

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Letter to the Editor:

Congratulations go to the Towns County Fire Rescue upon receiving word that its 2014 Aid to Firefighters Grant request has been awarded. This grant is part of a FEMA program to assist fire departments in providing equipment to enhance performance and increase firefighters protection.

This grant request that was compiled and filed under the auspices of retired Fire Chief Mitch Floyd and will be used for the purchase of new fire protective gear to replace some of this gear some of which is over 10 years old and non-compliant with current fire safety standards.

This grant that is among the others received in the past five years enhance Towns County Fire Rescue's ability to protect all of its clientele.

*Dewaine A. Olson
Pro-bono Grant Contributor
Towns County Resident and Taxpayer*

To the Editor:

As many readers know, ours is one of only a few of Georgia's 159 counties that still has the single commissioner system rather than a board. In recent elections some candidates have toyed with the idea of changing to a board.

For those who believe a board of commissioners would be better for our county than the highly efficient single commissioner system, I urge you to buy a subscription to the "Cherokee Scout" and read about the controversial performance of the board in nearby Murphy, NC. Several years ago the Cherokee County board consisted of three elected members and citizens were unhappy with their performance. After a contentious campaign, voters ousted all incumbents and elected a new board. Apparently the new board members had more zeal than political expertise or business knowledge. In one of his first actions the new chairman fired the county manager who promptly sued for breach of contract and won a settlement of \$140,000 (Ouch! tax increase). That board was split between political parties and soon decided that citizens were giving them too much heat for just three people to stand. So a resolution was put to voters who approved an increase to five members. The next election resulted in another split board with individual members often bickering with each other and trying to please their own party's supporters. Reportedly, they bought property through the "good old boy network" far above market value and built a manned trash depository just outside a new subdivision. Residents appealed long and loud but to no avail. The board also failed to clear tornado caused debris from the Valley River and the next time the river flooded, debris lodged against a major bridge and washed it out costing hundreds of thousands of dollars to replace. Then in the 2014 election most of that board was voted out and a new board all of one party was elected. One newly elected member promptly sued his neighbor, former friend and opponent in the election for defamation of character and that suit made front-page news in the "Scout." The board supported a land sale to the Cherokee Nation for building a casino just north of Murphy. Apparently they believed the casino would greatly increase tax revenue but were dismayed when the Tribe transferred the property into a non-taxable trust. Recently they engaged in a contest with the Tribe over emergency services to the casino (Board's first offer was \$250,000 per year and the Tribe countered at \$75,000). Last week's newspaper reported that the FAA had found the county's airport authority had illegally diverted funds from a federal grant and used that money to furnish rent-free housing to a "favored few." Almost every week features a new chapter of intrigue.

When I consider the many positive accomplishments in our county (first class recreation areas, exemplary farmers' market, senior center, good roads, good schools, good hospital, etc.) I can't help but think what a shame it would be to discontinue the good governance we enjoy with our one commissioner and exchange it for a board from which we could reasonably expect much talk, few results, frequent bickering, constant indecision and unreasonable delays in getting any substantive business conducted.

Wm. Ronald Gibson

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. Let-

ters 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

"Oh, yes, I met him a couple of times." This is a statement I have enjoyed casually dropping into conversations about President Jimmy Carter over the years. Of course I would leave out the fact that I was on a school trip to Atlanta to see the Governor's Mansion and got in line twice to shake the Governor's hand. My first introduction to the real workings of the political process came later in 1976 when Governor Carter ran against President Gerald Ford. I was a poll worker at a precinct in Hall County, GA, having been selected from my high school history class for that honor. To this day, I still have a kind of reverence for the voting booth and a sense of gratitude for what it represents.

I was too young to vote in the 1976 election, but I read Governor Carter's book, "Why Not the Best," written during his campaign for president. The book tells the story of Mr. Carter's childhood and naval career and the Christian values instilled by his family. The title of the book has remained a question I still

ask myself sometimes when I'm tempted to approach a task with less than my best effort.

The four years of the Carter Administration, like any administration in American history, will always be viewed with conflicting opinions, but the true measure of the man can be clearly seen in the ways he chose to use his time after the presidency. The Carter Center has remained a high profile force for democracy and the peaceful resolution of conflict. Mr. Carter's work with Habitat for Humanity has helped inspire a generation of young people to make practical and meaningful contributions to struggling families. As an elder statesman, a peace maker and an author, Mr. Carter has exemplified the very best of our American values.

Now past 90 and facing cancer, Jimmy Carter once again demonstrates the quality of his character by confronting the ultimate challenge with dignity and grace.

Godspeed, Jimmy Carter, and thank you for what you have done to make the world a better place.



RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

Not all sports figures qualify as heroes. You and I could make a pretty long list of some who don't. But I have to tell you I am a fan of James Harrison, outside linebacker for the Pittsburgh Steelers. I had never heard of him till a few days ago. I don't know much about his football skills, but I like what I learn about him as a dad. Let me tell you his story.

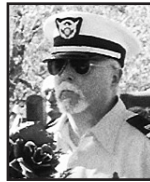
James and his wife have two young sons. Middle School or maybe late elementary. Although the Harrisons live the irregular life of a professional athlete's family, they have decided their sons will grow up to be young men of integrity. No accommodation just because their daddy has his name in the paper and his picture on TV every week. No shortcuts because of their dad's fame. They have chores. A schedule. And high expectations.

A few days ago dad came home to discover that his boys had been presented with a couple of pretty imposing trophies. He was pleased but curious. Had his sons excelled and displayed some exceptional athletic prowess? Had they persevered and put forth the extraordinary effort it takes to win some hard-fought contest? Well, not exactly. These were "participation trophies," awarded because the kids showed up for the games.

