

Burnette...from Page 1A

Choosing to go it alone, Burnette climbed atop his sergeant's shoulders, who raised him up to squeeze out of a small air vent at the top of the car as the train trudged slowly up the tracks.

"When I hit the ground, I tried to stay close to the train where I wouldn't be out far enough for the guards to see me and shoot me," Burnette said. "I laid there until the train got on up the track toward the mountains.

"I looked, there wasn't nothing around, so I got up and started coursing back the way I thought we'd come."

As Burnette made his way to safety, every last man remaining on the boxcar tragically lost his life in a friendly-fire bombing of the train later that morning.

Having escaped dangerously close to the German border, Burnette snuck swiftly through the occupied countryside until he happened upon a small French town right at sunrise.

"I come in on top of a hill," Burnette said. "It was sort of like being above Blairsville looking down in town. I seen a boy come out of the house and go in the basement. He had a bucket in his hand, so I knew what he was doing."

Burnette broke for the house and followed the boy into the basement. The boy had just started in on the family milk cow and received quite a shock at the sudden appearance of a soldier.

"I tried to talk to him and

couldn't understand anything he was saying," Burnette said. "I had an American flag sewed on my field jacket. I showed him that American flag on my arm, and he knew what that was."

The boy jumped up, spilling the little milk he'd managed to collect, and ran upstairs with Burnette fast on his heels.

Up top, Burnette was greeted by the boy's mother, who immediately pulled her surprise guest inside for fear of being discovered with an American soldier by the Germans.

She fed Burnette the first thing he'd eaten in over a week, a country ham breakfast, as the boy went off to fetch someone who spoke English.

"I sat down and ate breakfast, and (the boy) came back after a while," Burnette said. "He brought a little short guy who had a duckbill cap on, a little old Frenchman. He walked up and said, 'Good morning, sir.' Boy, was I glad to hear that."

After changing into the local garb – a serviceable disguise despite being too small for him – Burnette accompanied the little Frenchman to his living quarters situated above the drug store he owned in a neighboring village.

"He took me upstairs and pulled all the shades, and I sat up there and watched them Germans tromp up and down the street," Burnette said. "You could hear them a mile away, them old boots like they wore.

They had hobnails in them or something, making noise worse than a team of horses."

Burnette stayed with the Frenchman overnight, and the next day, he joined up with five members of the French Forces of the Interior headed for the frontline.

Soon after their journey began, three of the five Frenchmen died from enemy fire when spooked into the open by a close call with an artillery bombardment. Burnette even had to subdue one of the surviving members of his band, who panicked and almost gave away their position.

In his short time with the French, Burnette learned that the American forces were fighting their way across France and into Germany, south of their position.

He parted ways with his new friends, taking with him a small amount of provisions before striking out on his own. For about a week thereafter, he stealthily worked his way at night toward what he guessed was his unit.

Burnette eventually came upon a small border town in Germany, where he hid in an abandoned house until, after nearly two weeks of separation, he reunited with his outfit, Company M of the U.S. Army 36th Infantry Division.

"They were coming in right at the end of town," Burnette said. "I was up there at that house, and I walked out in the street and waited on them. They saw me, and they all come running up there where I was at."

A buck sergeant at the time, Burnette stayed with his

unit in Germany through the end of the war.

Afterward, Burnette often thought of his fellow soldiers

who'd lost their lives aboard that boxcar he escaped, the 64 men he'd served alongside who did not return home, and

he thanked God regularly for allowing him to make it back alive to raise a family in Blairsville.



Anceberry Burnette, center, at Union County War Memorial Park in 2018 with son Benny and grandson Shane, all U.S. Army Veterans. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

Honeybee...from Page 1A

"Honeybees are making food for man," Henderson said. "They've been collecting the honey off the honeybees, documented in cave paintings, back to about 14,000 years ago."

Henderson operates a bee farm near the University of Georgia Experiment Station on Gainesville Highway, and along with being a member of the Georgia Beekeepers Association, he helms the Mountain Beekeepers Association of Blairsville.

"We've got about 50 members, and we get together once a month and commiserate about how to raise bees better," Henderson said, adding that most members are small operators, but there are five big producers in the area with three or four hundred or more hives each.

Henderson said over \$50 million is spent each year attempting to unravel the mystery of "colony collapse disorder," a term describing the widespread dying off bees. He said research has identified many issues, but researchers still don't know what to do about the problem.

"Last year, (reported) colony losses for the winter was 42% nationwide," Henderson said. "It takes 1.9 million beehives just to (pollinate) the almond crop in California. This past spring, they got a little over 900,000 because of the losses.

"After the almonds, most of those people go to San Diego and do avocados. They only got about 800,000. They need a million just for avocados."

Commercial beekeepers haul their beehives cross-country in semi-trailers to help pollinate the plants of large commercial crop growers. It's called mass pollinator migration, and it's a booming business today.

The upshot is that, without bees, mankind would be forced into a more grain-based diet, not to mention the loss of honey, Henderson said.

"Apples and the beans and the peas, all the vegetables, would be smaller, less seeds in the bean pods," Henderson said.



Don Clark of Skeenah Valley Farm holding up a delicious-looking jar of honey during the Honeybee Jubilee over the weekend. Photo by Mark Smith

"They say it takes 35 pollinator visits – not necessarily bees – to an apple flower to get a proper, commercial-sized apple. I always thought it was irrigation, fertilization and insecticides. It's not. It's just pollination."

As for what the general public can do to help keep bees from dying off, Henderson said folks can cut down on the use of insecticides and herbicides in home flower and vegetable gardens.

"The insecticides are going to kill the bees directly, and gardeners that use a lot of indiscriminate Sevin Dust, it's going to get carried in the pod as pollen and it's going to kill the bees," Henderson said.

He also noted that there are more responsible ways to protect gardens using insecticides.

"You can put it on at certain times of the day, like at 7 p.m., after the bees have gone to bed," Henderson said. "By morning, it'll be glued down by the dew and the bees won't pick it up."

Herbicides kill the flowers from which honeybees forage pollen, Henderson said, so the less herbicides are used, the better.

"If you don't understand bees and their connection to food and that entire cycle, and really care – we're at that point nationwide," Henderson said, referring to food sources being in jeopardy.

Also on display at the



A monarch butterfly emerging from its chrysalis at the Towns-Union Master Gardener volunteer table at the Farmers Market on Saturday. Photo by Mark Smith

Farmers Market on Saturday were monarch butterflies emerging from their chrysalises at the Union County Extension Master Gardener volunteer table. Several monarch caterpillars and a few intact chrysalises were on display as well.

Monarch butterflies, like honeybees, are natural pollinators. It's been said that they, too, have declined in number over the last few years.

For more information on the Mountain Beekeepers Association, visit www.mtnbeekeepers.org, and for more info on the Master Gardener program, check out extension.uga.edu/county-offices/union/agriculture-and-natural-resources.html.