

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Battle of the Bulge

As you read the following "next to first person history", understand that those young men were just as scared as you or I would have been. Understand that they were well aware that they may never come home. But most importantly, understand that they, like so very many of our men and women who serve our nation, are acutely aware that something immensely greater than themselves was/is at stake, therefore they selflessly serve and sacrifice.

The Veterans' Corner
 Scott Drummond
 USCG Veteran



We were fortunate to have lifelong friends Perry and Betty Bruce as visitors to our home during the Christmas holidays. I happened to mention that I'd recently seen a movie, "Fury" which reminded me of Perry's Dad. Here is the end result of that conversation, a true story, one of hundreds of thousands of our Greatest Generation. All of our men and women, who have faced peril, danger, hunger, filth or any other unimaginable conditions honorably, deserve the respect and love that those heroes who never came back paid for with their lives. They did not know us, yet they blessed us with our freedoms. Never forget.

Leonard L. Bruce, a farm boy from Buford, Georgia, was drafted into the United States Army. He went through basic training at Fort Benning. Upon completion, he was shipped to England, for the massive D-Day invasion. Dad was assigned to a Sherman tank unit. George Patton's Third Army, Armored Division Spearhead Doughboys. In England they practiced shooting light armored personnel carriers, captured in African desert. The Sherman's main gun 75mm, could easily penetrate this light armor, and was a great moral booster. Unfortunately the Tiger and the Panzer tanks they were about to encounter, had much thicker armor and much more powerful main guns. Later, captured German tank commanders referred to our Sherman tanks as, "Tommy Toasters", because they used gasoline for fuel, which was easily ignited.

When 101st Airborne was surrounded in the Battle of the Bulge, Patton's Tanks were called to support them. In the Battle of the Bulge approximately 75,000 GIs were killed, captured, or wounded. In that battle my father's tank was hit by a German tank. Two of the men were killed in the blast. My father and one other escaped through the hatches, but both were hit by machine gun fire, from an MG42 mounted on the enemy tank. My dad was grazed on the left forearm, and shot completely through the left shoulder. His tank brother was grazed across the forehead, and lost vision. They escaped by holding on to each other, and using the smoke from their burning tank for cover. Dad was sent to England to recover. When able to carry a weapon he was sent back to battle in the 36th Infantry Division, as a Corporal. His job was to help new recruits stay alive for 3-5 days, a very critical time for a new man.

Thanks for hearing my father's story,
Perry Bruce

Semper Paratus

Commitment

The making and keeping of commitments is a basic requirement for a civil society. Civilization falls apart when people stop keeping promises.

On a personal level, keeping commitments is necessary for self-esteem. In addition to keeping the promises we make to others, we need to keep the promises we make to ourselves, like sticking to that diet, or getting up an hour earlier to work out.

We're not suggesting that commitment has completely disappeared. Every day of the week millions of people show up for work on time. But in a nation led by a proprietary investment of celebrity and corporatism with the power to choose our future, the making and keeping of commitments does not seem as important, or stylish as it once was.

Greed, and the monetization of human life might offer a partial explanation. The prevalence of inferior products sold to consumers, from pharmaceutical drugs to cheap appliances, speaks volumes on the ascendancy of profit over integrity.

The replacement of religion and spirituality by secular relativism also contributes to an "anything goes" attitude. What is a commitment when there is no right or wrong? When truth is dependent on context? "I never promised that! You must have misunderstood me!"

Let's bring the issue home with a story to which I understand many of you can relate.

Recently we began searching for a contractor to help us with a home improvement project after we reached the limits of our amateur ability.

We have some of the best artisans you could hope to find in our area - and some that are not the best. The building economy here has improved somewhat in the last couple of years. It's nothing like the glory days before the crash in '08, but it's better than it was.

Therefore we were hopeful we could find someone to help us out, and prepared to wait until our job could be scheduled. We began by calling potential contractors with numbers collected from bulletin boards, internet ads and personal referrals. We had a long list of numbers in the beginning, about twenty five all together.

