

# Opinions

## Everybody has one...

### Heating Your Home

Fall is in full swing and we are starting to feel the colder weather. The cooler temperatures mean that folks will start using various types of heat in their home. Heating the home during fall and winter is one of the leading causes of house fires. With this in mind, we would like to remind everyone of a few tips for safely heating your home.

The heating systems of your home, regardless of the type, need maintenance and attention before use. For people who have a fireplace or a wood-burning heater, there are several things to help maintain safety and prevent a fire. First, the chimney should be inspected, cleaned, and maintained. Homeowners should have the chimney inspected each year by a certified inspector. They may also be able to clean and repair any damage found to the chimney. Chimney fires can quickly turn into house fires.

Fireplaces can cause a house fire as well if not properly maintained. They should be cleaned and inspected before starting the first fire. It is also a good idea to keep any flammable objects away from the fireplace. Sparks and embers can fly out of the fireplace and ignite the objects that are too close. These fires can quickly spread. Utilizing a screen or glass cover will reduce the risk of flying embers.

Gas fireplaces are no exception. Homeowners should know how to operate and maintain their gas heaters. If a gas fireplace is not burning correctly, contact your gas company to have it inspected. Once again, do not forget to have working carbon monoxide detectors if you have any gas burning appliances, including heaters, in your home.

If you have a central heating system, it should be cleaned, inspected, and serviced by a certified HVAC contractor every year before using it to heat the home. This not only makes them safer but can save you money on fuel as well as maintenance later. It is also a good idea to change your air filters.

These are just a few fire safety tips for heating your home. Before you start that first fire of the season or turn that thermostat to heat, make sure that you have your systems inspected and cleaned. It is also a good time to inspect your smoke alarms and

See Dyer, page 7A

**Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief**

David Dyer



### No Longer Dead

Halloween is once again upon us. The modern version is yet another holiday meant for children to receive treats. Tricks are discouraged. So are any hints of celebrating evil. Hence the alternatives, like fall festivals and harvest celebrations.

Glow-in-the-dark skeleton costumes and pretend cemetery scenes mock the fear of death. Materialists are quick to dismiss the idea of life after death, although they are tickled to give miniature Snickers bars to toddling skeletons or ghoulish apparitions who manifest near their front yard spider webs and jack-o'-lanterns.

The only way you can conclude, "After I die, I'm only worm food," is to start with the assumption that the supernatural doesn't exist. Of course, the opposite is true for those who do believe in an afterlife. It's worth pointing out that whichever assumption you start with doesn't change reality. "I assume no one does Halloween anymore" wouldn't make it go away.

Throughout history humans have explored and embraced the idea of a powerful mind behind our existence and the possibility of immortality. To dismiss the consensus of history, i.e. "the democracy of the dead" (G.K. Chesterton's phrase), is to commit "chronological snobbery" (C.S. Lewis' phrase). Are we smarter than they?

Of course, there are various views of an afterlife, like successive reincarnation or becoming one with the universe. The Christian hope can be expressed simply as resurrection. To be absent the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). Jesus demonstrated power over death when He called the four-days-dead Lazarus out of the tomb (John 11:43). He told the story of a rich man who died and begged Abraham to warn his brothers. "They will not be persuaded," Abraham said, "even if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31). And so it is, that after the no-longer-dead Jesus left His tomb empty, and despite the evidence that it actually happened, unpersuaded souls yet remain. The invitation is open to embrace by faith the resurrection hope, but they whistle past the graveyard.

See Fowler, page 7A

**All Things New**

Wayne Fowler



### Commissioner's Questions

When local courts are in session, our office receives many calls from residents that wish to get messages to the courts for different reasons. There appears to be some confusion concerning the various types of courts and the types of cases that are heard by each type of court; therefore, people oftentimes don't understand which court to contact. This week's questions reflect some of the questions we receive about these courts.

**Q. Why do we have so many different types of courts in Georgia?**

A. Georgia courts have authority over specific types of cases as set forth in the Constitution of the State of Georgia. The court system includes judges, court administrators, court clerks, prosecutors, jury managers, and court reporters as well as others who are essential to keeping our trial and appellate courts working smoothly.

