

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Our VSOs in Towns County

Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) are not for the sole purpose of "looking out for fellow Veterans". Community service is an embedded mission after military service, for those who volunteer.

As an American Legion member, I was asked to help make our presence and what we HAVE ALREADY DONE just a little more public. Allow me to start with an example from our American Legion Auxiliary post #23, chaired by Robin Halfon with donations volunteered from every VSO under the roof of VFW Post #7807:

"Legion Auxiliary: A huge THANK YOU to all of the groups at our Post for contributing back-to-school supplies. We have delivered over \$700 worth of supplies: clothes, backpacks, face masks, head lice kits, pencils, paper, etc., to Towns County Elementary School. They were most appreciative of everything. Hopefully, school can remain open this year. This is still membership renewal time, so please send your dues to Kathy Yellina or the Post or bring to our next meeting, 9/1 @ 4:00 we will meet again. Hope to see everyone. Thank you! Robin Halfon, President " These fine ladies also sponsor Girls' State, as our AL sponsors Boys' State, in concert with Towns County High School.

In addition many of our VSO members take action upon their own, outside our post on day-to-day ventures, very often with no public awareness of what they do. In that respect, new members who want to donate to our wonderful North Georgia hometown area are always appreciated, with their new ideas and hopefully much younger than most of us, currently. Am I begging? Nope! But asking for sure!

We also do "Veterans Visits" to Brasstown Manor and Chatuge Nursing Home that are currently quarantined due to you know what! I am so sick of hearing that "v" and "c" word that I just ain't going to include it here. Fact of the matter is, those are two facilities that should receive the absolute maximum security during this vexing time.

Two of our members have donated pizza luncheons, snacks and sweet-cakes to the over stressed staff of Chatuge Nursing Home, Brasstown Manor, as well as our often overlooked Towns County Commissioners office and staff. Just try to imagine what they have been going through in the past few months! Those funds? Directly contributed by our American Legion family and our VFW. Cash often comes from our pockets when needed.

Our VSOs are all located within the walls of VFW Post 7807 at 706-896-8387 or email: vfw7807@yahoo.com. Physical location is on southeast end of Sunnyside Drive just before the driveway to the trash transfer station turn in. In an unusually designed post arrangement this one post consists of VFW, VFW Auxiliary, American Legion, Legion Auxiliary, Legion riders, Sons of American Legion, Marine Corps League; certainly not a bad assortment of Veterans who try to do the best they can with what they have. Just as our Greatest Generation, our WWII generation tried to teach us to do.

Semper Paratus

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
 USCG Veteran



WE REMEMBER

Falling Leaves, Gathering Memories

Spring cleanup on the farm is a fine thing, full of energy and anticipation, but I prefer the fall, mellowed by reflection and slowed by caution for that undiscovered yellow jacket nest and the snake looking for a place to soak up the morning sun.

Autumn cleanup is subject to the welcome interruption of having to stand perfectly still while the wind catches falling leaves, plays with them like a cat with a string and discards them just as abruptly.

Fall is a favorite book in a series. We read it more slowly and savor it because we don't want the story to end. Some passages we read over and over until they are committed to memory: Coffee on the front porch on a crisp morning; crunching leaves under deep blue skies in crystalline air; stars, more visible at night, and unlike the winter skies, you can enjoy the view without shivering.

September ripens and Joe Pye, jewel weed and iron weed are slowly replaced by goldenrod and aster. We pause to watch hummingbirds jousting around the feeder as they tank up for their long journey south.

We don't want them to leave, but the nights grow colder, the flowers fade, and one day soon our valiant little friends will hover one last time by the window as if to say, "Thank you," and "See you next year."

Fall cleanup this year began with a neglected little corner of the farm which had collected brambles and dead branches, a half wild area at the bottom of our driveway with cherry trees, sumac and locust. Memories gathered there also.

It was there long ago that my dad and I set up a bee yard. He said that the hives would catch the morning sun there, and the bees would discourage curiosity seekers from entering the barn just beyond.

In his later years he would bring a chair and sit near the entrance to the hives to watch the bees coming and going. He could gauge the health of the hive by the traffic, and determine what plants they were working by the color of the pollen on their hind legs.

