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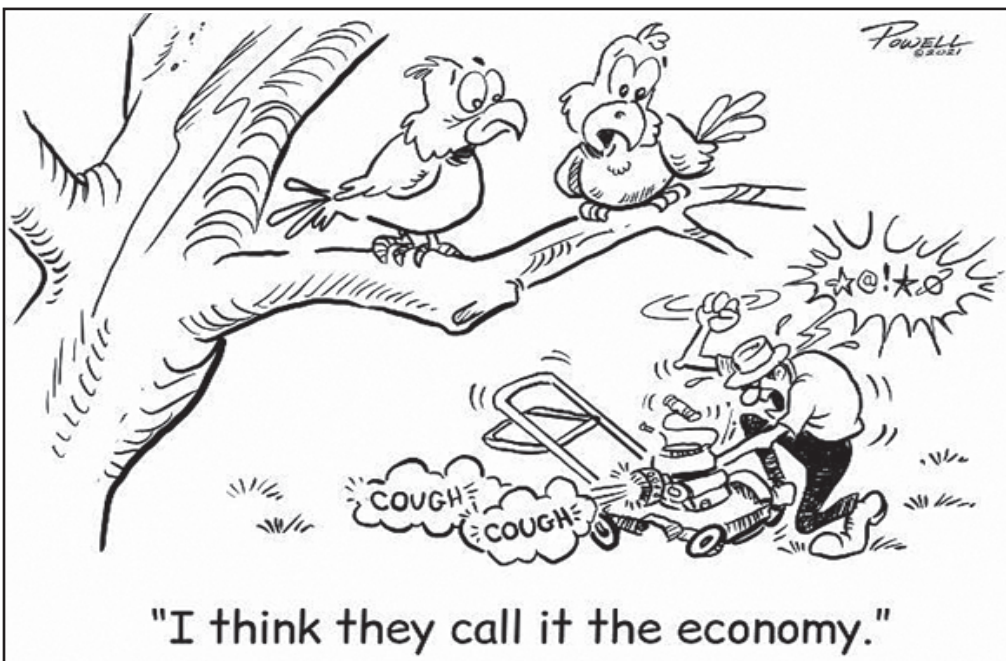
OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Wayne Mason, Patriot

Continued from page 1
 TCH Veterans Corner issue of May 12, 2021. Personally I've had the honor of knowing and being family to this man, a REAL American and Patriot, for most of our days on earth. He did not want to do this mini-bio as he's a humble Veteran, as are the majority of us who have served our America. Wayne has written this with only very minor editing on my behalf. His is as a story not unlike so many Veterans who have Honorably served our unique, wonderful USA willing and ready to do whatever becomes necessary to maintain our Sovereign Republic. Wayne's own words:



The Veterans' Corner
 Scott Drummond
 USCG Veteran



"I think they call it the economy."

Me and two buds flew into London, for three days, Saw the Tower of London, Windsor castle, the Cutty Sark, Westminster Abby, and the London museum, spent New Years Eve in Trafalgar square, 1973, at that time it was the custom for all the girls to kiss all the boys at midnight, regardless of boyfriends, husbands or not, it was one crazy night I will never forget. Next day we flew out of Heathrow airport, later the IRA set a bomb off in the airport, luckily we left when we did.

While in Germany, I made friends with a big old Master Sergeant in my unit, Msgrt. Ralph Eaton, he liked guns and hunting as much as I did, and really took me under his wing, When he wasn't soldiering, he shot competition Skeet on the weekends. He was Winchester World and European Champ at that time in 8 station regulation Skeet shooting, he was amazing to watch! HE really helped me get thru the lonely times of being away from home 20 months without leave or even a phone call home. No internet in those days!

I left Germany in Sept. 1974 ready to see Georgia again, came back to my old job, met the love of my life Nancy Jones in August of 1975, we dated almost three years, before we married, we both wanted to be sure, almost 43 years later, we still are! God blessed us with two children and three wonderful grand children. so far.....