Dad - and mom - weren't happy. They talked it over and agreed that they were not about to raise two boys to be men by making them believe they are somehow entitled to some special award for being mediocre. On his Instagram account James explained their reasoning. "I came home to find out my boys had received two trophies for nothing, participation trophies. While I am very proud of my boys for everything they do and will encourage them till the day I die, these trophies will be given back until they earn a real one. I'm sorry that I'm not sorry for believing that they are entitled to something even though it may mean they gave even their best...because sometimes your best is not enough, and that should drive you to want to do better."

Pretty strong language for a couple of grade school kids to hear. Interestingly, James had almost unanimous support on the responses to his Instagram post. We're all looking for ways to help our kids become their best. I think he's on to something.

Send your parenting questions to: DrDon@RareKids.net.



The Veterans' Corner

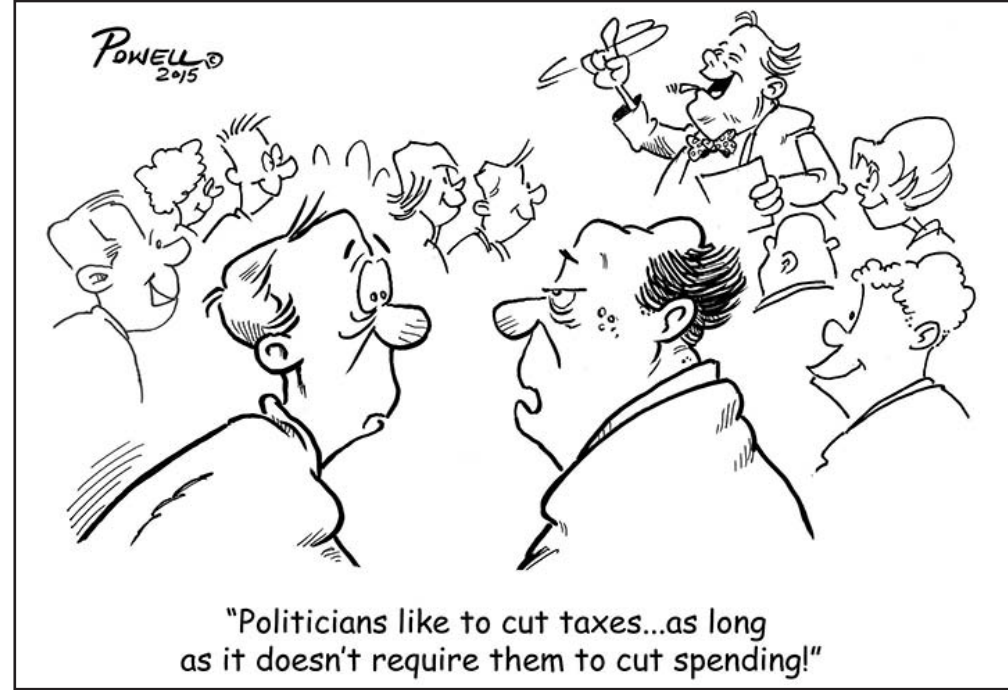
By Scott Drummond, USCG Veteran

Conversion!

I sincerely hope that I bore no one with these old clippings, letters and news articles we discovered in our old scrapbook. These remnants of real genuine American Patriot's thoughts, feelings and experiences, however small or anecdotal, nevertheless reflect the commitment, passion, patriotism and knowledge that our God, Country, and family are far greater than those, who serve a greater purpose, than themselves. Knowing, respecting, learning valuable lessons from wiser, older Veterans, and indeed today, those younger and smarter than me is valuable to each of us, and as I was very gently searching through this old, decaying scrapbook, the following news clipping actually fell out in my lap. No dates, no names, just a simple honest, beautifully written and poetic prayer offered up by one of our nation's servicemen who sacrificed his young years, and maybe his life, for our America. And as silly as some may deem, this too, brought tears to my eyes as I began to read it. Heck, sometimes it's hard enough to read this old yellowed out newsprint as it is! Ha! My hopes are for this soldier's prayer to be appreciated and taken to heart by all Americans who wish to read it. Not one tiny fraction of narcissism within this simple but bold prayer. Much like most Veterans I know, even when they use "R" rated language! We sure do need more of this spirit and honest humility across America today and as this young soldier realized our Supreme Commander awaits simple sincere words, like these, from any and all of us.

Look, God, I have never

*spoken to You
But now I want to say,
"how do You do."
You see, God, they told me
You didn't exist--
And like a fool
I believed all of this.
Last night from a shell-hole
I saw your sky,
I figured right then,
they had told me a lie."
Had I taken time to see the
things You made,
I'd know they weren't calling
a spade a spade.
I wonder God,
if You'd shake my Hand.
Somehow - I feel that
You will understand.
Funny - I had come to this
hellish place,
Before I had the time
to see Your face.
Well, I guess there isn't much
more to say,
But I'm sure glad,
God, I met You today
I guess the "zero hour"
will soon be here.
But I'm sure not afraid
since I know You're near.
The signal!
Well, God, I'll have to go.
I like you lots -
This I want You to know,
Look, now - this will be
a horrible fight,
Who knows - I may come to
Your house tonight.
Though I wasn't friendly
with You before
I wonder God -
if You'd wait at Your Door.
Look - I'm crying! Me!
Shedding tears!
I wish I'd known
You these many years.
Well, I will have to go now,
God - good bye.
Strange - since I've met You,
I'm not afraid to die.
Stars and Stripes
Semper Paratus*



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 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 Towns-countydemocrats@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.
Stevens 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: 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.
Chatuge Regional Shrine 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.shootingcreekbasketweavers.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
Dedicated to the promotion of Towns County

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