

Nix...from Page 1A

his musical contributions. "I don't want to quit, there ain't no plans to quit. Only the Lord knows when I want to quit, because I don't want to quit myself."

Unfortunately, 2020 was a tough year for Nix, especially considering his serious health issues and additional risks associated with the possibility of contracting COVID-19, so he was unable to perform this year.

He gave his last known live performance alongside John Cochran in a Christmas jamboree at the Young Harris Lodge Building in December 2019, where he sang "Christmastime Is Coming."

Many of Nix's most memorable performances took place during the Blairsville Sorghum Festival, in which he participated every year since its inception.

The highly respected entertainer so loved the festival and its purpose of raising funds for those in need that he not only played live music for 50 years to bring people in, but he also grew cane for decades to make syrup to sell for the many community initiatives provided for by festival volunteers.

It's almost fitting that the festival was canceled this year due to COVID-19. After all, this past weekend would have been the final weekend of the 2020 outing, and it wouldn't have been the same joyous occasion considering Nix's passing.

"The Sorghum Festival was his favorite thing in the world; he loved the Sorghum Festival," son Jeff Nix said.

"He loved playing music at it and the parade, the square dance afterward, making cane for syrup to sell. He pretty much got involved in the whole mine yards."

The Union County native lived with his son Jeff for the three years prior to his death, which was time the younger Nix will always cherish, both for the jokes they shared and the stories his father told him.

"He was great, he was patient - I'm not, so that worked out pretty good," Jeff said. "He taught me how to curb my temper with some patience. He was always supporting me and put up with me when most people wouldn't have, so I couldn't really ask for more than that."

"Around here, everybody loved him. If the world had more like him, it'd probably be a more peaceful place. His presence will be missed in concerts when they start having them regular again. He was always the face that was around."

"The family will miss him; he always had something good to say, was always cheerful, always happy to help somebody out, was never a burden. We were probably sometimes a burden on him, but he never let it show."

Nix played everything from Bluegrass to Gospel on fiddle, mandolin and guitar, with one of his favorite songs to perform being "The Great Speckled Bird." He was accompanied by an untold number of local musicians over the years, including many who have passed also, like his brothers.

"So many of them have gone on," Nix said in 2016. "That's the sad part, but it's



John Nix

Photo by Jerri Gill



Former Shady Grove UMC Pastor Winfred Pitts performed music at John Nix's funeral with help from Jimmy Waldroup Oct. 18. Nix was known to play many a funeral himself over the years.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

just something that happens. I've got more good memories about my pickin' than anything. When one of them passes on, you miss them, but you've still got good memories, even though they're gone."

In 2012, Nix was honored by the Historical Society, the Sorghum Festival and Shady Grove Methodist Church, with April 29 of that year being designated "John Nix Day."

The 2016 proclamation naming Feb. 6 that year as "John Nix and the Country Cousins Day" by Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris recounted the following history of the band in Union County and abroad:

"John Nix and his brothers, Homer, Clayton and Cranford, started the band Country Cousins in the 1950s, with Homer Nix on the guitar, Clayton Nix on the mandolin, John Nix on the fiddle and guitar, and later Cranford with a banjo, replacing Homer."

"The Country Cousins have played music all over the mountain region for the past 65 years, including square dances at Vogel and the Walasi-Yi Inn on Blood Mountain, and Country Cousins played with the world-famous Skillet Lickers at the Gainesville Civic Center in 1956, and they played for Sen. Zell Miller's gubernatorial campaigns."

"Country Cousins played with Bill Monroe at Young Harris College to kick off the first wagon train to the Bald in the late 1950s, and then played the first wagon train dance on Bald Mountain."

"Country Cousins played for many dances in the Old Masonic Lodge here in Blairsville. They were also the original band to play at the Opry in the Wildwood in the

1960s. "Country Cousins were the inaugural band for the Blairsville Sorghum Festival and have been the house band for the festival every year for the past 45 years."

"And Country Cousins have played for many street dances on the Blairsville Square, fundraisers, nursing homes, reunions, and benefits, making them well known and respected in the community."

Mountain View Funeral Home had charge of Nix's arrangements, holding a viewing on Saturday and a service on Sunday, with Revs. Winfred Pitts and Rob Rollins officiating inside Mountain View Chapel.

Together, they highlighted Nix's terrific sense of humor, work in life as a brick mason, immeasurable talent as a musician and love of a good meal.

Providing music for the occasion were Pitts and longtime friend Jimmy Waldroup, both on guitar, with piano accompaniment by Angie Burrell of Fairview Baptist Church.

Songs performed were "Who Will Sing for Me," "Blessed Assurance" and "When They Ring Those Golden Bells."