**Q. What is the difference between Superior Court, State Court, Magistrate Court, and Probate Court?**

A. Basically, superior Court is responsible for handling cases involving serious crimes (felonies), such as civil disputes, real estate matters and family and domestic relations issues. State Court handles civil law actions not otherwise within the jurisdiction of Superior Court, such as dispossessions, misdemeanors, and certain traffic offenses. Magistrate Court (Civil Division) hears cases involving civil claims of \$15,000 or less. Probate Court has exclusive jurisdiction in probate of wills, administration of estates, appointment of guardians, involuntary hospitalizations, issuance of gun licenses and marriage licenses.

**Q. If I need to contact these different courts, where can I find them?**

A. Superior Court is located at the Union County Courthouse located at 65 Courthouse Street in Blairsville. The local phone number for Superior Court Judge Levins is (706) 439-6100. Magistrate Court is also located at the Union County Courthouse. The phone number for Magistrate Court is (706) 439-6008. Finally, Probate Court is also located at the Union County Courthouse. The phone number for Probate Court is (706) 439-6006.

**Q. What is the purpose of the Clerk of Court in Union County?**

See Paris, page 7A

**Q & A from Union County Commissioner**

Lamar Paris



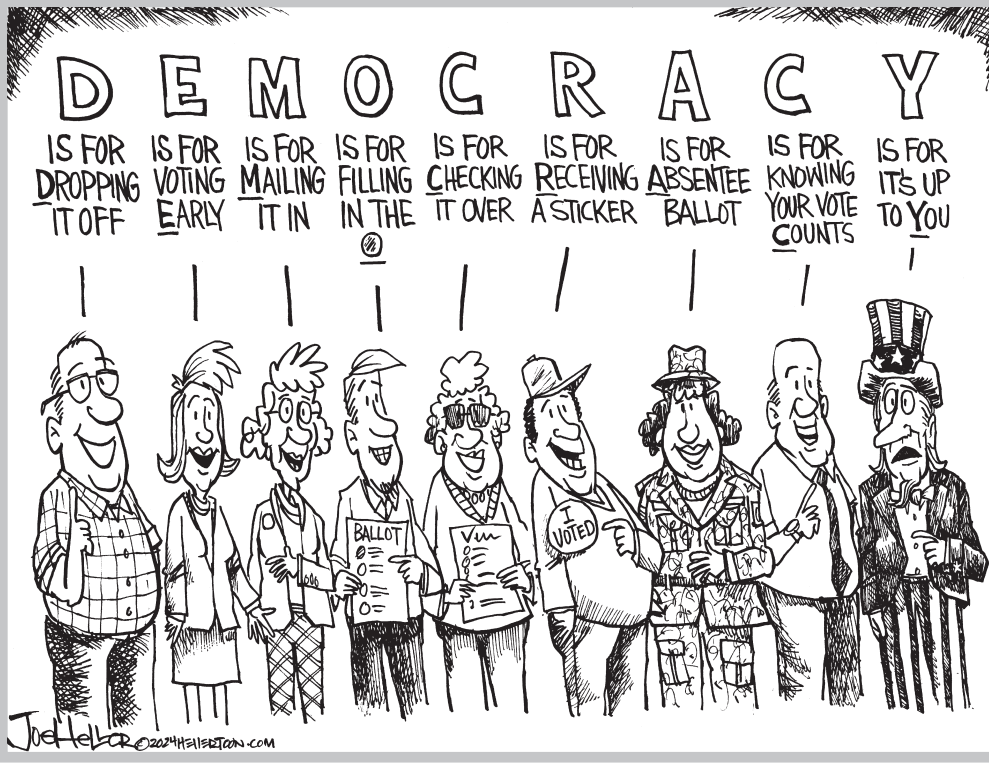
### The Gifts of Life

Not everything we accomplish in our lives can be labeled as "fun stuff," but everything we do can be God's grace of life and joy to us. We are free to experience a life of fulfillment that is positive to achieve and to earn. Jobs, vocations, homes, education, friendships, marital relationships, and family: these constitute gifts from life, and they provide us with happiness and contentment along our journeys. Some of these accomplishments include unwrapped gifts within.

With all of these available gifts in life, what can cause us to forfeit the gifts and leave them unwrapped or not achievable? What have we constructed that has resulted in our leaving the gifts under the Christmas tree of life rather than activating them? One reason is that we may have cemented ourselves into a comfort zone. We may feel panicky about temporarily leaving the gift rather than experiencing the fun things in life that are new to us.

See Ashurst, page 7A

**Successful Mental Health**  
Dr. James Ray Ashurst  
PH.D.



### Chamber of Commerce

Guess what time it is! The weather is getting cooler, the leaves are changing, and election season is upon us. It is that time of year when phone calls multiply from robo calls, and political commercials fill our screens.

