

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Letters to The Editor

**Dear Editor:**  
I have been for some time reluctant to write this, but as a combat veteran (lieutenant), I feel that it needs to be said. I suggest that the next speaker at the Veterans Day and/or Memorial Day ceremonies not be a politician, general, admiral, etc. (Nothing against past speakers, all of whom I thank.) Rather, I suggest the next speaker be an enlisted combat-wounded infantryman (a "grunt") or a former POW, because these are the folks who bear the burdens of war. After all, no one knows the price of freedom better than those who fought face-to-face, hand-to-hand, and down-and-dirty to achieve and preserve it.

*Claude Spears*

**To the Editor:**  
In the last two months of 2015 when we were seeing all that rain, weather was one of our most talked about subjects. One of my hobbies is tracking rainfall at our home in the Gumlog Valley near the intersection of Clay County, NC, Towns and Union, GA and you may be interested to know the results. My records show a total of 79.3 inches of rain in 2015. The month with least rain was May with 2.5" and the most was December with 15.5". That December total was the highest of any single month since I started recording measurements 8 years ago but the yearly amount was second to 2013. During the 8-year span that my records cover, yearly totals were as follows: 2008 (44.2"), 2009 (72.5"), 2010 (47.7"), 2011 (56.4"), 2012 (50.0"), 2013 (87.0"), 2014 (54.3") and 2015 (79.3"). That makes our yearly average for the same period 61.4". As you may know, rainfall varies greatly within our region as a result of mountain, lake and other weather-affecting influences.

*Wm. Ronald Gibson*

**Letter to the Editor:**  
Barack Obama is very concerned about gun violence don't you know. That's why Federal gun crime prosecutions have fallen to a new low under him. It's why his executive actions on amnesty have driven gang members to America even while he continues freeing violent drug dealers from prison. And then Obama wants to bring tens of thousands of Syrian Muslims to America (not the Christians who are actually persecuted), who poll as supporting ISIS by at least 13%. That's 1,300 ISIS supporters for every 10,000 Syrian migrants. It is reported that Obama is planning to issue executive orders because he can't legally get these gun laws passed. And, of course, these actions will end up hurting legal gun owners rather than the criminals he panders to. Obama doesn't want to fight gun violence by fighting criminals. He wants to take away the civil rights of Americans instead.

*Tim Groza*

**Dear Editor:**  
As I look back on Christmas season with The Salvation Army of Northeast Georgia, I am amazed at the generosity of our community. Each of you who provided for your neighbors blessed the recipients of your gifts more than you will ever know. Because of your financial support and the hours you gave volunteering in 2015, more than 5,000 people received assistance with rent, utilities, food, and Christmas gifts. I want to thank especially the volunteers who rang bells at our red kettle locations this year. We are so thankful for your commitment and the selfless gift of your time. Many days were cold, but you were always there, sharing a smile and Christmas greeting to passersby. Your spirit and love made a difference in the lives of so many and will continue to do so this year as we help those who have no alternative but to turn to The Salvation Army for their basic needs.

Our fundraising goal for the kettles was \$69,000. This money will go far in our work to keep families intact with rent, utilities, and food year-round. Thank you for this gift. We pledge to be good stewards of your generosity.

This year 475 children woke up to a joyful Christmas morning because of your help with the Angel Tree program. Thank you for adopting Angels from Angel Trees, for placing Angel Trees in your churches and businesses, and for hosting toy drives. Surely this proves that we are able to provide hope and joy to those in need in our community as we work together.

I am privileged to work alongside you as a neighbor, and I look forward to what we can accomplish in the upcoming year.

*Lts. Shaning & Melody Moran  
The Salvation Army of Toccoa, Northeast Georgia*

**Dear Editor:**  
Sheriff Clinton's article regarding turnover in law enforcement from the January 13, 2016, edition of *The Towns County Herald* rang true. As a former officer with the Chicago Police Department in the early 1980s, I saw many "Old timers" with 20, and even 30 years of service. I was one of the few from my graduating class to resign, leaving after 3 years.

I believe today's anti-police environment is the predominant factor in the heavy turnover we see in law enforcement. The lack of respect afforded our officers is abysmal. This drastic change in our culture is a direct result of people being too busy or unwilling to be parents. It is easy to make a baby, but it is not easy to be a parent and without both a mother and father, many children will end up on the streets, with a gun in their hand, some looking to kill police officers.

There is no simple answer to either problem, the high turnover rate in law enforcement or finding a way to stop people from having children simply to have children. However, I agree with Sheriff Clinton's statement, "As less desirable employees leave, we can bring aboard employees who share the agency's goals and vision and are more likely to succeed and therefore to stay longer, or at the very least, contribute to the agency goals during their tenure."

