

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## American Legion Centennial

On March 16th we are going to celebrate the American Legion's 100th anniversary. We will have (free) hotdogs with all the trimmings, HAPPY HOUR--1/2 PRICE BAR from 4-6 p.m. All the American Legion family are invited, as well as non-member VETERANS. We would love for all Veterans who are inactive members of any of our VSOs to attend to see what you may want to be a part of. If you are a Veteran who has never considered becoming a part of our American Legion family please attend so ya'll come and celebrate, and stick around for the karaoke at 7. If you are a VFW member you are also invited to join our American Legion family. Per American Legion Post #23 Commander John Harkins

**The Veterans' Corner**  
**Scott Drummond**  
 USCG Veteran



March, 2019 our American Legion will be 100 years old! Now would be a perfect time to join, renew your dusty old membership, or transfer your membership from other posts to here. We NEED you! This cannot be over emphasized!  
 In Towns County, GA we are a part of VFW Post 7807 also shared with the following Veterans associations: VFW post #7807; American Legion Riders (recently chartered as an outstanding group of individuals who do great things for our communities, veterans, and bereaved loved ones.); SAL (Sons of American Legion), for those who are family of Veterans, but never served in uniform; American Legion Auxiliary, previously "ladies auxiliary"; VFW Auxiliary; and Marine Corps League.

Our post information: Post Address: P.O. Box 927, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Post Telephone: 706.896.8387 Post Email: vfw7807@gmail.com Hours: Monday through Friday 1500 - 2000. Saturday 1500 - 2400. Sunday 1200 - 1800 we invite you to come by and join! If there is no one there to answer your questions on any of the aforementioned organizations, we'll find someone. Applications are there to be handed out for potential members or those who wish to transfer their membership from prior home towns. Websites for your research: www.legion.org/; www.members.legion.org/CGI-BIN/lansaweb?wam=MYSINTRO&webtrn=WR\_SalIntro&ml=LANSAXHTML&part=TAL&lang=ENG; www.legion.org/auxiliary.

Our Veterans organization members work together; we are like a family, undertaking various and sundry community services and projects. We do simple things such as road cleanup alongside church groups and other community clubs and businesses. . . Even us older folks, many with arthritis and other health conditions may work slower than we used to but we "git 'er done!"

"Older" is a fact, therefore our Veterans organizations today need younger Veterans, recently discharged from any of our branches of armed services. The age bracket of Veterans active in our clubs today are of the Vietnam War Era, age 70 being just about average.

A great fellowship is in the offering, along with plenty of officer positions which need filling. We love to hear younger folk's stories, and how things have changed and how many are still the same.

Let's do our part as Veterans to keep our All American spirit alive for the future of our communities and our homeland, our USA! We've already done the hard part.

*Semper Paratus*

## Just Sayin'

As we've discussed here often, one of the secrets to having a good life is the ability to curate. We choose, as much as possible, the elements we allow in our physical and mental space. Our success varies.

With this in mind I recently decided to curate my experience of information with extreme prejudice. This is something I do periodically, and more frequently as time goes by. The thing I seek to manage we sometimes refer to as "mass media," but we struggle to find a fitting term for something that is ubiquitous and difficult to escape. Nevertheless, I was determined to severely limit my exposure to news of all kinds, commercials, websites, opinions and social media.

The power of the human psyche to adapt is remarkable. Our younging media consumers have no idea that the information inundating their daily lives is a howling wilderness compared to the early days of the information age and the time before that.

We long ago accepted that the price we pay for entertainment includes the time we spend enduring ads and commercials, and that includes all those websites dressed up like news providers. We don't begrudge these efforts to pay the bills. But what we often forget is the sophisticated science that informs the manipulative power of the ads.

To some degree we all carry within us an empty space of want and need, unfulfilled desires and unrealized dreams. Religion, spirituality and Faith have been trying to teach us for centuries how to fill that void, but in a culture where the secular and the carnal is paramount, we are losing the knowledge and the ability.

