

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Thank you once again!

May 5th, 2022 the Ukulele Club of the Mountains graced us with their Veterans visit to Brasstown Manor. These are

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
 USCG Veteran



some amazing folks who gave of their time and talent with some very upbeat music and songs. Our elders, many wheelchair bound had a wonderful afternoon, as did we all. Just imagine over a dozen ukulele players harmonizing with some great old songs we all know and love. Amongst these talented folks who form this mixed band, are several Veterans, in fact we had at least one Veteran from every branch of our military service there today. This being their third visit to Brasstown, as they also helped us wrap up 2021 in December., with their beautiful medley of Christmas songs. Today, a beautiful spring day in these mountains, was a rock and roll remembrance day. Their music today brought all our souls together. As I was leaving today, there were several requests to please bring them back!

Like always we have a core group of Veterans from VSOs including our American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, VFW, VFW Auxiliary, Sons of American Legion, American Legion Riders and several other Veterans from our North Georgia mountain homeland. The fellowship and camaraderie we have shared with our many elder friends at Brasstown Manor is as they say, "Priceless". There's no way I can attach all the names of our loving, caring Veterans who participate in events like this. I can however present a very short bio as an introduction to Cy Sineath who leads the Ukulele Club. Cy is a former 1st Lieutenant United States Army, Vietnam. He was Field Artillery (King of Battle!) and spent his tour flying in an O-1 Bird dog directing artillery and air strikes. He says he wouldn't want to take the credit for being a grunt! That says a LOT about Cy and his humble admiration of those of who served and sacrificed so much as infantry soldiers. In passing, after I learned he was an officer, Cy like so many of us Veterans stated, "I'd do it all over again, if I were called upon." That attitude for each other pretty well says what all who served with Honor are all about.

Having no musical talent myself, I am always amazed at those who were blessed with those skills and talents. It is an honor to say Thank You to these wonderful Americans who come together for fun and to entertain others. Our elders at Brasstown certainly had a wonderful day. There were smiles, grins, hugs and kisses all around as we departed from our visit with some very fine folks.

Cy is also a member of the Institute for Continuing Learning at Young Harris College. There he serves on the Curriculum Committee and also teaches ukulele classes. That is how the Club was formed. On June 27, 2022 he will be starting a new class and welcomes all to come learn to play "the happiest instrument in the world." Cy tells me it's easy and mostly fun and grins with no musical skills required. Who's game?

- Semper Paratus

Letters To The Editor

Fighting Climate Change

Dear Editor,

The oil industry now agrees that current climate change is caused by burning fossil fuels.

Since the industrial revolution, mankind has released half a trillion tonnes of heat retaining gasses into the atmosphere by burning fossil fuels. These excess gasses are destroying our habitat in more ways than I can list here.

I had to do something to help save my grandchildren and yours so I joined an organization called Citizens Climate Lobby - a bipartisan group that supports a carbon fee and dividend program. This plan would charge fossil fuel companies for carbon pollution and the fees collected would come back to consumers as a dividend, driving businesses to use greener alternatives.

There are other countries that are already using this strategy. Many people, politicians and organizations support this idea. This week alone four more organizations announced support of carbon pricing. Surprisingly, one was the American Petroleum Institute. We hope that as more people and organizations support this solution, it will receive greater support in congress.

While we would love to have you in our organization (check us out @CCL.NorthEastGA9 on FB), my main hope is that you will find some way to help in the fight against climate change.

Ginger England

Autocract

Dear Editor,

By definition, Towns County is an Autocracy - governed by a Sole Commissioner with absolute power - no checks or balances - no council to question his/her authority. As per Wikipedia, Georgia is the only state in the country to have counties governed by a sole commissioner (currently there are 7 of 159 counties under such rule). Having such a system of authority requires a deep sense of trust by the citizenry for one individual.

Recently, a referendum passed in the City of Hiawassee to allow for package store sales of liquor. It is concerning when our Sole Commissioner, who claims he is opposed to alcohol of any form, and would not support a countywide referendum regarding alcohol sales, leased a building he personally owns to a liquor store in the City of Hiawassee. Does such a decision by the Sole Commissioner erode our trust?

