

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## The Watkins Man

The "Traveling Salesman" was a fixture among many Americans for generations. My family is no exception. The first story I can

### Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



remember happened to my great-grandmother Laura. She was a tiny woman, but you know the expression, "Dynamite comes in small packages" don't you?

Lon and Laura Cummings lived 8 miles from Phil Campbell. They had a large farm, saw mill, grist mill and black smith shop on the banks of Cummings Creek. Laura was enterprising and eager to help earn a living for the large family. So, she opened up a gas station on the well traveled path into town. Hers was the only gas pump between Trapptown and Phil Campbell. One afternoon a car pulled up at the front of the house. A traveling salesman introduced himself as a Watkins Man selling all kinds of products needed by the public. He asked her if he could get some gas for his automobile further explaining he had no money. But, he assured her he would be back next month and would pay her the money needed to pay for the gas. She was hard nosed, however, her heart was tender and agreed to allow the man a loan for the gas. You need to understand that gas was only .18/gallon. Therefore, 10 gallons only cost \$1.80. But, in 1925 that was a lot of money.

That evening Lon came in from working at the Mill and asked his wife about her day. Upon hearing about the salesman he chuckled and stated, "You will never see that money". She considered his statement a challenge and told her husband to get ready for supper. Over the next month Laura would perk up and watch when she heard a vehicle pass in front of her home. Since there were only a couple of vehicles in the community it was easy to spot the Watkins Man as he came traveling by her house that day and the arrogance he displayed as he drove by and waved only caused her anger to reach a boiling point. She told her son and my grandfather, "Columbus, hitch up "Old Blue" to the surrey". That horse was an easy cantering and quick trotting horse the family used to take them to the Church House at Union Hill.

Papa hitched up the horse while she readied herself. It only took them about 45 minutes to make the 8 mile trip to Phil Campbell. They found the Watkins Man parked in front of the "Pool Hall". She did not know anything about the place since she was a church going woman and had never been in a place of ill repute. She'd heard that lazy men hung out in the establishment and told dirty jokes all day. She told her son to stay seated in the wagon while she hopped down and sashayed into the joint. There was the Watkins Man shooting pool and drinking a Nehi Belly-wash.

He grinned as she walked toward him and told him she wanted the \$1.80 he had borrowed. He laughed and said, "Why don't you go back to that Hillbilly family of yours?" Without saying a word she walked from the Pool Room and retrieved her shotgun. Laura walked back into the Poolroom and everyone scattered except the Watkins Man. He had his back to her and turned just in time to feel the barrel of the shotgun poke into his neck. She said, "It ain't right for a man to try and cheat a woman and I am not going to tolerate being cheated. Do you understand?" The Watkins Man handed her the \$1.80. She promptly left and went back to Trapptown. But the afterwards every man in and around Trapptown and Phil Campbell knew not to cheat Laura Cummings.

Twenty years later my Granny also had to deal with another Watkins Man. Paul and Uncle Bud were only about 10 when a wagon pulled up in front of their home on Cummings Road. The boys ran to the front porch and watched as a great, round man got out of a car and walked toward their house. When he reached the steps he slipped and fell injuring his left knee. Quickly, the boys and their mother rushed to his side to help him onto the porch. He sat there while he was tended to by the young family. Papa came up from the fields on his mule at lunch time. Granny was in the house preparing a good meal, so, the boys quickly explained that the man had fell and hurt his knee. Both Papa and Granny were tender-hearted so, they invited the man to stay for lunch. This invitation quickly turned into a stay of 5 days. This was wearing on the family. The guest was given the boys' bedroom while they slept on the floor. Granny was waiting on him hand and foot. Papa was putting in 10-12 hours per day in the field planting his cotton. Finally, Papa invited the man to leave which he did for a few months.

But, I guess he missed Granny's cooking. Because he showed up again in August during lay-by season. Papa was getting ready to go to meeting at Union Hill Church. The second week of August was always and still is revival at Union Hill Congregational Methodist Church. Once again Paul and Bud were on the front porch. The man appeared to roll an ankle as he tried to step across the ditch between the yard and road. To make a long story short Papa missed Revival services that day and his parents, Lon and Laura, came calling to see if there was a problem.

They knew the story about the previous incident at their son's farm and they also had their own experience with another salesman 20 years prior. But, even at 65 years old Lon Cummings was an imposing man. He looked down at the man and said, "If you think you're gonna get a free meal and lodging out of this you're mistaken. My grandkids ain't gonna sleep on the floor and my daughter-in-law ain't gonna cook for ye. Now get up and skeddadle". The Watkins Man never came back to Cummings Road again.

