

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Mystery P-51 Pilot

This 1967 true story is of an experience by a young 12 year old boy in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. It is about the vivid memory of a privately rebuilt P-51 from WWII and its famous owner/pilot.

In the morning sun, I could not believe my eyes. There, in our little airport, sat a majestic P-51. They said it had flown in during the night from some U.S. airport, on its way to an air show. The pilot had been tired, so he just happened to choose Kingston for his stop over. It was to take to the air very soon. I marveled at the size of the plane, dwarfing the Pipers and Canucks tied down by her. It was much larger than in the movies. She glistened in the sun like a bulwark of security from days gone by.

The pilot arrived by cab, paid the driver, and then stepped into the pilot's lounge. He was an older man; his wavy hair was gray and tossed. It looked like it might have been combed, say, around the turn of the century. His flight jacket was checked, creased and worn - it smelled old and genuine. Old Glory was prominently sewn to its shoulders. He projected a quiet air of proficiency and pride devoid of arrogance. He filed a quick flight plan to Montreal ("Expo-67 Air Show") then walked across the tarmac.

After taking several minutes to perform his walk-around check, the tall, lanky man returned to the flight lounge to ask if anyone would be available to stand by with fire extinguishers while he "flashed the old bird up, just to be safe." Though only 12 at the time I was allowed to stand by with an extinguisher after brief instruction on its use -- "If you see a fire, point, then pull this lever!", he said. (I later became a firefighter, but that's another story.) The air around the exhaust manifolds shimmered like a mirror from fuel fumes as the huge prop started to rotate. One manifold, then another, and yet another barked -- I stepped back with the others. In moments the Packard-built Merlin engine came to life with a thunderous roar. Blue flames knifed from her manifolds with an arrogant snarl. I looked at the others' faces; there was no concern. I lowered the bell of my extinguisher. One of the guys signaled to walk back to the lounge. We did. Several minutes later we could hear the pilot doing his pre-flight run-up. He'd taxied to the end of runway 19, out of sight. All went quiet for several seconds. We ran to the second story deck to see if we could catch a glimpse of the P-51 as she started down the runway. We could not. There we stood, eyes fixed to a spot half way down 19. Then a roar ripped across the field, much louder than before. Like a furious hell spawn set loose -- something mighty was coming. "Listen to that thing!" said the controller.

In seconds the Mustang burst into our line of sight. It's tail was already off the runway and it was moving faster than anything I'd ever seen by that point on 19. Two-thirds the way down 19 the Mustang was airborne with her gear going up. The prop tips were supersonic. We clasped our ears as the Mustang climbed hellishly fast into the circuit to be eaten up by the dog-day haze. We stood for a few moments, in stunned silence, trying to digest what we'd just seen.

The radio controller rushed by me to the radio. "Kingston tower calling Mustang?" He looked back to us as he waited for an acknowledgment. The radio crackled, "Go ahead, Kingston." "Roger, Mustang. Kingston tower would like to advise the circuit is clear for a low level pass." I stood in shock because the controller had just, more or less, asked the pilot to return for an impromptu air show! The controller looked at us. "Well, What?" He asked. "I can't let that guy go without asking. I couldn't forgive myself!"

The radio crackled once again, "Kingston, do I have permission for a low level pass, east to west, across the field?" "Roger, Mustang, the circuit is clear for an east to west pass." "Roger, Kingston, I'm coming out of 3,000 feet, stand by."

We rushed back onto the second-story deck, eyes fixed toward the eastern haze. The sound was subtle at first, a high-pitched whine, a muffled screech, a distant scream. Moments later the P-51 burst through the haze. Her airframe straining against positive Gs and gravity. Her wing tips spilling contrails of condensed air, prop-tips again supersonic. The burned bird blasted across the eastern margin of the field shredding and tearing the air. At about 500 mph and 150 yards from where we stood she passed with the old American pilot saluting. Imagine. A salute! I felt like laughing; I felt like crying; she glistened; she screamed; the building shook; my heart pounded. Then the old pilot pulled her up and rolled, and rolled, and rolled out of sight into the broken clouds and indelible into my memory.