Ads are designed to tap into that void, to create need where none existed before, and the longer and more frequent our exposure, the more habitual our behavior becomes as we "eat" to satisfy the "hunger." Our needful economy depends on constant and ever growing consumption, and we are conditioned to follow the fashionable and the viral.

Our job as curators would be difficult enough if manipulative marketing was the only contaminant in our flow of information, but there are elements even more toxic to our peace of mind. Politics and propaganda have polluted the river in concentrations that threaten the very survival of our civil society.

Elections never end now, and the two dominant tribes of red and blue are more than willing to tear the country apart in order to gain and regain power.

Unfortunately, we are helping them do it. Someone red speaks; someone blue tweets and someone is offended. Someone else slams, attacks, destroys, calls out, and stuns and we comment and repost, and it all happens in a phantom world of pixels. The sun is shining, the green shoots of spring are emerging from the cold ground and the birds are singing, but we are angry because someone whom we've never met, and never will meet, said or typed something.

You might be surprised at how quickly anger fades and hunger diminishes when they are not being artificially stimulated by mass media. You might also be quite surprised at how addicted you have become if you decide to abruptly cut off your exposure to Facebook and Twitter, to close the laptop or turn off the television. I challenge you to resolve to try it for a day and take note of your reactions. Notice how quickly you can rationalize a retreat from your resolution. You may not be able to cut off the flow cold turkey the first time you try it. Don't despair if you can't. A lot of study has gone into getting you hooked on pixels.

I should be more proactive in my own efforts to curate. They tend to occur at moments of frustration or disgust which could be altogether avoided if I was more vigilant, but like many of you, my business interests require a constant gathering of information, and there are many road hazards on the information highway.

It was a productive vacation, this brief departure from media. Work was easier and sleep was sounder. A few more books got read that had been collecting dust. Several projects which had been put on the back burner got some much needed attention.

Returning once again to the flow, I found the nation right where I left it, a land once known as a melting pot now defined and divided by our insufferable identities. I hear "diversity and inclusion" but I see instead a kind of Balkanization.

It's more than a little embarrassing to watch our elected leaders performing playground rituals of he said, she said and indulging in name calling. Oh, and the victims, the racists, the bigots, the anti Semites and the Islamophobes. "I know you are, but what am I?" The posturing, the recriminations, the spin, all packaged up in tweets and sound bytes ready to be propagated into the echo chambers.

But you know, another technique for curating our experience is to shift our perspective just enough to see the humor, and once we learn to do that, humor is abundant.

In fact, Nancy Pelosi provided me the biggest laugh of the season so far, and almost as soon as I opened my laptop.

I'll leave you with her quote, taken out of context but able to stand on its own for the purposes of a good laugh. She said,

"I don't think our colleague is anti-Semitic, I think she has a different experience in the use of words, doesn't understand that some of them are fraught with meaning that she didn't realize.

Or, to put in another way, in the succinct language of youth, "Man, she was just sayin'."

## The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

## Mulch

Mulch is a very important tool in any gardeners' toolkit. In addition, it does a lot more than simply make beds look nicer. Mulch serves a variety of different purposes that are beneficial to plants around your house.

**UGA extension**  
**Watching and Working**  
*Jacob Williams*



Let's talk about the different types of mulch that are out there and how they can help you have healthy plants.

There are many different types of mulches out there. Some of the most common kinds of mulches are bark, compost, leaves, newspaper, pine needles, straw, and wood chips. If you are using bark for mulch usually small chunks is going to be better because large chunks are more susceptible to being washed away. Compost can be a very beneficial mulch. What separates compost from the other mulches on this list is that compost is capable of providing nitrogen to plants. Leaves are a good cheap source of mulch for many people. Many times, there's nothing wrong with taking leaves that have fallen and applying them around the base of plants. The only time when applying leaves as a mulch is not a good idea is if the leaves have a disease in them. Those leaves should be removed to prevent the disease from spreading to the next season. It's also good if you can shred the leaves before applying them so that they don't become matted. Newspaper serves as a good undermulch. Placing pine needles or straw on top will keep the newspaper from blowing away. Pine needles look good as mulch. They can make the soil more acidic over time, but that is a slow process. Straw can be an effective mulch, but it's not as long lasting as some of the other mulches described here. Straw will also sometimes contain weed seeds. Wood chips are a long lasting mulch. They can last two years.

