

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Traditions

Around Towns
Dale Harmon



A burning question this time of year may well be, Traditions-- Should they ever be tweaked or are they as set as Parliamentary Law? Like everything else traditions had to begin. Be they religious practices, or social or familial customs, traditions were, for the most part, handed down by word of mouth and reinforced by example.

Hank Williams Jr. (also known as Bocephus) sang "Hank, why do you drink? Hank why do you roll smoke? Why must you live out the songs that you wrote? If I'm down in a honky-tonk and some ole slick's trying to give me a friction I'll say leave me alone I'm slogging all night long it's a family tradition". If you listen to all of the song, Family Tradition, you'll learn more traditions probably handed down by example. Being punishable by law.

Some a southern girl, my family ate black eyed peas, which represented coins, and collards (dollars), along with some sort of porcine on New Year's Day. Still do. Tradition demands it.

Something old. Something new. Something borrowed and something blue. Wedding traditions, once sweet, simple and personal are now taking longer to pay for than some marriages endure.

It was not a destination wedding. It was to be held at Sydney's, the bride's, church. The engaged couple had met in college. She was an only child and he had two brothers. The duty of the Maid of Honor, an unmarried woman who attended the bride, began when England was both jolly and olde and class distinction reigned. After World War I, Maid of Honor or now Matron of Honor (married woman) became a designation of love and respect to a woman close to the bride. Sydney's best friend had been so since childhood and just had to be in the wedding party. The fly in the ointment was her BFF is a man. Sydney's betrothed offered groom man's status to her dear friend, which would have eliminated one of his cousins. It was appreciated but didn't seem right to her. An idea had formulated Sydney first consulted her future husband. Together they gathered their parents and the minister who was to perform the ceremony. They wanted no one to be offended or feel disrespected.

On a beautiful, sunny day a group of people entered a church to share the joy of a wedding. Though some guests did not know one another, all knew the bride and groom. Happy tears escaped but not one eyebrow was raised when Sydney turned and handed her bouquet, to receive her ring, to her Bride's Man of Honor.

A brave, loyal woman and two brave, loyal men tweaked tradition with love and respect.
See you around Towns.

Power, Profit and Perpetuity

The Middle Path
By: Don Perry
onthemiddlepath.com

The world, which has always been full of dangers, just got a little bit more dangerous, and for some, it may be a lot more dangerous. While it may be true that the killing of a sworn enemy of the United States with the blood of Americans on his hands is not necessarily a bad thing, there may be unforeseen consequences to this act. When you are stung by a hornet, you may be justified in throwing a rock at the nest, but there might be unforeseen consequences to that act as well. If the nest is in your hayloft, how much hay are you willing to poison to get rid of it? Should you work around it and let the hornets catch all the flies they can? Wait for winter to kill the hornets naturally? Or should you burn down the barn to make sure that no hornet will escape unpunished? Should you burn every barn in order to teach hornets not to sting?

The challenge for us now is that the governments of our world are in the barn business. They make money burning barns down and then they make money building them back. As former British Ambassador, Craig Murray wrote, "There is also a lesson to be learned here in that this morning there will be excitement and satisfaction in the palaces of Washington, Tel Aviv, Riyadh and Tehran.

All of the political elites will see prospects for gain from the new fluidity. While for ordinary people in all those countries there is only the certainty of more conflict, death and economic loss, for the political elite, the arms manufacturers, the military and security services and allied interests, the hedge funds, speculators and oil companies, there are the sweet smells of cash and power."

"Government" is a lot bigger word than it used to be. Not only is it welded to all the agents of cash and power mentioned in the previous paragraph, welded so tightly that you cannot even detect a seam, but it is artfully woven into the fabric of society itself through the financial entities that bring us most of our information. Try to find a major website today without the word "war" prominently displayed. What is different now than in the days of our ancestors, who care belief the prospect of war? For generations of Americans, a core belief in God was the durable fabric of society. It informed our values, our morals, our ethics, and even our legal system. That fabric is tattered and frayed now, replaced by a patchwork of cheap synthetics: political drama, political correctness, social media and the constant companion of celebrity opinions. Such things have always been with us, even before technology amplified them, but Americans once shared core beliefs about what is right and wrong that helped to filter fact from falsehood.

