

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Beautiful Veterans Memorial Park

Whenever one or more of our local Veterans visit this sacred park the story that often is shared reads like this: "While I was there, visitors from other areas pulling in with cameras and commenting on what a beautiful and wonderful little Veterans Memorial Park we have here." Ditto for me and my solo visit of Friday, last. This park means so much to so very many. We all give thanks, once again to Bill Kendall and the Towns County School associated crew who envisioned and built this park over thirty years ago. Our new commissioner, Mr. Cliff Bradshaw has thus far passionately approved the Towns County mission of honoring our many Veterans, their families, living and deceased with the beauty of this small, simple, yet sacred ground.

**The Veterans' Corner**  
*Scott Drummond*  
 USCG Veteran



We have volunteers from our many Veterans organizations who often commit to projects concerning our park. One of which is our Memorial Wall Committee. Beginning shortly after 2012, we had many meetings with Mr. Kendall trying our best, ironing out any kinks and removing obstacles from our primary objective of inscribing deceased Veterans names, who currently were Towns County residents upon the one lone remaining granite wall, which had gone unused for years.

No easy task, and of course our team had to research granite inscribers, negotiate for the best price available and meet their requirements for those who sponsor their loved one's name to be placed on this last wall to honor our Towns County Veterans, who have gone on to our Supreme Commander.

Requirements thus became: 1: Must have served in one of our primary branches of the armed services, a- US Army; b-US Navy; c-USMC; d-USAF; e-USCG. 2: The Veterans surviving sponsor must have proof of residency at time of passing and provide proof of military service and discharge under honorable conditions. 3: The proposed Veteran must have no criminal record. 4: There should be no duplication of Veterans names which are already inscribed upon, thus recognized upon the original existing walls of honor. 5: Name and branch of service to be inscribed, no rank or other recognition is available. 6: Time of passing of said Veteran should be after January 1, 2012, or the sponsor will be told their loved one will go on the "waiting list" to be decided upon by the last public meeting in September of each year. This is based upon space available on the small granite wall of that specific year and upon an annual basis. Thus far, this has worked out well, for all. 7: Sponsor must provide a check or cash for covering the cost of engraving only.

The fine, dedicated volunteers who chair our five summer month meetings to meet with sponsors will be at our VFW Post #7807 upstairs in back from 3 PM till 5 PM on Saturdays, typically the first Saturday of the month excluding holiday weekends. There are three meetings left this year, 2017: July 8; August 5th; September 9th.

*Semper Paratus*

## To Catch a Thief

Most of us have experienced theft at some point in our lives. Anger is a normal response, but a sting of betrayal can follow, for thieves take more than material possessions. They take peace of mind and faith in humanity.

Some thieves steal out of need or desperation. Some do it for the thrill. Some thieves are as blunt as a bludgeon. Some are as cunning as a politician. Woody Guthrie said, "As through this world I've wandered, I've seen lots of funny men; Some will rob you with a six gun, and some with a fountain pen."

Like most places on Earth, we have our share of theft. The crime rate here in the peaceful valleys of North Georgia is lower than in many parts of the world; lower than many places within our own state. We have some break-ins and other incidents, but we rarely have to endure anything as dramatic as the nightly shooting report from the city. For this, we are ever grateful.

There is another kind of crime, however, that is not uncommon in our area. It is rarely prosecuted. It is not even considered a crime by some of its well-heeled perpetrators. This crime happens all over the country where there are old farms and old buildings, places that the uninformed or insensitive might consider neglected or abandoned.

The perpetrators of this crime sometimes look just like you and me. They are well mannered and often well-regarded members of our community. Like many of us, they might appreciate quaint old things or enjoy collecting antiques and such. You may even know some of these people yourself, people who do not "need" to steal anything.

Unfortunately they seem to have a misguided notion that it is acceptable to rummage about private property if that property appears sufficiently remote, neglected, or "abandoned," as some have said. They seem to believe that stealing from an old farm is "rescue" or "salvage."

