

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

The Heels of Memorial Day

Because of the ChiCom virus infecting our precious America, there may be some locales where our Memorial Day observation may be subdued. Never, ever let that be the case in your heart or mind. Those who are not with us anymore, even though we know only a few of them and a little about others, please bear in mind that they were committed to something great for all of us. Never forget! Now for some not so trivial facts:

1. Thirty American presidents served in the U.S. Army, 24 during time of war. Of the 30, two became five-star generals – George Washington and Dwight Eisenhower. Teddy Roosevelt was awarded the Medal of Honor. -- military.com. 2. 1,760 PlayStation 3s were used to build a supercomputer for the Department of Defense. -- escapistmagazine.com. 3. Hundreds of thousands of “General Purpose” vehicles, or “GPs,” were made for the U.S. military during World War II for soldiers to transport men and supplies. Today, we know them as “Jeeps.” (We love our civilian Jeep!)

4. The Department of Defense owns almost 30 million acres of land. -- DOD. 5. The United States has nearly 800 military installations overseas. -- DOD. 6. According to Military.com, the Navy’s bell-bottom trousers are believed to have been introduced in 1817 to permit men to roll them above the knee when washing down the decks. In addition, the trousers can be used as a life preserver if you knot the legs. 7. The Marine Corps motto is “Semper Fidelis,” Latin for “Always Faithful.” 8. The last time the United States “declared war” was in 1942. -- The Atlantic. 9. The U.S. Department of Defense is the nation’s largest employer. -- DOD. 10. The U.S. military uses 4.6 billion US gallons of fuel annually. -- Air Force Magazine. 11. U.S. military bases overseas do not accept pennies as currency. This practice began in Europe in the 1980s as a means to save money by eliminating the cost to ship the coins. -- Los Angeles Times.

12. The U.S. military uses a nearly silent type of Velcro that reduces the ripping noise by over 95 percent. -- Reddit. 13. A duty area generally does not have to pay federal income tax on the military pay and reimbursements during his or her service there. -- Internal Revenue Service. 14. In 1949, a U.S. Army private first class – known to the payroll department as an E-3 -- took home a monthly check of \$99.55 in “basic pay.” That \$99.55 came after he had been in the service for two years and had no dependents.

Semper Paratus


The Veterans' Corner

Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran


Letters to The Editor**Towns County Water & Sewer Authorities**

Dear Editor,
Towns County currently has three water authorities, Towns County Water and Sewer Authority, City of Young Harris Water Authority, and The City of Hiawassee Water Authority all operating independently and with little cooperation. There are customers who have water service from the Towns County Authority and sewer service from the City of Hiawassee Water Authority. As a result, billing and service calls are confusing to the customer. Some accounts have refused to pay the City of Hiawassee the sewer portion of the billing, without support from Towns County authority. Typically when there is a collection issue, the water is shut off after a period of default. In instances where the City provides sewer services only, they don't have the “shut off” capability, and no leverage to collect for service. In a recent “press release” by the Towns County Water Authority’s attorney, Eddy Corn, he advocates maintaining the same operations in triplicate, however on “geographic location and existing infrastructure”. Which essentially is more of the same job (including Mr. Corn’s fees) and territorial protection. The current structure of town/city authorities and Attorney Corn’s plan continues more of the same inefficiencies and expense to the customers of Towns County. A better solution can be found in Rabun County. They consolidated multiple water/sewer authorities under a singular operation eliminating redundancy of staffing, equipment, and attorneys, providing for more cost effective and efficient service. One Towns County elected official stated that he did not want to lose any jobs which would ultimately occur from consolidation. Allowing jobs to expire upon retirement, or if an employee leaves on their own, and/ or is terminated for cause, would be an effective way to achieve this objective with minimal job loss. If the county is to move forward in the best interest of its citizens, it will require leadership and cooperation from all elected officials. With Covid-19 disrupting our economy, budget shortfalls may be an unfortunate consequence. A more forward thinking plan to provide essential services to the citizens of Towns County needs to be considered and acted upon immediately.

Noel Turner

Towns County Libraries

Dear Editor,
As an almost-daily patron and very frequent donor to the Towns County Public Libraries, I hope that by the time this is read those libraries will have reopened, with face masks and social distancing both strongly suggested. This is reasonable.

Claude Spears

The Best Plan Forward?

Dear Editor,
First of all, I want to thank our Congressmen for working together in a bipartisan manner to put forth a stimulus plan that has helped keep America from sinking into a great Depression. As we look ahead to what must now be done, most evidence seems to indicate more will be needed. Much evidence indicates that stimulus money invested in the Green Economy will generate the most new jobs per dollar invested. A broad government study finds that renewable energy creates 4.3 times as many jobs as coal and 5.4 times as many as natural gas per dollar invested. More than 330 major business, including Capital One, General Mills, Microsoft, and Visa are advocating for including climate solutions in the next stimulus. A recent survey of more than 200 central bankers, finance ministry officials and leading economists recommended that measures to address climate change represent the best path for recovery, as do many world leaders, including the European Union, China, the World Bank, and the IMF.

Vernon Dixon



IMAGINE YOUR STORY WITH SUMMER READING!

Snake Eyes

It's hard to love a snake.

I know, all creatures great and small, but even though I am a snake supporter, I have to admit that there is something very snaky about a snake.

I had a pet King Snake in college. (It was just a phase.)