Backing up I left trucking and began working for Gwinnett County schools in 1990, I ran several bus shops there in three locations for 22 and 1/2 years and retired.

Life has been good to me, as I reflect on my time in the Army and time spent overseas and I think it made me a stronger person, I feel guilty at times that I didn't go to war like so many did, but I was prepared mentally and physically to do so, I pray daily for our country and all that served and for the families that paid the ultimate price in the loss of a loved one. Those people deserve our utmost respect and Honor, May God Bless them each and every one!

Semper Paratus

Letters to The Editor

Democrat Voters Should Have Buyer's Remorse

Dear Editor,

A cyberattack has taken down a major pipeline that supplies gasoline to the South and East Coast and now has led to gas shortages, even further worsening the high energy costs we are already enduring under President Biden.

Biden's handlers claimed that it was a "private sector" matter and the administration is not involved. It brings back vivid memories of the Carter-era gas lines of the 1970's. Add to this the poor economic news on inflation and unemployment, the crisis at the border, the recent Israel and Palestinian rocket attack exchanges and you've got utter chaos.

So where is Biden? He has given no statements concerning these major crises. His staff have sent mixed messages, with his press secretary Jen Psaki actually criticizing Israel for being attacked by Palestinian terrorists. The peace in the Middle East that we all experienced during the Trump Administration is coming apart at the seams.

It has become very clear that we don't have a president who can stand up and provide guidance on the tough issues. The Palestinians had not fired a rocket at Jerusalem since 2014 until a few weeks ago. They understand that former President Donald Trump isn't there to push back anymore while Biden is pampering the terrorists with arms supplied by Iran.

Most of us conservatives knew things would be bad, but didn't expect them to go down the toilet this quickly. We were constantly told during the campaign last year that Biden would be a real leader or something. It's a something alright.

If Biden is leading, he's being mighty stealthy about it. The world doesn't function very well with a weak leader in the United States. So there are consequences to electing a man suffering from dementia to a job that requires at least some level of competence.

Voters should take note because things will get worse before they gets better.

Tim Groza

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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Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network

Next week, we will be attending the Southern Blue Ridge Fire Learning Network (SBR FLN) annual meeting (virtually, the way of the world now) on Tuesday the 18th and Thursday the 20th.

The SBR FLN is a gathering of natural resource managers who are dedicated to bringing fire back into our mountain environment. Fire is a natural phenomenon that has occurred in our forests since the beginning of time and will continue long after we are gone no matter how hard we try to prevent it or ignore it.

The Firewise and Fire Adapted programs don't try to prevent fire, but educate people who live in the wildland areas how to prepare and protect their property from the out-of-control wildfire that is coming to their backyard one day. Partners in the Southern Blue Ridge FLN (SBR FLN) collaborate to develop, share and apply the best available science to restore fire across a vast, diverse region. Partners and stakeholders work in teams in the network's eight landscapes to set and achieve restoration goals in their fire-adapted pine and oak forests. Vegetation maps, models and tools developed by partners help build a cohesive vision and description of restoration needs. Landscape teams have adapted a regional treatment prioritization tool and applied it locally, with each learning from other landscapes' work.

The SBR FLN has also collaborated with the Cherokee National Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative, Central Appalachians FLN and LANDFIRE to adapt LANDFIRE models to this region. The models, along with a LiDAR-based forest structure analysis and the vegetation maps, have been used to estimate the loss of current vegetation from historic conditions across the National Forests of North Carolina. This information is informing forest planning and National Environmental Policy Analysis (NEPA) projects in several landscapes. Fire history research on three SBR FLN landscapes is shaping prescribed fire regimes. Evidence that fire historically played a role in maintaining these forests—which are changing, due to almost a century of fire suppression—is also being used to build wider support for the use of controlled fire. Partnership burns across multiple ownerships have become common in most landscapes, and more are planned for the coming year.