Many of us now possess a worldview that, rather than being informed by faith, family and education, is informed primarily by the information we receive from a handful of corporations firmly bound to a shadow government, soulless golems with superhuman legal rights and possessed of only three goals: power, profit and perpetuity.

In the face of an increasingly dangerous world we stand unsteady, divided and in need of faith perhaps as never before in our lifetimes. Yet we use the gifts of technology to accuse and insult each other, and we are addicted to the drama of it all. Our divisions are encouraged by our politicians, celebrity talkers and "influencers." The angrier and more frightened we are, the more engaged we become with the dialogue, and engagement is profit.

Volumes have been written about the erosion of faith and family in our society. I think I can condense much of the issue into a single paragraph by Buckminster Fuller, who said, "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

When I worked with the victims of gang violence I learned that gangs were successful only because of the demise of the family. Gangs offered structure, a sense of belonging and a companionship that appeared to be a better model than the broken family.

What of the rise of secular, materialistic, pixelated and divided America? Has it made the values of Church and family obsolete?

I don't think so, but we each have to decide for ourselves. Ludwig von Mises said that over time, individuals act in a way that maximizes their own benefit. I spent many years looking for the system of belief that would do that for me and make every other system obsolete. When I first moved to the valley of my ancestors, there was an old man, a follower of Jesus Christ, who befriended me. He continued the education my own grandfather had begun before he died, and over time he became as dear to me as a grandfather. When he died, I was devastated, and it was with much grief that I went to visit his family. It was met by the man's son, who was smiling, rather than grieving. He told me that his father's passing was an occasion for rejoicing. His father had just died, but there he was, comforting me. His model made mine obsolete.

My aunt was also a follower of Jesus Christ. One evening she called us from her nursing home and said that she just wanted to say that she loved us and she wanted us to know that she was going home. We were ready to hop in the car and start driving, but she said no. Simply and sweetly and with a smile in her voice she explained that she had had a good life, that she had done everything that God had given her to do, and that she was ready to go home. We said our goodbyes, and a few hours later she died peacefully in her sleep. Her model made mine obsolete.

I don't know what will eventually heal the divisions now wounding this country. I don't know if the current rattling of sabers is the beginning of another march to war. If we do go to war again, I know for sure that the vast majority of those who would take us there know nothing of war and will not spend a single hour in harm's way.

This is a time when faith and compassion are needed much more than cleverness and vindictiveness, but the left attacks the right which attacks the left, and the pride of identity is elevated above the stability of community. Even the Church at times seems to condemn more than it invites. We have better models, if we can only remember they are there for the choosing. They have always been there.

Radon

UGA extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Radon is an invisible, odorless gas that causes lung cancer. Every 25 minutes someone dies from radon induced lung cancer, making it the second leading cause of lung cancer. During Radon Action Month this January, UGA experts are advising you to test your home for radon gas. I'd like to talk about what this dangerous gas is, how you can find out if you have it, and what you can do to reduce the radon in your house to a safe level.

When uranium, which occurs naturally in Georgia soil and rock, breaks down, it produces radon gas. Radon is a heavy gas which seeps into homes from the ground and concentrates in the lower levels of a house. Radon can be present in any home, regardless of the age or type of home. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that about 6.7% of homes nationwide have elevated levels of radon gas; however, in some counties the levels are higher. Homes in north Georgia can have high levels of radon. In Union County, between March 2003 and July 2017, about 46.5% of the homes tested had elevated levels of radon. In Towns County it was 33.1%. An elevated level of radon is anything at, or above, 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L). Being exposed to a level of 4 pCi/L has similar health effects as smoking 8 cigarettes per day.

