

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Welcome Randal Forehand

Even though he's found his peace and solace here with the love of his life, Vic, since 2016, after several careers in extremely high tech national cyber security stints, I'm just now getting to know this fine USAF Veteran.

Randal was born and raised in Americus GA, into a military oriented family with his dad achieving full bird Colonel status as an ACE WWII P-51 fighter pilot. His brother is a Marine with a purple heart. His entire family on his father's side participated in our WWII effort from civilian work force to military life. Those great ladies as well!

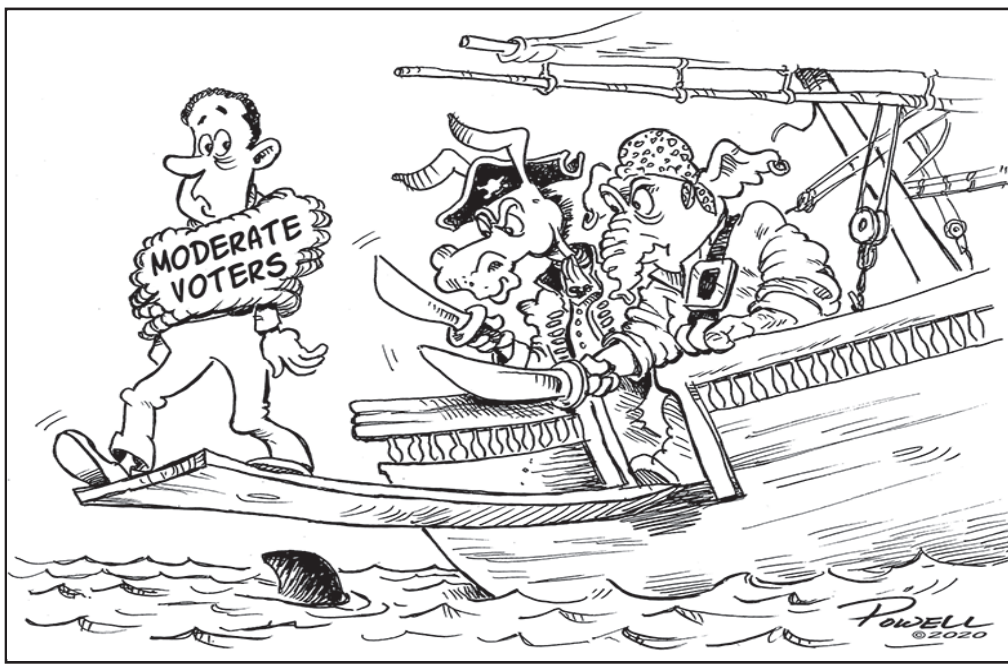
Randal began his pursuit of electronics as a self-taught genius of sorts by hanging out at the local cord-board office of SBT and T company in Americus as a teenager. His expertise followed him into our USAF, enlisting in 1975 with basic training in San Antonio. Then USAF electronics training in Biloxi. Next onto Mobile Combat training in Altus, Oklahoma. Some SERIOUS, TOUGH training there! Not for sissies! His first overseas assignment was a Troposphere station in Torrejon, Madrid Spain supporting the AUTOVON network. Leaving Spain, he was assigned to Special Projects in Oklahoma City, part of a team to design and build our AUTODIN communications network, which I know filtered down into my latter career in SNET broadband telecommunications on the civilian side. He also supported Operation Eagle Claw, the Iranian hostage rescue of April, 1980. Randal also assisted in defeating Libya's defense network. Onward to NRO assignment in Omaha, NE, under control of our CIA. Also manned communications during our Challenger Shuttle incident.

Randal has earned these awards, Defense Meritorious Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster, Air Force Meritorious Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Air Force Achievement Medal with 2 oak leaf clusters.

After retiring from SEVERAL different high security jobs, military and civilian, Randal and his High school sweetheart moved here where Randal now owns and operates our new "Nature's Health and Body" store selling CBD products to those many of us who suffer from arthritis and injury related health problems.

