

# DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Weather

As every one of us Veterans who served operationally know just about anywhere on our globe, the weather can be friend or foe. Doesn't matter if you were in aircraft, seagoing vessels, in the mud or desert, the weather can be downright miserable at times, without mankind experimenting and diddling around with God's own Mother Nature!

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



One problem encountered in Vietnam was the logics and supply line known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail whereas the Communist forces were kept supplied with food, and weapons. Our forces repeatedly bombed that roadway with unsatisfactory results. Their forces kept rerouting and rebuilding the trail surrounded by thick forest and woodlands. Thus their supply line kept material flowing to our enemy forces.

Meanwhile here at home experimenting with cloud seeding in California at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake had begun. Testing was done in Okinawa, Guam, Philippines, Texas, and Florida, calling it Project Stormfury. This was to become top secret Project Popeye. As a highly classified mission in Southeast Asia, Project Popeye was decided as an answer to stopping the flow of traffic from north to South Vietnam along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The plan using lead iodide and silver iodide was determined to soften the road surfaces; cause or create landslides along roadways; to wash out river crossings; and to maintain saturated or flooded conditions beyond the normal monsoon season.

Command and control of this project was under the domain of the 54th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, their slogan being, "make mud, not war." Cloud seeding missions were flown beginning on March 20, 1967, until 1972. Three C-130 Hercules aircraft and two F-4C Phantom jets out of Udorn Thani Royal Thai Air Force Base in Thailand flew these missions twice a day. Also they accomplished their regular duty of weather recon missions. The crews were rotated regularly out of Guam, and their code name for their missions was "Motorpool."

On July 11, 1967, this mud and flood campaign was expanded to the 20th parallel including areas of North Vietnam. Then expanded again on April 1, 1968, to include the A Shau Valley area of South Vietnam. As of July 5, 1972, all rainmaking missions were ceased.

There were problems from the beginning of "Popeye" as one of the early clouds drifted over one of our Special Forces camps and dropped nine inches of rain in four hours! Cloud movement cannot be controlled. As well, we now know that the seeding chemicals are often toxic to animals and humans. Early on it was known that the buildup of these chemicals in water resulted in huge fish kills. Our Secretary of State at the time Henry Kissinger along with our CIA lied to Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird who then denied to Congress that weather modification as a tactical weapon never existed. However, to this day other politically motivated officials continue to speak of weather modification programs which have been proven to be toxic in implementation, as well as detrimental to our own men and women serving in operational areas of warfare.

*Semper Paratus*

## Letters To The Editor

### Immigration

Dear Editor,

This country is being overwhelmed by the invasion of our southern border. At the present rate, we will have 12 million, or more, illegals in this country before the end of the present administration. This is more than the population of several states! This is not sustainable. There are common-sense solutions to this problem if we only had a willing Congress and a willing President.

1. All illegal immigrants, when apprehended, shall be returned to Mexico, regardless of nationality. After all, Mexico is culpable for having enabled, and perhaps encouraged, transit through their country. If Mexico refuses to accept this human contraband, close the border. Mexico needs us more than we need them. Mexico is no friend of the United States.

2. Infiltrate and eliminate, with or without Mexico's consent, the cartels that control Mexico.

3. Anyone age 16 or over, who entered this country illegally, can NEVER vote in a federal election or become a citizen of this country.

4. Finish the wall and use force, if necessary, to control the border.

5. Sanctuary cities should be given an ultimatum. Obey the laws of this country or forfeit all federal monies.

6. The Constitution should be amended to require that any person born in the U.S. must have at least one citizen parent in order to be considered a natural born citizen.

Finally, I am sick and tired of hearing these gutless politicians say we just need comprehensive immigration reform. Bull. Why not enforce existing laws before passing new ones? If you agree with these suggestions, let your Congressman know how you feel. One thing I do know, this issue coupled with over \$30 trillion in debt, is NOT sustainable.

Peter W. White

## 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.

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## Radon Awareness

January is National Radon Action Month. Many Georgians spend these cold months huddled inside waiting for a warmer spring.

