

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Outdoor Burning

Autumn began on September 22nd, and that means we will soon see falling leaves. People may be disposing of those leaves and other yard debris by outdoor burning. Last year, we provided some information about Georgia's new law concerning outdoor burning and the new safety standards. These new standards took effect on July 1, 2021. It is important that everyone understands the changes that were made and the new safety standards that must be followed.

In the past, if a person wanted to burn leaves and yard debris, they were required to obtain a burn permit through the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). That involved going online or calling to obtain a burn permit number. The law concerning burning has changed and it no longer requires a burner to inform the GFC online or by phone about their intention to burn hand-piled leaves and/or yard debris.

The change in the law did incorporate five safety standards that must be followed by persons who are burning. A GFC awareness campaign was launched introducing the theme "Take Five" before the burn and to remember the acronym "S-S-T-A-R" representing the five points of the burning safety standard.

The first "S" represents Space. There must be 25 feet or more between the fire and woods. The second "S" also represents Space stating that there must be 50 feet or more between the fire and any structures. The "T" represents Time. Burning can only be conducted from sunrise to sunset. The "A" represents Attendance. A person responsible for the fire must stay on-site with the fire until it is completely extinguished.

The "R" represents Reasonable Precautions. The concept of reasonable precautions is to have tools and measures in place to prevent the fire from escaping. These include things such as a continuous pressurized water source on-site; man-made or natural barrier to contain fire; hand tools or fire-containing equipment on-site; weather awareness such as red flag warnings, High Fire Danger designation, and other hazardous conditions such as low relative humidity, high winds, etc.

The law may have eliminated the need for a burn permit on certain burns but it did not change what a person is allowed to burn. Only hand-piled leaves or naturally occurring

See Dyer, page 5A

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Lay the Burden Down

Jack London's "The Call of the Wild" was required reading in my high school. It is red in tooth and claw. It reveals London's burdensome view that this harsh world is all of reality.

The protagonist of the novel is Buck, a dog. He learns by the "law of club and fang" to be an obedient Klondike sled dog. It's a story of weary labor, deadly retribution, and the struggle to survive. At the end, Buck discovers his owner Thornton and the other dogs dead - killed by indigenous people. He joins a wolf pack living in the wild only to return as the legendary "Ghost Dog" who kills humans.

London's experiences informed his stories and his worldview. His time in the Klondike damaged his health. As a child he labored 12 to 18 hours a day at a cannery. As a teenager he sailed with a sealing expedition, bludgeoning and skinning seals for days on end. He experienced hunger, homelessness, and a stint in the penitentiary. His mother attempted suicide. His birth father denied him, suggesting any number of other men could be his father.

London's faith was in Darwin. He declared, "I believe that with my death I am just as much obliterated as the last mosquito you and I squashed." A few months before he died at age 40 of an overdose, London explained his credo. "I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze than it should be stifled by dry rot. The proper function of man is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them." If anything, he lived as though to shorten them. "The ultimate word," he wrote, "is I Like," expressed in his wild adventures, riotous living, and substance abuse. Those were his attempts to offload the burden of a pitiless and pointless world.

His is a story of tragedy, not redemption. He missed the evidence all around him of a far greater and more attractive reality - the rest of the story. Even amidst tooth and claw, creation points to something beautiful and sublime. "O Lord, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; the earth is full of Your possessions. There is the sea, great and broad... animals both small and great. Let the glory of the Lord endure forever. As for me, I shall be glad in the Lord" (Psa. 104).

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. I have seen some postings on Facebook about a new Veterans Memorial Park. What is this about?

A. The Appalachian Veterans Memorial Park will be a dedicated space for Union County residents, their families, loved ones, members of the community, and visitors to remember those who are serving or have served our nation's military. It will take a community effort to fund this project. If you are able, please consider a donation.

Q. Last week you spoke about a local war memorial on War Memorial Street. Do we need two Veterans Memorials?

A. The two memorials are similar in that they both will represent our military involvement in conflicts. However, they are very different. The one on school street is primarily dedicated to all major historic wars or battles that involved Union County citizens who were lost during those conflicts and is a tribute to and represents all veterans. The new Appalachian War Memorial will focus on all branches of the military.

