

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

100-year-old Hometown Vet

Part I: Vaughn Barrett recently celebrated his 100th year of life. He is a lifelong Towns County native and a very humble man. His daughter, Mitzi submitted a portion of his life history for this column, Vaughn not wanting to brag about his Meritorious Service, sharing that same notion with so many of our Greatest Generation's philosophies. Speaking with Mitzi, who loves her Dad and is so proud of him for many reasons, I learned that he would sometimes say the old quote about a "cat with nine lives". As you read his history herein and understand those missions he went on, I'd say that applies to Mr. Barrett. Not only in his Army exploits, but as Mitzi said, here in Towns County on his many jobs he was also very close to dying after a cave in on Young Harris Mountain, and as well when his tractor went off and flipped over in a ditch over at the Fairgrounds. The doctors told Mitzi that by all accounts he should have died. Lesser men often do. Nevertheless he ALWAYS was willing to help and assist anyone in our area who needed his help. Including the many "drunks" who ran off the road and got stuck in the ditches out front of his home. He'd do anything for them except take them to buy more beer!

Vaughn's active duty began February 10, 1943 with the US Army's 544th Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment. He was a private, assigned to Company "D", Shore Battalion, and was promoted to Corporal for his abilities as a highway construction machine operator, and general engineering. He underwent rigorous training at Camp Edwards, Massachusetts, studying the techniques of our nation's enemies, mastering small arms weapons, and learned modern warfare strategies and tactics. Moving to Camp Gordon, Johnston, Florida his Regiment became part of large scale assault maneuvers, preparing for what was to come with overseas movement.

May 2nd, 1944 found Vaughn leaving San Francisco aboard the UST "Sea Devil" Passing under the Golden Gate Bridge bound across the Pacific Ocean to disembark at Oro Bay, New Guinea. This was a 22 day journey.

Leaving Oro Bay, Vaughn was a part of the first elements of the Fourth Engineer Special Brigade headed into Maffin Bay, Dutch New Guinea where he and others staged for their initial combat landing. He then joined the large task force, landing with the D-Day Assault units on the Jap held island of Morotai, Netherlands East Indies, in mid September, 1944.

After Morotai Island had been cleaned up, Mr. Barrett was headed to Bouganville in the Solomon Islands assigned to the 37th Infantry Divisions for combat operations. After three weeks, Vaughn and his unit were assigned to XIV Corps of the Sixth Army for amphibious assault on the Island of Luzon, Philippine Islands. Vaughn, already a seasoned Veteran of much training and many tough campaigns landed with the initial assault at Lingayen Gulf, on January 9, 1945.

Vaughn Barrett's heroic history to continue in next week's TCH.

Semper Paratus

NOTE: Excepts including spelling taken from directly from copy of Vaughn's Certificate of Meritorious Service, as written by Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Charles J. Larson.

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



"The feds are just starting to worry about inflation?
I think I need to shop at the same market they do."

Crouched at the Starting Line

Are you still reluctantly crouched at the starting line of the age of information and technology? No, it's not a race if you choose not to run. However, though you may still be, for example, quite content with your 1998 Craftsman riding mower, your repair guy only wants to work on a brand new zero turn Toro, and one day he's going to tell you he can't get parts for your old faithful. Fine. I'll find the parts myself. After all, I can locate anything I need on the internet, right? Here we go. So...why does Google keep showing me ads for zero turn mowers? All I need is a belt keeper and an idler pulley arm. I'll keep clicking past the ads...and clicking. I think I found it! Good old Amazon! What do you mean you want \$65 for shipping a \$14 part? Not on your life, buddy. Hold on...That's it! Serial numbers match. All I have to do is...setup an account? Prove that I'm not a robot? What robot would need a belt keeper for a 1998 mower deck? What do you mean, "click on all the traffic lights?" There are no traffic lights in those squares. Do you mean that fuzzy, out-of-focus thing? What about the fuzzy thing that's in two squares? I'll click on both of them.

Sorry, try again. Click on all the crosswalks. Sorry, try again. Click on all the motorcycles. Sorry, you've made too many attempts. Please call customer support. Due to Covid and the high volume of calls, your estimated wait time is 2 hours. Please refer to our website and setup an account for faster service. That zero turn mower is starting to look pretty good.

Well, any goat can mow a lawn and I've got a push mower and a sling blade. But sometimes the rage of information starts messing with your business, like the time the bank wanted me to change my online password. I understood, and as a network security guy from this side of the Stone Age, I appreciated the need, the fact that my password was already 16 characters including every squiggly mark on the keyboard notwithstanding.