Dad and I had many conversations in that bee yard. Some pieces of land just seem to be conducive to conversation. Under a big maple tree at the edge of that space Dad would visit with his friend, Jack Dayton, our long time county commissioner, when Jack was in the valley. In the late afternoon the cool breeze from the mountain would flow down an old woods road, through the mountain laurel and under the tree where the two old friends met to revisit their younger days.

Years ago when the road bank at the edge of this plot was bare, I would occasionally find an arrowhead after a rain. Finding an arrowhead gives one pause, especially in the fall, when the signs of change and decay are inexorable.

Thousands of years ago someone spent hours to fashion a tool to feed a family, most likely with no thought at all that someday far into the future his creation would be someone's curiosity or trinket.

What, if anything, will remain of our creations of plastic and particle board, even 20 years from now? Every year there is less of the Americana of the southern Appalachians. The old houses and barns, personal creations of oak and chestnut and heart pine, more durable than what we build today, sink slowly to the ground to disappear forever.

I've been asked on occasion why "you people" don't clear away your crumbling old barns and buildings. The simplest answer is that "it's none of your business." But if anyone really wants to know: Old things hold memories. If we're lucky enough to stay on the land, there comes a day when the calendar and the ache in the joints tells us that it isn't prudent to climb a ladder to nail the tin back on the roof. We would pay someone to do it, but money is tight on a fixed income.

It doesn't bother us much, though we sometimes long for the old days when the old barn was new. There is a kind of quiet dignity in decay. It is as natural as the falling leaves, and the old things that make way for and nourish the new. This will happen without any effort on our part to hurry it along.

Yes, old things and old places hold memories, and not every corner needs to be cleaned up right away, and not every piece of ground has to look like a golf course. The modern world wants everything to be neatly cropped and categorized, and so effective is our masking of the real with the virtual that we have forgotten that chaos and decay are as natural as the changing seasons.

Leaves fall; barns fall more slowly. Trees grow where there were once fields and the bulldozer of modern life turns the forest to field once again. Time turns the bulldozer to rust.

These thoughts all occurred in the time it took the sun to move beyond the limb that was shading me, and I had to smile, remembering my grandfather who would interrupt his morning routine to simply stand and look at the mountain. The old hives stands got cleared away, the brush was piled and the grass mowed. All traces of the old bee yard are gone now, but the memories remain.

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The Middle Path
 By: Don Perry
 onthemiddlepath.com

Chiggers

Now is the time of year when chiggers are going to be most active. If you haven't, then consider yourself fortunate, because you live a blessed life. Let's talk about chiggers, what they are, and what you can do to protect yourself from them.

Some people call chiggers red bugs because they are tiny red mites that are less than 1/50th of an inch long. Chigger are mites that are still in their larval stage. The larval stage is the only one that bites. The other stages of the chigger life cycle either lay eggs or prey on small insects. Chiggers like to live in areas that are full of brush and debris. They can be found in leaf litter. If you have areas with tall grass, they'll like that too. Chiggers mainly bite rodents and rabbits. So, if you have areas that make a good habitat for rodents and rabbits then there is a good chance that you'll have mites as well. Female mites will lay their eggs in the late winter, which will hatch in the spring. Chiggers will reach peak population in mid-summer and remain active until

fall. They'll be killed off by a hard freeze.

Chiggers only bite, they don't bury under the skin. When they bite they inject their saliva which has a skin dissolving enzyme in it. As your skin cells dissolve, they drink it up. The saliva that they inject causes irritation, which makes you itch. Chiggers can stay latched on for three or more days, so if you have a chigger bite it's best to wash that spot with lather repeatedly, and then dab the spot with an antiseptic. That will kill most of the chiggers on you.

Chiggers typically like to bite in tight places. That means you'll often get their bites underneath your socks, in your waistband, or armpits.

Chiggers are susceptible to dehydration. Therefore, they like to populate areas with shade and high humidity. Removing brush piles and leaves, keeping grass cut, and removing bushes will eliminate areas that they like to live. Blackberry bushes seem to be a particularly favorite habitat. Chiggers don't like temperatures over 90 (I don't blame them), so when our temperatures drop as summer ends, chiggers will become more active.

There are some chemicals that can be used as repellents to kill chiggers. Products containing DEET will be effective at repelling chiggers, mosquitoes, biting flies, gnats, and ticks. You can also spray it on your clothing to keep them off your clothes. Oil of lemon eucalyptus can be used as a repellent, except for children under 3 years old. Products containing permethrin can be used on clothing to kill chiggers and ticks.