I've captured beneficial snakes and brought them to the farm and I've relocated other snakes. My official snake policy on the farm is “live and let live.” In fact, we have the same policy for all the creatures that share this space.

Except for Copperheads. Copperhead behavior and puppy behavior is not compatible. Copperheads just won't get out of the way. They “bow up” and stand their ground and wait for you or one of your dogs to step on them. “Go ahead. Step on me. I dare you. I was here first and I'm not moving.”

I don't relocate Copperheads, but I do relocate parts of Copperheads.

Rattlesnakes? No problem. We have co-existed here with timber rattlers for decades. Rattlesnakes are thoughtful enough to alert you to their presence, otherwise they are good at getting out of the way.

Snakes are just too beneficial to disrespect. They earn their keep in mice alone, and the only cost to me is watching where I put my feet. We could all use an occasional reminder to watch where we put our feet.

We don't have water moccasins here in the North Georgia Mountains. Some people will argue with that, but I've never seen one, and the biologist for our Conservation Easement says that this area is outside their range.

I'll take the word of the person who can name every living thing you encounter when you walk with her in the woods.

We do have water snakes though, and they look enough like water moccasins to get your attention, and – they are extremely snaky. They can also be aggressive. They like to jump out of a bush and into the water when you're trout fishing. I think it amuses them to wait until the last minute when you're almost directly under them.

Water snakes are spring-loaded, and they can jump an unbelievable distance. I saw one jump about 10 feet into the Chattooga River.

The kid who disturbed him was in a canoe and decided to float over to a rock face and investigate a hole. The snake cleared his face by about 3 inches.

Fear makes you do illogical things. The poor kid screamed and jumped into the river – with the snake. When he realized what he had done, I swear that kid walked on water. I don't blame him.

We have a water snake living in our frog pond. When you look at her head, there is no doubt that she is non-poisonous. She looks almost sweet, with a ghost of a Mona Lisa smile, and she has pretty eyes. I named her Hazel.

While Hazel's visage is very becoming, if you come upon any other part of her unawares, there is a visceral reaction. The grab in the gut, the raised hairs on the arms and the tingle in the spine all shout, “Snake!” We're trying to get used to each other, since the pond is right next to the garden. But even when I know it's her with the pretty eyes, those intimidating markings and that serpentine slither do not inspire a warm cozy feeling.

The frogs in our pond are not very happy with Hazel as a neighbor. Some of them have moved to another nearby pond, and the ones that remain are not nearly as mouthy as they once were.

There were far too many frogs in that pond for the available food supply, but thanks to Hazel, there is a better balance now.

Nature always seeks balance, if we get out of the way and allow it to happen.

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,
PO 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.



The Middle Path

By: Don Perry
onthemiddlepath.com

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 are a couple of different ways that weeds can be classified, and these impact how we want to treat them.

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.

Wildfires and Homeowners Insurance

Many people find out too late that their insurance coverage is inadequate in case of a wildfire. Every year, the wildfire season seems to start earlier and burn later. While Georgia is not in the top 10 for acres burned by wildfires, homeowners are still at risk for the many small fires that occur each year and if your home is the middle of one it is a bad thing for you. Damage from wildfires and forest fires could be covered by your homeowner's insurance. While your dwelling coverage can help with expenses related to repairing or rebuilding your home (up to the limits you choose for your policy), personal property coverage can help replace any of your belongings that are destroyed. Homeowners insurance could also provide coverage for additional living expenses (like food, a hotel, and transportation) if you are forced to evacuate due to a wildfire. And if your house gets vandalized while you're away, your policy may offer you protection in that circumstance too. What's more, home insurance will typically help cover expenses related to smoke and soot damage, if the damage resulted from a covered event, like a wildfire. Homeowners who live close to areas prone to wildfires and brush fires may pay more for coverage because of the financial risk posed to the insurer. And some homeowners will flat-out be denied coverage under a standard home policy. These homeowners can often purchase a standalone fire policy to secure protection against wildfires. Of course, the best way to avoid having to file a wildfire insurance claim is by reducing your home's risk of damage. The Firewise Communities program recommends taking these steps when it comes to home maintenance and landscaping: Use nonflammable construction materials, like roofing and materials for exterior walls. Apply fire-retardant finishes to exterior wood. Keep gutters and roofs clear of debris. Remove tree limbs from attachments and overhangs. Make sure your home's windows are double-paned, or use tempered glass. Use fire-resistant plants and gardening materials. Keep trees clear of yards and branches until it reaches the 10-foot mark. Clear your yard of dead vegetation and other debris. Maintain the space between your yard's trees. Make sure to mow, prune, and water your yard on a regular basis. It is also a wise idea to have a written evacuation plan that you and your family review on a regular basis. And be sure to maintain a thorough home inventory of your more valuable belongings in case they're damaged or destroyed in a blaze – it can really expedite the claims process and help you get back on your feet faster. One of the most important things to do first is to understand your homeowner's policy to make sure you have adequate coverage for wildfires and other natural disasters before you have a problem. The key words here are, “might”, “if”, “may” and “could” which be the exits for insurance companies to deny insurance payments so find out before it is too late. To check your coverage, call your insurance agent.

For more information check www.firewise.org or www.chestchattred.org.



Watching and Working

Jacob Williams


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Kenneth West
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Phone: (706) 896-4454 Fax: (706) 896-1745 Email: tcherald@windstream.net

Or mail to: PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546