While the Chamber remains non-political, we encourage everyone to participate in the voting process! Take the time to research and gather information from various sources before casting your vote. Every vote matters!

Early voting is open now through November 1st, and Election Day is on November 5th.

We are also looking forward to seeing everyone at Meeks Park on Halloween night from 4 PM to 7 PM for the Blairsville Boo Bash!

Let's come together to make a positive impact in Blairsville!

**Blairsville - Union County Chamber President**

Steve Rowe



### Letters to the Editor

#### A Letter of Compliment

Dear Editor,  
Please, let me have my faculties as well as Ms. Hansen at 93.

Lord, let her words and wisdom shine light for each voter to see clearly, what this beautiful world has come to, so they can be moved to make the effort to correct our years of complacency, with this election.

Thank you, Ms. Hansen, for saying it out loud!  
LaDonna Davis

#### Spoiled Ballots

Dear Editor,  
Early voting is now in full swing, and We the People are determined to get our voices out there for our employees (the political ones) to know what we want. Yay, us!!

What we are failing to understand is that we need to also make our bureaucrats (remember! We do not elect them - for example the BOR, Board of Registrars and the BOE, Board of Elections, are not elected but appointed by whomever, but not by us). We need to have our voices heard by them, too, and it seems that they will change what they want to change, when they want, willy nilly when they are challenged by the public of which I am one.

The Board of Registrars has been doing a good job at getting the daily voting numbers out to us, I have no problem with that. What I

See Lodes, page 7A

#### Russian Roulette

Dear Editor,  
Russian roulette and having unprotected sex have a lot in common.

In today's society, they are both potentially deadly. Playing Russian roulette can only hurt the participant, who obviously made a foolish decision in the first place. Having unprotected sex, is also a foolish decision.

Unprotected sex can result in a woman becoming pregnant, and if she so chooses, she can abort the fetus without ever considering it a viable life. However, in some states, if a pregnant woman is murdered, the perpetrator can be charged with two counts of homicide. There seems to be a little discrepancy here.

Life begins at conception. Ronald Reagan said, "I never met a person yet, who was probably aborted, that hadn't already been born." The falling away from spiritual values has a lot to do with the pathway we are traveling upon as a nation. At some point, those who believe in abor-

See Vickers, page 7A

### Heater Warning

Here is my seasonal reminder about the dangers in our homes this time of the year, when we fire up the old wood heater or fireplace so we can enjoy the dancing flames and crackling of the wood burning to warm our backsides and toes. We don't think about the cobwebs, bird nests, and creosote in our chimney left over from the long hot summer. When it is hot, we don't think about cleaning out our chimney for the first fire. It gets cold and we light the match and plan to clean the chimney on Saturday. Saturday might be too late after our first chimney fire!

Wood heaters and fireplaces make the room warm and toasty but are only one escaping spark away from disaster. Wood heaters seem most dangerous but in fact seemingly safe space heaters are the deadliest of all. While only 32% of home heating fires involve space heaters, they are involved in 79% of home heating fire deaths, according to a report released by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Heating equipment continues to be the second leading cause of home fires behind cooking and the second leading cause of home fire deaths behind smoking. NFPA is urging caution and asking the public to practice safe heating behaviors as the peak time for home heating fires continues, and half of all home heating fires usually happen in December, January, and February. The leading factor contributing to space heater fires in general was heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattress, or bedding. Other leading factors contributing to home heater fires were failure to clean, which is principally related to creosote build-up in chimneys, and leaving an operating space heater unattended.

Whether your chimney supports a wood or coal stove or just a fireplace, be sure to have it cleaned and inspected at least once a year to reduce your risk of having a fire. Always turn off a portable space heater when you go to sleep or leave the room.

In 2022, U.S. fire departments responded to 66,500 home structure fires that involved heating equipment. These fires killed 580 people, injured another 1,850, and were responsible for \$608 million in direct property damage.

NFPA offers the following safety tips: Use a sturdy, metal screen to prevent contact burns, which are even more common than flame burns. Keep things that can burn, such as

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**RC&D Executive Director**

Frank Riley



### Attack of the Martians...

*Attack of the Martians at the Weaning Off House*

Have you ever wondered about the magnitude of which electricity has influenced our lives? For example, I am sitting at home writing this article for the newspaper. The computer I am using requires electricity. The lights are on and they require electricity. The TV is on and requires electricity. My cellphone will not operate without electricity. Our society could not maintain its present status without electricity. But, there was a time when people didn't even know about electricity.