Ultimately, the Citizens of Towns County will decide if an autocratic form of government is the best choice.

Noel Turner

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Pretzel Logic

Bamboo seems like such a good idea when you first plant it. A bamboo grove is beautiful and mysterious, and an individual cane seems innocent enough. Don't let that fool you. Bamboo is intent on world domination. It is patient, and cunning. It senses exactly where it can be the greatest nuisance, and then develops a strong desire to go there. It will travel 50 yards, silently, hidden underground to emerge where you least expect it. It is relentless. I've cut down a hundred sprouts in an hour only to turn around and see 20 more emerging where I just passed.

We have an annual ritual every spring in which we try to convince bamboo that isn't welcome in certain places, and a sling blade is ideal for this purpose. I've been using a sling blade since I was 12. I had a good one, probably from Sears, though the patina long ago covered any company logo. I recently retired it for something new.

We prefer to shop locally, but I didn't like the looks of the "imported" sling blade in the hardware store so I turned to the almighty internet to find something better. Curiously, there were very few options available. Apparently hand tools are now valued mainly for their decorative value, physical work being somewhat of an anachronism. There were scores of electric and some gasoline-powered tools, but the word is that internal combustion in all its forms is frowned upon by the socially advanced. I paused in my shopping to imagine working on a fire line with a battery powered chainsaw while my Fire Management Officer sent us good vibes and meditated on rain, but I lack the vision.

After some effort shopping, I settled on a model that seemed appropriate. We do the best we can. We read the reviews, disregard those written by manufacturers and buffoons, look at the pictures and make our best guesses. When my new sling blade arrived I opened the box to find that it looked just like the picture. It would have made a nice decoration for the wall of the shop, but bamboo was on the march and I had work to do.

When you have a sharp blade and a good rhythm, a sling blade is much faster than a good vision or even a gasoline powered tool, and I was making good progress. I had cleared all the way back to the border of the established grove when I overshot a sprout and the blade cut clean through to a full stop against a mature cane. When I drew back the tool, there was a pretzel on the end of the handle.

My vintage sling blade would have embedded itself in the mature cane, given my arm a hard shake and cost me about 10 minutes of filing to regain its sharpness. The new tool behaved quite differently. The blade was missing a couple of teeth and the bracket which holds the blade was severely bent. The first thing that occurred to me was, I must be a lot stronger than I was 10-20 years ago when I was chopping down young privet with my old faithful. As much as that idea appealed to me, I reluctantly put it aside.

Next I considered that maybe, with all the climate change, mutating viruses and freakish weather, bamboo is a lot tougher than it used to be, but chopping it down with a bush hook feels about the same as always.

Finally it hit me. With all the visionary advances in technology, business, government and society, my sling blade was behaving exactly like it was designed to behave. The pretzel wasn't a flaw - it was a feature. Some smart engineer had designed my blade with a structural safety feature - a crumple zone, like a modern plastic and aluminium automobile. The blade was just doing it's job and protecting me from myself, just like visionary technology, business, government and society is supposed to do. It is an exciting time to be alive.

Nevertheless, I think with a new blade and a bit of welding I can resurrect my old sling blade, despite the hazards of filing and the risk of getting my arm shaken. Bamboo is still on the march, and time is of the essence. I admit it. I'm somewhat of an anachronism myself. Only the visionaries can lead us over the cliff of prosperity into the inviting gorge of safety, equity and social justice for all. I'll just stay out of the way here on the mountain with my old tools.

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.

Weeds

Weeds are a common problem for any gardener. The problem with weeds is that they create competition. Competition for nutrients, water, and most importantly sunlight. They can also serve as a host plant for pests and diseases that you don't want in your garden. There a couple of different ways that weeds can be classified, and these impact how we want to treat them.

UGA extension
Watching and Working
 Jacob Williams



Weeds are classified as annual or perennial. Annual weeds only live for a single season. Perennial weeds live for two or more seasons. The goal of an annual plant is to produce as many seeds as it can in a season to ensure the survival of its progeny next year. Perennial plants are looking to store energy in their root system so that they can make it through the winter. If you can keep annual weeds from putting on seeds by mowing or tilling them, you will reduce the population that you'll have next season. Perennial weeds can be treated in the fall with a systemic herbicide. In the fall, perennial weeds are moving energy into their roots for storage. Therefore, that herbicide is moved into the root system and kills the plant at the roots. Crabgrass is an example of an annual and broadleaf plantain is an example of a perennial.