Randal was recently elected as our new American Legion Post#23 Commander, with coaching from our former Commander John Harkins, who had insight enough to make a good choice.

Randal wants to pass this along, "I'm here to help."
Semper Paratus



All Hands on Deck

The screen door slams at the back door of our old family home. It has a distinctive sound. No other screen door sounds quite like it, and when I hear it I travel through time. It is summer and my mother is carrying a load of wash to hang out on the clothesline. My dad is feeding his birds. My brother and I are heading out to roam the neighborhood. "Be careful, and be home before dark," we are told. How times have changed.

The old farmhouse where my dad lived with his family of 7 has been unoccupied for many years. It was built by hand, of oak and chestnut and heart pine. Friends and neighbors pitched in to raise it up, and it grew organically over the years as the needs of the family grew. It has its own distinctive house smell, which still takes me back to the time when it was warm and rich with the aromas of sweet bread in the oven and a fire crackling in the fireplace. The old house is showing its age, and I think living memory keeps it standing as much as its hand sawed beams. Many younger houses have fallen while this one still stands. We don't build things to last anymore. Times have changed.

Times always change. My childhood memories will look very different from those of someone born in the same place a generation later. There are things I value that were unknown to my forbears, and those who come after me will value things I can't imagine. There is always a generation gap, but a healthy culture has continuity. We pass on our core values, our history, and our sense of place.

We have never done an outstanding job of that in our great nation. We are still a relatively young country, and we are the personification of change. We don't have thousand year old cathedrals to anchor us in time. Chances are we would have knocked them down to build freeways if we did have them. But we do have a history. We've been through some hard times, and we've had our share of triumph and tragedy. We are young, but we are old enough to be "of age," to have a sense of history and national character.

Those of us fortunate enough to have a sense of personal history and place and continuity are blessed. We have a resource which provides us comfort and stability; something that helps us map our course through life. Even the fastest ship needs an anchor, and a great nation, even a progressive one, needs these things also.

Our ship seems to be adrift these days. Our sails are furled and the winds of change are blowing. There is little agreement on what bearing we should take, even among those of us who still know how to read a map.

What does it mean to be an American? Our opinions are divided between the extremes of those who embrace a form of patriotism that is martial in character and leaning toward jingoism, and those who seem content to drift with the currents of identity politics and relativism, or who feel that it is politically incorrect to even ask such a question.

At the right hand edge of those extremes are those who cling to a past that never really existed, a paradigm constructed by propaganda and reinforced by fear: terrorists, radical religions and Russians. At the left edge there is no absolute truth, and a vision which does not extend beyond the social matrix which sucks at our souls through the little windows we bow to and poke at throughout our waking hours. And Russians.

If we are to survive as a great nation, we will need to come to some agreement as to who we are. Still alive among us are traditions and core values which have seen us through many hard times. Peel away the obscuring layers of politics and we may be able to see again the humanity we have in common, and the shared goals of a civil society.

The world around us is changing at an ever accelerating pace, and we need to be able to chart a course through these unknown waters. We need to find a middle path between sailing angrily into the unknown, guns bristling, and drifting wherever the wind blows to run aground or be dashed against the rocks.

Soon enough, as happens to all great nations, it will be time again for all hands on deck.

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.

Is it Ripe?

One question that people will call me with is how to tell if a fruit or vegetable is ripe or not. Different plants ripen differently. Some will continue to ripen after they've been picked, others need to ripen attached to the plant. Let's talk about what causes plants to ripen and how to tell if some common fruits and vegetables are ripe or not. Fruits and vegetables are divided into climacteric and non-climacteric. The difference between these groups is their response to the hormone ethylene. Ethylene is a hormone that plants produce to induce ripening. Climacteric fruits and veggies will continue to ripen after they have been picked. Non-climacteric fruits and veggies won't continue to ripen. Instead, they will soften and rot as they age. Some crops are sensitive to ethylene and so shouldn't be stored with climacteric crops that produce ethylene. Apples, pears, peaches, plums, potatoes, and tomatoes are some examples of climacteric plants. Blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, cherries, cucumbers, eggplant, grapes, strawberries, peppers, squash, and watermelon are all examples of non-climacteric crops. Some examples of plants that are sensitive to ethylene and so shouldn't be stored with climacteric crops are asparagus, broccoli, cucumbers, green beans, kale, onions, peas, peppers, squash, and watermelon. Now that we know a little more about the ripening process let's talk about how to tell when the best time to pick some of the most commonly grown crops around here are.

