

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

The Departure of Memory

Last week, I left the mountains beginning to select their fall attire and traveled south to another place rich with history and tradition, and fading memories. Within a few hundred yards of the place where my brother and I roamed the woods on misty September mornings, Erskine Caldwell was born. A little further up the road, Lewis Grizzard grew up, and Margaret Anne Barnes.

Outside The Box

By: Don Perry worldoutsidethebox.com

Kathy Sue Loudermilk and Murder in Coweta County had not been written when William and I wandered the woods and fished the ponds and big lazy creeks of cherished memory. We had not read Tobacco Road or God's Little Acre when we tiptoed through the shadows to creep up on the old house where our mother said the famous writer was born. It was abandoned then, and naturally, we assumed it was haunted. We may or may not have thrown a rock at the side of the house (Mama didn't raise us to bust windows), to frighten away any ghosts that might have been waiting to spook us.

Erskine was born in White Oak in Coweta County, but the town of Luthersville, down in Meriwether, claimed him and moved the house there to be part of the museum. He wrote about poverty and racism in the South, but there was no sign of either when I was having breakfast at the County Line Cafe nearby. Sometimes it takes a reporter or a politician to detect such things and remind us frequently that they exist, but none were available to enlighten us while neighbors and strangers enjoyed friendly conversation over eggs and hash browns.

It had been too many years since I visited my brother's place in the country. Each of us made a home on the farms where our maternal and paternal grandparents lived. He preferred white oaks and slow-moving streams while I favored whitewater and sourwood honey. The barbecue is better down there, but we have fresh-caught trout.

William took me to see the old house, fallen down. A chimney presides now over the departure of memory as the earth slowly reclaims its own. I remember our mother's story of the first night she spent in that house as a little girl. Snow blew in through a hole in the roof until the clouds passed, and they could see stars. Bundled against the cold under layers of quilts, she and our grandmother cried together until our grandfather climbed up on the roof and patched the hole. It was an early chapter in the story of strength and sacrifice and perseverance as he rebuilt that house by hand and made a fine home of it. It was old then, but he built it back strong, and only the ravages of time could bring it down.

The old barn still stands, and a corner of a shed that resisted the second law of thermodynamics long enough to gift me with a glimpse of a moment frozen in time. Stooped low to peer under the collapsing roof of the room where the fishing tackle of legend was stored, I saw a corner still intact, and a rod and reel that was old when we were young hung just where our grandfather left it. I was reluctant to disturb it, to break the charm and allow entropy would rush in, but that old fishing pole will hang on my own wall now and preserve the memory a bit longer, until time reclaims that as well.

A mile or two up the road are the remains of the old Bailey Brothers' farm where we spent many a quiet Saturday afternoon fishing in the well-stocked ponds of Miz Lucille. One of Dad's hobbies was managing fish ponds for people in exchange for fishing rights, and Lucille's ponds were stocked with bass, bream, and catfish aplenty. I attribute my good health today to the grace of God and a body that grew up eating fish on a regular basis of a quality that no longer exists.

Over the years, Lucille became a good friend of the family, and after her husband, Will, passed away, we helped her fend for herself, alone now in her big rambling house. Word got out among the kind of folks that will steal from a widow that she was alone and her pond full of fish unprotected. Lucille had a different opinion and a shotgun she knew how to use. Respect for her shotgun kept the house safe at night, but a couple of rogues knew its limits and taunted her on the nights when they stole fish out of range.

"Now Miz Lucille, don't be like that!" They would laugh at the shotgun blast from the house on the hill and keep on fishing. The next morning she would find their calling card, empty beer bottles, and cigarette butts.

When she told Dad about her frustration, he provided a .22 rifle, a few boxes of .22 long rifle cartridges, and a short course on ballistics: "Wait until the moon is shining through the clouds and aim at the water well away from where you see the glow of the cigarettes. You might have to repent if you kill one of them. If you hit it just right, the bullet will ricochet, and that will sure get their attention."

Lucille did just as Dad said, and she could hardly stop laughing when she told us about it. "I waited until one of them lit that old cigarette and then I started ping-pong the water. After the third or fourth ping, I heard them holler and crash through the woods on the backside of the dam. They left all their fishing tackle, and one of them lost a square of his trousers in the barbed wire fence. They haven't been back since!"

Lucille didn't have any children but she took pleasure in us kids and always had cake and Kool Aid ready when we would visit. She let us wander about her house and explore its many rooms. The Baily Brothers were something of a rarity in those days and now. They were farmers who became wealthy from farming. The house was filled with antiques, furniture imported from Europe, teak and mahogany, hand-carved banisters on the stairs, oak paneling, and beadboard.