**Watching and Working**  
**Jacob Williams**



This makes it even more important that we test our homes for radon, a colorless, odorless gas that is the second leading cause of lung cancer.

In Union county, about 46% of homes have elevated levels of the naturally radioactive gas radon. In Towns County, it is 36%. Over the course of many years, exposure to this gas can cause lung cancer even in non-smokers. In fact, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Smokers, current and former, exposed to radon gas have an even greater risk of developing lung cancer.

Radon is a naturally occurring gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in soil and rock. Often granite rock naturally has high levels of uranium, which is part of why radon is such a persistent problem in Georgia, the gas seeps out of the soil and up through crawlspaces, foundations, and basements into a home. About 800 Georgians die annually from radon induced lung cancer.

Fortunately, testing for radon gas is simple and inexpensive. You hang a short-term radon test in the lowest living level of your home for three to seven days, and then mail it to the laboratory for analysis. In a few days, you will receive the test results. If the radon level in your home is high (4 picocuries per liter or above), you can have a certified radon mitigation professional install a radon reduction system that will reduce the indoor radon level. The system most frequently used is a vent pipe system and fan that pulls radon from beneath the house and vents it to the outside.

A radon test kit can be obtained from the UGA Radon Program ([radon.uga.edu](http://radon.uga.edu)) or many hardware stores. You can also purchase a radon test kit at the Union or Towns county Extension office for \$15. Testing for radon is very easy and effective, and I recommend it to anyone that has purchased a home or is living in a home that has not been tested.

Radon may also be found in drinking water. This is primarily a concern with private well water. In Georgia, wells drilled into granitic crystalline rock aquifers, usually in the northern part of the state, are at risk of naturally occurring radon contamination. This is where the uranium that decays to radon can be found at higher levels. To learn more about radon in water in your county visit <https://aesl.ces.uga.edu/water/map/>. If you are interested in radon in water, test kit contact your County Extension Office.

Radon is a real concern for where we live. Thankfully, more and more people have become aware of the problem that it presents. Mitigating radon in home that has finished construction can be expensive. If you are in the process of building a home consider installing a mitigation system, as it is cheaper to have the system installed before a house is completed. If you have questions about radon, you can contact your County Extension Office or email me at [jacob.williams@uga.edu](mailto:jacob.williams@uga.edu).

## Letters To The Editor

### Being a Christian

Dear Editor,

This article is not to offend anyone but to clarify what it means to be a true and faithful Christian. It is easy to say that you are a Christian, but what duties are required before you can really say you are a Christian? I can go out into my garage and sit there all day, but that doesn't make me a car. When I got saved and gave my heart to the Lord, Jesus, I became a messenger for God, and I have to tell the truth of what is required for one to say that they are a good and faithful Christian.

First order of business is for you to confess to God that you are a sinner and to repent of your sin against God and ask His forgiveness. Secondly, you must accept Jesus Christ into your heart and serve Him in all things. Thirdly, you must be born again which means to turn away from your sin and start a new life of living for God, not yourself.

We all must face the facts that God has strict guidelines that demand all Christians to be loyal and trustworthy to the cross of Christ. How many times do you pray daily which is a requirement from our heavenly Father, because if we don't pray to Him, how can we keep in touch with what God expects out of us? Now after your heart and soul are right with God, then He will send you the Holy Spirit which is part of God Himself, to help you in your new walk with Him. God wants nothing better than for you to surrender everything over to Him. You can't keep even 10% and give God 90%. He wants you all-in 100%. Our God is a jealous God, and you can't serve two masters. Only God will do.

A lot of folks who read this are going to be very upset, and I could care less if you are upset with me, but the Holy Spirit gives me the words to say to you that being a true born-again Christian is a serious matter, and God expects nothing less than your best. If you have trouble with what God has given me to say: Take it up with Him. He is a good listener and has a big heart that loves you so very much. God tells me in His word that if I am ashamed of Him, He will be ashamed of me, and the last thing I want to do is stand in front of Christ one day and give an account of what I didn't do for Him.

Folks, please examine your heart and see if it is pleasing to God. We only have one life here, so don't blow it, but embrace what God has in store for you, so when the Lord Jesus sees you face to face he can say: Well done good and faithful servant. Welcome home.