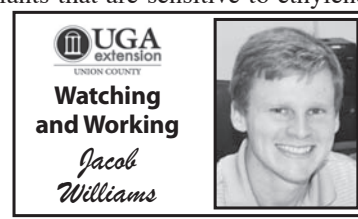
Tomatoes are an easy one to tell when they are ripe because they start to turn red. You can pick tomatoes before they are fully ripe on the vine. Because they are climacteric, they will continue to ripen. I've put tomatoes up in the kitchen windowsill so that they'll ripen. Sometimes it is advantageous to pick something before it's fully ripe so that you make sure critters don't get it before you.

Apples and pears can be a little more challenging to tell when they are ripe. Different varieties will ripen at different times. In addition, the entire tree may not ripen at the same time. If the apple or pear stem breaks away easily from the tree then it's ripe. Turn the fruit sideways to see if it pops off. Depending on the variety, you can use color to tell if the fruit is ripe. If you cut an apple open and the seeds are dark brown, it's ripe. Blueberries will be plump with a deep blue color. They also have a white powder on the skin that keeps them fresh longer.

Squash and zucchini should be harvested when they're 4-8 inches long. They'll both grow longer if left on the vine, and you can still eat them if they're big, but they get tougher as they age. You should be able to push your fingernail into the skin. Sweet corn is ripe when you can puncture a kernel with your fingernail and milky fluid comes out. As soon as corn is picked, it starts to lose flavor. Refrigerate it to retain flavor.

Pick peas when the pods have plumped out. If they start to wrinkle, they're getting overripe. You can always open a pod to see if the seeds are swollen, but still tender. Beans are ready when you can see the seeds bulging through the sides of the pod. Pick peppers when they are shiny green. If you let them sit on the bush longer and they start to change to orange or red and they're getting hotter. If that's what you're looking for, let them sit.

If you have questions about when plants are ripe contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.



Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



The Middle Path
By: Don Perry
onthemiddlepath.com

Letters to The Editor

What a Community Should Be

Dear Editor,
Almost ten years ago, as a Law Enforcement Officer in Florida I was introduced to an old man who came from a Slavic country that no longer exists under Communism. With congress moving towards stricter gun control and discussion of the seizing of certain types of rifles, he inquired if I, as a constitutional Law Enforcement Officer, would seize guns from citizens, in violation of the 2nd amendment. His interest was predicated on the fact that when he was a little boy his father would take him bear hunting in the winter. He said that one day the local council came to his father and said, "Vladimir, we need the serial number of your rifle just in case it would be stolen or so." He said his father complied without any concern. He then told me that two years later the same government came and took the rifle and they never saw it again. Yet worst, two years later they came and took his father and they never saw him again either. If you think this is unrelated to today's atmosphere, just look to the St. Louis couple that were legally protecting their home from rioters, who blatantly violated their private property rights and summarily broke down their gate to enter their private property. On July 10th their guns were confiscated and seized by the same government that would not protect them. I assure you that they personally will be next arrested, forcibly seized, and placed in jail, guaranteeing that due process rights under both the Constitution and Bill Of Rights will be abrogated by prosecutorial fiat.