Broadleaf and grasses is another way of categorizing weeds. There are many herbicides that are effective on broadleaf weeds, like 2,4-D, but don't work on grasses. Therefore, understanding what type of weed you're dealing with is very important.

Mulch is a great way to suppress weeds. Many different materials can be used. Straw, wood chips, and sawdust are all effective. Mulch blocks the sunlight from hitting the soil and creates a physical barrier that weeds have to grow through, making it difficult for them to germinate and grow. You can also use weed fabric barriers. They do much of the same thing. However, because water can't penetrate fabric barriers you'll probably need to install some drip irrigation underneath the barrier. You can also inject fertilizers through the drip irrigation using an injector.

You can find any number of recipes online for natural herbicides. Some of these are effective, others are not. Unlike some synthetic herbicides, these are not selective. They will kill every plant they touch. One problem is that they only kill the part of the plant that they touch. Therefore, if you have a perennial weed you are going to have to re-treat that weed many times before its root energy reserves are depleted and it stops regrowing. Vinegar is a common ingredient in these mixtures. I've seen recipes with citrus oil and soaps too. One issue with using these is that if you use them too much, they'll damage your soil. Recipes with citrus oil are really more of a biocide, meaning they'll kill plants, insects, earthworms, or anything else it meets. That's not to say don't use them, but rather use them judiciously. A natural product designed to kill is dangerous to the environment when it's not used responsibly.

Shallow tillage is a great way to control weeds in row middles. Or, making your rows wide enough so that you can fit between them with a lawnmower allows you to remove weeds. Hand hoeing is hard work but very effective. I find that holding the hoe at a high angle and using the corner of the blade allows me to get just under the crown of the weed and pull it out. It also helps save your back.

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

Habitat for Humanity

We are well into May now, so thankful for the warm spring weather that brings new life to this area. We are so thankful for the growing numbers of people that are supporting us, coming out to volunteer, buying items in our ReStore, and repairing homes through our Helping Hands program.

Our volunteers donated on average a combined total of 250 hours in our ReStore for the month of April! It is incredible the things we can accomplish with their help. We wouldn't be able to be successful without them. On behalf of our board and staff thank you volunteers for all that you do!

Our volunteer event was a huge success! We made a total of \$1,248.00 through donations, our silent auction, and t-shirt sales. We wouldn't have been able to make anywhere close to that if it weren't for the generous businesses who donated funds, and items to put into our silent auction for this event. Thank you to our community for getting involved in this event, not only did we raise funds for our mission of making sure everyone had affordable and safe housing, but we also had a blast at the event.

This month we are setting goals to do more helping hands projects, ReStore improvements to make the store easier to shop in and more accessible to receive donations, and begin breaking ground on the Habitat home for the Snow Family. We are always working hard to reach our community through multiple different avenues.

If you are interested in being apart of the Snow build or help out in the ReStore please come into the Habitat ReStore to fill out a volunteer application. In addition, if you know any homeowners in need of repairs, or accessibility updates have them come into the ReStore we have brochures on our helping hands program and applications. We would love to meet our community and give opportunities to get involved and offer your skills in benefiting others in need through Habitat for Humanity.

It's about that time of year again, where spring cleaning is in effect. I know I speak for myself when I say, cleaning out my belongings and deciding what I use and getting rid of what I don't is a great feeling. Habitat is here for the items you decide you don't use or need anymore. We take gently used items, and we will pick your items up! Be sure to give us a call at 706-745-7101 and schedule a donation pick up today! We fill up quickly so be sure to schedule a week in advance for the time slot you are looking for, or better yet drop your donations off at our garage entrance at 225 Wellborn St. Blairsville.

Please continue to support us through your donations to our ReStore, and shopping at the ReStore, it continues to help our community as we take on more helping hands projects this summer and dive into the latest Habitat home build.

Habitat Happenings

Madelyn Bailey



Towns County Herald

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