally complete the boys ended up tearing it apart and asking us to help them put it back together. When I see a Santa Clause I always think of our eldest son because Will never

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



### Merry Christmas

Merry Christmas from the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce! To all who believe, there is truly something magical about this time of the year.  
All around Blairsville during the month of December, we have witnessed the hustle and bustle of frantic shoppers, children eager to sit with Santa and express their wishes, Christmas party goers, lights being hung on rooftops, and wreaths and trees put up in windows. Yet, among the midst of all the excitement, the words to "Silent Night" seem to keep playing in my mind, "All is calm. All is bright." Just around the corner, across all the land, there will be a calmness that descends. No more lights to hang, cards to send, or presents to wrap. On Christmas Eve, the night before the birth of Jesus, all who are aware will feel it too. It's a time of reverent calmness that sweeps the town as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior.  
My hope is that each one of us take time to celebrate the gifts of Christmas and the joy it brings. If you too have been caught up in all of the chaos, it is not too late! I encourage you to take at least a moment to reflect on the blessings in your life and all the wonders of Christmas.  
From our hearts to yours, we wish you a Merry Christmas! Thank you for being part of our Chamber and this wonderful community.

Blairsville - Union County Chamber  
Cindy Williams



### Along Side the Turkey

Dorcas Reilly resides with her husband Tom just 8 1/2 miles from Campbell Soup headquarters, in Camden, NJ. Dorcas was born and raised in Camden. She went just 6 miles west of her home along the Delaware River to attend Drexel University during WWII, where she studied Home Economics. In 1949, she joined The Campbell Soup Co. She never strayed very far from her birth place until 2002, when she traveled across the width of Pennsylvania to Akron, OH. Mrs. Reilly appeared, by invitation, at the National Inventor's Hall of Fame to donate her original copy of one of the most infamous recipes, "The Green Bean Casserole", to the museum. The now-yellowed 8 x 11 recipe card takes its place alongside Enrico Fermi's invention of the first controlled nuclear reactor and Thomas Alva Edison's two greatest hits: the light bulb and the phonograph.  
Last week I surveyed my readers, friends and family to share what they had in their pantry, freezer and spice cabinet. I then challenged myself to create a recipe using those responses. Sixty years ago, Dorcas Reilly was faced with a similar challenge; to concoct a quick and easy dish that could be made from ingredients that most Americans have in their pantry. Reilly determined most households have leftover cans of Campbell's cream of mushroom soup and a stash of green beans. With these two staples, the Green Bean Casserole was born.  
This week I reached out once again to my gastronomically challenged group, asking what their least favorite side dish is at most Christmas buffets. You probably guessed it. The number one answer was the Green Bean Casserole.  
Yes, there were other responses. It seems gelatin in any form is not as appealing as the Jello jingle would lead us to believe. From tomato aspic to green molded wreaths with cherry tomatoes buried inside, pretending to be holly berries, the wiggle of the gel just doesn't set too many people's tongues a hankering for more.  
Green is one of the festive colors of the

Farmers Market Moment  
JoAnne Leone



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