My great-grandfather had four sons and two daughters. When one of the children married, that child moved into the weaning off house next to my great-grandfather's house. This "weaning off house" was an older house generally next to the house of one's parents. The custom of living in one allowed a child to live under the economic protection of his or her parents while trying to build one's economic status and self-sufficiency.

Sometime around 1950, electricity came to Trapptown, Alabama, at which time Papa's youngest brother, Poggy, lived at the weaning off house. Uncle Pick, Papa's older brother, lived about 300 yards south of the weaning off house. When the TVA brought the "electricity" to Trapptown, a big power line was erected directly across the road from the weaning off house. Uncle Clay, Uncle Pick, and their Daddy all signed up for the electricity.

Uncle Pick had taken his turn in the weaning off house, and he never liked living in it. He said, "There was just something scary about that place." His eldest daughter Polly was born sometime around 1936, and on her second birthday, all the family was up the road at my great-grandfather's house celebrating Polly's birthday. After supper the family sat around the battery-powered radio to listen to a show called "The War of the Worlds." To make sure we all understand, let me explain. Orson Wells read this story to a live radio audience and pretended that he was reporting the news. People all over the USA thought we had been invaded by monsters from Mars. Anyway, this event had a profound effect on my Uncle Pick that would not have an impact for 12 years.

One night a serious storm hit the area around Trapptown. Uncle Pick decided to take his young family by the weaning off house to his Dad's house where he could find safety in a storm shelter. As he and his family walked in front of the weaning off house, he noticed something fly-

See Cummings, page 7A

**Around The Farm**

Mickey Cummings



### Leave the Leaves

Leaves are falling from the trees. Soon they will be littered all over the ground. However, we shouldn't think of leaves as litter. They are a natural product that is beneficial in a lot of ways. Let's talk about some of the benefits that leaves provide, and why leaving them is good for the environment.

In the fall most, people will get out their rakes and leaf blowers to remove the leaves from their yards. The end result is a yard that looks very tidy and neat, but also a yard that has removed a crucial element of the nutrient cycle and disrupted the life cycle of many beneficial insects. I would argue that there are some places where you should remove the leaves. Like your driveway or walkways because they can create a hazard. I have also raked a small portion of my yard because my kids love a good leaf pile, and I'm not going to keep that happiness from them. But in the rest of the yard and the surrounding woods it's beneficial to leave those leaves in place.

Fallen leaves create organic matter for the soil. As the leaves break down they return the nutrients that they are holding back to the soil. This is an important part of the nutrient cycle. In the spring trees will withdraw nutrients from the ground and start to make those leaves. In the fall when the leaves drop, the leaves are still holding the nutrients. Each individual leaf may not have a lot of nutrients, but collectively their nutrient load is important. Allowing those leaves to return their nutrients to the soil completes the nutrient cycle. Leaving the leaves in plant beds around your house is a good thing for the plants. It will also help reduce weeds, since it serves as a mulch layer. A light layer of leaves over grass will benefit the grass too. On grass, if the leaves are too thick, it can damage the grass.

Another great benefit of leaving the leaves is that it helps beneficial insects. Lots of insects will lay their eggs in the leaves. Butterflies and moths will lay eggs in the leaves to emerge next year. Bumblebees, Luna moths, and swallowtail butterflies will over winter just under the soil line. A layer of leaf mulch protects these important pollinators.

Lots of animals rely on the leaves too. Turtles, toads, birds, salamanders, and small mammals use the leaves for food, shelter, and nesting material. All of these critters need a place to spend the winter.

If you have more leaves than you can handle consider putting the extra around trees, ornamental plants, and in garden beds as a natural mulch. It's better to not shred the leaves as this

**Watching and Working**

Jacob Williams



## North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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Website: www.nganews.com • Email: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com • Mail: P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

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Publication No: 001505

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**County? How does that position fit in with the courts system?**

A. This office is responsible for all the civil and criminal affairs and filings made in the Union County Superior Court. The office of the Clerk of Court provides the juror list for Grand Jury along with

civil and criminal trials. The jury lists are selected from a jury pool that is provided by the Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia. This office also serves as the official recorder of real-estate documents for the County and maintains records of deeds and plats.