Of the twenty five contacts we started with, about five did not answer their phones (and a business that will not answer the phone will not be a business for long). We eventually spoke with about twenty different people over a period of four weeks.

Of that twenty, four told us up front that they were currently too busy, but they would like to be considered for future projects. Three said that they didn't do the kind of work we needed. Fair enough.

Of the remaining thirteen, seven did not call back after our initial conversation. That left six contractors who actually followed up. Two of those "went dark" and stopped returning calls or emails.

Of the original twenty five contacts, we were left with only four who agreed to submit a bid for our job. Two of those failed to show up for an appointment, and they both "went dark" as well.

The remaining two actually came out to do an estimate. One of those missed his deadline for turning in a bid, asked for a few more days, and then missed that deadline too.

The last man standing answered every call, replied to every email, showed up on time and turned in his bid on time. He kept every commitment he made. Guess who got the job.

The contractor we hired told us "You would be surprised at the number of jobs we get simply because a lot of contractors won't return phone calls. I mean, how long does it take to pick up the phone and say 'yes or no' or 'not now but I can do it later?'"

Speaking now as a former contractor, a word to the wise for the next generation of artisans, and to a few veterans who seem to have forgotten the basics. When you are self-employed, working in our area can be feast or famine. It's frustrating when you have committed to a small job and a bigger opportunity comes along, but the bills need to be paid, so you do what you have to do and you take the second job.

It's easy to become over-committed trying to juggle all your obligations, and if you spread yourself too thin, the quality of your work suffers. At some point, you have more commitments than you have time.

This is the point where accountability comes into play. You need to let your customers know what's going on, and somebody is going to be disappointed. Unfortunately, it seems that some of you believe that it's better to say nothing to a customer than to say "no," as if by ignoring that customer the opportunity to do the job will somehow be preserved for the future.

This is magical thinking. The worst thing you can do in customer relations is to ignore the customer. The second worst thing you can do is to make a commitment and then fail to keep it. Communication, however, will often bring forgiveness. Most people are reasonable when you explain why you're not available or why the job is taking longer than anticipated. But if you ignore your customers or leave them hanging, they will not forget it, because they all know that in the age of information there is no excuse for failing to communicate.

When you have all the work you want, it's easy to assume that you will always be busy, or that you can afford to disregard your customers from time to time because you can always get more work. This is a fantasy. Reputation and trust is vital to building a successful business, and our area is small enough that everything you do that affects your reputation will be magnified.

In a perfect world, you would keep your commitments because it's the right thing to do, but if you have rationalized your way around that, nothing we can say will change your mind.

Consider this, however: People will always reason that the inability to keep the small commitments, like returning phone calls and emails and getting bids in on time, is a sign that you will be unable to keep the big ones. If you won't keep your commitments for the sake of honor, consider keeping them for the sake of your own self-interest.

The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

Crape Myrtle Care

Crape Myrtles are a staple of Southern landscaping, but there are many myths out there about how you should care for them. The real keys to success with crape myrtles are providing adequate sunlight, maintaining the desired soil pH, good drainage, proper pruning, fertilization, mulching to control weeds, and insect control as needed.

Crape myrtles always require full sun for at least eight hours or more per day to be healthy and have beautiful blooms. If they do not receive adequate sunlight, they will not bloom or grow to their fullest potential. Always be familiar with the sun patterns in your yard before planting crape myrtles.

These trees love our Georgia clay because they thrive in slightly acidic soils with a pH of about 6 to 6.5. It is important to maintain this pH because if it is too high or too low, the plant will not use fertilizer properly and your crape myrtle will never reach their full potential. If you are thinking about planting crape myrtles, or have already done so and they seem to be struggling, test your soil to see what the pH is and what nutrients are currently available for the plant.

Late winter is the perfect time to prune crape myrtles. However, contrary to popular belief, they do not all need to be pruned every year. Though it is believed that they should be completely cut back to the main trunk, or "topped," every year, this is not best for the plant. It is so dramatic and stressful that many call this method "crape murder." It can lead to thick, unsightly joints between branches and diminish the natural beauty of the plant. Crape myrtle trees should be pruned so they maintain their natural shape by thinning out branches that cross or rub against each other. This keeps the canopy open to maximize the amount of sunlight that accesses the plant and allows for adequate air movement.