We remember Lucille's vigor and joyfulness, but like the southern gothic novels that seem to thrive in the land of heat and humidity, she left this life with a struggle. Late in life, she was stricken by a stroke and lost the ability to speak. With a child's memory alone, I don't know the gothic notes of her family history, or why the cold and venomous sister we would sometimes see at Lucille's resented her so much. Perhaps it was a simple case of jealousy and greed for her sister's wealth, but when Lucille was stricken, her sister placed her in a private care home with strict instructions for staff to allow absolutely no visitors.

This was unacceptable to my brother and our dad, who determined to visit her anyway. They were convinced that Lucille was still "in there," only trapped by a body that would not respond and a sister who coveted what she might leave behind. In a flash of inspiration, William managed to gain access to her room with an electric typewriter. With a gnarled hand gripping a pencil, Lucille was able to type one letter at a time with the eraser end and let the world know that she heard and understood everything, and still had a will of her own.

Lucille is long gone now, but the shell of her magnificent house still stands. Everything of value has been stripped from it and sold. It's almost an embarrassment to look at it now. It feels something like accidentally catching a glimpse of moonlight shining through your aged grandmother's nightgown. Yet the house, though unclothed and exposed to the world, still stands erect, with dignity. Unclinging on the porch, you can look across the field where all the barns and outbuildings once stood. The land belongs to her beloved church now, which tells me that Lucille was able to make known her wishes in the end.

I miss my brother. Too many miles of quietly desperate people waiting in traffic make the journey between our memories more difficult. We grew older together too many miles apart, but when we laugh and remember, we grow younger.

"A CITY WITHOUT A NEWSPAPER IS A CITY WITHOUT A SOUL." -LUIS A. FERRE



Joe Heller

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER WEEK

... the Pursuit of Happiness

How do happy people differ from unhappy people?

A research project called the 'Nun Study' was conducted from 1930 until the 1990s. Almost 200 women, who were joining a convent, wrote about their lives and thoughts about the future. After seventy years, researchers looked at their entries to find clues to a longer life. They checked factors like intelligence, place of origin, and faith. Only one thing affected how long they lived—their positive attitude. Over 90% of happy nuns lived until 85, but only around a third of unhappy nuns did.

Echos from Sinai "Torah for Everyone" Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger



The conclusion emphasizes that striving for happiness can do more than just improve your mood. It holds the power to genuinely extend your life.

To paraphrase Rabbi Schne'ur Zalman of Liadi, one of the greatest Rabbis in history, The battle against negative thoughts is like a wrestling match, where each person tries to knock the other down. If you are lazy and tired, you'll lose even if you are strong. The same goes for fighting sadness; you can't win if you're lazy and sad. You need to be energetic and happy to overcome those negative feelings.

If you want to be successful at self-mastery in any area of life, being happy gives you a decisive edge. A renowned statement which echoes throughout the Torah is, "joy breaks through barriers." When a person is happy, his joy fills him with energy and enables him to break through anything that stands in his way. When people are happy, they can overcome weaknesses that would otherwise overwhelm them. Being joyful helps people get past these issues.

How exactly does joy break through barriers? The Zohar, an important Jewish mystical text, states that what we do affects Heaven. If you are happy, blessings flow from above; if you are sad, blessings can be constrained. That's why Psalm 100:2 tells us to serve G-d with joy, as your happiness can reciprocally trigger Heavenly joy. In short, your attitude can influence G-d's kindness. When you are happy, G-d is happy, and this leads to more blessings than when you are sad. How can you become a happier person?

Conventional wisdom says that happiness results from having things like good health, intelligence, beauty, good education, a good childhood, and a lot of money. Some people, we are told, receive these blessings and some do not due to random luck.

Judaism completely disagrees. While it acknowledges that certain situations can make life easier, it also emphasizes that some people live in perfect conditions but lack happiness. The famous psychiatrist and author of Man's Search for Meaning Viktor Frankl reported of a young woman in a concentration camp who told him she "knew that she would die in the next few days. But... was cheerful in spite of this knowledge. 'I am grateful that fate has hit me so hard,' she told [him]. 'In my former life I was spoiled and did not take spiritual accomplishments seriously.'"

In the final analysis, said Frankl, "Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way...when we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."

Yes, "The pursuit of happiness" may be challenging and elusive. However, the Torah's expectation that we should "serve G-d with joy" is not an unrealistic demand; it's an empowering truth about human nature. Take children as an example—they are free to be happy because they are not yet self-aware. As they mature and become more self-conscious, they also become more self-absorbed. Everyone has hardships, deficiencies, and frustrations, providing ample reasons to be sad or upset. However, a child isn't bothered by what they lack; thus, they experience a sense of wholeness. The child's lack of self-consciousness allows them to enjoy life and be happy.

The more one focuses on personal happiness, the more elusive it becomes. As soon as one forgets about what he is missing and refocuses on what he is needed for—the good he can do for others rather than the good he can get for himself—joy returns, and happiness prevails!

