

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Introducing Frank Gibbs

Please indulge me as this is only an introduction to a fine Veteran, a great American and a genuine friend that I bonded with in about 90 seconds after meeting him. A great friend and indeed a family member told me that Frank, one of his hunting pals was staying up here for a short vacation with his family and for me to call him. Wayne mentioned that he thought I "might like him". After doing so he knocked on my door and came in. Nothing short of amazing, and as anyone knows this doesn't occur everyday, Frank and I instantly were like long lost brothers. We talked on commonalities like military service; our younger lives in Georgia; our wives; our very conservative politics and love for America; our faith in God.

Believe me, it was like we had known each other for our entire lives! Frank and I are indeed "brothers" in almost every way.

I already knew he was a Vietnam Combat Veteran and didn't talk a lot about his experiences. A good friend of his lost his legs and a hand on night patrol one evening right in front of Frank. Frank requested help from my SIL, an OK Senator, Vice Chair of Military Affairs Committee, where his good buddy was living and in very bad health.

The folks associated with the VA and building his home were dragging their feet, even as this severely disabled Veteran knew he was close to dying and needed help making sure that his wife and family would have a solid home, after he left our earth. Lo and Behold with Brenda and an associate's help the home was completed right as Frank's dear friend, U.S. Marine was called Home to serve at the Right Hand of our Supreme Commander.

I had asked Frank if he'd be interested in sharing his story in Veterans Corner. His response, "Boy do I have something to tell!" Therefore for Frank and each and every single one of our Vietnam Combat Veterans, I've decided to print Frank's words, exactly as he wrote for all those who served over there. One of their very own, who suffered a lot, and never wanted to be sent into that mess, but did his duty.

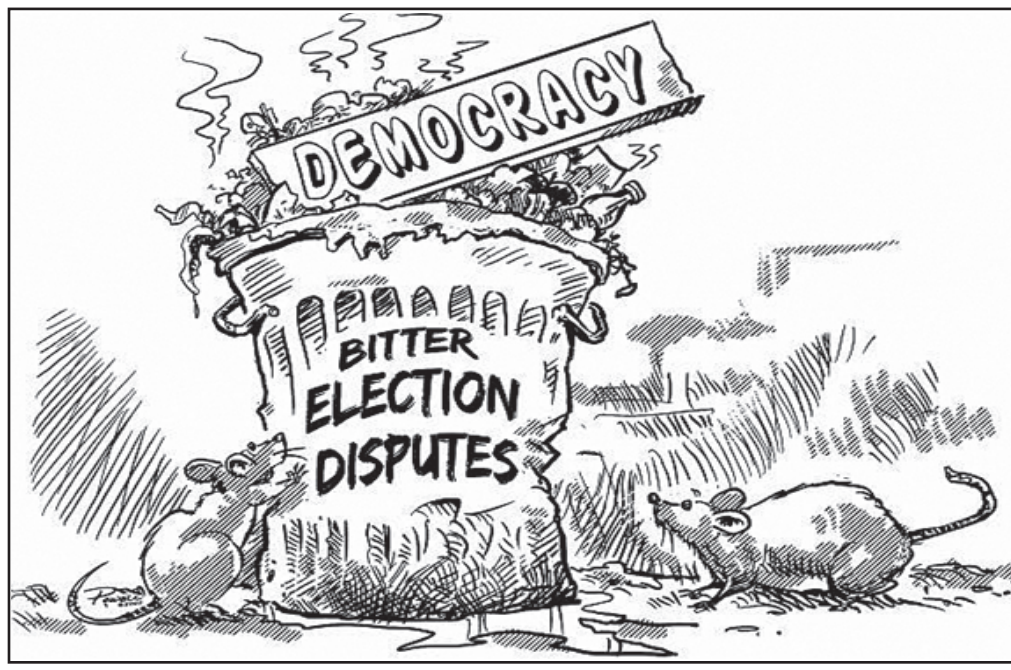
Frank's words should provide a wee bit of comfort, honor and recognition for those who were up against awful odds in Vietnam and who were ignored, misused by politicians, and even hated by some really sick twisted folks amongst us who should have taken their anger out on our politicians.

It really didn't matter where you served or which uniform you wore back then, those dummies weren't exactly "nice" to any of us in airports all over America. That sure made things a LOT worse for those who were there. It hurt them so bad, it may have contributed to what we now know is PTSD.

Therefore, for forthcoming issues of Veterans Corner, I'm going to present Frank Gibbs's first person story, in his own words, not just for Frank, but dedicated to all who served in that Vietnam Hellhole.

Semper Paratus

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



The Farctated Philodox

No, this isn't an homage to a lost Dr. Seuss story. Let me explain.

