

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Dear Editor:
 Corrections to article titled "Hiwassee hires Carl Vinson Institute" in the 9/23/15 edition of TCH.

The article states that the Vinson Institute performed a City of Hiwassee salary review in 2010. The correct date is 2001. I have a copy of the letter from Jan H. Hansford of the Vinson Institute who performed the survey, dated July 2, 2001. Furthermore, I confirmed the survey date of 2001 with the Mayor and City Manager on September 25, 2015.

Quoting the City Manager, Rick Stancil, from the article, "its already been done one time, nothing has changed". Two major changes occurred, Mayor Mathis' salary has more than doubled, and Mr. Stancil was not employed in 2001. Change #1: Mayor Mathis' annual salary is currently \$48,534. If you go to www.dca.ga.gov you will find statewide salary comparisons of similar size cities. The average annual salary for a mayor of similar size to Hiwassee, Population Group G is \$4,190. The mayor of Helen makes \$1,800 annually, the mayor of Clayton makes \$7,500 annually, and the mayor of Young Harris makes \$8,400 annually. Change #2: Richard Stancil, City Manager, makes an annual salary of \$96,847. Mr. Stancil claims his salary is justified because the city provides water for 10,000 people in the city / county. Referring back to the GA salary survey website, the City Manager of Clayton (who currently provide water for Rabun County, population of over 16,000) makes \$58,000 annually. Also, the City of Clayton has more than twice the population of Hiwassee. There are many more comparisons which are disproportionate on the website for your review.

The article is correct in that several citizens have requested the report to be updated since it has been 14 years since the last analysis. However, having attended the council meetings for the past two years, No One, I repeat, No One has stated that the employees of the city should be paid minimum wage.

Summary: The Hiwassee Mayor and City Manager's salaries total over \$175,000 annually when you add in benefits estimated at 20%. This disparity is one reason other city employees are not being compensated equitably. The City Council has an obligation to the citizens and employees of the city to ensure that compensation is fair and equitable.

Noel Turner
 President, Towns County Homeowners Association

Dear Editor:

In last week's issue of the *Towns County Herald* I found two articles, or rather a Letter to the Editor and a news article, to peek my interest. First the Letter to the Editor by Mr. & Mrs. Heimanson, with whom I sympathize with their frustrations. However, historically the board does not answer to the general membership, but sits there pompously having Mr. Sorgen run the show. I found it refreshing to see Mr. Brewer come to the microphone on numerous occasions to try to clarify and answer questions, but regretfully the questions regarding the cost of the building was pre Mr. Brewer's time and he would have no reason to have that at the tip of his tongue. But the absence of a member of the Finance Committee coming to the microphone is very upsetting. They are board members elected by the general membership yet they sit there on stage like statues without any responsibility to the membership. What did not surprise me was the information in this week's paper stating that Jenkins was the proposer of Akins' severance. I guess a "good ole boy" all the way. A Union County member proposing the benefits for another Union county resident. Am I the only one that smells a rat in the room? Cannot help but ask myself if the board will have the guts in two years time to ask the nominating committee to put Jenkins' name up for re-election.

And now the prize. The city of Hiwassee hires a consultant to tell them what their city manager should know. He is the manager after all, isn't he? Why hire a city manager who does not even know what to pay the city employees? Was it not the purpose of electing a full time mayor to run the city? Now there is a full time mayor, a full time city manager, and between them they have to hire a consultant to tell them what to do. How many city council members are there, and yet not one is competent enough that an outside firm has to be hired? What exactly does a full time mayor do all day anyway, when a city manager has to be hired to do the job the mayor historically was elected to do? Boy, I would hate to be an incumbent right now.

What is your water bill looking like? Mine was just over \$20 a year or so ago and now it is just over \$30. According to the consultant I had to hire, that is approximately a 50% increase. What have you received for a 50% increase in your water bill? Tastes just as bad to me as it did over a year ago. But then maybe I am being a little cynical in expecting two people who are costing the city over \$150,000 a year to be competent. It looks like the consulting firm has been hired to study the wrong end of the food chain.

This incompetency thing must be catching. First the EMC board and its general manager. Now the city of Hiwassee. What can we expect next? E-mails and the State Dept.? Never!

And my last question, is it not a conflict of interest having Stancil as city manager and his firm hired to legally represent the city?

John Fitzgerald

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

Driven indoors by recent rains, I took the opportunity to double down on some research I've been doing to try and understand the headlines from that part of the world that seems cursed by interference from the rest, where the great powers and those who aspire to power conspire and collude in overlapping layers of complexity reminiscent of the years before the beginning of WWI. I pity that part of the world where the aspirations of empire and the divisions of race and ethnicity and religion combine to deny innocent people the basic human rights of peace and safety.

Discovering the truth about the Middle East is difficult because that truth is so often obscured by deliberate deception. Even the simple facts that might lead to truth are suspect, contaminated as they are by the spin of hidden agenda and the noise of opinion asserted as fact. It is a chilling reminder of New Testament images of "wars and rumors of wars."

One explanation that almost fits many of the facts (and I'm not trying to be deliberately obtuse here) is that with the Russian intervention in Syria we are seeing an escalation of the proxy war between Russia and Iran versus the United States and Saudi Arabia, funneled through Shia and Sunni hatred.

The explanation almost fits, or perhaps it fits well enough, but with friends like Saudi Arabia, I'm at a loss to define "enemy." On the one hand we have decades of images of American presidents holding hands with and bowing to Saudi royalty. On the other we have the persistent and growing body of evidence linking Saudi money to the 9-11 attacks and recent Saudi efforts to bring down the domestic oil industry in America... or are the Saudis doing the bidding of the US to damage the Russian economy, dependent on fossil fuels, by driving down the price of oil? Perhaps it is both, and perhaps "frenemy" would be a more accurate description of our relationship with the Saudis.

