

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Answer to the Prayers

Back in 2019 I published a column reflecting upon our "Four Chaplains" aboard the Dorchester which was torpedoed and sunk in 1943 by a NAZI U-boat. These examples of REAL Americanism and worship of our Creator lived up to their beliefs by giving up their life-jackets so that others may live and praying to our God. You may find these columns in the TCH archives.



The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran

Here's a little known, overlooked back story about another example of what we Coasties are and have always been about. Charles David Jr., a black low-ranked Coast Guardsman came from a Caribbean immigrant family, circa early 1900s. His father taught him his skills, building pews for a local church. Charles wanted to serve America, now his homeland in the military. No one but our USCG would have him, providing he could otherwise qualify. He was hoping that at least he may become a cook. As it turned out he was the fifth lowest ranked man aboard the USCG Comanche on the night the Dorchester was sunk. Although Charles had no obligation to do so and was advised to NOT jump into the freezing cold Atlantic waters, he did so repeatedly anyway. He risked his own life and well being to save others. This is what all those who Honorably serve America in any branch of our military do. Combat, non-combat or anywhere on planet earth where they may be serving. Charles David died from pneumonia within a month after his prolonged exposure to freezing water and hypothermia. His granddaughter was asked to describe why her grand dad, a least likely hero committed such an action. She stated, "You know, I always felt that while the Chaplains were on that boat praying, that God sent my grandfather as an answer to those prayers." US Coast Guardsman David Charles, Jr. and his brother Coasties of the escort, Comanche rescued 93 of those 227 survivors. He was posthumously awarded the Navy and Marine Corps medal for heroism. And in 2013 the Coast Guard named a new Sentinel-class cutter for David. If your interest is piqued then look for the 2021 book, "THE IMMORTALS" by Steven Collis.

The week of this newspaper's publication, on February 3rd, American Legion posts across our Sovereign Republic will observe Four Chaplains Day, Honoring George L. Fox, Methodist; Alexander D. Goode, Jewish; Clark V. Poling, Reformed; and John P. Washington, Catholic who gave up their life-jackets so others may live. Don't forget about USCG hero, Charles David, Jr. and the thousands of other military servicemen and women who sacrificed so much up to and including their lives for ALL OF US!

Semper Paratus

Letters to The Editor

A One-Horse Race

Dear Editor,
Which came first, apathy or complacency? Voting is not just a hard-earned right, it is also a duty. Living in the land of the free, home of the brave and lounge chair of the lazy, rights and duties can be honored and practiced or ignored and shirked with no reprisal. God bless America. This is not about voting rights or political party policies. I have been flummoxed to see that the ballots on the last few local elections have been peppered with the word, unopposed. I have friends to whom I'd willingly give a bone marrow transplant, but would not give a vote in a political campaign. Realizing my lack of aptitude and temperament, I could never seek public office. I have cast votes for friends whom I knew would consider the benefit and well being of those they serve over their own agendas or the fear of losing votes. I knew too, that we would not always agree but that integrity and remaining civil would not waiver. For the same reasons, I've voted favorably for people with whom I share no friendship.

Running for public office in The City of Hiawassee and Towns County requires that one be at least 18 years of age, a registered voter, meet residency designations, and pay a meager running fee. With no opposition, the candidate menu may grow stale and the roads rutted. In a One-Horse Race with no incentive to run faster, a once dashing steed may become lackadaisical and develop a gait between slow to standing-still. Being the only candidate does not indicate being the best. Of course, it does not mean the worst either. Have you ever been intrigued by the thought of serving in an elected capacity?
Dale Harmon

Bidenflation? No!

Dear Editor,
There have been a number of letters/comments here and elsewhere blaming President Joe Biden for the continuing rise in gasoline prices. We should look at the facts here regarding this instead of knee-jerk reactions and just passing on more Fox News lies. 1. OPEC has been withholding supplies in order to increase their revenues. 2. U.S. oil production has been dramatically lower due to COVID-19. 3. The harsh winter has been tough on refinery production. 4. Supply and demand always rule pricing, not the proclamations and posturing of politicians.