*Thank you,  
Christopher D. Mazur*

## Georgia Association of Conservation Districts

Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D Council has many partners with the programs, events, and field days that it administers and facilitates each year. Our closest partner groups are the Soil & Water Conservation District Supervisors that cover most of the counties in Georgia. These groups are made up of local farmers and business people who monitor and oversee projects that involve soil and water and the supervisor's purpose is to monitor these projects thru the NRCS to prevent erosion and damage to our streams, rivers, and lakes.

These district supervisor groups are monitored and supported by the Georgia Soil & Water Conservation Commission which is a state agency under the Georgia Department of Agriculture. The Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC) was formed to protect, conserve and improve the soil and water resources of the State of Georgia. The Commission's goal is to make Georgia a better place for its citizens through the wise use and protection of basic soil and water resources and to achieve practical water quality goals.

In Georgia there are 159 counties and 40 Soil & Water Conservation Districts. Each county has at least two supervisor representatives on the District Board of Supervisors. Serving as the coordinator and guide to all these efforts is a Commission, appointed by Governor Deal and comprised of five supervisors from different regions of the state.

The Georgia Association of Conservation District Supervisors (GACDS) is a nonprofit organization made up of Soil & Water District Supervisors, and is dedicated to help the 40 districts with the protection and conservation of our state's natural resources. The 370 members volunteer in each of Georgia's 40 soil and water conservation districts to promote conservation, educate citizens about the importance of conservation, and inform policy makers about natural resource issues.

Conservation districts host educational events throughout the year, covering topics such as best management practices for agricultural production, erosion control, water conservation, and improving wildlife habitat. GACDS partners with several organizations to maximize the impact of the efforts we dedicate to conservation activities. Whether they are conducting educational events for the general public, working with agricultural producers to implement conservation practices, or advising developers and municipalities on best management practices, they count on these partners' technical assistance and financial support.

GACDS is closely aligned with the Georgia Soil and Water Conservation Commission (GSWCC), since their membership is composed of soil and water conservation district supervisors. Districts were formed in the late 1930's to protect, improve, and conserve the soil and water resources of the State. GACDS partners with the Commission on educating supervisors and the public on conservation issues. The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) offers support in many ways. NACD develops the educational materials distributed by the districts during Stewardship Week each year. Regional meetings, the annual meeting, and the summer legislative conference offer continuing education for supervisors and conservation partners. NACD represents the conservation community on legislative issues and national policy concerning natural resources.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is an active partner on conservation activities. NRCS provides technical assistance to agricultural producers, which is necessary to getting conservation on the ground. NRCS employees help conduct educational activities within the district and work closely with local work groups to establish conservation priorities. Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D) partner with districts to achieve conservation goals. Several RC&D projects, such as the sustain-

Executive Director of RC&D

Frank Riley



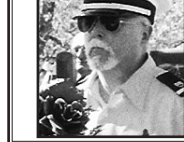
able agriculture workshops and equine management courses, are promoted by the districts. One supervisor from each district serves as a member on his/her local council. District and council activities are coordinated through that supervisor and the RC&D coordinator's attendance at district meetings.

The Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and GACDS cooperate to protect and improve environmental quality in the state. Information is shared on environmental laws and enforcement so that supervisors have the knowledge needed to carry out their duties. In the next 3 years, Chest-Chat will work with the Supervisor groups in north Georgia to facilitate field days and events that will help educate the citizens about soil health, erosion control, water quality, alternative farming methods, High Tunnels, pasture management, row crop management, and forest management.

All of these topics are part Best Management Practices, BMPs, that are voluntary rules and methods that help conserve and protect our soil and water resources. Chest-Chat is a member of and attends 5 of these District Supervisor groups meetings each month.

For more information on GS&WCC, S&WCD, GACDS, or NACD, contact Frank Riley, Executive Director, Chestatee/Chattahoochee RC&D council at info.cccrd@gmail.com.

## The Veterans' Corner



By Scott Drummond, USCG Veteran

**Towns County Patriots**  
Many of us know some great guys from the Classes of '64-'65 like Alvin Gibson, Clyde Owenby, Bruce King, Tommy Gibson and Ernest Garrett. Each man is special because they honorably served their country in the US Army during the Vietnam War. Both Clyde Owenby and Ernest Garrett gave their lives in that conflict and we proudly continue to recognize them with the VFW/Legion Post #7807 bearing their names.

Four of these young mountain boys were inducted 2 years after high school in May 1966, and "selected" to train for and form a new division, the Ninth Infantry Div out of Fort Riley, Kansas. They completed 30 long weeks of hard, continuous training in jungle warfare before deployment to Vietnam. Between training and deployment the four returned to Hiawassee for a thirty day leave to spend time with family and friends.

After Christmas '66 the four young friends began what they called an "adventure" to Southeast Asia. After arriving in San Francisco the entire 9th Infantry Division boarded ships sailing to Vietnam. It was a miserable seaskip journey for 29 days for the boys that had only "johnboat" experience.