When I was a child (the first time around), I didn't understand why my grandmother disdained opening Christmas presents. She preferred to arrange them around the house as decorations, and if we did convince her to open one, she did it carefully, removing the gift and setting it aside, whereupon she would painstakingly re-wrap the box and restore it to its former glory, sometimes with the gift back inside.

It has taken a few turns of the calendar pages to understand. The gift was immaterial to her. The treasure was the occasion which brought family under her roof, and she wanted to preserve that for as long as possible.

Perhaps there was an even deeper wisdom in play. Maybe she understood something which has almost disappeared from our culture: The realization that much of the joy of living is in the anticipation. Once the box is opened, the mystery is gone forever.

Our culture doesn't savor mystery in the same way as our grandparents. The sleuth has yielded to the gourmandizer in our craving for immediate gratification.

Every mystery must be solved, not in the sense of scientific discovery, but in an effort to feed that addiction. Every box must be opened and every rock turned over. Every wilderness must be mapped and tamed.

Our personal mysteries of self, our innermost thoughts and feelings, must be revealed on a regular basis to the hive mind, and our youngest don't even believe that privacy is a basic right.

Consider how we spend so many precious hours of our days and nights, following events in "real" time. If we think it might snow, for example, our interest goes far beyond the need to know how to dress properly.

We want instant updates and an absolute foreknowledge of one of nature's grand chaotic events. We want to know the results of an election 4 years before the actual event, with a ceaseless flow of opinions updated 24 hours a day as to what those results might be.

We cannot abide uncertainty in any form, and yet we still want to feel like explorers, but without taking a step. We want to feel like scientists without ever opening a book or risking an experiment.

And while technology provides us an artificial taste of the rewards of discovery, that taste is fleeting and leaves us hungry, so we need to consume more.

We can be mean when we're hungry, and when we're full, we're farctated philodoxes, in love with our own opinions. Something tells me I should spend less time on social media.

We have created a hive mind of instant gratification, real time events, global awareness and a steady march toward mapping, monitoring and monetizing the entire planet and all its inhabitants, but I don't think it's our better angels striving for omnipresence and omnipotence.

I'm reminded of the 1953 novel by Arthur C. Clarke, "The Nine Billion Names of God." In this classic tale, a group of monks on a secluded mountain have worked for many years to transcribe every possible permutation of the name of the Almighty in their belief that this will one day fulfill the destiny of humankind. The protagonist of the story arrives with a computer that the monks have purchased to facilitate their efforts, which, without revealing the ending, accelerates the story to its conclusion.

The author of Genesis also knew of the human desire to be god-like, and I think that if the story of Babel were written today, the tower would exist in the form of the internet and the technology which has become the connective tissue of our nemesis.

That doesn't mean I'm disconnecting my modem as soon as I've posted this article. We have to be in this world. We don't have to be "of" it.

I would like to know when it's going to snow again, but only so I can dig the saucers out of the basement so we can slide down the hill.

I don't need to know how many flakes are going to fall or what the masked singer thinks about snow.

I'm also going to spend more time in the woods and less peering at pixels. I'm going to explore some new trails, but not every trail.

Every wood should have an unexplored corner to anticipate, and to feed the imagination. I'm also determined to stay just a little bit hungry.

It improves the appetite and sharpens the senses. And I'm bound to continue learning.

True learning softens opinions, and that allows opinion to yield to faith.

Besides, nobody likes a farctated philodox, and there are more than enough of those on Facebook.

Outside The Box
By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

Mistletoe

You can find mistletoe outside on trees year round as it is an evergreen plant. Usually in December it will become more noticeable because trees are bare after dropping their leaves. If you see a green bundle of leaves in the branches of tree around this time of year, chances are that it's mistletoe. In the plant world mistletoe is considered a parasitic plant. Mistletoe will send its root, called the haustorium, into the bark of a host tree. The mistletoe will take nutrients and water from the host tree. Mistletoe is usually found in the southern United States, because it is susceptible to freezing temperatures, ranging from Virginia over to Texas and down to Florida. It can infect more than 105 different species of trees. Some trees often infected by mistletoe are maples, buckeyes, birch, hickory, oaks, and a whole bunch more. Mistletoe can be shaded out by surrounding branches. Therefore, fast growing trees that can cover mistletoe from above will have success in preventing infection.