Q. Does the North Georgia News know about the park?

A. Yes, there was an article in the North Georgia News on August 3, 2022, reporting on recent progress as described by the Appalachian Veterans Memorial Committee.

Q. Where will this park be located?

A. This park will be located in Meeks Park at 490 Meeks Park Road here in Blairsville. You will find it adjacent to the upper ball fields between the ball fields and the newest pavilion (Conley Pavilion) at Meeks Park.

Q. What can I expect when I go to the park?

A. Each branch of the military will be represented by a monument that speaks to the specific branch. The park will be a place of solitude - one of retrospection - and a gathering place for those who wish to learn more about and to identify with the various military branches.

Q. How will this have an impact on those who live here and visitors?

A. The goal is to provide a location for local residents and visitors to reflect on our beliefs and inspire our future generations

See Paris, page 5A

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

Re: "152 Choices"

Dear Editor,
There was a time, not all that long ago, when people who disagreed with each other could still have a cordial discussion. It didn't matter so much if anyone's mind was changed as that wasn't really the point. The point was to understand who you were talking to a little bit better, to get to know them a little bit more than you did before. Honestly, sometimes I think it was just to have something to talk about since there was so little going on around here. In fact, this was part of the allure and charm of our beautiful community.

Reading the letter to the editor titled "152 Choices" last week makes me wonder what happened. The writer made it very clear that if we did not agree with him then we should all leave and he would be glad to help anyone pack. The offer to pack was, of course, typed in capitals, which we all know is screaming so we can all assume he "really means what he is saying!" I remember hearing a conversation once when someone told the person they were talking to, "If you don't like it here then you can go back to Africa." I can tell you, this didn't go over too well, as well it shouldn't have. The only difference I see between the conversation I overheard so long ago and what the letter writer wrote is that it's missing where he would prefer the disagreeing folk to move to!

Residents should keep in mind that signing the petition for a multiple commissioner board only allows it to be placed on the ballot so residents can vote on it. It is NOT asking for a decision, a YES vote, or a NO vote. All it does is place the question on the ballot so the "community" can decide for themselves, without having to move out of the county. I think that's the way our government is "SUPPOSED" to work.

Dean Antalik



Judging What Matters

Recently in the North Georgia News it was reported that the millage rate for FY2023 had decreased by 15.5% and that the Commissioner was basically taking credit for this wonderful decrease. The reality is that the Commissioner is only indirectly responsible for this decrease in the millage rate. It is true that the assessed valuation of property here in Union County has increased greatly in the last couple of years. If the millage rate were to remain unchanged from year to year, the county would see a very large increase in the property tax revenue. This would often be referred to as a windfall tax revenue. The state of Georgia realizes that with greatly increased assessed values the tax revenue would be greatly

See Peterson, page 5A

Transgender Misinformation

Dear Editor,
The letter to the editor published last week concerning transgender children was full of misinformation. Transgender people usually know from an early age that they are different, and recent studies of the brains of trans people indicate that the brain profile is more similar to the gender they identify with and not the gender assigned at birth. It is not something they choose.

The author wrote of surgery performed on children. This does not happen. Surgery is a choice for some after becoming an adult. It is not done to children.

The hatefulness shown in the letter is dangerous. Trans Children who are not accepted are at risk for suicide. A recent study showed that 45% of trans kids considered suicide in the past year. Blaming them for all the woes in the world is horrifying. Instead of hatred maybe show a little understanding and kindness.

Transgender people have always existed, and in many cultures, they are accepted without question. It is natural to be fearful of things you don't understand. That can often be remedied by a little knowledge. Hatred is never the answer.

Penny Connell

Letters to the Editor

Burning Household Trash

Dear Editor,
I just want to remind everyone that since leaf season is around the corner, it is advisable to call 844-844-2876 to get a burn permit. And remember that it is against the law to burn household trash. The plastic in those fires is toxic and bad for the environment.