These facts are presented from sources such as gasbuddy.com, msn.com, AAA gas prices, Reuters, Forbes, Wall Street Journal, the Energy Information Administration, oilprice.com. Fox News and Facebook are not reliable sources of FACTS. They are sources of lies, misinformation and propaganda.

I have not presented these facts to defend Biden and the Democratic Party, as I am not a believer in either the Democratic nor Republican parties. I do believe in facts and reality. If these price increases were due to Biden, then why have prices in Europe more than doubled? Does Biden have control of prices in Europe? Investigate facts at multiple sources, people, not at Fox News and Facebook.
Jim Grazis

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Mixed Signals (Part I)

Being celebrity illiterate, I've never listened to Joe Rogan. I had to look him up on Wikipedia for context on the latest left and right virtue signal playground fight involving Joe and some other celebrities.

I prefer to remain more or less culturally illiterate when it comes to celebrity. That, and my general lack of interest in team sports rather limits my participation in much of the conversation at social gatherings, but if you want to talk about history or science, farming, finance, firearms, genealogy, GPU's, recipes or books, I'm your Huckleberry.

Speaking of books, there has been abundant virtue signaling from both sides of the political divide around the movement promoted by a Texas state legislator to remove a number of titles from school libraries. Let's get right to it. Generally speaking, book banning is...unwise. To be fully educated, and to make better decisions, we need all the information, not just the information with which we agree.

OK, so why not allow books about, say...improvised explosives in school libraries? Because some information, even in a free society, is dangerous. Well then, who gets to decide? That's a tough question. My answer, in a perfect world, would be that the parents, working through their local school systems, would decide, and my hope would be that the people deciding had read all the books and not just the ones they found agreeable.

Of course, it's not a perfect world, and that's where the rubber meets the road. Generally speaking, our political divide separates people who want imperial Washington to decide for everyone, from those who prefer that power be distributed more locally. It's an argument as old as the nation.

Curiously, it seems that many of the folks getting excited about Texas are unconcerned that "book banning" has been ongoing for years. Many school systems and individual educators have taken it upon themselves to declare that much of the core history and culture of the United States is bad, i.e., racist, sexist, homophobic or guilty of pronoun or other forms of thought-crime. Any book that provides a window into the dark ages before we became so enlightened, is at risk. Someone has decided that it is better to be ignorant than to be offended.

Corporate America is, in large part, on board with this kind of thinking, as are the extremes of the Coke and Pepsi national political parties. Being offended has become the ultimate and definitive signal of virtue in in some circles, and as a result of that, we now have competing lists on the left and right of books that need to be banned, and both sides don't seem to understand how dumb that is.

Getting back to the Joe Rogan issue, virtual virtue is gushing around the virtuous self-sacrifice of millionaire musician, Neil Young. I didn't have to look Neil up on Wikipedia, but I was somewhat amused to hear about his involvement in another kind of "book burning." It seems that Neil is offended by Joe Rogan's opinions, and he told Spotify that if they allowed anyone to hear those opinions on their platform, he would take his toys and go home. And so, he did.

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
P.O. 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.

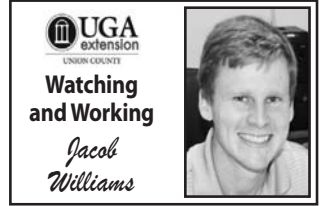
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Controlling Invasive Plants

Let's talk about some invasive species that are problematic in the mountains. I'll cover Nepalese browntop (Japanese stiltgrass), privet, kudzu, and autumn olive.



Watching and Working
Jacob Williams

Let's start with the Japanese stiltgrass. This is on the only annual that I chose, so its control will be a bit different. Japanese stiltgrass looks like a miniature bamboo. It has alternate leaves. It can grow up to 2 feet tall. It likes to grow in shaded areas, so it can grow in shaded lawns and in forests. Japanese stiltgrass will put on seedheads during the fall. The seeds are small, light colored, and sticky. Controlling it can be very challenging. In lawns, herbicides or hand pulling can be done. A pre-emergent herbicide that is also effective against crabgrass will prevent it from germinating. A product with the active ingredient prodiamine will work. Japanese stiltgrass germinates earlier than crabgrass so the application would need to be done in early march. In forested areas there are no herbicides labelled for use. That means that you will have to either hand pull or cut it back in the fall before it goes to seed. Most likely, there is already seed stored in the soil; therefore, you will need to cut it back several years in a row to deplete the soil seed bank.