Mistletoe creates a large draw for water and nutrients on the tree. Mistletoe will pull these things to itself away from the roots of the tree. This process can lead to a lot of stress on the tree, especially in a drought. Mistletoe tissue will have 1.6 times more nitrogen, 2.3 times more potassium, and 2.5 times more phosphorus than the host tree tissue. During the times of drought mistletoe water and nutrient uptake from the tree will increase while the rest of the tree is in decline. Research has shown that moderately infected trees can have a 66% mortality rate after a severe drought period. Mistletoe is able to pull water from the tree more effectively than the tree can pull the water up. Mistletoe infections can be very common. Trees that are taller than surrounding trees and trees that are not densely packed in with other trees are most likely to be infected. Infections will begin at the top of the tree and move downward and inward over time. Advanced symptoms on the tree of infection can be branch die-back, reduced tree growth, increased stress, and in massive infestations, tree death. Early intervention is critical when dealing with mistletoe infection. If you simply remove the mistletoe shoot it will mostly likely grow back, so repeated removal would be necessary. Pruning tree branches that are infected is an effective method of removing mistletoe. Remove the branch at least 14 inches below the point of infection. Ethe-phon is as chemical application that is a plant growth regulator that can be used to control mistletoe. Whenever you apply any chemical, read the label before application. Control of mistletoe on old and socially significant trees can be important. Having a mistletoe infection does not necessarily mean that death is imminent for a tree, but mistletoe can have a drastic impact on the tree's ability to thrive. If you have any questions about mistletoe contact your local Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Letters to The Editor

Flak about Biden

Biden gets a lot of flak about being too old and being senile, and some folks don't know that Joe Biden was born with a speech impediment, and so he takes his time expressing himself so as not to have words come out wrong. My dad had to speak slowly as he had a condition called MS, but he had a photographic memory, so speaking slowly was not a sign of senility.

Do you know, for years, Biden commuted by train to Washington. His first wife and child were killed in a car wreck, and this was the way he traveled to his home, to be with his children, and back to DC.

Biden and his present wife have a combined wealth of about 9 billion. She works as a college professor and will continue to work after Biden becomes president.

When Biden left the vice-presidency they had a combined wealth of about 1.2 million.

Their income comes from her salary as a professor, and this book deals, and speaking engagements.

I took this off-line and anyone can do it. As Mark Lowery of the Gather Quartet says, Don't take my word for it, look it up for yourself.

Bob Gibby

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
P.O. 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.

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Clean Forest, Healthy Forest

It is that time of year when forest managers begin forest improvement projects and fuel reduction by burning the forests as nature intended. When I say burning the forests, I do not mean burning them down, but a prescribed (Rx - planned) fire under controlled conditions where the fire burns the underbrush and undesirable plants that compete with the native trees and plants and does not harm the natives. Many natives require periodic fires in their habitat to make them thrive. We must understand, fire is not something mankind or the government thought up, but nature has been doing it since the beginning of time and is part of the natural progression of things. The only difference now is where nature once burned, there are now houses and buildings so forest managers must plan or prescribe a burn to create the least problems with the neighbors as possible. People need to realize that the smoke from a controlled burn means that the forests will be healthier, water cleaner, animals will have more to eat, and fuel for wildfires will be reduced for several years to come. If the neighbors are bothered by the smoke, then they can go to a movie for a few hours until it blows away. A few hours of smoke are much better than watching your house disappear in a cloud of smoke and flames from an uncontrolled fire fed by over buildup of forest fuel. After a burn, animals can find tasty, tender plants to eat on the clean ground and seeds and berries, and the animals also know how to get out of the way of an oncoming wildfire, nature taught them how to do that. Most species in their native habitat need periodic fire to maintain the natural progression of their species, nature planned it that way. Controlled burning stimulates the germination of many desirable forest trees, and reveals soil mineral layers which increases seedling and shrub growth, thus renewing the forest. Some require heat from fire to open cones to disperse seeds and trees like Longleaf and pitch pine must have fire to stimulate growth. For many species in our forests fire is a necessity for regeneration and nature has always provided it, but federal policies created by government forest managers decades ago thought they knew better than Mother Nature (Smokey Bear campaign) and put policies in place to prevent and suppress all fires in the forest, good and bad. Smokey has wised up and now says "Only You can prevent wildfires!" but there is a long way to go to catch up with the backlog of fuel from no burning for decades and more houses are built in the forest every day so burning will get harder than ever before. This policy of suppression has created the situation we have today with a huge buildup of natural fuel that creates more fires, hotter fires that are more destructive, and leads to a longer season that grows every year. These factors make wildfires costlier because it takes more resources to contain and keep the fires away from houses that are built where forests used to be. Now when you see smoke settling in your valley late in the evening this time of year, it is probably a controlled burn set by foresters under the right conditions using technology to predict where the smoke will go where it will not bother people. Controlled burning reduces fuels, improves wildlife habitat, controls competing vegetation, improves short term forage for grazing, improves accessibility, helps control tree disease, and perpetuates fire dependent species, it's a good thing so why do people resist it? This is what nature intended and we do not need to mess with Mother nature, because contrary to government studies, Mother Nature does know best about how to manage her forests and foresters work for her.

For more information on controlled burns contact your local Georgia Forestry Commission office or US Forest Service office in your area.

RC&D
Frank Riley
Executive Director



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