

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

These Good Men and Women

Have you ever stopped and considered?

Do you know why we Veterans who have served our nation in peacetime or time of war, for a short period of time or many years until retirement yearn to reunite, just as we often gather and just "hang out"?

Look around you, who do you see, not just an acquaintance, but a comrade and a friend who was willing to lay down his or her life for yours and yearn to reunite with others of the same desires.

Not necessarily to tell stories of experiences we shared as military men and women and look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep but again that's what we are about. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men and women who once gave their very best, men who suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped raw, right down to their humanity.

We did not pick these men and women. They were delivered by fate. But we know them in a way that we know no others. We have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than their own lives, for all our lives. They were willing to have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the oath that we all made, the reason we were willing to die for one another.

We cannot tell what the future holds for each of us. Our comrades drift far from us over the years, sending letters or calling occasionally. We realize that one day even these will fall in silence. Some of these men and women will stay close, a couple perhaps, always at hand.

As long as we have memories and meetings to honor them and their service to America we will think of them all, each and everyday!

I am sure that when we leave this world and report to our Supreme Commander, our thoughts will be of our friends and comrades. "Such Good Men"

Written and given to me by Iwo Jima USN Veteran and Friend, CPO C.E. "Bud" Johnson, USN Retired. Only very slightly edited. This column is for and about those like Bud and indeed all who have served America. Also herein lies very important history of our exceptional unique Sovereign Republic, our United States of America bought and continually paid for by those described by our friend Bud Johnson as above.

Semper Paratus

The Veterans' Corner Scott Drummond USCG Veteran



The Passing of the Flame

Educators and counselors talk about "teachable moments." If we're "living right," as my grandfather used to say, we encounter these moments every day and often. Sometimes our best teachable moments are also ranked as our most embarrassing.

When I am an old man telling and re-telling the stories of my youth and its glory days, I will very likely focus on the decade I spent working as a wilderness guide and counselor. The best of those years was spent at Wolfcreek Wilderness School, which was located just below Vogel State Park in Union County, Georgia.

I've never been comfortable speaking in front of groups, but one of the core components of the programs we facilitated was challenging people to step out of their comfort zones. Therefore, when it was my turn to lead a ceremony closing out a program for a group of 8th graders, I had little choice but to roll up my sleeves and get to work.

The closing ceremony I chose was a variation of the well known ritual of passing on the torch. The participants stand in a circle, each one holding an unlit candle. Beginning with a single flame, they light the candle of the person next to them as the flame travels around the circle. The ceremony symbolizes the passing on of knowledge or tradition and it is usually done in silence or in a solemn and respectful manner.

As the ceremony was about to begin and we stood quietly in our circle, we could hear the sound of dogs barking in the distance. We thought nothing of it at first. Barking dogs are not uncommon in the country. But the barking got closer, and closer, until a pack of dogs ran into a storage room directly under the floor where we stood.

For several weeks prior to our summer program, the property around our facility had been visited by some of the "wild" or feral hogs that often plague mountain communities in our area. Unbeknownst to our staff or participants, our director (from Atlanta) had hired a group of local hunters to deal with the hog problem - on the very weekend we were hosting a group of kids. As curly from the movie, "City Slickers" might say, "City folk!"

The dogs we heard barking were hunting dogs. They were chasing a hog down the mountain, across the field and into the storage room under our Lodge. They cornered the hog directly under our common room and proceeded to do what dogs do with a wild hog. Soon the sounds of growling were added to the barks, as well as the piercing squeals of a hog in distress.

I don't now if you've ever heard a squealing pig, but if you were close enough I believe it could actually do damage to your eardrums. As it turns out, there were a few kids in our group who were capable of screaming almost as loud. In an instant, the silence of our ceremony was replaced with barking, growling, squealing, screaming, crying and the angry shouts of hunters. It was all we could do to prevent an infectious panic from stampeding our terrified group of children.

Joy passes quickly, but horror seems to stretch out forever. Eventually the hunters captured the hog (still very much alive), secured the dogs and to everyone's relief, left the property. One of the teachers responsible for our group of students took me aside and asked if we could go ahead and complete the ceremony. She thought the solemnity might be just the distraction needed to calm our group of frightened kids. So we reformed our circle and passed out candles to begin the passing on of the flame.

Unfortunately for the solemn tone of our ceremony, the only candles we had available were tea candles. You know the type - small disks of paraffin thinly clad in aluminum. They work fine sitting quietly on a hard and heat resistant surface or floating in water. However, when you hold them in your hand for an extended period of time, they get hot. Very hot. So hot that it becomes impossible to continue holding them. And to add insult to injury, our collection of candles must have also been defective, because as they warmed up, they began to escape the confines of their aluminum enclosures and drop to the floor.

You can imagine the scene: The quiet dignity of our ceremony was punctuated by cries of "ouch" and the sound of burning candles being dropped on the floor. The heat of the candles was almost as hot as the temperature of my cheeks.

So a flame was indeed passed around the circle, but it was not the one we anticipated. Instead it was the sound of infectious laughter born out of relief. After the laughter subsided, the flames extinguished and smoke cleared, I did have the presence of mind to remark that there was no rule which required that the quest for knowledge be undertaken without humor.

"We all learned something today," said one of the teachers. "though I'm not quite sure just now what that is. But one thing is certain. We will never forget this night."

Nor will I.

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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.