One of the benefits of mulch is weed suppression. When it's applied thick enough, mulch creates a barrier that blocks sunlight and creates a physical barrier preventing unwanted plants from growing. Once summer is in full effect mulch can go a long way to make your job of weeding easier. Mulch can help with disease suppression in the case of mummyberry on blueberries. Mulch will bury the disease.

Mulch also benefits moisture retention in the soil. When there are hot dry summers the mulch will serve as insulation against the sun and the wind, reducing the amount of water that is lost. The insulation from mulch also helps moderate soil temperatures. That doesn't mean mulch can keep your soil from freezing, but it can give you a buffer of a few degrees if temperatures are fluctuating.

One thing to keep in mind when applying mulch is the carbon to nitrogen ratio. Most mulches are very high in carbon. For the microbes in soil to decompose mulch they need nitrogen. So, if you apply a lot of wood chips as mulch, those microbes in the soil will need all the nitrogen to break down the mulch, meaning your plants aren't going to get as much nitrogen. So adding some extra nitrogen to the soil will be beneficial to the mulch and your plants.

Most mulch should be applied 3 to 4 inches. 5 inches for pine needles and 2 inches for wood chips. If you have any questions about mulches contact your local Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

## Letters to The Editor

### Please Reconsider

Dear Editor,

My initial letter regarding Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Cooperative's plan to raise the fixed customer service charge from \$21.37 to between \$38 and \$40 over time appeared in the North Georgia News in the Feb. 6 edition.

Since then, the message that that first letter sent was addressed at a monthly meeting of the co-op reviewed above. The EMC general manager, who basically indicated they would go forward with their plans because their consultant stated they needed to redesign the EMC's power rate to better cover fixed costs.

Mr. Nelms, general manager, was quoted as saying that "I do not believe there is a strong correlation between income levels and energy usage."

It was also claimed that most households receiving help via charitable organizations experienced power bills in the \$200 to \$300.

This "Please Reconsider" response has been delayed by the need to do a survey of the needy and explore other avenues to achieve the admirable goal of the EMC Board, which they express as the need to keep up with fixed costs such as power poles, power lines, transformers etc. We thank them for doing their job to keep the cooperative solvent so they can continue to do the very good job they do providing electric service year round, even during difficult weather scenarios.

We surveyed over 55 participants in one of the large food lines in Blairsville. Yes, a few, very few had bills in the \$200 to \$300 range that the co-op reviewed above. The average was \$150, with the lows below \$100 and the highs in the range quoted above. Obviously, to have an average of \$150 meant that the majority were in the \$150 or less range. (Remember, those bills have a built-in customer charge of \$21.37 plus sales tax of \$9, so the usage is approx. \$120.)

Many of those in the line were highly concerned and some actually cried discussing this proposed increase over time.

Would you consider a different approach?

It is obvious there are many new residences being built in our area such as those built in the 1300 development and The Highlands and many other locations. Surveying the owners, it is obvious the majority of these are part-time, many weekends only, or summer for the most part. The co-op must provide the amenities mentioned above, i.e. transformers, power lines, etc., this according to their statements why they need to raise the fixed charge.