I've never wanted to be an American more than on that day! It was a time when many nations in the world looked to America as their big brother. A steady and even-handed beacon of security who navigated difficult political water with grace and style; not unlike the old American pilot who'd just flown into my memory. He was proud, not arrogant, humble, not a braggart, old and honest, projecting an aura of America at its best.

Call it a loving reciprocal salute to a country, and especially to that old American pilot: the late - JIMMY STEWART (1908-1997), Actor, real WWII Hero (Commander of a US Army Air Force Bomber Wing stationed in England), and a USAF Reserves Brigadier General, who wove a wonderfully fantastic memory for a young Canadian boy that's lasted a lifetime.

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



Shift

It was my intention this week to write about gun violence in America and how it is a failure of our culture, not our legal system. I wanted to write about how we are inundated by violent images from an early age, yet our understanding of the issue is no more sophisticated than the teenager (or the thirty-something male) playing "Call of Duty - Black Ops" on Xbox.

I was going to highlight the link between acts of violence and the use of psychiatric drugs, and contrast the knee jerk reaction of politicians calling for more laws with the long standing traditions of individuals and families exercising their Second Amendment rights responsibly.

I was going to close by pointing out that, though the media is howling over the tragic deaths in Las Vegas, there was hardly a whimper when about the same number were killed in Chicago last month. (Most of the victims were young, poor, and black.)

If I elected to turn on the television this morning or scan the headlines online, I would find talkers with plenty to say about this topic and others. The work of herding our attention to the topics that have been selected for dissemination across the land will have reached a crescendo for the morning. Instead, I would prefer to leave this gathering early, and I invite you to come with me.

If you are like me, you have grown weary of worry, and you have started to wonder whether the constant barrage of bad news is a result of some kind of group insanity particular to our times, or whether there is some design or intent behind the effort to keep us fearful and angry, all the time.

Personally, I believe it is the former, though there is little doubt that there are those willing to exploit that insanity. The worldwide information network we have created is a powerful golem that leverages and magnifies everything we say, or see, or think.

Unfortunately for the human race, our most basic programming is a survival instinct designed to identify and react to danger. We are wired to accentuate the negative, and our electronic golem consistently magnifies that natural tendency.

To compensate for this impediment to modern life, we educate ourselves and, if we are lucky, we learn self-determination. We learn to be the masters of our own minds. However, this is difficult when both parents are away from home working, when teachers are overburdened by babysitting and we are left to roam unguided among the sensations and enticements of mass media and popular culture.

Cognitive shifting is a method of consciously redirecting our attention from one fixation to another. When we are preoccupied with thoughts that detract from our well being, thoughts that cause worry, anger or anxiety, we exercise our will and we shift.

For most of us who do not suffer from mental illness, it is just as easy as it sounds, yet we forget, and we are distracted from the realization that it is well within our ability to do so. Determining the thoughts that occupy our minds is one of our most basic rights as human beings, and yet those thoughts are the aspect of our lives most targeted by those who seek profit and control.

Many of us shift without even realizing it. We shift when we worship, when we pray, when we focus on our families and communities, when we meditate, walk in the woods, work in the garden, exercise, read a book, bait a hook. We shift when we pause to spend a moment in gratitude.

Cognitive shifting does not mean that we stick our heads in the sand and ignore the problems of the world. It means that we choose not to fixate on them. It means that we make a conscious effort to have a more balanced perspective on life.

We can do it right now, together. Turn off the television. Shut down the computer. Take the smartphone out of your pocket and leave it on the desk. Shift.

There is a mist on the mountain this morning, and the valley is quiet and peaceful. The air is cool and heavy with moisture from the much needed rain we just received. The broccoli in the garden has grown an inch since yesterday, and the greens are sprouting.

A single hummingbird is drinking at the feeder, one of the last of the busy little group to remain. Any day now she will come to the window and hover for a moment to say goodbye before beginning her long journey south.

These are the thoughts I choose to carry with me today. What will you choose?

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.