You, dear reader, know better. You know that old houses, old barns and old out-buildings may look abandoned. They may actually be neglected. But this does not mean that they are not cherished. Sometimes here in the country we let our old buildings take their own time returning to the ground. They hold memories, better than any photograph ever could, and there is a quiet kind of dignity in just letting them be.

We know that some people disagree, but if we had a microscope, we would still be unable to locate the slightest interest in a drive-through opinion of what constitutes an "eyesore."

This does not mean that we don't appreciate beauty and order. We respect natural order and live according to its rhythms. We believe that what time and nature do to old farms, old buildings, and old people – is beautiful. Nevertheless, we still sigh with sadness at the sagging roof or the cracked window at the place where our grandmother once greeted children with smiles and sweetbread. We miss the carpet of flowers that used to decorate the neighbor's farmhouse, before his wife passed away and arthritis limited his ability to garden. Some of us wish that the job that kept us on the road so much had given us more time to drive an extra nail or pull more weeds. There are only so many hours in the day, and so many days in a lifetime.

Some of us wish that our backs were straighter, that we still had the strength to mend the old barn where we were mighty in our youth, where our children learned about life and death and where our grandchildren played before they all grew up and moved away. When we look out the window and see someone digging up bulbs from the old "neglected" flower bed, they are digging in our memories. When they put a shoulder to that closed door, and then carry out something "quaint" and "abandoned," we are wounded. We feel an anger that would call down lightning, and when that passes, we feel the weight of the years even more.

Now as to the thief who is the subject of this week's discussion, we must assume you are smart enough to read a newspaper. You were smart enough to earn the money to buy the new SUV you drove. Chances are that you might not even consider yourself a thief, but you are.

Be advised: Some of us who love old places still have strong backs, very likely stronger than yours. We are the ones who put up the posted signs that you chose to disregard and climbed the trees to hang security cameras, in the shadows. You won't see them. But we will see you. We were reluctant to do all this, but you, and others like you, keep coming, and digging, and taking.

In a quiet, remote grove of an old homestead there is an old log barn that was built a century ago. It is a simple structure, but a family treasure. The roof is kept in good repair. The sills are still sound and the little barn sits high and dry above the ground. You came quite a distance through the woods, thief, to get to that barn. You damaged the frame when you pried off the door. It wasn't locked. Maybe you thought that you would take it with you, but it was too heavy to carry. You forced out a beam from the wall, leaving an ugly gap in the side of the barn. Your desire for that "quaint" old beam did not come close to justifying your theft. It was a load bearing beam, and now the entire wall sags. Left unattended the whole structure would soon have fallen to the ground, after all these years.

The wall will be repaired, but a memory of the quality of your character will persist, as well as an electronically preserved image of your face. Remember those cameras we mentioned earlier? They take remarkable pictures. Don't come back.

## The Middle Path

*By: Don Perry*

## Radon Testing

Radon is a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas that is directly linked to increased rates of lung cancer. In fact, it is the second leading cause of lung cancer, after tobacco smoke. It is a common problem in mountainous areas as uranium breaks down into radium, which eventually degrades into radon. Radon can enter the home through well water and the foundation itself. Unlike for carbon monoxide and other harmful gases, there are no detectors for radon levels. The only way to determine if you have high levels of this gas is to test it yourself.

Pickens, Fannin, Union and Towns have some of the highest radon contamination rates in the state. In Union County alone, 47% of the homes tested showed unacceptably high levels of radon gas. If the air in your home tests positive for higher than 4 picocuries per liter, it is recommended that you take steps to reduce the levels of radon. Though you can take many steps yourself, such as increasing circulation and ventilation in basements and crawl spaces, it is highly recommended that you hire a professional radon mitigator.