Early spring is the best time to fertilize crape myrtles to maximize their growth and blooms. Fertilizers such as 10-10-10, 12-4-8 or 16-4-8 are acceptable for crape myrtles, but soil testing is always recommended to make sure that the appropriate amounts of fertilizer are added. Over-fertilizing trees will cause excess growth and a reduced number of blooms on each tree.

Mulching crape myrtles after planting conserves moisture, reduces weeds and insulates roots against extreme temperatures. The mulch layer should be about three to five inches deep around the tree, and the mulch area should be much larger than the planting hole is to protect the roots as they grow.

Insect damage is a frequent problem on crape myrtles, especially aphids. In severe infestations, aphids will secrete honeydew onto leaves that can lead to sooty mold, a black discoloration that can occur in the summer and fall. This honeydew can also attract ants.

Sooty mold usually causes little damage, but it can reduce the plant's vigor and look unsightly. Insect resistant crape myrtle varieties are available if this is a consistent problem. Always follow pesticide label instructions carefully, and spray late in the day when bees are not active. Crape myrtles are important food sources and habitats for important pollinators, so it is important to disturb these creatures as little as possible.

UGA extension
 From the Ground Up
 Melissa Mattee



Letters to The Editor

Tax Reform

Dear Editor,
 In November 2016, I said that Americans had grown weary of the road that they'd walked for eight years under hollow leadership. This November, we saw the difference between the struggle behind us and the hope before us when Republicans in the House of Representatives introduced the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. With the president's signature, conservative tax reform became the law of our land this December. America's unified Republican government has kept its promise to inject fairness, simplicity and common sense into a broken tax code, and the new system took effect on New Year's Day. At its core, tax reform means that workers from Sky Valley to Big Canoe see the difference in their paychecks. In northeast Georgia, a family of four will see their annual income tax burden fall by \$2,080 under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

The fact that some lawmakers have fought furiously to deny working Americans such historic tax relief reveals how committed they are to centralizing power and money in Washington. But I believe their confidence in big government comes at the expense of industrious Americans. The IRS has been the pit bull of federal bureaucrats for too long, but the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act puts Fido on a much shorter leash by lowering income tax brackets across the board. Conservative tax reform means that my neighbors in Hiawassee will see more money in their paychecks as their federal withholding decreases and as companies like AT&T and Boeing invest more in their employees in response to a smarter tax system. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act also means that Washington is more accountable to everyday citizens. Before now, taxpayers looking toward April 15 faced a cyclone of confusing itemization rules. To make the filing process simple and more transparent, we've doubled the standard deduction from \$12,700 to \$24,000 for families and \$6,350 to \$12,000 for individuals.

Roughly 30 percent of filers in Georgia's Ninth District itemize their taxes, and, moving forward, nearly nine out of ten of them will have the option of coming out ahead by filling out their taxes on a postcard.

Already, we're seeing productivity encouraged and rewarded once again. Leadership at Yancey Bros. Co., a Georgia company with a presence in Jefferson, is giving each of their employees a \$500 bonus because of the benefits our tax reform package will bring to local business communities. For too long, America's corporate rate effectively subsidized the economies of other nations by driving production overseas, where corporate tax rates are less absurd. By lowering the corporate tax rate from 35% to 21%, we're rehabilitating one of the worst tax systems in the industrialized world so that it serves our citizens again.

