

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Wm. Ronald Gibson, LTC, USA, (Ret)

Our Georgia Mountains have produced fine, outstanding leaders. Amongst those is Ron, from age 14 yearning to become a teacher. Age 26, well on the way to a Masters Degree, already completing three years as a classroom teacher, a 1968 draft notice interrupted this mild-mannered and humble man's plans. Becoming qualified on every individual weapon in the Army's inventory, a sharpshooter, with a stopover in Panama en route to Vietnam added a "Jungle Warfare Expert" tab. Ron and those who served were abandoned by the same establishment who created that war.

With assignments in Georgia, New Jersey, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Panama, Vietnam, Maryland, Indiana, Germany, Kansas, and retirement (not really) in 1992. Ron met his wonderful and beautiful wife: "We met in an unusual way at Ft. Meade, MD. Carol, an intern in the Post Information Office, came to interview me after I was selected as "Outstanding Lieutenant of 1970." Opposites in some ways we shared many common values and married two years later (remaining together for almost 44 years). Despite hardships we survived and prospered. Our children, born in Germany, learned to make friends in new places and our son benefited from the uncommon experience of three years in a German school."

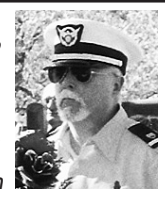
"However, the strongest, longest-lasting memory occurred 9 years after retirement. I was working for Northern Virginia Community College, en route to our office in the Pentagon. Backing out of the driveway, I saw in the rear-view mirror a stain on my shirt. The delay of changing caused me to be on the road instead of in the Pentagon when a hijacked terrorist airplane crashed into the building killing over 100 people (some of whom were co-workers or acquaintances), 11 September 2001. Anxiety worsened, knowing that Carol and our daughter were across the Potomac River in DC, the flight path of another plane on its way to attack the White House. Almost four hours later we had escaped the carnage and traffic, learning that none of us were harmed. However, that was the most memorable and terrible day of my life."

"We eventually chose to return to my roots in Towns and Union County. We built our dream house on land that has been in my family for at least five generations. Today I walk a wooded path that Grandpa and I used when I was a little boy bringing the cows home for milking. In the Army I was privileged to visit many of the great cities of the world (London, Dublin, Edinburgh, Paris, Rome, Vienna, Berlin and others) that bring a wonderful, educational experience. I am living happily in a smaller world where I grew up. My parents and almost all of the people who molded my early life are gone today; some of their spirit lives on here. I am deeply disturbed that some new arrivals are willing to tear down the mountains that have been a source of our strength and inspiration for nearly 200 years. During my remaining days I will do all possible to stop that trend."

Semper Paratus

The Veterans' Corner

Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



Truth and Technology

There were some stories my father refused to tell until he was very old. "Too many of the people involved are still alive," he said. Before the internet, back in the dark ages before the world became digitized, secrets were easier to keep. When events happened that suggested intrigue, a student of history might quip, "Perhaps we'll know the truth in 50 years."

Because of technology, truth can be revealed much faster today. Every member of a technologically adept society carries in the palm of their hand the ability to communicate with every other member in real time, along with access to the world's storehouse of information and more computing power than the first moon landing.

To counter the spread of technology among the masses, those who would keep secrets have been forced to adopt more sophisticated methods. Encrypted communication is much more advanced than it was even 5 years ago, and much less advanced than it will be next year. Even so, it barely stays ahead of those who are determined and resourceful enough to ferret out the secrets of government and business.

Deceiving, and managing large numbers of people is much easier when you control the sources of news and entertainment that most people access on a regular basis. Most of do not have the time or the inclination to ferret out the truth. We are lazy; we are weary. We are not educated to think critically, so we turn naturally to those sources that do the work for us – sources which we grew up thinking we could trust. We cannot overemphasize the significance to our understanding of truth of the fact that 6 corporations control 90 percent of media.

Deceiving and managing large numbers of people also requires a well researched understanding of human psychology. Our brains naturally divide into patterns of thinking that fit very well into the left and right, liberal and conservative paradigms that are acted out in a recurring cycle that peaks every four years. It is well understood that, given the vast amount of information available to us (some of it factual), we will seek out the information that agrees with what we already believe.

