

Sacrifice...continued from page 1

“Because there are a lot of places here in the United States that this is not taking place,” he said. “People are too busy, they’re too worried. So thank you, the folks of this county and Hiawassee for what you do. I thank the Post (7807) for what you do. May God continue to Bless America.”

Towns County residents from all walks of life came to the Memorial Day event near the Towns County Schools with a common bond: they had a family member serve or die protecting America’s Freedom. They came to hear the Past Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars speak about the sacrifices that veterans have made since 1776.

“Think about some-

body that is not here today,” Gwizdak said. “Think about somebody lying in the beautiful monument that you have developed for him or her.

“Just give your day today, for them, who ever is not here,” he said. “Open your eyes and look at what you’ve got, because anybody that’s not here, they paid a price for freedom in America.”

Monday was a day to remember our nation’s participants in the field of battle, those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and those who fought to protect the liberties of American freedom.

The men and women honored on Memorial Day have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Memorial Day weekend is better noted as the traditional first weekend of summer. But, it’s really a

more solemn occasion. It can be traced back to the days of the Civil War, when the mothers and widows of soldiers gathered flowers and placed them on the graves of their fallen loved ones. This became known as Decoration Day.

It took place on various days of the year, depending on the availability of spring flowers.

The first official declaration of Decoration Day is thought to have been made by Union Gen. John Logan on May 5, 1868; the day to recognize was May 30. It wasn’t until after World War I that the day officially recognized all war dead.

In 1971, Memorial Day became an official federal holiday.

For many, Gwizdak said, it’s a three-day week-

end, but he was proud that those gathered in Towns County were gathered to honor sacrifice.

“We honor those today, who gave everything they had in service of our country,” Gwizdak said.

Freedom was born in sacrifice, Gwizdak said.

Garrett-Owenby Post 7807 is named in honor of the memories of two local soldiers who paid the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam. U.S. Army Sgt. Ernest William Garrett, 56th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division, was killed at Bear Cat, in Vietnam, June 24, 1968. PFC Clyde Owenby, U.S. Army 9th Infantry Division, 2nd Battalion 47th Infantry MEC, was killed June 22, 1967 in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam.

Graduation...continued from page 1

standing group of Towns County seniors.

It was a large group, 80 graduates, one of the biggest classes in TCHS history.

“Well, here we are,” Perren said. “The moment that you have worked so hard for since you were a small child is here. You are just moments away from walking across this stage.”

Sutton, the senior class president, was the first graduate to speak. She urged her classmates to hold their heads high, go out into the world and make their mark.

“Be not afraid to live,” she said. “Be not afraid to face challenges and forge your successes. We will face our fair share of heartbreak, we each have difficult choices as we move ahead; be not afraid, we will prevail.”

Historian Camille Guss told the group that history teaches each and every one of them what really matters in life.

“Never give up,” she said. “Each of us fought hard to be in these caps and gowns tonight.”

Salutatorian Ginny Rhoades told her fellow

classmates to be the best they could be.

“Hold yourselves up to the best light,” she said. “Give yourself room for error; make wise choices in order to do the right thing.

“Be bigger than you ever expect to be,” she said. “Dare to be bigger than you ever thought you could be.”

Valedictorian Jordan Moss reflected on her early days in the school system and building a lifetime of friendships.

“I was too busy crying (on her first day of school) to remember those first days,” she said. “Through the years, I’ve built friendships and memories that I hope will last a lifetime.

“Parents and teachers, friends and family, we’ve had great times and not so great times,” she said. “Overall, I have to say, it has been fun. I’m proud to be part of one of the largest classes ever at Towns County High School.

Moss said that graduation was a happy time for all of her fellow classmates, a time to remember, a time to reflect, she said.

“We all have a des-

tiny,” she said. “When we fall, we must get up; we must keep going. We must fight the good fight; finish our course and keep the faith. The future is what we want it to be.”

Perren told the graduates that he took his time signing their diplomas.

“With each one, I paused for a moment to think about you as I was writing my name on this document that you will likely have for the rest of your life,” he said. “I closed my eyes and pictured how special you are.

“Yes, I want you to know that you are a special class to me,” he said. “It has been my honor to serve as your high school principal. I have been blessed to watch you all grow and mature into fine young men and women.”

Perren charged the graduates to go out into the world and make a difference.

“We have mixed emotions on this great night,” he said. “We hate to see you go and yet at the same time, we are proud to see you graduate. God be with you Class of 2011.”



The Class of 2011 completed Commencement Exercises Friday Evening at Bill P. Kendall Gymnasium at Towns County High School. The class is one of the largest in school history. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Raymond...continued from page 1

Senior Judge Robert Struble sentenced Raymond to 20 years with 10 years to serve. Child molestation charges in Gwinnett County (same victim) will run concurrent with the sentence in Towns County Superior Court, Langley said.

The final 10 years of the sentence will be served on probation, Superior Court records show.

Raymond was indicted by a Towns County Grand Jury in the first quarter of 2010. Grand Jurors originally handed up a six-count indictment against Raymond on one count of aggravated child molestation and five counts of child molestation, Towns County Superior Court records show.

The original indictment

against Raymond, 60, was nolle prosequi by the District Attorney’s Office. Later, a 12-count indictment, including 10 counts of child molestation and two counts of aggravated child molestation on a child under the age of 16 years old was returned by Towns County Grand Jurors.

The sexual abuses occurred between the dates of May 17th, 2004 and Nov. 30, 2009, according to the indictment filed in Towns County Superior Court.

Earlier this year, Raymond was charged with child molestation against the same victim in Gwinnett County, Superior Court records show.

Lt. Brian Wilson, an investigator with the Towns

County Sheriff’s Office secured arrest warrants against Raymond following a thorough investigation, court records show.

Wilson was a witness before the Towns County Grand Jury during the indictment process against Raymond.

Raymond will be sent to Georgia’s Diagnostic and Classification prison in Jackson to await processing before his permanent state prison assignment. He pleaded guilty in Gwinnett County Superior Court on Friday.

He must also pay fines and Superior Court fees of \$2,690. Raymond was represented in court by local attorney Lawrence Sorgen.

Hunter...continued from page 1

model employee.

“He is an asset to the Department and to the State of Georgia and most importantly a friend to all of us,” McDuffie said. “We celebrate his career now. We will sorely miss Alden when he retires later this year.”

Hunter began his ca-

reer with GDOT in 1980. He began as a maintenance employee and has served in the Maintenance Division his entire career. Hunter worked his way up through the ranks serving in almost every position from equipment operator to Highway Maintenance Foreman to Assistant Area Engineer for

Maintenance. Hunter became the Assistant District Maintenance Engineer last December. Hunter and his staff are responsible for ensuring more than 2,500 miles of interstates and state routes safe and open for motorists to use.

Hunter and his wife Mattie live in Hiawassee.