Here's an idea that would be more equitable to all, as our full-time residents should not subsidize the new part-timers (and especially those full-timers that can't afford it):

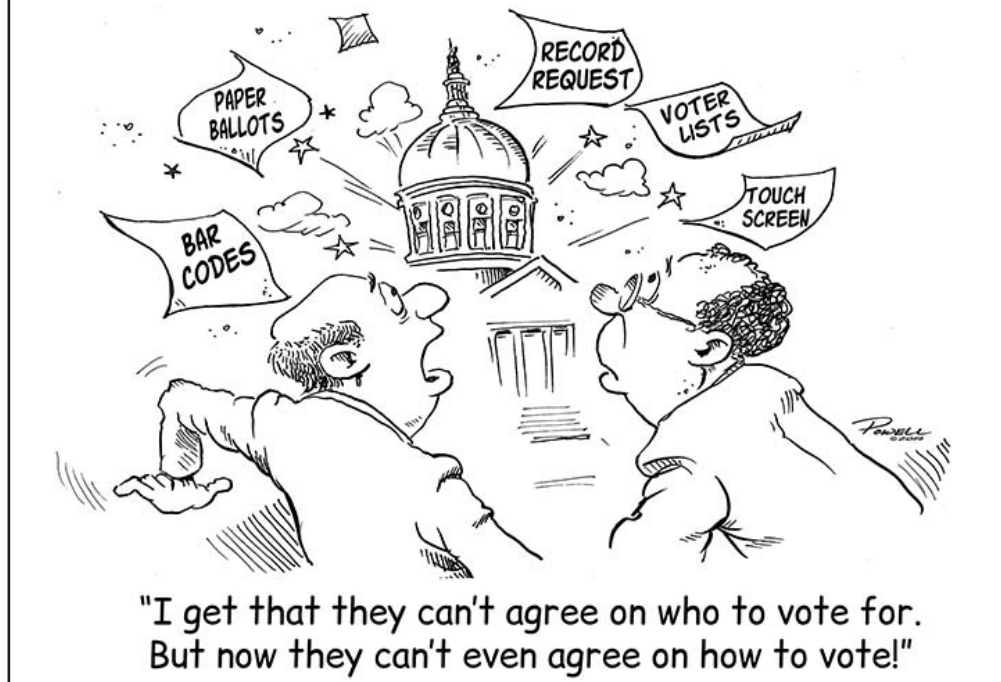
Why not institute a minimum customer charge for each bill offset by the total usage bill? The amount would have to be determined to reach the necessary goals, but the minimum charge wouldn't affect the needy, as their usage bills would be in excess of, let's say for example, a minimum \$55 charge for the year not using their power because they are not here a majority of those.

We have a neighbor who is very part-time, and he confirms when he is not here his bill is normally less than \$30, which is the current customer charge plus tax.

Hopefully, that proposal is clear. Oh, by the way, I had an hour conversation recently with a retired co-op executive in another area that confirmed that what I have laid out here is used by many co-ops to achieve the same goal.

Please reconsider your approach. I'm sure many, many others would agree that would be commendable.

Roger Rashid



## Towns County Community Calendar

Bridge Players	<b>Every Monday:</b> All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	<b>Every Tuesday:</b> Old Rec. Center	4 pm
SMART Recovery	<b>Every Wednesday</b> Red Cross Building	7 pm
Bridge Players	<b>Every Thursday:</b> All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Movers & Shakers	<b>Every Friday:</b> Sundance Grill	8 am
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	<b>Every Sunday:</b> Red Cross Building	7 pm
Chamber Board	<b>Second Monday of each month:</b> 1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
VFW	VFW Post	5 pm
Historical Society	Hist. Soc. Bldg.	5:30 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoy Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
Conv./Vis. Bureau	<b>Second Tuesday of each month:</b> Civic Center	8 am
Gen & 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	<b>Second Wednesday of each month:</b> SC Fire Hall	10 am
USCG Aux.	Senior Center	7 pm
Hiaw Writers	<b>Second Thursday of each month:</b> 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
Hospital Auxiliary	<b>Third Monday of each month:</b> Cafeteria	1:30 pm
Planning Comm.	Civic Center	6 pm
YH Plan Comm.	<b>Third Tuesday of each month:</b> YH City Hall	5 pm
Co. Comm. Mtg	Courthouse	5:30 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.	Blairsville store	5:30 pm
Water Board	Water Office	6 pm

**Have something to sell?**  
**Let the Herald work for you!**  
**Contact us at 706-896-4454**  
**Deadline for the T.C. Herald is Friday by 5 PM**