Frank F. Combs

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

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

## Wildland-Urban Living

Many people are moving out of urban areas into "natural" areas to take advantage of the natural beauty, recreational opportunities, and more affordable living (it's getting crowded out here in the forest!). Once upon a time that made sense, but now people are moving into these mega subdivisions where you had better have a good relationship with your neighbors, because they are only a short stone's throw away. More than once I have heard "if I want to borrow a cup of sugar, I just open my window and reach across to my neighbor, or if my neighbor's window is open, I can watch their TV."

**RC&D**  
**Frank Riley**  
Executive Director



These are extreme examples, but soon, several counties up here will not have any more farmlands left; it will be covered up with these houses that all look alike. I feel sorry for the old folks who farmed their whole lives on their piece of land and now are forced to sell the land for the next development. Developers are building neighborhoods to accommodate this influx. As a result, fire departments are fighting fires along the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI), defined as areas where homes are built near or among lands prone to wildland fire. The increase in the WUI threat has been steep because of continued development and exposure.

The WUI is not a place, per se, but a set of conditions that can exist in nearly every community. It can be a major subdivision, or it can be four homes on an open range. According to the National Fire Protection Association, conditions include (but are not limited to): the amount, type, and distribution of vegetation; the flammability of the structures (homes, businesses, outbuildings, decks, fences) in the area, and their proximity to fire-prone vegetation and to other combustible structures; weather patterns and general climate conditions; topography; hydrology; average lot size; and road construction. The WUI exists in every state in the country, and in our North Georgia counties, everyone lives in the WUI since forests are all around us and the danger from wildfire is just as great here as it is out West where they have the spectacular wildfires that can consume 400 homes in an afternoon. We don't normally have conditions like that here, but if we lose one home to a wildfire, it is a tragedy just the same for the folks who live there and are without a home after the fire.

Wind-blown embers are a major cause of concern in the WUI. Most structures within the WUI are not destroyed from direct flame impingement, but rather from embers. Embers may precede the flaming fire front, carried by the winds that distribute burning brands or embers over long distances, sometimes up to a mile or more depending on the winds. These embers fall or are wind-driven into receptive fuels at structures, often going undetected for some time. As the fire front passes, these small embers may ignite incipient fires that spread to the home and then from home to home in a neighborhood.

The Gatlinburg fires in 2016 were caused by ember showers from the mountains above that rained down on the unprepared city and surrounding areas. These ember showers were caused by the extreme winds and dry conditions that created the perfect storm that consumed a large portion of the city that destroyed more than 2,200 homes and businesses and killed 14 people. I talked to a firefighter from South Dakota who was deployed to Gatlinburg during the fires, and she said that all the homes in the neighborhood they were assigned to protect were threatened by fire and they had to choose to try to save only those that were savable and safe for the crew. The savable ones were the homes where the owners had taken preventative measures to remove fuel on and around the structures or were built with non-combustible materials. The most important thing we learned in Firefighter 101 is that safety for the firefighters comes first, and in Gatlinburg, the crews could not put themselves in jeopardy to try to save a home that was a hazard to them or their equipment. Fire engines cost much more than most houses, and firefighters lives are priceless.

I saw a video recently about a wildfire that swept through a neighborhood where the fire crews were chasing the fire down the street. They had passed by several houses that seemed to be intact and not on fire. When they returned in a couple of hours, these homes were on the ground. They were burned by embers that were nestled in fuel on the roof and ignited once winds fanned the spark.

The Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) have conducted a series of beneficial tests at their research center in Richburg, South Carolina, to explore the effects of ember intrusion on differing home constructions. The tests illustrate both the threats and preparedness steps residents can take to prevent ember-caused fires. Fire departments should consider utilizing this information in their presentations with residents to help explain the ember threat. You can check the IBHS website to see their videos. They are real eye-openers! We are going there in a couple of weeks and will report back. For more information on WUI, contact Frank Riley at [info.cccrd@gmail.com](mailto:info.cccrd@gmail.com).

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## Towns County Herald

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