I would love to hear your thoughts on this week's column. Please email me at yonatan@chabadruralgeorgia.com. Wishing you G-d's abundant blessings, Rabbi Yonatan Hamburger

Ginseng

Ginseng is a plant that has long had an important place in Appalachia. It is important economically and culturally. Unfortunately, there is less and less ginseng growing in the wild. Let's talk about ginseng, some of its history, and how to start your own ginseng patch.

UGA extension Watching and Working Jacob Williams



Native Americans have used ginseng for medicinal purposes for centuries, but in the 1700's settlers found that they could sell it to Asian markets. That led to a steep increase in the amount of ginseng being dug. In Asia ginseng has been used for thousands of years. It's been used as a dietary supplement and in herbal teas. There are many traditional medicine uses of ginseng. Many of the health claims about ginseng are not supported by clinical studies. In spite of this ginseng is still incredibly valuable because of its use in Asia. The root of the plant is what is sold, which means that harvesting kills the plant. Wild ginseng roots can sell for hundreds of dollars per pound, depending on the quality of the root. Wild ginseng roots have more character to them. They will have more lines across them and usually have splits in them that make them look like legs. Cultivated ginseng, tends to have a slick roots which is not seen to be as valuable as wild ginseng, but it can still be sold.

The native range of ginseng is eastern north America from Canada down to North Georgia. Ginseng's status in Georgia is rated as vulnerable. Ginseng is very rare to find in the wild. This is due to habitat loss, wildlife eating it, its slow reproduction, and overharvest of the plant in the wild. There are stories from the early 1800s of bundles of ginseng the size of hay bales being floated down the river to be sold at market.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources regulates the harvest and sale of ginseng in Georgia. Growers and dealers must be registered. Ginseng can only be harvested from September 1 through December 31. This is to give plants an opportunity to put on seeds before they are harvested. Only plants with 3 or more prongs can be harvested. As plants age in years they gain more prongs, or leaves. By only harvesting plants with 3 prongs or more, you don't harvest plants that are too young to reproduce. When you harvest ginseng, you are required to plant any berries that are on the plant. This is to encourage new plants of ginseng to start growing. No ginseng may be harvested on state owned land or national forest at this time.

Ginseng can be grown on private property. You want to look for a place that has at least 1000 feet in elevation, slope of > 30%, and has a north, east, northeast, or northwest facing aspect. Ginseng must be grown in the shade. About 75% shade is what is needed. Hardwoods are better than pine. Some indicator plants to look for are mayapple, bloodroot, trilliums, foam flower, ferns, and cohosh. When planting seeds keep in mind that they may take two or more years to germinate. Once plants are growing it can take 8+ years before they reach harvest age. Ginseng can be a valuable crop, but it's best to temper expectations because there is a lot that can go wrong in 8+ years. Wildlife damage, washout, theft, diseases, and insects can all take their toll.

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

Letters To The Editor

Summers in the Mountains on Lake Chatuge

Dear Editor,

In 2017, a local contractor and his wife handed us keys to a place we call "Two Waters." We are so grateful to them, have enjoyed every summer since, without a doubt.

This summer we experienced the other side of living in the mountains for the first time. Towns and Union County health care. On July 3rd, Towns County EMS arrived at our home. With a huge question mark, I said, "Will you send my brother to Gainesville or Northside hospital?" All five-plus men reassured us Union General Hospital is where he should go. So the "unknown" began, as EMS transferred my brother to UGH ER.

I kept asking myself, are we doing the right thing? We consulted with the surgeon and anesthesiologist, expressed my concerns for my brother's condition, and they reassured me he'll be fine. And yes, they are both highly skilled men in their professions. Staff at UGH were amazing: the nurses, clinical care, gals at the nurse's station and physical therapists. The discharge personnel, medical records and transportation staff were spot on.

With the guidance of a Towns County Pharmacist, we moved onto Chatuge Regional Skilled Nursing Facility. Once again, the unknown, will my brother be in good hands? The answer, most definitely YES. Chatuge SNF is a family of many families. From Admissions, RNs, CNAs, PT, even the lead Administrator was involved in his care. Each and every one of you made us feel like part of the family. He is now home with aid from another fantastic Home Health Care facility out of Union County.

My husband and I live in a small beach town in South Florida – yes, a small town, with a rapid increase of growth within the County. Changing times are everywhere! We have been coming to Towns County for over 30 years; it feels like home away from home. I must say, with the experience we encountered this summer, we have a new extended family and a great appreciation for the medical care in Towns and Union County. If I may say, please keep moving forward with the small-town feel of family comes first.

Bless you all, YOU know who you are, and thank you ALL for what you do for our community.

Polly Gardner

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.

Towns County Community Calendar

Table with 3 columns: Event Name, Location, Time. Includes events like School Board, TC Library, City Council, Civic Center, etc.

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