The only way to know if your home has a high level of radon is to test for radon. Radon test kits are available from several sources, including local retailers, the Extension Office, and by ordering online at www.UGARadon.org. Purchasing a kit from the Extension office costs \$10.

If the radon level in your house is high, it is important to install a radon reduction (or radon mitigation) system will reduce high levels of indoor radon to acceptable levels. The system most commonly used is a vent pipe system, which includes a fan that pulls radon from beneath the house and vents it to the outside.

Just because your neighbor has had a negative radon test does not mean that your house isn't affected. Also, if your neighbor has had a positive test it doesn't mean that you have radon in your home. It is advisable to test your own home. Experts usually advise that you have your home tested regularly to make sure that radon levels are low.

Radon will also be found in drinking water. This is primarily a concern for individuals whose drinking water comes from private wells. In Georgia, wells drilled into granitic crystalline rock aquifers (pretty common for wells around here), are at risk of naturally occurring radon contamination. This is where the uranium that decays to radon can be found at higher levels. If you don't know if there is radon in your well water, have the water tested. The UGA Agricultural and Environmental Services Laboratories in Athens tests water samples for the presence of radon. To get a water testing kit, contact your local Extension Office. Testing for radon in water costs \$40. For more information on radon, visit www.ugaradon.org. Radon can be a serious concern in our area. It's best to be tested to know if you have dangerous levels in your home.

If you have questions about radon contact you County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. We also host a Radon Awareness program each year, so be on the lookout for that.

Letters to The Editor

A Year of Hope Ahead for Climate Change

Dear Editor,

We now have a new year and a chance to really do something about climate change. Public opinion polls now show that most Americans want this to happen, and solar and wind energy plus storage are almost as cheap as fossil fuels. With technology rapidly advancing, this will only improve. I believe we all want clean air and to avoid all the health hazards of burning fossil fuels and that we want a planet that will provide a good life for future generations.

Numerous studies have shown that converting to clean energy produces savings that amount to 2-5 times the cost of the conversion. Simple conservative policies like a carbon fee and dividend plan can decrease greenhouse gases by up to 90% while growing our economy and putting more real spendable income into most American's pocketbook. Will this be the year we finally act?

Vernon Dixon

Community Collaboration

Dear Editor,

Kudos to Towns County High School students and the Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge-Hiawassee in the conversion of an old phone booth into a free library located on the Hiawassee Town Square!! What a great idea!

The students did a terrific job of transforming the space into a useful and beneficial little library for adults and children alike. It is a special treat for children to choose a book and know that they can keep it if they would like to do so.

My husband and I have been adding books to the shelves and are gratified to see that the free library is being utilized the way the students and Rotary members envisioned. This is community collaboration at its best!

Linda and Jim Worl

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 E-MAILED 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 Community Calendar

Bridge Players	Every Monday: All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Every Tuesday: Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Sharp UMC (Men)	7 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Every Wednesday: Hiawassee UMC	Noon
Bridge Players	Every Thursday: All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Movers & Shakers	Every Friday: Sundance Grill	8 am
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Every Sunday: Red Cross Building	7 pm
Chamber Board	Second Monday of each month: 1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
VFW	VFW Post	5 pm
Historical Society	Hist. Soc. Bldg.	6 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unico Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
Conv./Vis. Bureau	Second Tuesday of each month: Civic Center	8 am
Gem & Mineral Club	Senior Center	1:30 pm
Arts & Crafts Guild	Calvary Church	4 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Mtn. Coin Club	N. GA Tech	6 pm
Basket Weavers	Second Wednesday of each month: SC Fire Hall	10 am
USCG Aux.	Senior Center	7 pm
Hiaw Writers	Second Thursday of each month: Hiaw Pk. Comm. Rm.	10:30
Awake America Prayer	Civic Center	Noon
Mtn. Comm. Seniors	Senior Center	1 pm
Democratic Party	Civic Center	6 pm

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Towns County Herald

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