A couple of years ago the SBR FLN regional workshop was held here in Hiawassee. Due to programs presented then, state agencies in North and South Carolina are now performing collaborative burning across state lines. A network of monitoring plots established by Forest Stewards enables partners to track the effectiveness of management actions. Consistent, long-term monitoring is essential, since it can take years—and multiple treatments—for the full impact of fire in hardwoods to become evident.

The second comprehensive assessment using these data has been completed and will be used to inform planning for future burns and other restoration work.

SBR FLN partners include Georgia Blue Ridge Mountains, Great Smoky & Unaka Mountains Northern Escarpment, Central Blue Ridge Escarpment, Nantahala & Balsam Mountains, Southern Blue Ridge Escarpment, South Mountains, New River Headwaters, Network Partners Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists, Forest Stewards Guild, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Georgia State Parks; Wildlife Resources Division, Georgia Forest Watch, Greenville Water Land Trust for the Little Tennessee River, Mountain True National Park Service, Blue Ridge Parkway; Great Smoky Mountains, North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation, North Carolina Forest Service, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, South Carolina Division of Natural Resources, South Carolina Forestry Commission, South Carolina State Parks, The Nature Conservancy, Towns County Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network, USFS Chattahoochee-Oconee NF; Cherokee NF; Nantahala NF, Pisgah NF, USFS Region 8 Fire & Aviation, USFS—Southern Research Station, and Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D. Promoting Ecosystem Resilience and Fire Adapted Communities (PERFACT), a cooperative agreement between The Nature Conservancy, the USDA Forest Service, and agencies of the Department of the Interior supports the Fire Learning Network.

This FLN has helped build the foundation of the Joint Fire Science Program's Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists, and continues to play a key role in providing opportunities for networking among scientists, managers and practitioners. This accelerates transfer of knowledge and feedback that supports adaptive management.

Well-attended workshops, collaborative projects, and tools shared by online seminars and other means have helped the SBR FLN build strong working partnerships. These in turn support the steady growth of the network, most recently with the addition of the Georgia Blue Ridge Mountains landscape. This landscape brings a new dimension to the SBR FLN, as it includes Towns County, an original member of the Fire Adapted Communities (FACNET) Learning Network.

To register for the SBRFLN online event go to: www.sbrfln.com/ws15.html and for more information go to: www.nature.org.

Also, on June 3rd we will have the 3rd annual North Georgia Prescribed Fire council (virtual) meeting with a very good panel of speakers to talk about the benefits of prescribed fire in our forests.

Log on to www.garxfire.com/events.htm to see the agenda and register. For more information on either of these programs contact us at: info.ccrecd@gmail.com.



RC&D
 Frank Riley
 Executive Director

Soil Amendments

There are many different things that you can add to your soil. You may see ads for different products claiming that they'll do miracles for your garden. Alternatively, maybe you've always seen your grandparents put a special mixture on their soil and it did wonderfully every year. Soil is alive with microbes and complex chemical reactions that are happening all the time. The amendments that we add may be helpful to those processes. Let's talk about some common soil amendments and what they do to the soil.

Real quick, what is a soil amendment? These amendments have nothing to do with our constitution. Rather, they are things that we mix in or incorporate into the soil. The overall goal of an amendment is to improve soil quality. That may be done by adjusting pH, adding nutrients, building organic matter, increasing soil biodiversity, or improving soil drainage. Amendments can be organic (from something that was alive) or inorganic (mined or man-made).

Fertilizer and lime are two of the most obvious soil amendments. Synthetic fertilizer provides a quick boost to the plants, but doesn't really improve soil quality over time.

Organic fertilizers must be broken down to be available to the plants, therefore, they will fertilize over a period. Lime raises the pH of the soil and makes the nutrients more available to plants. You can have too much of a good thing and over apply lime, resulting in a pH that is too high.