## Letters To The Editor

### Most Truly Dedicated Employees in Towns County

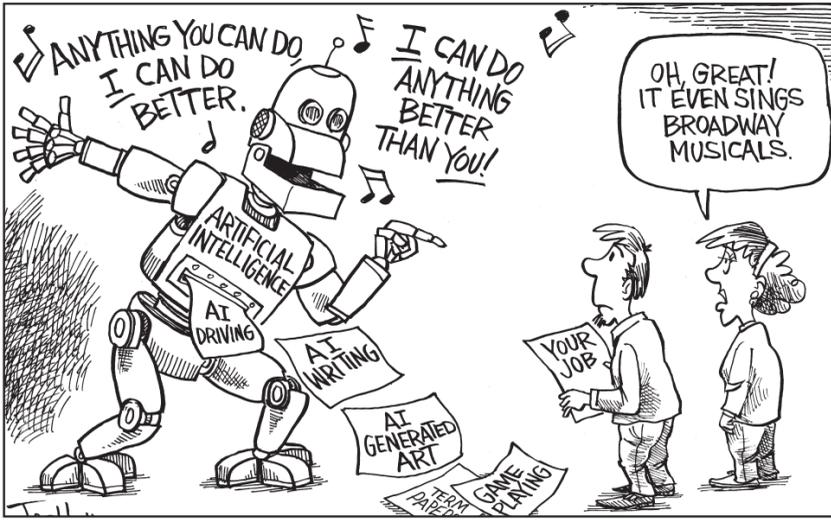
Mr. Sole Commissioner,

I have been going to the Towns County Transfer Station since 1998 when we acquired property in Towns County. I would like to duly recognize the dedicated employees there, Mary, Travis and Mr. Youngblood.

They all work very hard and in harmony and go about it in a very cheerful manner. They are always very respectful and accommodating as well. I know it must be a task at times when trash gets backed up, but they seem to handle it well and with a cheerful disposition.

That being said, please Mr. Commissioner, keep their pay at a maximum for doing their duties for the citizens they serve in Towns County and other surrounding counties.

Perry Bush



## Pull My Finger

Every culture, and every subset of humanity down to the family unit or small group of friends, can and does develop its own narrative, its own mythology, customs and jargon. Each can share its own exclusive brand of humor and its own taboos.

Every culture has its childhood stories, fairytales and legends. Some are archetypal and some unique. If we are fortunate we will remember fondly for the rest of our lives the songs our grandparents sang and the stories they told.

My grandmother was a storyteller, and with her songs and stories she opened up a window into the past that I can still peer through today, many years later. She and my grandfather were shaped note singers, and they sang songs almost as old as the nation. Some of the stories they told, passed down from our Cherokee ancestors, were even older.

If I told those stories to a young person today, they would sound as strange to them as a tale of the Apollo mission would sound to a child of the late 18th century. Both listeners would lack the necessary context for a proper understanding.

Our stories tell us a lot about ourselves and the culture which shaped our lives, but as western culture has spread like a coat of paint, thicker in some places than in others, over most of the planet, much of what was unique in our decreasingly diverse human experience has been irretrievably lost. Go just about anywhere today and people look very much the same. Pittsburg or Prague, you'll see the same American jeans and multinational brands.

A story came out recently which says a lot about western culture, though the events of the story took place in Tibet. What it says does not speak well of us. The story was about the exiled spiritual leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama. With fan flaming breaking news righteous indignation, establishment media published a picture of him sticking his tongue out at a young boy and quoted the broken English of the elderly monk while inviting us to question either his sanity or his character. Was he suffering from dementia or was he revealing a perverse nature long hidden behind the trappings of religion?

Anyone who grew up in Tibet knew immediately the context of the story and saw the event for what it was – an innocent and heart warming encounter between young and old. The broken English quote was the closing line from an old Tibetan fairytale told by grandparents to their grandchildren for generations, and no more harmful than when your own grandfather invited you to "pull my finger."

Tibetans were quick to confront the tacky rumors and speculations, or at least they attempted to do so. I challenge you to find one retraction, correction or update to the story within the infotainment matrix of establishment media.

The story had served its purpose, and as my brother pointed out, it also advanced the interests of the Chinese government which exploits every opportunity to erase Tibetan culture in their own modern and ongoing version of what Americans in the 19th century called "manifest destiny."

So quick we are to click the tacky and the prurient, to heedlessly feed the wolf of negativity and thoughtlessly move on to the next sensation, wondering why we sleep so poorly and suffer from digestive ailments. How serious we all can be, judgy and quick to judge; a bit neurotic with a tendency to overdramatize.

The responsibility is not all our own. Our brains are fight or flight responders and that is the hitch which pulls our wagons, which is another idiom indecipherable without historical or cultural context. "We all just need to lighten up," says a good friend. I agree. It seems half the world missed having a grandfather to tell them to "pull my finger."