John Maryland Nix is survived by his wife Susan Nix of Spencer, West Virginia; sons Jeff Nix of Blairsville and Andy Cheek of West Virginia; sister Charlotte Collins of Blairsville; grandchildren Sydney Michelle Cheek and Michael Bryan Cheek, also of West Virginia; and many other relatives and friends.

He was interred at Shady Grove Cemetery the afternoon of Oct. 18.

Young Harris...from Page 1A

Councilman Steve Clark turned discussion to the sewer fund and next steps in resolving that debt.

"Sewer financially is not doing very well," Clark said. "I looked at the last two quarters of '19 and the first two quarters of '20. That got a little convoluted because that has some leachate stuff that we haven't totally reconciled. Leachate we can talk about later; it is off in its own zone right now."

"I wound up going back to Fiscal Year 2019 from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 and looked at that calendar year. Our loss in the sewer department was a little under \$80,000. Nothing to do with leachate, nothing to do with COVID - we just lost \$80,000."

Clark told the council that the city's Administrative Committee was recommending a 7.5% sewer rate increase to allow

the city to build up cash reserves for expansion, which will allow Young Harris to decrease the city's dependence on its two biggest customers.

Joe Engram of Mueller Water Products and Patrick Day of Ferguson Waterworks appeared in the virtual meeting to discuss required changes to the city's water metering system.

"You guys purchased the Hot Rod metering system, which was really implemented in 2009, 2010," Engram said. "You are right at that 10-year mark, so recently what has happened is Mueller has decided to move to its newest platform, which is the MiNetM Meter Reading System. With that, we are discontinuing our Hot Rod System (in six months to a year)."

He said Mueller had approached the city in 2018 to say the system would be discontinued at some point,

though Gibby and the council became upset earlier this month because they felt the company had not updated them on the impending discontinuation in a timely manner.

"This is a huge issue, and we are a small city, and it is hard to budget when we don't know what is going on," Gibby said, noting that the budgeting process is currently ongoing. "That is what upsets me more than anything."

Also in the meeting, the council approved the 2020 millage rate of 2.479, which was the same rate as 2019. Real and personal property are up about \$1.6 million, so the rate will bring in \$3,735 in additional tax dollars compared to last year, for a total of \$29,895 in property taxes in 2020.

The City Council will hold two public hearing on Tuesday, Nov. 17, one concerning the 2021 budget starting at 6 p.m., to be followed by a hearing on the sewer rate increase at 6:15 p.m.

Craft Show...from Page 1A

Kornegay's dolls and wreaths, call 910-540-0908.

Now, Thomason is getting ready for the Fairgrounds' final event of October, namely the Appalachian Brew, Stew & Que Festival taking place this Saturday, Oct. 24, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"We have got 46 breweries that are going to be here, which is way more than we had last year," Thomason said. "We had around 30 here last year. We also have arts and crafts. We have every single booth full, with arts and crafts and vendors and food and breweries."

"We will have a stage set up down in front of the funnel cake booth, and we will have five bands playing. There will be unlimited tasting for \$35 in advance or \$40 at the door. We're hoping to have a great time and are looking forward to people coming out and spending the day with us."

With this year looking to be the largest yet for the festival, Thomason and the Fairgrounds are searching for volunteers to help pour beer for



Bowyer Adam Nicholson was one of many vendors to attend the Georgia Mountain Fall Craft Show over the weekend. To check out his handmade bows, visit his eBay store at "Appalachian Archery."

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

the breweries.

"We have two shifts, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.," Thomason said. "If anyone wants to volunteer to pour, they can give us a call and we will get them signed up. We'll have a representative from each brewery to talk about the beer, but we need our own

volunteers to pour it and help us out."

For more information on volunteering, contact the Fairgrounds at 706-896-4191; and be sure to check out the website at georgiamountainfairgrounds.com for even more upcoming events.

Early Voting...from Page 1A

freedom, and it is a freedom that I feel like everyone should be appreciative of and be a part of - every vote counts."

Early voting also attracted first-time voters such as Rebecca Smithson, who just started college and said she wanted to give voting a try to experience what everyone has been talking about.

"I actually thought voting would be a little scarier," Smithson said. "I didn't really know what to expect when I walked in. It isn't really something that you get taught in school, and I have never

voted for anything that I can remember."

"I came for a bunch of different reasons, but I think I mainly wanted to come just to experience it for the first time. I wouldn't say this is an election that I have paid the most attention to, but I still wanted to do my part and see what it was like to vote."

"I would encourage others to vote. I know people my age don't really want to, but I think it is great to get involved with the future of our country. We are going to be the ones living in it."