Coffee grounds can be added to soil. They will build organic matter in the soil. They also attract earthworms. Coffee grounds don't have a big impact on the soil pH if you rinse them first. They can also be used in compost as a green material because they have nitrogen.

Compost is another amendment that people like to use. Compost is a great way to boost the quality of your soil because it builds organic matter. Compost will release nutrients to your soil over time.

Releasing nutrients over time makes your plants use the nutrients more efficiently and gives you even growth throughout the season.

One issue with growing plants in compost is that compost raises the pH of the soil. Growing in 100% compost can lead to nutrient deficiency problems because the pH is too high. Mixing compost with soil will help alleviate this problem.

Mycorrhizae can be added to the soil. Mycorrhizae are a fungus that attach to the roots of your plants. This fungus becomes like an additional network of roots. They will pass nutrients up the plant and the plant will send energy down to the fungus. It is a symbiotic relationship. Mycorrhizae can be beneficial to plants, but they're not always effective. If there is too much phosphorus in your soil, the fungus won't grow.

Compost tea is made from compost. You add the tea to plants to increase the microbes there. We need microbes in the soil, and the issue with this is that we don't know all the microbes that we're adding.

There could be E.coli in the tea. A simpler thing to do would be to add the compost straight to the plants, and not worry about the tea.

I would recommend caution when looking into new products to add to your soil. There are many things out there and not all of them do what they claim. If you have questions about soil amendments, contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.



UGA extension
 Watching and Working
 Jacob Williams

Taken too Lightly

That outfit was to die for. Really? He just loves hush puppies. That seems like a lot of emotion to expend on a wad of fried dough. I'm crazy about that fabulous rap artist, Notorious B.I.G. That may not be such a stretch. Hey Mom, I met a new friend today.

She breathlessly slid into the booth 45 minutes late. The two of us waiting had drunk all the water we could hold and endured the glares from the servers waiting to turn the table. The apology was gushed and ended with, "I knew you'd understand because you're my friends".

Not knowing how to respond, I let it go. However, the third member of the ladies who lunch had plenty to say. This is not verbatim, but it went something like, You left us, whom you call friends, waiting over half an hour, for a frivolous conversation with strangers?

It seems like friends should be treated with more regard than people you'll probably never see again. The three of us are friends. We share a history as real as life. Happiness, sadness, euphoric highs, painful lows, spats and pats. We care enough about each other to hash it out when needed. We left the restaurant having reinforced our bond and having shared a sinful dessert.

"I'll be your best friend if you give me that Little Debbie cream-filled cookie", sounds so childish. The chasm between enemy and friend is vast. The gap between acquaintance and friend is less but still several shades of gray.

Over the years I've cultivated friends and I didn't even realize that seeds had been sown until the blooming started.

Attractions are quick and on occasion, I've mistaken them for friendships. Attractions are instant and friendships brew.

Some of my friends have died but the friendships did not. I'm always glad when they come to memory camp and set up tents for a visit.

Calling someone I've never met or even seen, a friend, and being able to sever it by a few key strokes without a quibble, demeans the definition of the word.

Friend is an honorific title for those who have been garnered and chosen for some symbiotic reasons that benefit all engaged. They are selected family.

She thinks it weird that I enjoy asparagus in oatmeal but she loves me anyway. I was touched when the season's first beautiful spear from her garden was presented to me. I ate it from tip to none. Shear perfection.

If that's not a friendship token, then there is no such thing. Thank you Mags. I love you more than hush puppies with butter.

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Publication No: 635540

Advertising, News deadlines: Friday at 5 p.m.

Towns County (1 Year) \$25. Out of County (1 Year) \$35. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawassee, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points. The Towns County Herald is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. Postmaster: Send change of address to: Towns County Herald, P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

Office located at: 518 N. Main St. Suite 7 "The Mall", Hiawassee

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