Over the July 4th weekend our community was "tagged" by graffiti using slogans that are based on Black Lives Matter Doctrine. "Kill all Cops", "Death 2 Amerikkka" are not innocuous statements made by lone wolf perpetrators. Having worked in an outreach program in the inner-city, gang enforcement and protesting by anti-American groups, I can tell you this was a test of our community and its resolve. This was not un-orchestrated; it is right out of Antifa, BLM's and Alinsky's "Rules for Radicals" playbook. They are telling you they are coming for all of us, and they will make themselves known. They are now observing, per their strategic plans, to see our citizen's and politician's reaction. In brief, "what we will do", if anything, to say and enforce, "Not in my community".

I moved my whole family here because this community represented everything I believed a community was, is and should be. And, that defined community is simply comprised of close, patriotic and supportive neighbors, fundamentally based on strong Judeo-Christian beliefs. I wanted nothing more to do with the crime, the unrest, and the increasing Socialist-Marxist bent of any city. Yet, alas, last week we were "tagged" by those who offer nothing else but a pathway to misery, deprivation, resulting in political and moral collapse.

Like the Florida Sheriffs' of Clay County, Darryl Daniels and Polk County, Grady Judd, we as a community, as well as our Law Enforcement Departments, need to make a definitive, loud and clear, public statement that we, the loyal and proud citizens of Towns County, GA, and the United States of America, will not accept, tolerate or countenance violence, vandalism, lawlessness, disrespect and any other violation of our Constitution and Bill Of Rights.

Fly your American flag, talk to your neighbors, support your law enforcement officers and refuse to go quietly into the night.
Jeffrey Pierot

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Brush Fires and Debris Burning

Even relatively small fires have the potential to spread to homes, vehicles, and other properties. More than 9,000 buildings per year, on average, were involved in these incidents. A 2017 NFPA Journal "Firewatch" incident description shows how these fires can turn deadly. A Pennsylvania woman had been burning brush outside her home when the fire spread out of control. She called 911 to report that her back porch was on fire. Her husband called moments later to say he could not find his wife. Smoke alarms were heard in the background of the 911 tape. When firefighters arrived, smoke was coming from the eaves as fire was coming from an open front door and a skylight. The back of the house was also burning. The woman was unable to escape the home and died in the fire. These fires often occur on properties where people live, work, or travel. A brush, grass, or forest fire can spread to buildings or vehicles on the property. Roadway fires can make travel or escape impossible. A fire that starts outside a building can get into the concealed spaces between the exterior and interior. A fire inside the wall or attic space may not activate smoke alarms or sprinklers until it gets into the living space. Thousands of structure fires began with ignition of vegetation During 2011-2015, heavy or light vegetation was the item first ignited in an average of 6,200 reported home structure fires per year. These fires caused an average of seven civilian deaths, 53 civilian injuries, and \$130 million in direct property damage. Most of the brush, grass and forest fires were caused by human activities. One in five of these fires were intentionally set. Other leading factors include open burning of debris (#1 in Georgia), smoking materials and electrical power or utility lines. Lightning caused 17% of the forest, woods, or wildland fires, but only 4% of overall brush, grass, or forest fires. While lightning cannot be prevented, fire growth from outside fire can be limited by maintaining the land, getting rid of dead vegetation, and removing "ladder fuels" that provide a pathway to the tree canopy. A gust of wind can cause a campfire, or a debris burn to rapidly spread out of control. Causes vary by month. Nationally, brush, grass and forest fires are most common in April, July, and March. Some types of fires, such as open burning and fireworks fires show strong seasonal patterns with prevention implications. Intentional fires, fires caused by open burning for waste disposal or agricultural or land management burns and rekindles were all most common in March and April. These patterns vary by region. Fires started by fireworks, electrical power or utility lines, and garden tools or agricultural equipment were most common in July. The Fourth of July was the peak day for these incidents, followed by July 5th. Over the five years, local fire departments responded to an average of 4,430 brush, grass, and forest fires on July 4th, more than five times the daily average of 840. An average of 2,550 fires average on July 5th was three times the daily average. Almost two-thirds of the brush, grass and forest fires started by fireworks.

For more information on things you can do to become Firewise even during the pandemic, check out www.firewise.org or www.chestchattred.org.



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