

Judge Barrett...continued from page 1A

Superior Court judges to carry a firearm in the courtroom for their own protection.

"As he was admonishing the witness to let her attorney do her job, Judge Barrett withdrew his firearm and displayed it and continued to talk as he held it in his hand," Langley said. "He was telling the witness that if she wasn't going to let her attorney do her job that she might as well kill or shoot her attorney. I don't know if those were his exact words, the court transcript will tell that at some point."

Langley said that Judge Barrett continued to scold the witness with the gun still in his hand for a few moments.

"I think the entire courtroom was stunned by that course of events," Langley said. "It was inappropriate to display the firearm in that context."

Langley asked Judge Barrett for permission to approach the bench on behalf of the state. He asked the judge to put his firearm away, which he did.

The hearing proceeded in a relatively normal fashion after the incident, Langley said.

Langley is aware that news of the handgun incident involving Judge Barrett has gone viral in media circles. He said that some downplayed the incident like it was no big deal. The prosecutor says, indeed, Judge Barrett's actions were a big deal considering the witness was the victim of an alleged domestic physical assault involving a gun.

"It was inappropriate to display the firearm in the courtroom in that context," Langley said.

However, he said some are blowing the incident out of proportion.

"I've heard many people exaggerating what happened," Langley said. "Some have made it sound as if the gun were drawn in anger, or that it was drawn in a particularly threatening manner, or that someone was assaulted with it."

"That was certainly not the case," he said. "Though the judge was cer-

tainly showing poor judgment by making a rhetorical point using the gun, I did not feel like he was going to shoot anyone. Other people in the courtroom would have to speak for themselves as to whether they felt threatened.

"I certainly didn't feel like I was about to be shot," he said.

The hearing did not reach a conclusion. There was more evidence than there was time to present the entire case. The hearing was scheduled for the next available open date on Judge Barrett's calendar, Langley said.

"The hearing ran on so long, that we ran out of day before we ran out of evidence," Langley said. "The defense attorney still had evidence he wanted to put forward in the bond hearing, and therefore it was set over to the next day the judge was available."

"At this point, because of the controversy concerning the display of the gun, my expectation is that on this particular case, another judge will be appointed for this case," Langley said.

In addition, the suspected origin of the Cedar Cliff fire was the chimney/roof area of a wood burning stove. Including a structure fire on Pope Road in late December of 2011, this makes three fires that the suspected cause was a wood burning heating device.

The Towns County Fire Rescue Department strongly urges homeowners to check the operation of their smoke detectors every month and to replace the batteries when we make the change to Daylight Savings Time.

In addition, the National Fire Protection Association statistics reveal a significant number of winter fires are caused by faulty, poorly maintained or improperly used heating devices.

The Fire Department recommends having your heating devices regularly maintained by a certified and licensed heating contractor, that you identify two exit routes from your home, and that you develop and practice an exit plan.

Should you need any assistance with developing a home fire safety please contact the Towns County Fire Rescue Department at (706) 896-2090 or (706) 896-6990.

Fate...continued from page 1A

Langley was present in the courtroom when the incident occurred last week in Lumpkin County Superior Court.

"I'll make it clear, I'm not taking the position that Judge Barrett has committed any crime," Langley said. "I've heard many wildly, exaggerated stories around town about what took place. He did inappropriately display a firearm in a courtroom; the Judicial Qualifications Commission will render their investigation on that."

"But, at this point, I'm not considering it criminal conduct," he said. "I'm going to look at it, but he certainly did not point the gun at anyone in anger or assault anyone. Instead, he was using it to make

a rhetorical point.

"It was more poor judgment than anything else," Langley said.

The Judicial Qualifications Commission was created by Constitutional Amendment in 1972 to conduct investigations and hearings with respect to complaints of misconduct by Georgia judges, and also is authorized to issue opinions regarding appropriate judicial conduct. The Commission operates under rules established by the state Supreme Court.

The Commission is composed of two judges of any court of record selected by the Supreme Court of Georgia; three lawyers, each of whom must have had at least 10 years experience,

appointed by the State Bar of Georgia; two citizens, neither of whom shall be members of the State Bar, appointed by the governor.

All members serve four-year terms and until their successors are appointed and qualified, according to the JQC Web site.