The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

Planting Spring Bulbs

The end of the growing season may be drawing near, but the time for planting spring flowering bulbs is just beginning. Flowers such as daffodils, hyacinth, tulips, and other plants that bloom before tree canopies start to fully form should be planted from October to early December. Though the bulbs themselves may not look like much, if they are planted in a well-prepared site and maintained properly, they will produce a multitude of large, beautiful flowers as the temperature begins to warm.

One of the most important aspects to planting bulbs is the site selection and preparation. Full sun is often best, but flowers will still form with light shade. If there is less than eight hours of sunlight at the site, you run the risk of decreased flower. The site must also be well drained. You can tell if your soil is well drained by digging a hole that is one foot deep, filling it with water and letting the water absorb. The next day, fill it with water again, and if the water disperses after eight to twelve hours, the soil has adequate drainage. If not, you may want to consider adding amendments to the soil to promote drainage. Appropriate amendments include compost, perlite, peat moss and other alternatives. Certain bulbs may do better with certain amendments, so always carefully check the care guide for the bulbs you are planting. Spring bulbs are most productive in a soil pH of 6.0 to 6.8, so always remember to test your soil before establishing these plants. Typically, one to two pounds of 10-10-10 per hundred square feet is an acceptable fertilizer rate.

When purchasing your bulbs, always check for mold, blemishes or cuts. If any of these are present, the bulbs are much more likely to rot or be susceptible to disease after they are planted. Planting bulbs at appropriate depths can also prevent disease and damage. For large bulbs (greater than two inches), plant them to a depth two to three times their diameter. For smaller bulbs, they should be planted three to four times their diameter deep. Different bulbs require different spacing, but planting a few smaller bulbs together in a large hole a few inches apart usually gives a better landscape effect than planting all bulbs individually. When placing the bulb in its hole, always be sure to plant it upright, with the fibrous roots down.

For spring flowering bulbs, not much continued maintenance is needed until they become crowded. Mulching keeps weeds down and helps protect them in hard winter weather, and normal spring rainfall is usually adequate water. However, every few years, you will probably need to divide your bulbs as they produce more roots and bulblets (small bulbs). Always wait until the bulb's foliage starts to yellow and wilt naturally to dig up and divide bulbs. Most can be gently pulled apart and re-planted immediately. If you would like to store your bulbs, wash off all the soil and store in a cool, dry place away from sunlight with adequate airflow until you are ready to plant again next fall.

For more information on bulbs suitable for our area, contact the extension office to receive our publication "Flowering Bulbs for Georgia Gardens."

UGA extension
From the Ground Up
Melissa Mattee



Towns County Community Calendar

Bridge Players	Every Monday: All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Free GED prep.	Every Tuesday: Old Rec. Center	4 pm
SMART Recovery	Every Wednesday Red Cross Building	7 pm
Bridge Players	Every Thursday: All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Every Friday: Red Cross Building	7 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Every Sunday: Red Cross Building	7 pm
Chamber Board	Second Monday of each month: 1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
Historical Society	Old Rec. Center	5:30 pm
Mtn. Comp. Users	www.mcug.org	6 pm
Planning Comm.	Civic Center	7 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoy Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
Caregiver support	Second Tuesday of each month: Brasstown Manor	3 pm
Arts & Crafts Guild	Mtn. Regional Library	4 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Mtn. Coin Club	N. GA Tech	6 pm
Basket Weavers	Second Wednesday of each month: SC Fire Hall	10 am
Board of Elections	67 Lakeview Cir., Ste. A	4 pm
CVB Board	Second Thursday of each month: Rec Center	9 am
Awake America Prayer	Civic Center	Noon
Mtn. Comm. Seniors	Senior Center	1 pm
Hospital Auxiliary	Third Monday of each month: Cafeteria	1:30 pm
Water Board	Water Office	6 pm
YH Plan Comm.	Third Tuesday of each month: YH City Hall	5 pm
Co. Comm. Mtg	Courthouse	5:30 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.	Blairsville store	5:30 pm

Have something to sell? Let the Herald work for you!



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Towns County Herald

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