Advanced in-person voting for the Nov. 3 election continues weekdays through Friday, Oct. 30. People are encouraged to vote early, as turnout is expected to be higher than ever this election, potentially translating to longer than usual precinct lines come Election Day.

Early voting is available weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. at the Elections Board Office in Suite A of 67 Lakeview Circle in Hiawassee next to the courthouse, and people will be able to vote there this Saturday, Oct. 24, as well.

Remembering Reece:

In honor of Reece friend, supporter John Nix



John Nix with John Cochran: John Nix performed with John Cochran and the Cowhands at the Towns County Historical Society headquarters on Oct. 21, 2019. Pictured here: Jeri Ann King, John Cochran, John Nix and Will Potts. Photo/Submitted

John Nix was a humble man known by most and loved by all, a true artist!

He was the young brick mason who did the original beautiful brickwork on Shady Grove Methodist Church, where he would spend a lot of his life worshipping and singing. Many years later, he was a moving force in starting the Shady Grove Band.

John planted cane in his fields to use at the Sorghum Festival, the Union County Farmers Market, the Union County Historic Courthouse, Towns County Historical Society, Mountain Home Music, Georgia Mountain Fair and Fairview Baptist Church. He recorded some of his beautiful old hymns for the Owl-town Church of God's 100th-year celebration. John and his brothers, Cranford and Clayton, were inducted into the Georgia Country Music Hall

of Fame in 2001.

He was pleased to open the 2019 "Maters and Music Festival" sponsored by the Byron Herbert Reece Society with his fiddle. He said it needed to be lively! At the time, he asked to speak personally about his friend Byron Herbert Reece, telling of when Reece was a Lay Minister at Shady Grove and Salem Methodist Churches. We had over 200 guests in the pavilion that day listening to the beautiful sounds ringing throughout the Choestoe Valley. He was pleased when I told him that the Byron Herbert Reece Society wanted to bestow upon him an honorary membership.

John was invited to tour the Reece Farm and take some photos for the North Georgia News and Towns County Herald for the upcoming Festival's Press Release. He wanted a picture in the rocking chair on the front porch of the Heritage Center. He loved playing and singing in the Welcome Center and on the back porch at the Reece Farm.

He was grateful for the opportunity to sing at the Reece Farm, saying it made him

feel young again. I don't think he realized that he was the celebrity! Everyone came to hear him play the "Orange Blossom Special" or to sing "I'll Fly Away." He has left behind shoes that cannot be filled. He truly is a legend.

I am thankful for every minute that I have had the pleasure of talking with him. John, your legacy lives on in the hearts and minds of more friends and family than can be counted! I think that Hub Reece would be happy to know that his friend John enjoyed singing at his homeplace. It is our honor and privilege to lovingly "remember our friend John Nix."

***The Byron Herbert Reece Society is appreciative to the publisher of this newspaper for providing the space for "Remembering Reece." We are deeply saddened by the passing of our dear friend and Byron Herbert Reece Society Member John Nix. When we again gather in the pavilion for singing events, John Nix will be very much in our hearts and minds. Godspeed, John! Jerri Duncan Gill, Chair The Byron Herbert Reece Society

Rotary Club...from Page 1A

said, "We absolutely love having community groups come and take what we call a stewardship area. It is theirs, and our only requirement is that they take care of it."

The flower bed project is but one of many that Rotary Club members take part in, with the group having a goal of always putting the community first.

"We do a lot of local projects," Gutenstein said. "We also give out dictionaries for the third-graders at Towns County Schools. We give donations to the food pantry here. The Lions Club is giving to the Shop with a Hero Fund."

"Habitat for Humanity has the Ferst Foundation (for Childhood Literacy), which gives books to kids ages 1 to 5, and we donate every year so that all kids get the books."

"Our biggest fundraiser is (our) Reverse Raffle, and all of that goes back into the community. We don't spend this money on ourselves, and we put every penny on other things."

2020's big \$10,000 Reverse Raffle will take place virtually on Nov. 7, to be broadcast via Facebook and Zoom from 6-10 p.m.

"This year's raffle will benefit local businesses and local charities," per



Rotary of Lake Chatuge President John Scott going over some club business in their Tuesday, Oct. 13, regular meeting.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

golakechatuge.com. "A total of 300 tickets will be sold for \$100 each ... The last ticket drawn will be the winner of the \$10,000 grand prize!"

Rotary president John Scott is satisfied with all the organization has done over the summer, despite the pandemic.

"We have been working and operating as we normally do, and we have been having our normal meetings," Scott said. "We go back to Brasstown (Valley Resort) for our next meeting, which is where we usually have them. We are looking forward to being back."