Thank you,
Irene Stannard

Commissioner(s)

Dear Editor,
Many taxpayers think our Sole Commissioner has done a good job, many believe not. I don't have an opinion on that. But, of the 3,143 counties reported in the United States in 2020, only seven still have a sole commissioner. Many of the decisions affecting Union County are made by this one person. Wouldn't it be fairer to have a governing body?

This is "important not only for acquiring the necessary range of skills to oversee the entity, but also in promoting cohesion, flexibility, and effective participation of the members," said Jeanette M. Franzel in a report for the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Our Sole Commissioner can be one of the five. I don't see any reasonable downside to having more than one person representing an entire county.

Rebecca Van Wagner

Losing Election Integrity

Dear Editor,
One may not have thought they needed to be concerned with election integrity here in Union County, but think again. I'll let you be the judge.

Very unsettling news has developed a couple of weeks ago from the Board of Elections meeting. At the very least, we are faced with a case of maladministration or at worst case scenario, fraudulent, criminal activity that needs to be prosecuted.

It is seriously alarming that our Elections Board announced in their September meeting that they do NOT have digital ballot images (DBI) for the 2020 General Election, the 2021 Runoff Election or the May 24, 2022, Primary Election. Libby Stevens, Supervisor of Elections (appointed by our Sole Commissioner Paris), also announced in the same breath that it was OK not to have the DBIs because there is no law which requires them to have them. Her statement is simply not true!

According to the press release issued on

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The Understanding

Paul was of a slight build and had been quite sickly as a small child. He developed Scarlet Fever when he was little resulting in a heart condition that caused him to miss out on many things. When the other kids were out rambling around in the woods, he was spending time indoors until he got better and grew out of his condition. So, he was small and unable to enjoy sports until the family moved to Chicago when he was in the seventh grade.

While there he began a love affair with baseball and basketball that has endured to this day. The family moved back to their Alabama farm when he entered the 10th grade. That is when he met his distant cousin. Everyone literally looked up to "Momma." He was taller and bigger than anyone else in school. The relationship between these two boys was rocky in the beginning.

Momma looked at his smaller cousin as frail and way down the pecking order in the scheme of things. I guess he must have thought the smaller boy needed to know who was boss. Anyway, the very first day of class he hit himself in the side of the head with a blackboard eraser and accused Paul of throwing it at him. Miss Underwood looked at the bigger boy and then looked at the frail boy. Immediately she called the bigger boy by name, saying, "Your Daddy tried that same trick on me 22 years ago. Now, you sit down and straighten up or you'll catch it from me." Paul thought to himself, "Whew, that was close. But I am going to have to deal with this big kid."

Two days later the boys were in physical education running timed races. The bigger boy accidentally tripped his smaller cousin, and in this case, the word accidentally is used in a very questionable manner. When he hit the ground, his bigger cousin let out a big laugh and began to ridicule him. Do you know what it is like for a 135-pound boy to take a swing at a 6 foot, 2 inch, 220-pound behemoth? Let's just say the smaller one did not fare well. By the time the Coach had separated the two boys, the smaller one looked like he'd run into a saw mill. Both boys were sent to the locker room to shower. Paul was a good runner and ran while his cousin took his bows in front of the cheering class of boys. He was in and out of the shower when his nemesis and the Coach appeared. They received a good tongue lashing. And after the Coach left, Momma said, "You need to understand I am the top dog of all the boys in our class, and you better not ever swing at me again." He then drew back his hand and knocked his smaller cousin to the floor.

Paul never said a word. He just sat down on a bench and began dressing himself. The bigger

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Chamber of Commerce

It's here! It's officially Fall. I don't know if it's the cooler weather, the college football and tailgating, or the changing leaves, but there is something about this time of year that I love. There's no better place to be in the Fall than in the North Georgia Mountains.

As you get out and enjoy this weather, you may want to be sure to mark your calendar for a few events:

The Indian Summer Festival will be on October 1 & 2 on the campus of the Woody Gap School. All funds generated are invested in the students of Woody Gap. You surely don't want to miss this Festival because there is something for everyone.

The Sorghum Festival will be again, the 2nd and 3rd weekends in October, and this year's event promises to be the best ever. This is the second year for Enotah CASA organizing the festival, and all the proceeds will go to support the program.