**Ashurst... continued from Page 6A**

Another reason is our obsession about what others would think if we were seen branching out. We are nervous about the potential for criticism. We may refuse to be full participants in exploring life and its gifts without the approval of others.

Third, we don't want to take the risk of being kids again. Perhaps the last few times we acted silly, things became all too traumatic due to all of the negativity from our friends and family. Therefore,

we hide behind our adult barricade, where it's safe and secure.

The last reason for not enjoying "life's gifts" is that we may have forgotten how to let loose our inner kid in order to find happiness and freedom with the gifts, such as bowling, hiking, fishing, swimming, and traveling. If an individual does not find that inner child, then the adult will always act like an adult without giving the inner kid a chance to be someone of value and importance.

**Riley... continued from Page 6A**

paper, bedding, or furniture, at least 3 feet away from heating equipment. Use heating equipment that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Never use your oven for heating. Have a qualified professional install the equipment.

Make sure all fuel-burning vented equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure the venting for exhaust is kept clear and unobstructed. This includes removal of snow and ice around the outlet to the outside. Install and maintain carbon monoxide alarms to avoid risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected annually by a qualified professional.

Turn portable electric heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room. Use portable space heaters with an automatic shut off so if they're tipped over they will shut off. Plug power cords directly into outlets and never into an extension cord. Inspect for cracked or damaged, broken plugs or loose connections.

Always use the proper fuel in a fuel burning heater as specified by the manufacturer. When refueling, allow the appliance to cool and refuel outside or in a well-ventilated area. When using the heater, open a window to ensure proper ventilation. In portable kerosene or other liquid-fueled space heaters, always use the proper grade of the proper fuel. All new unvented gas-fired space heaters have an oxygen depletion sensor

that detects a reduced level of oxygen in the area where the heater is operating and shuts off the heater before a hazardous level of carbon monoxide accumulates. If you have an older heater without this feature, replace it.

If the pilot light of your gas heater goes out, allow 5 minutes or more for the gas to go away before trying again, do not allow gas to accumulate, and light the match before you turn on the gas to the pilot to avoid risk of flashback. If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not attempt to light the appliance. Turn off all the controls and open doors and windows. Call a gas service person. Start the fire with newspaper or kindling, never with a flammable liquid, such as lighter fluid, kerosene, or gasoline. Keep the doors of your wood stove closed unless loading or stoking the live fire. Allow ashes to cool before disposing. Dispose of ashes in a tightly covered metal (Never Plastic!) container and keep the ash container at least 10 feet away from the home and any other nearby buildings. Douse and saturate with water.

Chimneys and vents need to be cleaned and inspected at least once a year by a professional. Heaters are just "Contained Fire" trying to get out into our flammable things, and it only takes one mistake to let the fire escape into our homes. Think safety because the home you save might be yours!

For more information on heater safety, contact your local Fire Department or NFPA at [nfpa.org](http://nfpa.org) or Chest-Chat at [Chestchatrcd.org](http://Chestchatrcd.org).

**Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp announces another \$1B tax rebate**

*By Dave Williams  
Capitol Beat News Service*

ATLANTA – For the second time in three years, Gov. Brian Kemp is giving Georgians a tax rebate worth more than \$1 billion.

Kemp said Tuesday, Oct. 22, he will include the rebate in the mid-year budget he introduces to the General Assembly in January. He said the extra money will come in handy, particularly for Georgians who suffered losses from Hurricane Helene.

"We all know that even if inflation has fallen, high prices haven't," he said. "Families see that every day when they go to the grocery store or the gas pump. ... People shouldn't have to deal with that added burden, especially in the wake of tragedy."

That Tuesday's announcement was the second tax relief measure the governor has issued in recent weeks. Kemp temporarily suspended collection of the state sales tax on gasoline and other motor fuels shortly after Helene struck

large portions of South Georgia and the Augusta region.

The governor proposed a similar tax rebate two years ago worth about \$1 billion. The General Assembly approved that rebate during the 2023 legislative session.

Under the new tax rebate, single tax filers will receive \$250. A single filer who is the head of his or her household will get \$375, and married couples filing jointly will receive \$500.

Kemp said the state can afford the rebate because conservative budgeting has helped the state build up a huge budget surplus. He said he'd rather send that money back to taxpayers instead of pouring it into new government programs.

"This is one-time money ... a way for us to use our excess surplus to get it back to the people we believe know how to use it best," he said. "The worst mistake the state could make would be to grow government with one-time money."