"They are the appropriate body that investigates any allegation of judicial misconduct," Langley said. "They have their own investigator and staff. I am aware that they have opened a case looking into this matter."

"I have not spoken with them and they have not contacted me," Langley said. "It's commonly referred to as the JQC. They take this very seriously."

Fires...continued from page 1A

ive attack was made on the fire with three hose lines and the fire was brought under control, with extensive damage to the structure.

Although the structure was heavily damaged, the 81-year-old female resident was able to escape uninjured due to the activation of a smoke detector and her rapid exit from the structure.

Extinguishing the blaze was made easier by a newly installed fire hydrant that was within 300 feet of the involved residence. The distance to the hydrant, and the use of new 5-inch diameter supply hose, provided an uninterrupted supply of water that was more than adequate to extinguish the fire.

The State Fire Marshal's Office arrived on Monday morning to assist in investigating the cause of the fire, which was determined to have originated from a cracked flue pipe in a wood burning furnace located in the basement.

Firefighters were again called to a reported structure fire just before 10 a.m., on Tuesday Feb. 14th at 1719 Cedar Cliff Road. First arriving units were faced with heavy fire billowing

from the rear roof area of the 8,000 square-foot residence. After determining the elderly occupants were safely out of the house, a defensive fire attack was initiated with multiple hose lines. Like the Fodder Creek fire, the fire fighting efforts were made much easier due to the availability of a newly installed fire hydrant located approximately 800 feet from the involved home. A 5-inch supply hose and a hydrant assist valve provided adequate water to ultimately extinguish the blaze. Extinguishing the blaze was extremely difficult due to the amount fire that was hidden in debris that resulted from roof and floor collapse. The Fire Department used its aerial ladder truck in an attempt to reach the hidden hot spots. However, the use of a mechanized track hoe combined with hose lines ultimately helped extinguish the stubborn fire.

It is noteworthy that the occupants at both these residences were able to safely exit their burning homes because of early detection and notification provided by a working smoke detector.

Lady Indians...continued from page 1A

held a 48-10 bulge on the scoreboard at intermission.

Stephanie Patton included two treys among 9 points and Bleckley a trey among 7 in the third quarter as the Lady Indians led 71-16 entering the mercy rule shortened fourth quarter before closing out a 78-27 victory.

Scoring leaders for the game included Bleckley with 19 points, Arencibia with 15, Cochran and Stephanie Patton with 12 each, Cowart with 8, and Dadrian Blythe with 6.

Seven different Lady Indians combined for 18 assists with leaders being

Cochran with 8, Bleckley with 4, and Lindsay Patton with 2, according to your reporter's unofficial tally.

Log onto the Towns County Herald Web site (www.townscountyherald.net) to find out if the Lady Indians' March to Macon will continue on Saturday.

Patton...continued from page 1A

reached the accomplishment while providing 15 points in a key role during the Lady Indians' 66-54 Region 8-A Championship victory over George Walton Academy. The announcement was delayed in anticipation of making it in front of the home crowd during the opening round of the Class A State Tournament.

Due to uncertainty as to whether appropriate to announce a personal achievement at a state tournament game, it is being made now in this newspaper.

As is usually the case, missing score books, from the distant past in this case, prevent considering Patton's achievement as representing an all-time school record, but there can be no doubt that she holds the record for what might be described as the modern era under full court rules in Lady Indians basketball.

Score books are available for the Lady Indians for all except a couple of seasons since "rover" rules allowing limited full court play were implemented during the 1971 season with unlimited five player full court play having been allowed

since the 1976 season.

Keisha Taylor (O'Hearn) had set the standard of 287 points scored by a freshman Lady Indian during the 1994 season with Patton passing that total during the aforementioned region championship game and she has now exceeded the 300 points barrier when including the remainder of the region championship game and last Friday's state tournament game against Georgia Military.

Taylor went on to four years of stardom for the Lady Indians, finishing with a career total of 1,569 points, good for fourth place on the verifiable all time career list behind Nikki Winn's 1,870, Amy Allen's 1,753, and Blair Barrett's 1,699. Taylor followed up the stardom at TCHS with a fine three year career at Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia, after missing her freshman year there due to a knee injury.

Numerous former Lady Indians have had great "on the record" scoring success as freshmen at TCHS since the 1971 season with six having preceded Patton in scoring more than

250 points as freshmen. Those in addition to Taylor have included Carol Ina Peebles (Ramsack) with 281 points during the 1973 season, Nikki Winn with 274 in 2006, Martha Moss (Hufstetler) with 259 in 1976, Blair Barrett with 258 in 2002, and Sheila Moss (Moody) with 253 in 1972. Amy Allen, who held the Lady Indians' career scoring record for well over 20 years missed the 250 total as a freshman in 1983 with 218 points, but missed six games due to injury. If scoring anywhere near her 12.1 points per game average for that year, she would have approached the previous record set some eleven years later by Taylor.

Congratulations are extended to Stephanie Patton for setting such a prestigious record by exceeding the accomplishments of now legendary players at TCHS and best wishes are extended for the future from this reporter and the Towns County Herald.

For more details about Stephanie Patton and her journey to the Lady Indians' record books, turn to Page 12A in today's edition.

Early Vote...continued from page 1A

line for submitting the list of candidate names for the 2012 Presidential Preference Primary is November 15, 2011.

Georgia election law also requires the Secre-

tary of State's Office to publish the lists of each party's candidates on its Web site during the fourth week immediately preceding the date on which the presidential prefer-

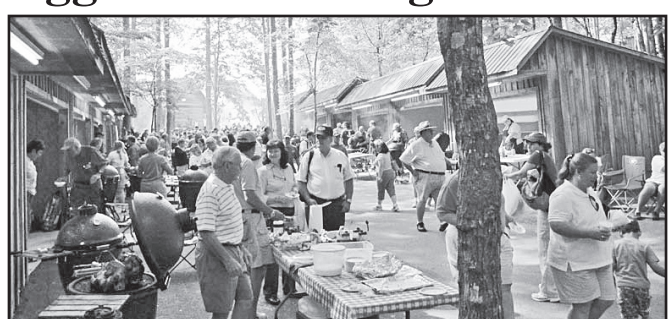
ence primary is to be held.

Although several candidates have already withdrawn from the race, their names still appear on the ballot.

Second annual Egg Fest is coming

The second annual Georgia Mountain Big Green Eggfest will be held May 19th, 2012 at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. They're expecting over 100 Big Green Egg cooks and chefs from all over the country and Canada. "Sampler" tickets can be purchased which will allow you to stroll through the fairgrounds and sample and experience wonderful "egged" food while chatting with the cooks about their recipes and techniques. You'll soon learn why the Big Green Egg is the "Ultimate Cooking Experience".

Hiawassee Hardware and Building Supply, 139 Main Street North, Hiawassee, GA 30546, is the authorized Big Green Egg dealer and are offering the Big Green Eggs for sale at a large discount.



2011 Big Green Eggfest

Also, there will be several vendors set up with a variety of goods, both food and non-food related.

The Big Green Eggfest is being sponsored by the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds and the Towns County Tourism Association. Hotel, motel, and campground reservations are going at a brisk rate due to this event. Also, the local economy

gets a large boost due to the restaurant, gasoline, hotel/motel and shopping revenue this event creates.

It is required to pre-register online at www.mountaineegg.com or at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds Office, 1311 Music Hall Road, Hiawassee, GA 30546, (706) 896-4191. Taster tickets are in high demand, so it is suggested you register early. TFeb29.L1JSH

Give blood, get beached with American Red Cross

Upcoming blood donation opportunities in March:

Tuesday, March 13: Blairsville Community Blood Drive at the Haralson Civic Center, 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. Please call 745-2335 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

Thursday, March 22: United Community Bank Blood Drive, 59 Hwy 515, Blairsville, 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please call Anna Gladdin at 745-2151 for more informa-

tion or to schedule an appointment.

Wednesday, March 28: Young Harris College Blood Drive in the Myers Student Center, 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please call 379-5110 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

Thursday, March 29: Towns County Community Blood Drive at the Ramada Inn, 653 US Highway 76, Hiawassee, 1:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Please call 970-0343 or 896-9541 for more information or to schedule an appointment. If no answer, please leave a message and your call will be returned.

For more information or to schedule an appointment to donate, please call 1-800-RED-CROSS or visit redcrossblood.org. Call 1-877-975-2835 to make an appointment to donate platelets. NTFeb29.A3JSH

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