Be sure to check our calendar for the dates

See Chamber, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber President

Steve Rowe



Changing Leaves

This time of year, you'll see leaves start to change colors. Our peak leaf color time is usually in mid-October. In the mountains the colors can make a beautiful sight. But why don't evergreens lose their leaves, and why are there all the different colors? Let's talk about it so that as the leaves change this year you can show off your scientific knowledge to your friends!

Firstly, leaves can change color for a variety of reasons.

Disease, drought, nutrient deficiency among other things are all reasons why leaves can change colors. In the plants cells there is a chemical called chlorophyll. Chlorophyll is crucial to the plant. Chlorophyll converts the light energy into chemical energy in a process called photosynthesis. That chemical energy is used by the plant for growth and reproduction. If you eat a plant then you're ingesting that energy too. If you eat an animal that has been eating plants you're still ingesting that energy. Photosynthesis is an amazing process that is one of the biggest building blocks of life.

The chlorophyll can absorb many wavelengths of light. However, the green wavelengths are not absorbed but reflected. This gives leaves the green color that we see. Next to the chlorophyll in the plant leaves there are other chemicals that serve as a buffer to protect the chlorophyll. These other chemicals are pigments and they absorb the wavelengths of light that would be dangerous to the chlorophyll. These pigments vary in the color that they reflect from yellow to orange.

As the temperature starts to drop and the days get shorter, chlorophyll will start to break down in the leaves and stop converting light energy to chemical energy. During the growing season, there is so much chlorophyll in the leaves that the green color overpowers the pigments yellow to orange. However, with the chlorophyll beginning to break down the pigment's coloring begins to show through. Different species of plants will have different levels of chlorophyll. The mixing of chlorophyll and pigment will result in the different colors of leaves that we see in the fall. The weather can affect the intensity of the leaf color. Colors will be more intense with rainy and overcast days.

While the leaves are changing color the tree will also begin to create a special layer of cells at the point of attachment for the leaf to the tree. This layer of cells will seal the tree off from the leaf so that an open wound is not left when the leaf falls by its own weight.

Not all trees lose their leaves in the fall.

See Williams, page 5A

Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



North Georgia News

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by displaying our commitment to supporting our military and the defense of our country.

Q. Do you know what the park will look like? Will it have a walking path or direction?

A. The park will sit on approximately one acre of land and will be adorned by a 60 ft. diameter compass rose. It will feature branch service monuments representing every branch of the United States' military, as well as monuments recognizing all Veterans Service Organizations in the area.

Q. Who is leading the charge in the construction of the park?

A. The committee for the project is made up of a group of veterans that come together for common good. This group has been very active in the community by promoting veteran/military awareness and by volunteering for various community causes, events, and activities. Students of UGA's agricultural

center will also be participating in the landscaping.

Q. When will this project be completed?

A. The groundbreaking is expected near the end of 2022 with a dedication ceremony targeted for November 11, 2023.

Q. How can I get involved with this project?

A. The Committee is currently seeking corporate sponsorships to build the park – as well as donations from the community at large. To learn how you can contribute to the project, visit <http://theveteranspark.org> or email contact@appalachianveteransmemorial-park.org.

Donations are tax deductible and they can be hand-delivered to the Union County Commissioner's Office at 65 Courthouse Street, Suite 1, Blairsville, GA 30512. Please make all checks out to "AVMP."

Chamber... continued from Page 4A

of all the fall festivals including the "Fall Festival at Vogel State Park." If you have not been to Vogel lately you need to take a short drive to see all the changes and enjoy the day sitting by the lake among the changing leaves.

October 31st is the date for this year's Blairsville Boo Bash at Meeks Park. Bring

the kids and enjoy the evening with friends, family, and many of our local businesses as we have a good time in the park.

Please be sure to go to visitblairsvillega.com for more information on these events and others that are scheduled for the area.

Thanks to you, Life is Better in Blairsville!