If information and perception are managed properly, secrets can hide in plain sight. Even our growing mistrust of media can be used to advantage. If we read about Trump's shady business deals, we can discount that information as an invention of corporate media intent on putting another establishment candidate in the White House. Clinton's long history of controversy and corruption is surely the result of a vast right wing conspiracy. Poor Hillary is only despised because she is a woman.

Has there ever been an election, at least in living memory, where the majority of voters of both main parties were required to suspend logical thought to such an extreme degree in order to vote for their candidate? Do you remember an election in which fear of the other candidate was the biggest motivation? Clinton will destroy the family and lead the country to war. Trump will unleash racial hatred and concentration camps and lead the country to war.

There may be other forces at work. Those of us who observe the workings of that unelected power which survives from one election to the next tend to think of the "deep state" as some kind of monolithic cadre of conspirators. This is a very simplistic idea of how power functions in the world, though the unprecedented cooperation between media and Wall Street to elect Clinton suggests that level of collusion.

The truth may contain more hope than we realize. There appears to be disagreement among those who wield power. The abject failure of neoconservative philosophy is threatening the stability of

our nation as it has threatened the stability of the entire world. America does not control Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria – places where a generation of blood and treasure has been wasted. We have all but lost the Philippines to Chinese influence. China has been delivering investment and soft diplomacy around the world while we threaten with military intervention. At home, wealth inequality is at historic levels for a people divided by a false dilemma.

The hope? Every few days now a new revelation appears which highlights the corruption and malfeasance of the elite, of the democrats and republicans who have set the agenda for the past 30 years. This information is not the result of teenage hackers from their parents' basements. It is not the result of Russians trying to disrupt the election. Some of the information being revealed could only have come from insiders, members of the intelligence community perhaps, or voices of dissent within the ranks of the shadow state.

Perhaps in 50 years we will know the truth. Hopefully it will be sooner.

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

Acorn Toxicity

Many small wildlife species depend on the numerous acorns that fall in late summer and autumn to sustain them through the winter. However, to most animals, acorns can be highly toxic and cause a dangerous illness known as "Quercus poisoning."

The term "quercus" is derived from part of the scientific names for many species of oak trees. Numerous oak trees are native to our area and many of them produce huge crops of acorns that we can see starting to drop all around the county. Quercus poisoning occurs when an animal ingests too many acorns in the fall or too many oak buds in the spring. Many domestic pets such as dogs are susceptible to this, but most cases are seen in cattle and sheep. In times of drought or large grass pest infestations, such as this past summer, cattle will take to eating other plant material since there is not enough healthy grass to satisfy them. Since those juicy green acorns are falling all around or hanging onto the tips of branches right now, they are a tempting treat to a cow that does not have access to the fresh grass it wants.

If a cow has ingested too many acorns, symptoms usually take a few days to appear. The animal may have nasal discharge, rapid weight loss, loss of appetite or diarrhea. Acorns also produce toxins that can cause extensive kidney damage, so it is important to be on the lookout for these symptoms before the disease advances. Once quercus poisoning extends to the kidneys, the damage is irreversible.

The best way to fight this disease is to make sure it does not happen in the first place. Though fencing may be expensive, in the long run, it is better to keep animals separated from mature oak trees that produce many acorns. It will be worth it to avoid costly vet bills. Some dairy producers have found that a ration containing ten per cent calcium hydroxide can prevent toxicity, but with beef cattle this is not feasible because there is no guarantee they are eating what they need to of the ration.

Calves and yearlings are the most susceptible cattle to quercus toxicity because the smaller the body size, the fewer acorns need to be ingested to induce illness. The larger the animal, the more acorns need to be ingested to induce symptoms. The green acorns we currently see falling are often the most toxic, because the chemicals within them tend to break down and be less concentrated as the nuts mature.

In order to make sure that your cattle are not tempted by these tasty yet toxic treats, try to block off sections of pasture with a lot of acorns for the next few months until they've had time to decay. Also, try to remove what acorns you can by shoveling or raking at least weekly.