The buddies arrived in Vietnam in January 1967 with the deployment of the 9th Infantry Division directly to the Mekong Delta jungles. A major memory for Company "A" was their involvement in the biggest ground battle of that war, Operation Junction City, a horrific battle of 3 days and 2 nights. The war

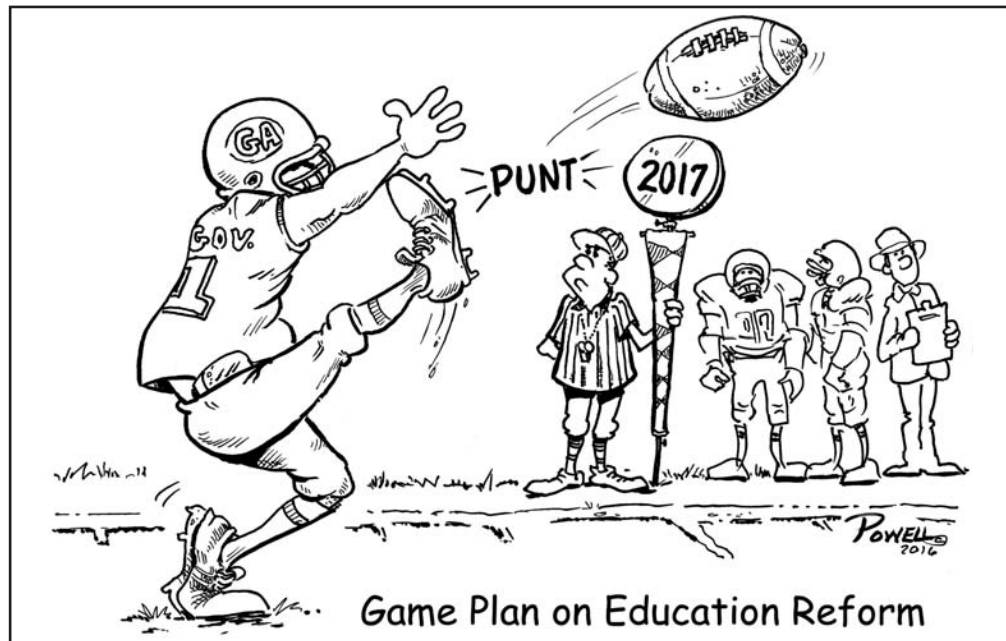
was tough, but the four friends had one another for hometown support.

Clyde Owenby was a perfect icon of a soldier, always in manner and appearance, always with a big smile and always there for his brothers. His CO, Captain John Phelps, relied on Clyde as "duty driver" when out on patrol. Clyde was smart, quick, and strong. In July 1967 when news arrived to Clyde that his older brother was seriously injured in a car wreck, he received emergency leave to return home. Captain Phelps had Clyde driving the APV out of the jungle, with Alvin's squad providing security escort. In route to the helo LZ, they were ambushed into a deadly fight. Clyde was killed instantly along with two others in the squad. Captain Phelps was injured.

Ernest Garrett arrived in Vietnam later in 1967, with a group of replacement soldiers for the 9th Infantry. Alvin was able to spend time with him, before Ernest was transferred to his assignment. Alvin later learned Ernest had been killed in a ground battle.

Alvin has no regrets for all that was endured in service to his country, other than losing two of his friends. In the summer of 2015, after 48 years, John Phelps contacted Alvin. The captain wanted to visit Clyde's grave. Indicative of the typical greatness, sincerity and integrity of our military men and women, at grave site, Captain Phelps snapped to attention, saluted and with tear filled eyes, proclaimed Clyde Owenby as "one hell of a soldier".

*Semper Paratus*



Game Plan on Education Reform

## Community Calendar

**American Legion Post 23** meets 1st Tuesday of each month at 4 PM at VFW Post 7807, Sunnyside Rd., Hiawassee. Call 706-896-8387 for details. We need your support!  
**VFW Fish Fry** April - October on 2nd & 4th Fridays each month from 4:30 - 7. \$10 per plate.  
**Towns County Water Board Meeting** 3rd Monday of each month at 6 p.m. in the TC Water Office Building.  
**Mountain Community Seniors** meet the second Thursday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 1 p.m.  
**Towns County Republican Party** meets at 6:30 PM the 4th Thursday of each month at the new Senior Center. For more info call 706-994-3919.  
**Democratic Party of Towns County** meets 2nd Tuesday of each month at 5 p.m. at new Senior Center. Newcomers welcome. Questions please contact the T.C. Dem's at Townscountydemocrats@gmail.com.  
**Towns County Planning Commission** is held the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Courthouse.  
**Towns County Commissioners** meeting is the 3rd Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in the courthouse.  
**School Board Meeting**, 2nd Monday each month at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.  
**Hiawassee City Council** 1st Tuesday of month 4 p.m., at City Hall.  
**Young Harris City Council**, 1st Tuesday of month at 7 p.m., Young Harris City Hall.  
**The Unicoy Masonic Lodge #259** meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m.  
**Stephens Lodge #414 F & AM** meets the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM in Young Harris. Sat. morning breakfast 2nd Sat. of each month from 8 - 10:30 AM. \$6 adults, \$3 12 & under.  
**Towns County Board of Elections** holds its monthly meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 4 p.m. at the Elections Office (Old Rock Jail).  
**Towns County Historical Society** meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the old Rec Center in Hiawassee at 5:30 p.m. 706-896-1060, www.townshistory.org