Brothers... continued from Page 4A

Nov. 9, 2021, by VoterGA, "Ballot images are a critical aspect of election records that have long been required to be retained by federal and state law. Federal law requires a 22-month retention period for election records while state law requires a 24-month retention period for election documents which are generally considered to include those that are electronic. [USC 52 20701, O.C.G.A. 21-2-73]"

As you may or may not know, the fairly new Dominion Democracy Suite 5.5 system which uses a touchscreen Ballot Marking Device (BMD) to print voter selections with a QR code on a sheet of paper was purchased by Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger in 2018. The Dominion voting system automatically creates images in order to tabulate an election.

To make matters worse, the following evening during the County Commissioner's meeting, while on the agenda I pointed out how disturbing it was that those required images had not been preserved. In response to my legitimate concerns, Mr. Paris allowed Ms. Stevens a goodly amount of time where she stated the same misinformation she had expressed earlier. He then disallowed me to rebut her fallacy.

Offering to count the Governor and Senate races in the upcoming election is a nice gesture but this will in no way restore integrity to the election process when there has been absolutely zero transparency thus far for the last three elections. For the record, an outstanding lawsuit exists against Libby Stevens for violating a May 24, 2022, Primary Election Open Records Request (O.C.G.A. 21-2-71). This litigation was instituted by Garland Favorito, co-founder of VoterGA. All Libby had to do after Favorito made his request for copies of the paper ballots on the night of the election was to comply in three days to avoid violation and this lawsuit. This blatant lack of cooperation raises the disconcerting question: Is there something to hide?! What makes this even

more concerning is that NONE of the 159 counties in Georgia have let their citizens see copies of the PAPER ballots for this 2022 Primary election. Again, what are they hiding?

We know that SOS Brad Raffensperger ostensibly won outright in a four-member race. Those kinds of races typically go into a runoff. Oddly enough, Raffensperger's best pre-election poll had him at 38% (which would have put him in a normal runoff). Later, the machines tabulated him at 52% – a seemingly impossible 14% increase! Plus, the SOS's office has been putting pressure on all election boards to keep results off limits to citizens. Again, why the secrecy?

Libby has been difficult and frustrating this entire time by not acknowledging ORRs, canceling meetings when citizens obviously are concerned, and dodging agenda requests. After an email exchange with Libby requesting to be on the July meeting agenda, she tried to cancel July and August due to "COVID Exposure." (As you recall there was no COVID epidemic going on in our county, but "COVID exposure" seems to be the excuse many people use to avoid group meetings). Since I was under the impression the July meeting was canceled, I didn't attend. Thankfully, Marsha Lodes did attend and reported that there was also a deputy there. Why would Libby feel the need to ask for a deputy to attend the meeting?

If I had attended the July meeting, I would have requested in July that paper ballots be utilized for this upcoming Nov. 8 election. Instead, I was not able to make the request until our recent meeting. It appears that manipulation tactics have been used to inhibit me from attending meetings and being able to make formal requests necessary to secure election integrity. Why, why would they want to frustrate sincere efforts to preserve our basic freedoms? All American citizens lose if we lose election integrity.

Laurie Brothers
352-464-4526

Peterson... continued from Page 4A

increased and that this is not just, therefore it is required that the millage rate be adjusted to take into account the increased property values. How is this adjustment done? The new assessed property value is fixed by the independent assessment. The only other value needed to determine the millage rate is the required tax revenue. The required tax revenue is the budgeted expenses for the year that are to be financed by the property tax revenue. This is the only number that the Commissioner controls. He sets the budget and the millage rate is calculated. With the increased assessed valuation, if the budget from FY2022 to FY2023 remains unchanged, the millage rate falls. What the Commissioner should be telling the community is what is the percent change in the budget between FY2022 and FY2023. This is what he is responsible for.

Also, the property owner does not pay the millage rate but the actual property tax. If the millage rate is x and the

assessed valuation is y, the tax is the product xy. Now if in the following year the millage rate decreases by 15% to 0.85x and the assessed value increases by 30% to 1.3y, the tax would be the product (0.85x)(1.3y)=1.105xy. In other words, the decrease of 15% in the millage rate results in an approximately 10% increase in the property tax.