There are two different tests to determine radon levels in your home: an air test and a water test. Air tests can be purchased from local retailers or from [www.ugaradon.org](http://www.ugaradon.org). Once you purchase your kit, make sure all exterior doors and windows have been closed for at least twelve hours, aside from normal exit and entry. You can run your air conditioning or heat as you would normally. Hang the test kit 2 to 6 feet off the floor on the lowest habitable level of your house that I used regularly. Leave the test kit for a minimum of 3 and maximum of 7 days. Once the required time has elapsed, seal the envelope, record the starting day and time and the ending day and time. Mail the test kit to the designated address in your kit immediately to ensure accurate results.

Radon water tests can be purchased through the extension office for \$40. These tests are different from basic water tests because they require specific containers and collection methods. First, remove any filters and aerators from the faucet. The kitchen faucet is usually the best water source as it is usually the most commonly used in the house. Run cold water for 15 minutes to flush the system, and then reduce the water to a gentle flow and fill a large bowl with it. Submerge the first sample bottle and its lid under the water and allow the bottle to fill. Cap the bottle while it is still in the water and turn it upside down. If there are any air bubbles, empty the bottle and fill it again until no bubbles are present. Once both bottles are filled, seal them inside the provided plastic bag and return them to the Extension Office. These tests need to be overnighted so we can only accept them Monday through Wednesday, 9am to 12pm.

Union and Towns County Extension will be holding a Master Naturalist Class Wednesdays starting July 26th and ending September 20th at the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. This is an eight week course that meets once a week and covers wildlife management, tree and insect ID, invasive species, Georgia natural history, and many other topics. Registration fee is \$250 for the entire eight week course. We are already half full, so please call ASAP to register!

Effective June 1, 2017, the Towns County Extension office will change its hours to 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. We will still close from 12 p.m. - 1 p.m. for lunch.

**UGA extension**  
**From the Ground Up**  
*Melissa Mattee*



## Letters to The Editor

Dear Editor:

*Donald Trump's Withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement - A Colossal Mistake*

Donald Trump's withdrawing the US from the Paris Climate Agreement is a national and international tragedy. History will look back upon this as one of the gravest errors that the US has ever committed. We now join Syria and Nicaragua as the only countries not in the Paris Climate agreement-really great company! I have a deep feeling of sadness and disbelief about this. How could Donald Trump turn his back on billions of people for countless generations to come who are depending on us to pass on a livable world to them? It is one of the most immoral actions that have ever been committed.

Not only that, we will lose face with the whole world, leaving a void that China, India, and Russia will gladly fill. In addition, it will undermine American security by furthering climate change which will cause mass displacement of hundreds of millions of people due to starvation and sea level rise. It will also allow China and other nations to displace the US in the race to be the leader in the Green Energy revolution and will cost Americans millions of good paying jobs. It is indeed a day that will live on in infamy.

The sad thing is that the withdrawal is based on more erroneous ideas. If America were to adopt a revenue neutral carbon tax, as actually advocated by leading Republicans like George Shultz and James Baker, both former Secretaries of the State and Treasury, Henry Paulson, former Secretary of the Treasury, Rob Walton, and Bob Inglis, former Republican Congressman, this would both grow our economy, add millions of new American jobs, and combat climate change.

America, we need to stand up and tell our leadership that it is out of contact with its citizens! 73% of Americans supported staying in the Paris accord. Write our Congressmen and our President and tell them there is a better way. A carbon fee and dividend plan is one such way.

*Vernon Dixon, MD*

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to Mr. Groza's rebuttal to my letter. I cannot find anything to substantiate Mr. Groza's assertions that Medicare and Medicaid will not be cut under the proposed budget.