After successfully proving that I was not a robot, the website finally allowed me to update my password. But wait, there's more. We're doing two step verification now. OK, send me an email. Oh...email is not an option. You have to send me a text to verify that the not-robot trying to check on his bank balance is really me. The only problem is, we don't have cell service here.

So I click "send text" and hop into the car. I'm going a little fast because it's 5 miles to the first hill where I can get a decent cell signal. Got the text and back home again, pull into the driveway, run into the house with the verification code, click on the website link and... "To prove you're not a robot, click on all the motorcycles." Not-robot finally got past the motorcycles, crosswalks and traffic lights to discover that his verification code had expired. Reluctantly, grudgingly, and with a deep resentment at being forced to submit to the evil dominion of full time interconnectedness, we decided to insist that our carrier make the wifi calling feature on our phones work properly. Alas, with a working cell phone at home, how long would it be before I was checking facebook every 5 minutes, sending texts from the bathroom and interrupting my sleep cycle to absorb some blue light from the nightstand? I'm convinced that the fell beast slouching toward Bethlehem will live stream the event on tik tok or youtube.

So I called up our carrier and the recorded message said that due to covid and the high volume of calls, the wait time would be 20 minutes. One hour and a half, one disgruntled work-from-home technician and one supervisor later, new SIM cards were due to be mailed to our address. Always use the USPS if it absolutely, positively has to be there sometime this year.

This tale has a cautiously optimistic ending. I can check my bank balance now. Oddly, since that first time, the website has never offered to send me a text again. The cell phones live in the office or anywhere outside the bedroom. When they get lost we call them and listen for the buzzing sound, but usually they stay lost until we need to travel. They haven't taken over our lives yet, and we're sleeping just fine. The faithful old Craftsman mower is still going strong as well. After negotiating scores of traffic lights, motorcycles and crosswalks, I found enough parts that, with a little hammering and light welding I was able to put off buying that zero turn mower for another year or two. If there's a moral to this story, it's this: Don't feel bad and don't feel left behind if you are frustrated or confused by the pixel planet. I was an IT professional for many years and I still find it difficult to navigate at times. It's not you - it's them. Part of the problem is that technology has surpassed the ability of our degraded work ethic and educational system to fully utilize it. Competing platforms of companies in a race to consume the weakest players adds to the confusion.

Finally, we can take some comfort in the fact that, if the lights ever do go out for good one day and this specialized, top heavy, compartmentalized virtual world that we've built, a world where almost no one gets the big picture and the components fit together like a thousand piece puzzle of a wheat field - if that virtual world fails, that sling blade will still work and our computers and electric self driving Ford pickup trucks will not be bothered with crosswalks and traffic lights. Our pixel world bank balance will be a mystery, but if we still have enough toilet paper left over from the pandemic, we can buy whatever we need.

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Backyard Laying Hens

Backyard laying hens are a fun and rewarding project for youth as well as grown folks. They eat many insects in the place they roam, their composted manure is a great soil amendment for home gardening, and the typical backyard breed will lay between 3 and 5 eggs per week if properly taken care of.

Good egg production begins with a solid diet for your hens. They require protein, starch, and fiber in adequate amounts to produce all the components of the egg. Other important ingredients to consider are grit, which aids in digestion; calcium, which is the major component in eggshells; and tender greens such as grass or weeds, which give the hen minerals and are a good source of fiber. A good layer feed has (depending on the brand) 16% to 25%

protein and supplies loads of starch, a fair amount of grit, and many minerals the hen needs. Although layer feed can be given to hens without any supplements, the backyard chicken keeper usually gets better results by supplementing layer feed with ground oyster shells (both calcium and grit), adding an electrolyte solution (such as Sav-A-Chick) to their water in hot weather, and letting them free-range for at least part of the day to eat both insects and greenery. Pullets purchased this spring are not likely to lay eggs until next spring or possibly late next fall depending on the weather. To get good production from your hens, they need at least 12 hours of daylight for their ovaries to begin working. Later in fall, through winter and early in spring, days are much shorter than this. In nature, if the chicken was raising a clutch of chicks, it would be harder to keep them alive in the winter months. She uses this to her advantage when living in cold places, not only to hatch more chicks but also to save her the energy of keeping them warm even in the cold. If the chicken keeper wants to make them lay through winter, all they have to do is add a light in the coop, and set it on a timer beginning at 4 in the morning. This extends the typical 10-hour daylight cycle to 14 hours, which is plenty of light for the hens. For practical purposes, this does not really hurt the hen, as long as she is getting a good diet and a place to sleep free of drafts, to reduce strain on her. And although she may produce less eggs than in the summer, she will still usually lay 2-4 eggs per week. A few things to consider are to collect eggs before they freeze (as the hen leaves the nest, they get cold), turn the light on in the morning instead of the evening, and be sure their nest is in a draft-free place in the coop away from feed and water sources, as the commotion of feeding can deter them from laying there. In addition, if you use red heat lamps instead of white bulbs, they will not have this effect on hens, as red light is not seen as daylight by the hen.