Finally, always make sure your cattle have adequate hay and supplements if your pasture does not have a healthy stand of fresh green grass for them to graze. This will greatly reduce the urge to eat things that they are not supposed to and prevent a costly visit from the vet!

From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



Letters to The Editor

Letter to the Editor:

While the breath-taking views atop Bell Mountain are unarguably some of the finest in the state of Georgia, let alone Towns County (keeping in mind that TC is also home to Brassstown Bald), I feel our county's administrators have lost track of the importance of what may be the right way or the wrong way to 'preserve this view'.

My family moved to Bell Mountain over ten years ago. We chose to live off upper Shake Rag Road because of the view - because of the quiet, semi isolated neighborhood on a 10-foot-wide, dead end county lane and, lastly, because we enjoyed our 'nature hikes' up to the Bell. All of this was taken from us, seemingly overnight, this year.

I think it's important for your readers to know that not one of the homeowners living along upper Shake Rag Road were ever given any notice of this destructive project.

No one from the Commissioner's Office knocked on our doors asking us if we wouldn't mind a County Park Entrance and Exit at the end of our peacefully quiet road. No Planning Committee sent notices out letting us know that they had plans of widening our road and paving an asphalt road to the top of Bell (such a travesty). No one thought it was important enough to let the property owners know that their life on Bell Mountain, as they once knew it, was about to change – forever.

Please keep in mind that before the new county park entrance/exit was opened to the public at the dead end of Shake Rag Road - the only vehicles traveling up and down this road were folks that lived up here – perhaps ten to fifteen cars a day. Are you sitting down? We are now seeing over 400 vehicles each weekend and an average of 50 cars each weekday! You can double that number because once those drivers reach the 'Top O' Bell – they need to turn around and head back down the same way they came up! The endless stream of speeding cars – the constant smell of burning brake pads – the trash and the noise are now a daily routine until well after posted park closing time. Our quiet, little neighborhood is gone.

Gone are the days of walking my dogs up or down the street outside my front door without being forced into the bushes. Gone are our quiet hikes up Bell Mountain. Gone is the simple stress free drive to my house up Shake Rag (I call it "car jousting" – who can or will pull over first?!). Gone is the raw beauty of the Bell.

This is not what any of my neighbors asked for. This is not why we bought homes up here. This is not why we live here. So much of this project was done the wrong way. I speak for the entire neighborhood when I say, "Shame on you, Bill Kendall!"

Catherine Hansen

Editor's Note: The intentions of Towns County Government to create a park on Bell Mountain were not secretive. In fact, the first of several stories about the county's intentions to create a park were on front page of the Towns County Herald's Jan. 13, 2016 edition. The property for the park was bequeathed to the county from the Hal Herrin estate.

Have something to sell?

Let the Herald work for you!

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Towns County Herald

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Publication No: 635540

Advertising, News deadlines: Friday at 5 p.m.

Towns County (1 Year) \$20. Out of County (1 Year) \$30. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawassee, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points. The Towns County Herald is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. **Postmaster:** Send change of address to: Towns County Herald, P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

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Towns County Community Calendar

Bingo	Every Monday: Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Bridge Players	Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Every Tuesday: Old Rec. Center	4 pm
SMART Recovery	Every Wednesday: Red Cross Building	7 pm
Free GED prep.	Every Thursday: Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Bridge Players	Every Friday: Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Every Sunday: Red Cross Building	7 pm
Mtn. Amat. Radio	First Monday of each month: 1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	6:30 pm
Alzheimer's Supp.	First Tuesday of each month: McConnell Church	1:30 pm
American Legion	VFW Post 7807	4 pm
Hiaw. City Council	City Hall	5:30 pm
Young Harris Coun.	YH City Hall	7 pm
Quilting Bee	First Wednesday of each month: McConnell Church	10 am
Stephens Lodge	First Thursday of each month: Lodge Hall	7:30 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.	Courthouse	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	Calvary Alliance Chapel	6 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	Old Rock Jail	4 pm
Mtn. Comm. Seniors	Second Thursday of each month: Senior Center	1 pm
Democratic Party	Civic Center	5 pm
Square Dance Club	Second Friday of each month: Rec. Center	7 pm