Chiggers are very aggravating to have, but hopefully this article has given you some options for how to deal with chigger bites and how to prevent them from getting on you. If you have questions about chiggers contact your county Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

On September 28 I will be hosting a Radon Education Program. This event will be virtual, but there is some limited in person seating available. Pre-registration is required for this free event. Call the Union County Extension Office at 706-439-6030 to pre-register.

UGA extension
 Watching and Working
 Jacob Williams



Letters to The Editor

Climate Change Solutions Save Lives & Money

Dear Editor,

In the area of climate change, there have been many studies done, all showing that we would save \$2-\$4 for every \$1 spent to control climate change.

Dr. Shindell, a professor of Earth science at Duke University and lead author of the 2 most recent IPCC reports, recently appeared before Congress and reported that the latest research showed that adhering to keeping to the 2 degree C path would save about 100,000 American lives each year and would save us \$700 billion annually.

Previous research by the MIT and Harvard Medical School showed similar results.

This is not counting all the countless billions of dollars damage and loss of life that occur from others parts of climate change such as sea level rise, increasing storms, forest fires, crop loss, heat stress, etc.

As a Christian, I believe strongly that we must do everything in our power to prevent the loss of human lives and to lessen human suffering, and as a fiscal conservative, I believe we need to protect our country from terrible financial losses.

One solution is to support HR 763, a bill in the House with bipartisan support. This would decrease greenhouse gases by 90% by 2050, add millions of NEW American jobs, and not cost you and me one cent.

Vernon Dixon, MD

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:

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 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 issuing 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 not be considered for publication.*

Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

What Exactly is in Wildfire Smoke?

Here is an article by a professor from Boise State University who researches wildfire smoke: "If I dare to give the coronavirus credit for anything, I would say it has made people more conscious of the air they breathe. As an environmental

RC&D
 Frank Riley
 Executive Director



toxicologist, I research how air pollution, particularly wood smoke, impacts human health and disease. What exactly is in a wildfire's smoke depends on a few key things: what's burning - grass, brush or trees; the temperature - is it flaming or just smoldering; and the distance between the person breathing the smoke and the fire producing it. The distance affects the ability of smoke to "age," meaning to be acted upon by the sun and other chemicals in the air as it travels. Aging can make it more toxic. Importantly, large particles like what most people think of as ash do not typically travel that far from the fire, but small particles, or aerosols, can travel across continents. Smoke from wildfires contains thousands of individual compounds, including carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, carbon dioxide, hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides. The most prevalent pollutant by mass is particulate matter less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter, roughly 50 times smaller than a grain of sand. Its prevalence is one reason health authorities issue air quality warnings using PM2.5 as the metric. There is another reason PM2.5 is used to make health recommendations: It defines the cutoff for particles that can travel deep into the lungs and cause the most damage.

The human body is equipped with natural defense mechanisms against particles bigger than PM2.5. The small particles bypass these defenses and disturb the air sacks where oxygen crosses over into the blood. Fortunately, we have specialized immune cells present in the air sacks called macrophages. It is their job to seek out foreign material and remove or destroy it. However, studies have shown that repeated exposure to elevated levels of wood smoke can suppress macrophages, leading to increases in lung inflammation. Short-term exposure can irritate the eyes and throat. Long-term exposure to wildfire smoke over days or weeks, or breathing in heavy smoke, can raise the risk of lung damage and may also contribute to cardiovascular problems. Considering that it is the macrophage's job to remove foreign material - including smoke particles and pathogens - it is reasonable to make a connection between smoke exposure and risk of viral infection. Stay informed about air quality by identifying local resources for air quality alerts, information about active fires, and recommendations for better health practices. Be aware that not all face masks protect against smoke particles. Most cloth masks will not capture small wood smoke particles. That requires an N95 mask in conjunction with fit testing for the mask and training in how to wear it. Without a proper fit, N95s do not work as well. At home, a person can create clean and cool spaces using a window air conditioner and a portable air purifier. The EPA also advises people to avoid anything that contributes to indoor air pollutants. That includes vacuuming that can stir up pollutants, as well as burning candles, firing up gas stoves and smoking". We may not have the number of wildfires here like out west, but even a small wildfire can hurt you. We promote prescribed fires that are scheduled and controlled to minimize smoke lingering in the area that can cause health issues. For more information check www.garxfire.org.

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