**Bridge Players** intermediate level meets at 12:30 p.m. on Mondays & Fridays at the Towns County Rec Center.  
**Mountain Regional Arts & Crafts Guild** meets 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Calvary Chapel on Hwy. 76 in Hiawassee. All local artists and crafters are welcome, for information call 706-896-0932.  
**Mountain Computer User Group** meets the 2nd Monday of each month. Meetings start at 6 p.m. and visitors are welcome. Details can be found at www.mcug.org.  
**Chattahoochee-Nantahala Chapter, Trout Unlimited** meets 2nd Thursday of each month at Cadence Bank in Blairsville. 5 p.m. Fly Tying - 7 p.m. General Meeting. Everyone welcome. www.ngatu692.com.  
**Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)** meets the 3rd Monday of each month at various area restaurants. For information call Gary at 706-896-4308 or visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridgemountains.  
**Alcoholics Anonymous:** meets every Friday and Sunday evening at 7 at Red Cross Building at 1293 Jack Dayton Circle. 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.  
**Chatuge Regional Hospital Auxiliary** on the 3rd Monday of each month, except the months of July, October and December, in the hospital cafeteria at 1:30 p.m.  
**The Humane Society Mountain Shelter** Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at Cadence Bank in Blairsville.  
**The Towns County Alzheimer's Support Group** meets the first Tuesday of each month at 1:30 PM in the Family Life Center of McConnell Memorial Baptist Church. For more info call Carol at 706-896-6407.  
**The Appalachian Shrine Club** meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6 PM at the Shrine Club, Industrial Blvd., Blairsville.  
**GMREC Garden Tours** every Monday 9 a.m.-1 p.m.  
**Shooting Creek Basket Weavers** meets 2nd Wednesday of every month at 10 a.m. at Shooting Creek Fire Hall Community Center. For more info www.shootingcreekbas-

ketweavers.com.  
**Friendship Community Club** meets the 3rd Thursday of the month at 6 PM at Clubhouse, 1625 Hwy. 76. 706-896-3637.  
**Goldwing Road Riders** meets the 3rd Saturday of each month at Daniel's Steakhouse in Hiawassee. We eat at 11 and meeting begins at 12.  
**Narcotics Anonymous (NA)** meets every Wednesday evening at 7 PM at the Red Cross building on Jack Dayton Circle.  
**Caregiver support group** meets 2nd Tuesday of each month, 3 p.m. at Brasstown Manor, located at 108 Church St., Hiawassee. Call 706-896-4285 for more info.  
**Enchanted Valley Square Dance Club.** Dances 2nd & 4th Fridays at Towns Co. Rec. Ctr. from 7-9 PM. \$5/person to dance. Free to watch.  
**Brasstown Woodturners Guild** meets 1st Saturday of month at 9:30 AM in HHS shop. For more info call J. C. at 706-896-5711.  
**Mountain Amateur Radio Club (MARC)** meets 6:30 PM the 1st Monday of month at 1298 Jack Dayton Cir. (next to EMS), Hiawassee. For info call Al 706-896-9614 after 6 PM.  
**The Board of the Towns County Chamber of Commerce** meets the second Monday of every month at 8 a.m. at the Chamber office, 1411 Jack Dayton Circle, Young Harris.  
**The Quilting Bee** at McConnell Memorial Baptist Church in Family Life Center, Room 216. 1st & 3rd Wednesday of each month from 10 AM - 3 PM. Bring a sack lunch. For more information call Kathy at 706-835-6721 or Marilyn at 706-897-4367.  
**Mountain Coin Club** meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the North Georgia Tech campus in Blairsville. Guests are welcome. For more info, call 706-379-1488.  
**Monday morning BINGO** at Brasstown Manor every Monday morning at 9:30 a.m. 108 Church St., Hiawassee. Players meet in the Bradford. Questions 706-896-4285.  
**Towns County Lions Club** meets 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Daniel's Restaurant, 273 Big Sky Drive, Hiawassee.

**Towns County Herald**  
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