Bragging about decreasing the millage rate is bluster. The only important percentage is the year over year budget expense percent increase or decrease to be covered by the property tax revenue. This is the number that we should judge the Commissioner's action on with respect to property taxes.

The same analysis is valid for the property taxes relative to the Board of Education. The only number they can be judged on is the annual percent increase or decrease in the school budget, not the percent change in the millage rate for the schools.

Sincerely,
Vincent Jay Peterson

Cummings... continued from Page 4A

boy turned and proudly walked to the shower. There was one place in the locker where the water temperature to the showers could be adjusted. The water could be turned on in individual showers, but, could not be adjusted except in the one place. The younger boy walked toward that place, and on the way, he stopped at a Coke Machine and used a nickel to purchase a 6 1/2-ounce bottle. He was finishing his bottle and heard Momma turn on the shower. He gave the boy time to get lathered up with soap and then cut off the cold water.

He walked to the shower door and heard his cousin swear about hot water. Then he heard, "You little runt, I am going to teach you a lesson." When the boy stepped through the door, the Coke bottle hit him between the eyes, knocking him to the ground. Immediately he jumped to his feet, only to be knocked down again. Each time he tried to come out of the shower he was knocked to the floor again. This repeated itself four times before the two boys came to an understanding, which was to tolerate one another. Not only did the two tolerate one another, but, they actually became quite good friends over the next couple of years. This relationship was evident the next morning at school. They were called to the office and asked what happened. The bigger cousin responded, "I slipped and fell in the shower."

The two boys were involved in many experiences and battles over the next two years and always on the same side. One story is noteworthy because it shows the character of not only the cousins, but, the entire class of 1956 from Phil Campbell High School. A younger boy was riding a bus to school one May morning in 1956. The bus driver, which was of questionable character himself, noticed this younger boy chewing gum. He stopped

Williams...

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Evergreens such as pines, hemlocks, and hollies have a thicker coating of wax around their leaves. All leaves have a thin coating of wax that is used to protect them from drying out. On evergreen trees, the wax coating is thicker and can protect the leaves through the winter. Evergreens will still lose leaves, but they don't lose them all at one time. They'll completely replace all of their leaves over a period of 2-4 years.

If you have agricultural questions or please contact your local county Extension Office. You can also send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. Enjoy the leaves this fall!

I am hosting program on Georgia Ginseng on October 3rd via webinar from 6 – 8 p.m. If you are interested in attending you can register at this link. https://georgia.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5aUUKTwfao23ZQ

Fowler...

continued from Page 4A

What is your story? You don't have to live a burdened life, denying that transcendent, eternal good exists.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest," Jesus said. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29).

Dyer...

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yard debris can be burned. Household garbage or other man-made materials cannot be burned.

Everyone who burns hand-piled leaves or yard debris should research the new law and burn safety requirements. For more information about outdoor burning and the five safety precautions, please visit www.gatrees.org.

Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

UC Historical Society's Brick Walk

The Union County Historical Society is still running a special price of \$50 on Memorial Bricks. These bricks make great gifts to honor someone or a memorial for loved ones.

We also have bell ringings for celebration of special occasions and memorials at cost \$50 each. For more information contact the Union County Historical Society at 706-745-5493.

the bus, then walked to the offender, and without saying a word slapped the boy in the face causing his lip to bleed. The boy was much tougher than the driver thought. He jumped to his feet and knocked the driver down to the floor. He hemmed the man between two seats and worked on the face of the driver. The older boys pulled the student from off the driver. Upon arriving at school, the bus driver had two black eyes and a swollen upper lip.

Willie went on to class while the bus driver reported his actions to the Principal, Mr. Weeks. He called Willie to the office and immediately expelled him from school. Word of the event got around to the students. Momma, the previously mentioned cousin of Paul, called for a meeting of all the athletes and all boys in the Senior Class. He explained the situation and told them we will stick together on this one. The entire Senior Class staged a sit in at the front of the school until Willie was restored back into school. So, do not judge my Dad's bigger cousin too harshly. His actions made sure that the right thing was done. Also, both he and his cousin Paul became ministers.