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

Snakes in the Mountains

How many times have you stuck your hand in a weed choked flowerbed, or walked to the shed out back in the dark without a flashlight, or stepped in brush without looking first. There are things in those bushes and around buildings that will bite you when you disturb them and make you awful sick, lose a limb, or even die. Snakes are all around us up here in the mountains and they usually won't bother you unless you disturb them. I was standing on the step to our old house here on the farm talking to my mother thru the screen and I felt a bump on my foot. I had been struck by a 4-foot timber rattler that was coiled by the step where people had been walking in and out all day with flip flops and tennis shoes. It was lucky that he hit me on my boot and not one of them! Rapid urbanization and higher-than-normal amounts of rain are a combination that increase the likelihood of human-snake encounters, and more interactions can lead to more bites. The thing to remember is to never put your hands or feet somewhere you can't see and to use tools like hoes or a shovel to move debris or turn it over so you can see that it's safe to handle. Because snakes cannot generate their own body heat, they prefer sun and/or stretching out on warm surfaces like rocks, pavement and other heat-absorbing materials while temperatures are cooler. But in the heat of the summer, they prefer shade.

Venomous snakes typically do not want to use their venom as a defense. They usually give warnings - like rattlesnakes rattling - before they strike. A snake strikes because it views you as a threat, and producing venom is an energetically costly process, and they only have so much. If they use it, they must make more to hunt for food, and they have to work for every single meal, so striking to defend themselves is something they would rather avoid. There are two things homeowners can do to reduce the likelihood of snakes hanging around a location - remove potential shelter and food. Reducing hiding spots for snakes will also reduce hiding spots for the prey they seek, like rats and mice.

Teach children not to reach inside crevices and under bushes with low-hanging limbs. They need to know they shouldn't reach into a place if they can't see what might be in there. Homeowners should also take precautions to reduce the chance of their pet encountering a snake, such as having them on a leash during walks.

Common non-venomous species include garter snakes, which people also refer to as garden snakes; rat snakes, also known as chicken snakes; and bull snakes, these snakes are helpful and need to be left alone. King snakes found in South Georgia will attack and kill a rattlesnake. Common venomous snakes here in Georgia include eastern diamond-backed rattlers, timber rattlers, copperheads and the cottonmouth, also known as the water moccasin.

Most snake bites to humans occur to the feet/lower leg or the hands. It's best to stay calm (yeah right!) and get to a hospital as quickly as possible. There was a snake bite on a hiker on the Appalachian trail last week and the victim was evacuated by helicopter to a hospital. First thing to do is to try to identify the snake species. This is especially important for the emergency room doctors to know what it was so they will know how to treat the bite. They just need a decent description of the snake or take a photo of it with your cell phone if it's safe to do so. The victim should remove clothing like socks if bitten on the foot and items like rings on fingers if bitten on the hand because of swelling. Tourniquets and suction devices or using other mythologized methods to remove snake venom could do more harm than good.

Hospitals have anti-venom on hand to deal with bites. Just focus on getting to the hospital quickly but safely.

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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

Letters to The Editor

Redistricting

Dear Editor,

The Census is done, and the redistricting season, that occurs every ten years, has begun. Drawing maps in Georgia is done by whichever party is in charge of the State Legislature. The work is done under a veil of secrecy sanctioned by law. Lacking an open, fair, and public process, everyone - no matter what party - has used this opportunity to protect their incumbents, to the detriment of Georgia voters.

The upcoming redistricting will affect our state for the next decade, and voters need to have a say in developing these districts that will be in place until 2030. Communities can have their influence diluted or overly concentrated by map line-drawers interested in partisan gain or pleasing powerful interests.

At a minimum, the House and Senate apportionment committees should:

Do all the work in public, share all data used, and release proposed maps well in advance of their adoption for public comment.

Draw maps based on community input given at open public hearings across the state.

Commit to using independent, non-partisan benchmarks to prevent partisan bias.

The non-partisan Fair Districts GA has resources on their website, fairdistrictsga.org to educate citizens about redistricting, and opportunities for involvement to encourage legislators to ensure that the process is fair and transparent.

It is important to contact Senator Steve Gooch, steve.gooch@senate.ga.gov and ask him to guarantee a transparent, fair, and open process as they redraw Georgia's maps. Also, find out when there will be a meeting for you to be informed about the possible changes to your area and be sure to attend.

Mary Lasris

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Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor
P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546
Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net

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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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