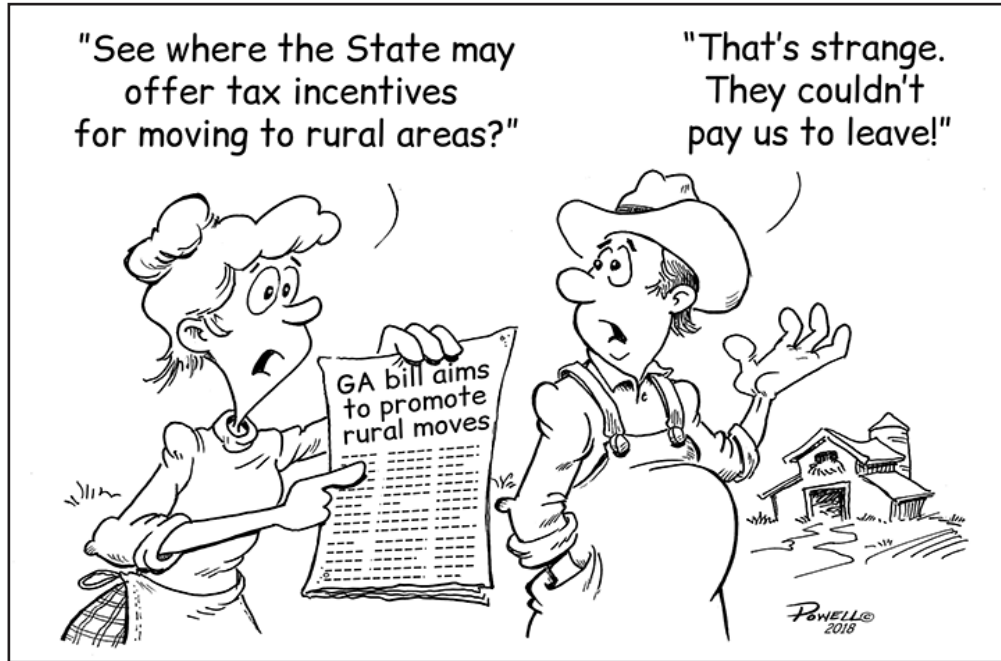
By allowing businesses to see more return on their investment in America, we finally make room for the economy to expand, to the benefit of all Americans. History bears this out. The Obama Administration attempted to manufacture growth by shelling out taxpayer money. As a result, Obama's presidency is the first on record not to have a single calendar year with a 3% rise in GDP.

The primary need of Georgia's farms, families, small businesses and entrepreneurs is to be unshackled from policies that have proven toxic to growth and liberty. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act does that in partnership with regulatory reform initiatives like the REINS Act, which I introduced - and President Trump supports - to make it harder for federal agencies to implement costly programs without approval from Congress and the president. Together, the president, House and Senate have reinvented a faulty tax system and complemented it with a deregulatory agenda that further peels big government off the back of the little guy.

We've been faithful to keep these promises because we have faith in our neighbors, the people who have always made America great and who deserve to keep more of their own money to pour into their own dreams - starting now.

U.S. Representative Doug Collins

Ninth District of Georgia



Towns County Community Calendar

	Every Monday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
	Every Tuesday:	
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Wednesday	
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Thursday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Friday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Sunday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Second Monday of each month:	
Chamber Board	1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
Historical Society	Old Rec. Center	5:30 pm
Mtn. Comp. Users	www.mcug.org	6 pm
Planning Comm.	Civic Center	7 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoy Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
	Second Tuesday of each month:	
Caregiver support	Brasstown Manor	3 pm
Arts & Crafts Guild	Mtn. Regional Library	4 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Mtn. Coin Club	N. GA Tech	6 pm
	Second Wednesday of each month:	
Basket Weavers	SC Fire Hall	10 am
Board of Elections	67 Lakeview Cir., Ste. A	4 pm
	Second Thursday of each month:	
CVB Board	Rec Center	9 am
Awake America Prayer	Civic Center	Noon
Mtn. Comm. Seniors	Senior Center	1 pm
	Third Monday of each month:	
Hospital Auxiliary	Cafeteria	1:30 pm
Water Board	Water Office	6 pm
	Third Tuesday of each month:	
YH Plan Comm.	YH City Hall	5 pm
Co. Comm. Mtg	Courthouse	5:30 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.	Blairsville store	5:30 pm
	Third Wednesday of each month:	
Quilting Bee	McCConnell Church	10 am
MOAA	Call Jack @ 828-321-2896	

Towns County Herald

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