To add an additional plot complication we also have a growing body of evidence (which we discussed here over a year ago) that elements of the US government are responsible for the genesis of the Islamic State and that, at the very least, the establishment of an Islamic caliphate was predicted if not encouraged by members of the US government. A growing number of military and political analysts find it hard to believe that the most sophisticated and deadly air power in the world could be wielded with such indecision and weakness and find itself unable to diminish the

threat of a loose confederation of 20-somethings with stolen weapons – unless it was never the intention of the government to eliminate that threat. Consider how quickly the Russians, beginning with 60 air strikes in two days, were able to report significant progress in meeting their own goals.

And what of those goals? Clearly the Russians consider any and all combatants that threaten Assad, including (in particular, it seems) those combatants backed by western powers, to be "terrorists." In one decisive move on the Middle Eastern chessboard the Russians have achieved their goals of preserving Assad and positioning themselves to be able to call the shots in the region, appearing to succeed where America failed, and all the while flying the banner of fighting "terror." Now the Iraqi government has welcomed Russian airstrikes against ISIL and Iranian troops are providing ground support in Syria. Russia has managed to elevate its proxy, Iran, to be able to prevail over Saudi influence in the region. An amusing cartoon making its way around the internet has Putin telling a subdued Obama to "make me a sandwich..."

Then again, what have the Russians truly gained by endeavoring to make themselves a target for radical Islam equal to the United States; Russia, with its southern border lined by countries with majority Muslim populations and a large Muslim population of its own? With American troops gone from Iraq and the United States unable to afford to continue to be the "sheriff" for the region, a true Machiavellian might embrace a situation where the destabilizing influence of hordes of unemployed, radicalized young men is ground down by internal conflicts focused along the border of our historic adversary. If Obama serves tea with that sandwich, Putin would be well advised to check it for arsenic.

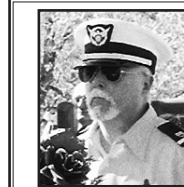
Time will tell which, if any of these scenarios bears any resemblance to the truth, or if American voters will remember any of the history of the Middle East beyond the latest episode of our favorite reality show. What was it all for, the trillions of dollars, the thousands of American lives, the hundreds of thousands of innocent civilian lives and the millions of refugees? "It kept us safe," we reply, snuggled underneath mountains of debt, and if you follow wealth to where it has accumulated over the last 25 years, you will find the rest of the answer to that question, or perhaps the answer in its entirety.

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, Hiwassee, 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 Veterans' Corner

By
 Scott Drummond,
 USCG Veteran

Most decorated woman in military history

Colonel Ruby Bradley, U.S. Army (Ret.), a survivor of two wars, WWII and Korea, a Prisoner of War for three years in WWII. Colonel Bradley entered the Army Nurse Corps as a surgical nurse in 1934. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, Colonel Bradley was 34, serving at Camp John Hay in the Philippines. Known as "The Angel in Fatigues" at Santo Thomas internment camp in Manila, she provided medical help to the prisoners and tried to feed starving children by shoving food into her pockets whenever she could, often going hungry herself. On February 3, 1945, U.S. troops stormed the gates of the Japanese camp, liberating Colonel Bradley and her fellow prisoners, ending her three years of captivity.

Weighing 80 pounds, Colonel Bradley returned home to West Virginia waiting five years before returning to the battlefield during the Korean War. After three decades of military service, Colonel Bradley retired from the Army in 1963.

On December 1, 1999, then 91 years of age, Colonel Ruby Bradley received more than a dozen military awards to replace those she had lost over the years. Senator Rockefeller presented the medals and ribbons to Colonel Bradley, who lived in Spencer, WV. Her military record included 34 medals and citations of bravery, including two Legion of Merit medals, two Bronze stars, two Presidential Emblems, the World War II Victory Medal and the U.N. Service Medal. She was also the recipient of the Florence Nightingale Medal, the Red Cross' highest international honor. Colonel Bradley, a native of Spencer, WV, died May 28 in Hazard, KY, at age

94 after a heart attack. The replacement medals: 1-Legion of Merit medal, 2-Bronze stars, two Presidential Emblems, the meritorious emblem, 2-American Defense Service Medal, 3-American Campaign Medal, 4-Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, 5-WWII Victory Medal, 6-Army Occupation Medal with Japan clasp, 7-three Korea Service Medals, 8-Philippine Liberation Medal, 9-Philippine Independence Ribbon, 10-United Nations Service Medal.

Thanks to U.S. Navy Chief (Ret.) Clarence "Bud" Johnson for this educational, not well-known tidbit of American military history dedicated to our women who serve. Sometimes we "old school" Veterans must admit that those we serve and stand in front of, like the women of our great nation, gallantly come forth and stand in harm's way in front of us! Fact: We couldn't do it without them! This lady is only one of our nation's great ones.

Important announcements: For the latest information concerning Agent Orange and other carcinogenic herbicides and possible exposure go here: www.vva.org/Guides/AgentOrangeGuide.pdf or here: www.military.com/military-report/more-ships-added-to-agent-orange-exposure-list.html?ESRC=mr0928.nl

Please do not forget our nation's Moving Wall Memorial will be at Meek's Park in Blairsville from Thursday, October 8 till Monday, October 12, for 24 hour daily viewing at no cost to visitors. This is a half-size replica of the Viet Nam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC and should prove to be emotionally moving as well as a mobile memorial to those who served and gave their lives in that tumultuous time.

Semper Paratus

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 Rep. Stephen Allison, Georgia House of Representatives, 404-656-0177 or 0185
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 Clerk of Superior Court Cecil Dye, 706-896-2130
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