**Cummings... continued from Page 6A**

ing through the air which turned out to be a big piece of tin from a barn roof. But, in his state of anxiety his imagination told him it looked like a flying saucer. The tin landed on the power line causing it too short out. The tin wrapped around the top line and as the wind continued to blow the tin would wave back and forth and hit the bottom line. Each time the tin hit the bottom line, an arc would occur and sparks would fly.

All Uncle Pick could think about was the radio show back in 1938. The sound the arc made resembled the sound of those monsters from Mars.

So, Uncle Pick would take his family back toward his house. Then he would think the storm was getting worse turn back toward the storm shelter. Upon hearing the arc noise and seeing the sparks, he would turn back home. He finally got his nerve up and decided to push through to the storm shelter. Just as he got to the weaning off house, a transformer exploded. Uncle Pick just knew the Martians were shooting at him, so once more he went home.

He never made it to the storm shelter that evening, and it took a few years for him to get used to electricity.

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have a problem with is the way they changed the reporting in the middle of the early voting, namely the Spoiled Ballots. Now we will not be allowed to see how many are spoiled UNTIL AFTER the election.

Seems the BOR and BOE have discarded my concerns over this reporting. While this does not change the total of the votes if this is being changed, what else are they changing without our knowledge? This is not transparency in our election, and you should be concerned, too.

Every election that I have voted in, the spoiled ballots were out there for us to see, no problem. The BMD (Ballot Marking Device) which prints out your ballot must match what the SCANNER (where you insert your ballot to be read) number is. The numbers must match, so if they don't, the manager of the Polls must find out why. Usually, it is because someone had marked a ballot name in error and needed a new ballot to replace the "spoiled one."

**Marsha Lodes**

**Dyer... continued from Page 6A**

carbon monoxide detectors. Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

**Vickers... continued from Page 6A**

tion on demand, should take a hard look at their lifestyle and at their value system, analyze it from a spiritual perspective and make appropriate changes so that unwanted pregnancies occur less, and therefore, the killing of the unborn also declines.

Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." Jesus knew the value of children and reached out to them. He has to be very saddened at the number of babies that never have a chance to enjoy life on this earth. Saddened, and perhaps angry.

**Gene Vickers**

**Your Patriot Reflection**



**Validity of the Constitution**

The Constitution was designed to accommodate changing times.

That may seem like a strange way to start this reflection when we pause to recall statements from progressives and extreme liberals who call for an end, or extreme make-over of our US Constitution.

All we have to do is look at the Founders own writings to realize that this legal document was written with future intent and was intended to be strictly interpreted. They knew that it would adapt itself, very readily to the needs of changing times.

It was designed to disperse political power among the people and protect the freedom of the individual by putting chains on excessive ambitions and frailties of human nature.

Their vision was far reaching in thought and process to insure a perpetual charter of human liberty that would never become obsolete.

The Founders urged those who came after them to never allow the Constitution to be changed by usurpation or twisted interpretation. It could only be changed by carefully adopted amendments.

There are twenty-seven amendments adopted since September 17, 1787 and more than 10,000 amendments proposed with less than 1% receiving enough support to go through the ratification process.

Reader, beware of those who want to abolish our Constitution. If that occurs you will no longer have liberty or freedom! Learn, know and protect the Constitution!

A Patriot Reflection is presented weekly by [www.joshuaswarriors.org](http://www.joshuaswarriors.org).

**Fowler... continued from Page 6A**

If you have lost a loved one, you might relate to Lewis' deep grief over the untimely death of his Inkling friend Charles Williams. "The odd thing is that his death has made my faith ten times stronger," he wrote. "All that talk about 'feeling he is closer to us than before' isn't just talk. It's just what it does feel like."

It was their shared hope in Christ that strengthened

Lewis in his grief.

All Saints Day follows Halloween. It's a day to remember the lives of believers who have stepped into eternity, no longer dead. They've experienced the reality of life beyond what is seen here. That is something to celebrate.

So is that innocent little face looking up at you expecting a Halloween treat. [www.mountainchristian.net](http://www.mountainchristian.net)

**Williams... continued from Page 6A**

will destroy any insects or eggs that are in the leaves.

Grass for lawns is the largest irrigated 'crop' in the US at over 40 million acres. That's more than irrigated corn or soybean. If everyone made sure that their lawn was a welcome habitat for pollinators and other critters it would make a huge difference.

If you have questions about your leaves, contact your County Extension Office or email me at [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu).