

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

Who remembers what they got for Christmas last year? I spent a few minutes this morning trying to remember, but my recollection of whatever was wrapped under the Christmas tree in December of 2010 has faded into the ghosts of Christmas past like a pinch of sugar in a cup of coffee, improving the general flavor but no longer distinguishable as a separate entity.

What I do remember about last Christmas is the reflection of Christmas lights on new fallen snow. I remember being stranded at my dad's house with all the dogs sequestered in his basement, the failing washing machine jury-rigged with a garden hose draining under the garage door, my dad just home from the hospital and his healthcare worker trapped by the ice with all the rest of us in our tightly packed, snowed in, close encounter Christmas refuge. I remember how full of life and warmth the house was while the snow fell outside. It was one of the best Christmas seasons ever, but for the life of me I can't remember what was under the tree.

There are a few Christmas gifts that I do remember. I remember my first shotgun when I was about 12 or 13 years old, but that memory is more of an accessory to other holiday memories from that year. I remember that my father got out of bed about 5 AM on Christmas morning and tossed a handful of pebbles onto the tin roof of my grandparents' house — just about the same time that we heard the reindeer taking off. I remember the voices of my grandparents, singing in the kitchen while they made breakfast and the heat from the pot-bellied stove penetrating thick layers of quilts on that snowy morning. The shotgun gathers dust now in a gun safe, but the memories are as bright as a Christmas ornament.

I do remember a gift given one year. It was the first Christmas after my grandfather died and my mother was struggling to come to terms with the loss. I remember how she cried when she opened one of her gifts, a family photo album with pictures of her father and her life growing up in rural Georgia. I remember how her tears turned to laughter and back again as we looked at the old pictures. I remember the empty seat at the table that year.

Christmas has changed in some ways since I was a

child. Our culture has changed with our economy. We borrow. We spend. We consume like no other people in the history of humanity. The forces that tie us together are less our common goals and beliefs and more a popular culture driven by marketing and manipulation. Witness the high speed traffic and the crowds of consumers intent on capturing those great deals to fill the boxes under the tree. Christmas begins now in September and we accept the mandate, the duty, the obligation to shop, almost without question, and if we are unable to spend for the holidays we feel the burden of guilt implied in the flood of images of happy people pushing overflowing shopping carts.

Yet for all the hype, the stress, the intensively researched methods of attaching our wallets to our primal impulses in our quest to fulfill our holiday "obligations," the memories of what we buy and what we receive will be torn away and cast aside like the brightly colored wrapping paper that covers the sum of all our efforts. In the end, it is the time we spend with those we love that we will remember and cherish. In that spirit, let me wish all of you a very merry Christmas and a joyful holiday season. May the time you spend with your loved ones this year be a brightly lit ornament that you will cherish for many long years.



"IT'S ON MY MIND.."
Danny
H. Parris

A Living Christmas card

In December of 1969, a woman from the state of Ohio wrote a letter to the postmaster in Nashville, Tennessee. Enclosed was 25 cents, and a strange request. It stated, "will someone in Nashville use this quarter to send me a Christmas card?" This lady lived alone in poverty, had never married, and had no relatives. She had been injured physically and was not able to work. She was an avid country music fan and chose Nashville to ask someone in that city to please send her a card. Christmas is certainly a time of joy, love and peace. But it is one of the loneliest times for much of the world's population. Loneliness is very pronounced in the life of the aged who have outlived most of their relatives. Some of these seniors are separated by long distances from their children and grandchildren. Loneliness grips the hearts of portions of our population who live in large cities where people are sometimes cold and suspicious. A lot of people are poor at making friends and feel desperately alone and isolated during the Christmas season. There are multitudes of wives/husbands who look for love, peace and joy, but are so disappointed. They have dysfunctional families and Christmas only intensifies their problems. The saddest segment of our society is children that are lonely because they are neglected and