## Towns County Community Calendar

<b>First Monday of each month:</b> School Board... HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
<b>Every Tuesday:</b> Storytime for Children... TC Library	10:30 am
<b>First Tuesday of each month:</b> Hiaw. City Council... City Hall YH City Council... YH City Hall	6 pm 6:30 pm
<b>Second Tuesday of each month:</b> Conventions & Visitors Board... Civic Center	8 am
<b>Second Wednesday of each month:</b> Board of Elections... Elections Office	4 pm
<b>Third Monday of each month:</b> Planning Commission... Temporary Courthouse	6 pm
<b>Third Tuesday of each month:</b> Commissioner's Mtg... Courthouse City of Young Harris Planning Commission... Meeting Room in City Hall Water Board... Water Office	5:30 pm 5 pm 6 pm

## Depth and Temperature

Planting Depth and Soil Temperature - As the soil temperatures are getting warmer, it's time to think about planting. Let's talk about planting in your garden and how deep you should plant seeds, transplants, or bulbs.

### Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



Getting planting depth correct is really important. If seeds are planted to deeply they will struggle to germinate and grow through the soil to reach the sunlight. When seeds start all the energy that they have is contained in the seed. So, if they are too deep, they won't have the energy necessary stored to grow above the soil surface and put out leaves to start making more energy. It is possible to plant seeds to shallow too. This is not as big of an issue as planting too deep, but seeds might dry out and have a tough time germinating if they are too shallow. Seeds do tend to have some tolerance, so if you don't get it exactly right, the seeds will still be able to grow and germinate. A general rule of thumb is that seeds should be planted 2-3 times their diameter. For small seeds like carrots that means they will be planted very shallow. Larger seeds like corn or beans will be planted an inch or deeper in the soil. There are some exceptions to the rule of thumb so checking the seed packet to see if there are more detailed instructions is always a good idea.

With transplants you want to set the plants at the same depth as they are in the container. Burying them deeper can lead to rots, and lack of oxygen at the roots. Burying them too shallow will lead to the roots of the plant drying out more quickly. Tomatoes are an exception to this rule. When planting tomatoes you can remove the lowest branch and then place the plant at that depth in the soil. Tomato plants will easily put out more roots, resulting in a plant that has more roots to draw up water and nutrients. Whenever you buy transplants make sure that the crown of the plant (where the above ground and below ground portions meet) is healthy and strong. If it is weak and flimsy, this plant will struggle when it's put out into the elements.

When planting bulbs a rule of thumb is to plant the bulb 2-3 times the height of the bulb. Generally speaking spring flowering bulbs (e.g. Daffodil and tulip) should be planted in the fall and fall flowering bulbs (e.g. Crocus and cyclamen) should be planted in the spring.

Soil temperature is also really important for seeds to be able to germinate. For warm season plants, generally we want soil temperatures to reach 65 to allow for the best germination rates. Our soil temperatures have hit that, and looking at the long-term forecast, it looks like most likely soil temperatures will stay at or close to 65. Most years it takes longer for our soils to warm up, but this has been a very mild winter this year.

If you have questions about planting depth contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

## Habitat for Humanity

Miss H is sitting on her porch on a Saturday afternoon around 5 p.m., the awning off the camper providing enough shade for her to sit. This is the first time she has been outside without poking her head out the door for three weeks.

Habitat Happenings Executive Director Charlotte Randall



Miss H, 91 years young, is the latest recipient of a Habitat Helping Hands project, and a 35-foot switchback handicap ramp would allow her to continue to do the things she enjoys, such as going to the Senior Center. However, because of her mobility issues, she has been unable to get in and out of her camper because of the difficulty of the camper stairs.

It was especially hot that weekend, and little shade in the large RV park. After two days of volunteers working straight, one being a Saturday, we were all exhausted, sunburned, and ready to relax. But you keep going.

After the first set of handrails went up, Miss H used her cane to come outside on the first platform. She stood there, and I offered her a chair. She sat in the chair for the last three hours of completion while volunteers finished the ramp.

You could feel her joy at being able to enjoy the spring weather. And this is why we keep on.

Receiving help and giving help are amazing God giving abilities we have.

We are a community, and we help each other through good times and hard times.

"The church community is where we learn to love God and others; where we are strengthened and transformed by truth from the Word; where we're taught to pray, to worship, and to serve; where we can be most certain that we're investing our time and abilities for eternity; where we can grow in our roles as friends, sons and daughters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. The church is earth's single best place – God's specially designed place – to start over, to grow and to change for the glory of God." Joshua Harris, Stop Dating the Church, (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Publishers, 2005), 21. (G3min.org)

Discipleship is what strives our community. It doesn't matter what church you belong to, striving to help others is a gift that God has enclosed within our hearts. At times it is hidden, which is why it is important to continually be looking inward and reflecting on actions of yourself and others.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

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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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