The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

To Bee or Not to Be

Before learning that local honey, taken regularly, could help relieve Hay Fever symptoms, John's mouth was agape, his eyes red, and his nose was not running, it was rushing. I knew that he was suffering Hay Fever and breathing was difficult. Still I couldn't refrain from saying, "Close your mouth, John. You look Gomer-Pyle goofy. "Well, I can't hear" he said. Opening the mouth to hear storky was as funny. They must have taught Anatomy one-o-none at John's alma mater.

Silliness aside. The world's bees are in decline. In 2006, the phenomenon which came to be called "colony collapse" started in North America and spread throughout Europe. Bees that seemed in good health would fly away and never return. They left behind a dying, unattended queen and combs full of honey. Even with extensive research, no finite cause has been found. Oddly, though colony collapse disorder peaked quickly and is waning, beekeepers continue losing large percentages of their bees every season. This loss and the importance of bees gave rise to a new and lucrative black market crime. Bee Rustling. Thieves head 'um up and move 'um out in the dead of night. In 2017, police discovered a stash of contraband bees worth about \$1 million. Although bees are not the only pollinating insects, biologists attribute every third bite of food in the human diet to bee pollination. Bees are the source of much of the flavor in the human diet too, nutritious or not.

Opie asked Andy what would happen to Aunt Bee if she didn't have them. She didn't know how to bait a hook or play baseball. "She needs us, Pa". Well, people need bees and bees need people. California almond growers are working with pollination specialists to add bee-friendly hedgerows and cover crops of native wildflowers to more than 10,000 acres hoping to triple local bee diversity and reduce the need for rented hives. General Mills has begun requiring bee-friendly practices throughout its supply chain. Experts believe several factors can be causing The Plight of The Humble Bee. I did not coin that phrase, just wish I had.

The factors are the four Ps: parasites, poor nutrition, pathogens and pesticides.

Asian Varro mites have spread through international trade in bees and bee keeping equipment. Widespread loss of flowers in rural landscapes and industrial farming practices over the past 60 years, have taken food sources from bees. Pathogens carried by bees and equipment get moved around with international trade. Pesticides get the most attention. Products that test "bee safe" in labs can become unsafe when mixed with fungicides or herbicides often sprayed on the same fields. Some remedies for bee decline can be as simple as planting flowers and reducing use of pesticides. With the right mix of flowers and nesting habitat, nearly any patch of ground can be turned into a bee garden. For farther-ranging bee species, nectar resources (pit-stops) need scattering across the landscape. Delve into this subject. People mucked it up. Now let's fix it.

Info gleaned from The Wall Street Journal (not the part about John).

Dishin' Dirt Dale Harmon



Pine Tree Care

Do you have pine trees around your home? Chances are that you have some near your house. Pine trees are abundant here in the mountains. They're a large part of the natural beauty. Pine trees aren't difficult to care for, and most will go their whole life without needing any additional care, but there are a few things to look out for.

UGA extension Watching and Working Jacob Williams



Pine trees are part of a group called conifers that includes pines, cypresses, firs, hemlocks, and spruce among others. Conifers stay green year round. Conifers are unique because they don't have flowers, instead they have cones. Conifers are in the broader classification of gymnosperm which in Latin means, 'naked seed.' Conifers are known for being very fast growing trees, so timely management of them is important.

Some diseases, and watch for on pine trees are fusiform rust, littleleaf disease, and pitch canker. Fusiform rust produces galls on the on the stems or branches of infected trees. Slash pine is particularly susceptible to this disease. Littleleaf disease infects pine roots, especially in shortleaf pine. The first visible symptoms above ground are a decline in the canopy with yellowing leaves and dwarfed new foliage, hence the name littleleaf. The best prevention is to apply a 5-10-5 fertilizer to your tree to keep it healthy. Pitch canker causes lesions that can encircle limbs, roots, and tree trunks. The canker cuts off water flow to the infected area, and so needles will turn yellow and brown, falling off the tree. Infected limbs should be cut off about 3 or 4 inches below the canker.

Pine bark beetles are another threat to pine trees. Pine bark beetles will usually not infest trees that are happy and healthy. Pine bark beetles become an issue when a tree has been stressed either by drought, age, overcrowding, diseases, fire, lightning, or other insects. There are several types of pine beetles found in Georgia. There are Ips engraver beetles, the southern pine beetle, and the black turpentine beetle. The best way to prevent pine bark beetles from infesting your trees is to do the best you can in making sure that they aren't stressed. That could include watering them during periods of drought, protecting them from fire damage, or if you're planting them make sure that they are spaced to have enough room when they're full grown.

Pine trees are a danger to fall during storms. Because they are so tall they stand above surrounding trees and don't have a windbreak to protect them. A healthy and sturdy root base will reduce the chances of a tree toppling over. Check tree roots that are near your house to make sure that they look healthy and are not rotting.

Signs of rot will be blackening of the roots themselves, excessive needle drop from the canopy above, or even growth of mushrooms around the base of the tree. If you determine a tree has become a hazard always call a professional to remove your tree.

If you suspect that you have a problem with your pine trees you can take some pictures and send them to Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. Ideal pictures will include an up close, a picture of the entire tree, and the tree from multiple angles. In this case quantity can make up for quality! You can also bring in a sample to the local Extension Office, just make sure that the sample is large enough to give a good idea of what is going on.

For more information, contact the Union or Towns County Extension offices.

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Deadline for the Towns County Herald is Friday by 5 PM



Towns County Community Calendar

Table with 3 columns: Activity, Day/Time, and Location. Includes events like Bridge Players, Free GED prep, SMART Recovery, etc.

Towns County Herald

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