abused. The world was no different the night that God sent Jesus into this poor lonely world. In fact, Jesus is God's card of Love sent to let us know that we have a friend that will never leave us and will always love us. God is able to take our loneliness and produce a great work through it. I am reminded of the famous Boston preacher, Phillip Brooks, who had gone to the Holy Land in December 1865. He arrived there very lonely and depressed. His brother had been killed fighting in the Union Army. Phillips had traveled from his pastorate in Philadelphia to the battlefield at Gettysburg where he walked in the aftermath of the carnage trying to minister to the wounded and dying for both the Federal and Confederate Armies. He was disappointed in love and never married. However, he immersed himself, not in pity but in caring for the children of Boston. By the time he reached Bethlehem that December he was terribly despondent. On that Christmas Eve night in 1865, Phillip Brooks attended a five-hour service (from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m.) that made a great impression upon his life. When he returned to America he still had "Palestine singing in his soul." From that experience, three years later he penned the words to O Little Town of Bethlehem. It was sung for the first time on December 27, 1868 by six Sunday school teachers and thirty-six children. The last phrase of the first verse proclaims "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight."

Why don't you make yourself available as a living Christmas card to some lonely person this Christmas season?



Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son.... 1st John 4:10

From the Desk of:



Sheriff
Clinton
of
Towns
County

Holiday safety tips

During the holiday season, busy people intent on trying to complete their Christmas shopping may fall prey to unscrupulous criminals who skulk in mall and shopping center parking lots, doing their "shopping" from the packages placed in parked vehicles. Some foresight and planning can reduce the chances of becoming a victim during a season that should be a joyous and loving celebration.

When shopping, look for the best lit parking spaces. Once in your chosen space, look around before leaving your car. Is there anyone in the vicinity watching you? Do you see anyone loitering? If so, remain in your car and watch them for a moment. If they move on, that's fine, but if not, you might consider moving to a new parking space. If you feel uncertain or unsafe about a situation you observe, take steps to move yourself to a safer location. Don't assume you are being foolish or paranoid.

Once you are in a safer location, lock your vehicle and move quickly and confidently to the store. Would-be thieves and robbers are looking for the easiest targets. If you show that you are aware of what is happening around you and move with a sense of purpose, you are less likely to become a victim. Walk against the flow and traffic.

Keep your head up and scanning—look forward, to the right and left, and even check behind as you walk. Awareness is your greatest defense. Don't search through a purse or bags in the parking lot. If you must look for something, make sure you are in the safety of the store before you become absorbed in your hunt for a tissue, shopping list, or other item.

If you store items in your vehicle, make sure they are covered or concealed. If you are putting bags in your vehicle and returning to shop, move your car from time to time in case someone is watching you.

Finally, if leaving late from a shopping mall or store, don't hesitate to ask a store employee for help. Don't accept the kind offer of the "stranger" who meets you outside the door and offers assistance. It may be a kind and generous offer, but it could also be a ploy to gain access to your belongings.

Be aware, stay safe, and have a joyous and wonderful holiday season!

RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

Q: My son is 10 and he came home from school last week saying he wanted to take piano lessons. He likes to play outside a lot and I was surprised that he wanted to do something that would keep him in the house. What do you think?
A: I think you're very fortunate...he could have said he wanted to play the drums. Or the bagpipes.

Seriously, here's my suggestion on this potentially significant event. Fads come and go with kids. Is this just a fad? Could be an expensive one. So, understanding #1 must be this agreement to stay with it a minimum of six months.

When that's been agreed to, the matter of a piano to practice on can be a major family decision. Do you have one already? Can he use one at school, church, grandma's? Can you rent one temporarily? Like, for six months maybe?

Those decisions out of the way, now the situation gets a bit more dicey. Practice. If he is still interested by this point, it's time to make contact with a piano teacher. Have your budding

young Mozart ask the teacher how much he will be expected to practice each week.

Have the youngster make up a chart with the required time blocks in it, and the time of day. First thing in the morning? Right after school? Before bed? These of course can be moved if it is discovered that a different schedule works better, but the point you're making here is that Dino is signing up for a major commitment, and that making good on that decision will be his responsibility. A helpful discussion at this point can be about what the consequences are if he gets sloppy with his practice sessions. Have him help set the penalties.

One characteristic of a good musician, as with much of life, is self-discipline. Here's a classic opportunity to help your young virtuoso develop his. Cheer him on. Applaud when he barely deserves it. And rejoice — he could have chosen the cymbals.

Send your parenting questions to: DrDon@RareKids.net.

GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE EMAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net. Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc. Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*

Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

- Towns County Water Board Meeting** 3rd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the TC Water Office Building.
- Mountain Community Seniors** meet the second Thursday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 2 p.m.
- Towns County Democratic Party** meets the 3rd Thursday of every month. Please call Kim Bailey at 706-994-2727 or 706-896-6747 for details.
- Towns County Republican Party** meets at 6:30 PM the 2nd Thursday of each month at Daniels Steak House. For more info call 706-379-1371.
- Towns County Planning Commission** is held the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Courthouse.
- Towns County Commissioners** meeting is the 3rd Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in the courthouse.
- School Board Meeting**, 2nd Monday each month at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.
- Hiawassee City Council** 1st Tuesday of month 4 p.m., at City Hall.
- Young Harris City Council**, 1st Tuesday of month at 7 p.m., Young Harris City Hall.
- The Hiawassee River Valley Kennel Club** meetings are held at 7 p.m. the 1st Monday of each month at Brother's Restaurant on Hwy 64 in Murphy, NC. Call President Kit Miracle: 706-492-5253 or Peggy Moorman: 828-835-1082.
- The Unicoy Masonic Lodge #259** meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m.
- Stephens Lodge #414 F & AM** meets the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM in Young Harris.
- Board of Voter Registrars** meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 4:30 p.m., Courthouse.
- Towns County Board of Elections** holds its monthly meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 4 p.m. at the Elections

- Office (Old Rock Jail).
- Towns County Historical Society** meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 5 p.m. Annual dues \$15, PO Box 1182, Hiawassee, GA 706-896-1060, www.townshistory.org
- Bridge Players** intermediate level meets at 12:45 p.m. on Mondays & Fridays at the Towns County Recreational Dept.
- Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild, Inc (MRACG)** meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at ArtWorks Artisan Centre, located at 308 Big Sky Drive (behind the Holiday Inn), Hiawassee. Refreshments at 6 p.m. & the meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Contact us by calling 706-896-0932, mtnregartscraftsguild.org. mtnregartscraftsguild@hotmail.com.
- Mountain Computer User Group** meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the Goolsby Center at YHC. Q & A at 6 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m.
- FPL Retirees Breakfast** will meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Hole in the Wall Restaurant on the square in Blairsville at 9 a.m.
- Chattahoochee-Nantahala Chapter, Trout Unlimited** meets 2nd Thursday of each month at Cadence Bank in Blairsville. 5 p.m. Fly Tying - 7 p.m. General Meeting. Everyone welcome. www.ngatu692.com.
- Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)** meets the 3rd Monday of each month at various area restaurants. For information call John Quinlan at 706-896-2430 or visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridge-mountains.
- Alcoholics Anonymous:** 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.
- Mothers of Preschoolers** meets on the third Thursday of each

- month at First Baptist Church of Blairsville from 6 - 8 p.m. Call the church office at 706-745-2469 for more information.
- Chattage Regional Hospital Auxiliary** on the 3rd Monday of each month, except the months of July, October and December, in the hospital cafeteria at 1:30 p.m.
- Mountain Magic Table Tennis Club** meets 6 p.m. Thursdays at Pine Log Baptist Church Fellowship Hall in Brasstown. Ping Pong players welcome. Call Lee (828) 389-0924.
- We do Family Oral History** of all of our residents. If you have not had your family history recorded and would like to do so, please call the Towns County Historical Society at 706-896-1060.
- Prostate Cancer Support Group** meets the 3rd Monday of every month from 5-6 PM in the Cancer Treatment Center Auditorium in Blairsville. For more info call Steve 706-896-1064.
- GMREC Native Plant Garden Tours:** Mondays 9 AM-1 PM. May-Sept. (except holidays). 706-745-2655.
- The Humane Society Mountain Shelter** Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at Cadence Bank in Blairsville.
- The Towns County Alzheimer's Support Group** meets the first Tuesday of each month at 1:30 PM in the Family Life Center of McConnell Memorial Baptist Church. Caregivers or family members of those with dementia are encouraged to attend. For further information, call Carol at 706-896-6407.
- The Appalachian Shrine Club** meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30 PM at the Allegheny Lodge in Blairsville. For more info call William 706-994-6177.

Towns County Herald

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