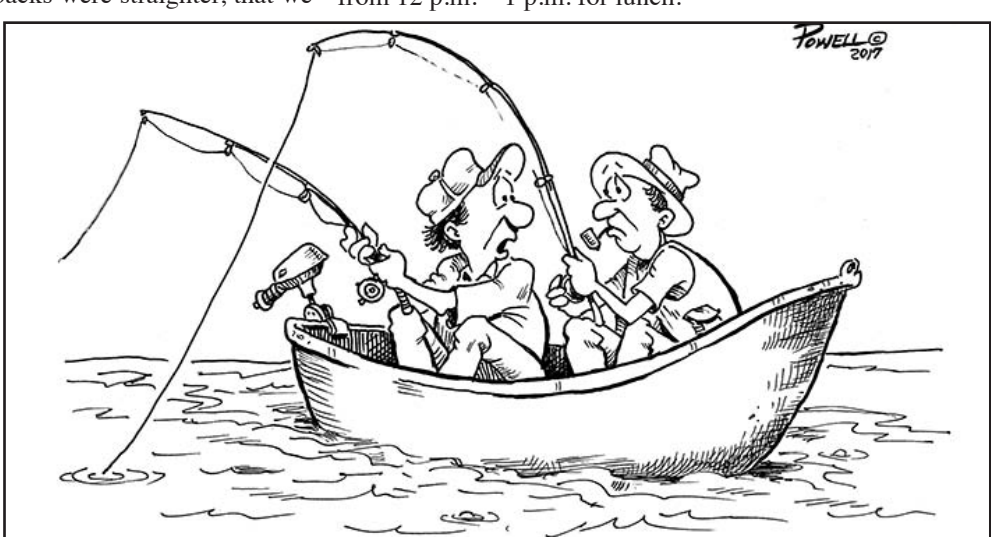
Medicaid, especially, will be cut drastically and fewer people will have access to needed health care. These cuts will be much more drastic than what is in the budget because the American Health Care Act, if enacted, will also make draconian cuts to health services in the amount of \$8.8 billion. By the way, senior citizens, beware of \$23.1 billion in cuts to Social Security after Mr. Trump promised not to touch Social Security.

With all due respect, Mr. Groza, my research does not support your conclusions. To wit, health care services will be cut by \$1.91 trillion over 10 years resulting in a 28.57 percent reduction over 10 years. Grants to states (likely to be block grants) will be cut by \$627 billion resulting in an 11.8 percent reduction over 10 years. Medicare will be cut \$68.2 billion resulting in a reduction of 0.8 percent over 10 years. (Source: [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/23/us/politics/trump-budget-details.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/05/23/us/politics/trump-budget-details.html?_r=0)).

The bottom line is that millions will not have access to health care. The Congressional Budget Office states that 23 million Americans will be without health care over 10 years.

Finally, I disagree with Mr. Groza's statement that budgets are not moral documents. How we spend money reflects priorities and values. Values are about morality. Why else would pro-life politicians want to block funding for agencies which provide abortions?

*Joseph Mahon*



"I'd like a new rod for Father's Day, but my family loves me so much it will probably be exercise equipment."

## Towns County Community Calendar

	Every Monday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
	Every Tuesday:	
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Wednesday	
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Thursday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Friday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Sunday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Second Tuesday of each month:	
Caregiver support	Brasstown Manor	3 pm
Arts & Crafts Guild	Mtn. Regional Library	4 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Mtn. Coin Club	N. GA Tech	6 pm
	Second Wednesday of each month:	
Basket Weavers	SC Fire Hall	10 am
Board of Elections	67 Lakeview Cir., Ste. A	4 pm
	Second Thursday of each month:	
CVB Board	Rec Center	9 am
Mtn. Comm. Seniors	Senior Center	1 pm
Democratic Party	Civic Center	5 pm
	Third Monday of each month:	
Hospital Auxiliary	Cafeteria	1:30 pm
Water Board	Water Office	6 pm
	Third Tuesday of each month:	
YH Plan Comm.	YH City Hall	5 pm
Co. Comm. Mtg	Courthouse	5:30 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.	Blairsville store	5:30 pm
	Third Wednesday of each month:	
Quilting Bee	McConnell Church	10 am
MOAA	Call Jack @ 828-321-2896	
	Third Thursday of each month:	
Friendship Comm.	Clubhouse	6 pm
	Third Saturday of each month:	
Goldwing Riders	Daniel's Restaurant	11 am

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 Let the Herald work for you!  
 Contact us at 706-896-4454  
 Deadline for the T.C. Herald is Friday by 5 PM

## Towns County Herald

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