Chinese privet can be identified in the fall by the BB sized fruits hanging on it. Chinese privet starts out as a bush that can grow to be over 20 feet tall, if left unchecked. The leaves on it are glossy, oval shaped, and a little bigger than a quarter.

Most people know what kudzu looks like. It is a vine that is capable of covering entire trees. Kudzu leaves are trifoliate which means they come in threes. They also have purple flowers, but can be hard to find because they're hidden behind the leaves. As members of the legume family they have hairy pods.

Autumn olive is a bush that that can get up to about 15 feet high. Their leaves are a silvery white color on the bottom. They put on a red fruit that has gray specks on it. The fruit is edible and is spread by birds and other wildlife.

Tactics for controlling perennial plants are different from annuals. Cutting them back is an option, but these plants will keep growing back from their roots. It would take several years of cutting back regrowth to eliminate invasive perennials. Hand pulling can be done while the plants are still small, but you need to remove the entire root system.

Herbicides are usually the most effective way of controlling perennial invasive plants. Even with herbicides, it will take a couple of seasons to get full control. For perennials, you should apply herbicides in the fall. During the fall perennials are moving as many carbohydrates and energy down into their roots as possible. Therefore, if you apply a systemic herbicide the plant will also move the herbicide down into the roots, making the herbicide more effective. As always, whenever you use an herbicide read and follow the label.

A lot of the invasive species that we have started out as ornamentals. Bradford pear is a good example of that. It's an ornamental that lots of people planted in their yards and on median. However, it has started to spread into the wild.

If you have questions about identifying or controlling invasive weeds contact your county Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Volunteers

2022 is well underway and New Year Resolutions are still going strong. Amidst the new year excitement and to do lists, we did some calculating and configuring to determine the productivity of this past year and then set goals to improve.

Our first goal here at Habitat for Humanity, is to be community focused on everything we do. To bring about positive change, we need to know where we've started, and how far we've come. We ask for eager involvement in our mission of making sure everyone has a decent place to live, while also striving to build a better community.

Our volunteers are at the pulse of this mission statement, without them we wouldn't be able to raise funds efficiently or build homes effectively. Our volunteers are asked to log the hours that they volunteer with us, for home applicant qualifications, and for a checks and balance. This past year we averaged our volunteers having over 1,352 total hours logged among our volunteers.

Our volunteers have the choice of working with us in the Habitat ReStore or on Helping Hands projects as the needs arise. Whether someone wants to volunteer three hours a week or three hours everyday we are flexible and eager for the help and extra skills our volunteers bring to Habitat. We also offer community service for select candidates that are looking to fulfill their volunteer hours.

Diane Klinger volunteers at Habitat and worked an average of 359 hours here at Habitat for Humanity for this past year alone. Diane is so much fun to work with, she is eager to join in on new projects we have, and she loves searching the ReStore for hats, silly hats, conventional hats, ball caps you name it. When asked what her favorite thing about volunteering at Habitat for Humanity was, she said, "Interacting with other volunteers, employees and customers makes volunteering so fun! I love knowing that the projects I work on benefits Habitat which then benefits our community."

Carol Andrews also volunteers with us at Habitat. Carol is going on her second-year volunteering here. Carol is always willing to come in whenever we need a helping hand, she is so much fun to be around, and always has ideas to make the ReStore better. When asked what made her decide to volunteer at Habitat for Humanity she responded, "It was my desire to give back to the community and habitat was the perfect fit. The team comradery was what sealed the deal. It makes you feel good to be involved with a worthy cause."

Their time means something to us, and we are so thankful for the hard work they put in, the dedication they have to our customers, and their smiling faces. We have truly built a family with our volunteers and employees as we all work towards the common goal of benefitting our community. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please stop by the ReStore and fill out an information form, then feel free to volunteer whenever you can!



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