

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Berry picking

When I was a young boy, I frequently had time on my hands. My Granny Potts was always trying to figure out ways to keep me busy.

I was too young to go fishing by myself, so Granny Potts came up with a way to keep me busy.

She would get a bowl and lead me outside. Depending on the time of year, we went berry picking.

Strawberries, dewberries, blackberries, huckleberries, and blueberries were plentiful and there for the picking.

The strawberries were wild, and offered the sweetest taste. I spent hours looking for wild strawberries until we had enough for a cobbler. She helped me, and often times pointed me in the right direction to find wild strawberries.

It was the same with the other berries. Hours of work that seemed like hours of play kept me occupied. I was easy to keep up with during this annual rite of summer.

Today, it's getting harder to find wild strawberries. I'm not sure why. However, I do find myself out looking for wild strawberries. It reminds me of the good times of my youth and times spent with my Granny Potts.

Granny Potts was an incredible cook and made a delicious strawberry cobbler. I unintentionally hurt her feelings when I was 7 years old during a trip to her sister's house.

Aunt Alice Towe put out quite a spread during a Sunday dinner. She topped that wonderful meal off with a strawberry cobbler.

I told Aunt Alice, "that's the best strawberry cobbler I've ever had. It is so delicious!"

Unbeknownst to me, I had put my foot in my mouth. I hurt Granny Potts' feelings. She thought she made the most delicious strawberry cobbler that I had ever tasted.

Both cobblers were delicious and I was just being polite to Aunt Alice, but, in doing so, I crushed Granny Potts' feelings.

I didn't realize at the time how competitive sisters could be, but, I did notice Aunt Alice looking at Granny Potts and smile when I paid her that compliment.

When we got home, Granny Potts wasn't speaking to me. I couldn't figure out why. When the time came to go berry picking, Granny Potts wasn't interested in the event.

I begged her to go berry picking with me, but, she didn't say a word. Finally, I prodded her enough on the topic and she finally told me, "Why don't you call your Aunt Alice and ask her if she wants to go berry picking? After all, she makes the most delicious strawberry cobbler you've ever tasted."

There it was, I finally figured out why Granny Potts wasn't speaking to me. It took a lot of begging and talking with Granny Potts to convince her that indeed, she made the most tasty strawberry cobbler I had ever tasted.

I think about Granny Potts a lot, and especially this week. It's the annual Strawberry Jubilee Festival at the Union County Farmers Market.

There will be strawberries galore at this year's festival on Saturday, May 24, and likely, plenty of strawberry recipes to test taste.

You see, I love strawberries in any shape, form or fashion. I love strawberry pie, strawberry cobbler, strawberry jam, strawberry preserves, strawberry jelly, well, you get the picture.

I'll be out in force this weekend and my favorite fruit is readily available. I'm hoping for some sweet tasting strawberries. That's because the ones you get in the store, unless they're local, have no taste at all.

Here's hoping you'll make it to the festival and here's hoping you enjoy my column when I write about my Granny Potts. She's my writing inspiration and she's the reason I'm a journalist.

With that said, I hope to see you at the Strawberry Jubilee Festival at the Union County Farmers Market on Saturday.

Letters to the Editor ...

We want to know

Dear Editor,
I would like to ask the question if the former Chairman of the BRMEMC has paid this back/unpaid bill of nearly \$50,000, as was reported in this paper two weeks ago? I have seen nothing or heard nothing to that extent. As a member of the EMC, I think it is only right that the members receive truthful information of this affair. In fact my calls have been 10 to zip for getting to the truth of this matter. Again, how could this happen, who knew about it, and why was nothing done? We, the members would like to know. If I am off base on this, apologies are in order. Respectfully,
Jim Steed

Confused

Sir: If I may...
I don't care what they call themselves. There is nothing DEMOCRATIC about the DEMOCRAT Party.

If they're the only ones who are DEMOCRATIC, where does that leave Libertarians, Republicans and Independents?

Perhaps you meant to refer to them in the same vein as the People's DEMOCRATIC Republic of China.

George Mitchell

Regurgitated Propaganda

Dear Editor
After reading John Q Adams III's letter in last week's paper I was shocked to learn what the Democrats had done to Social Security over the years. And that Jimmy Carter "approved paying Social Security to immigrants at age 65 even though they never paid a dime into the program" was simply outrageous. Wanting more details on this sordid tale I turned to Google and found this well researched page, www.snopes.com/politics/socialsecurity/changes.asp. Here I discovered that Mr Adams' information was based on a chain email that was only partially true. My reaction to this discovery was a mixture of utter hilarity and sadness that this type propaganda is regurgitated in our local media.
Ken Ashworth

A Tree Lover

Have you noticed how thick and luscious the foliage is on all of the trees? It looks like a tree surgeon has given them a shot of botox. Well, the Creator has provided abundant rain that has quenched the thirst of this majestic creation. This year God has blessed them and us with ample rainfall.

If you listen carefully the trees of the field are probably clapping their hands unto the Lord. Since childhood I have been a tree lover. Mind you I am not a "tree huggin'." Worshipping trees is not my thing, but I worship The God who created the trees. Not only do trees provide food, shelter, fuel, oxygen, privacy, serve as a sound barrier, dust collector, produce healing products, paper products and help regulate the earth's temperature but they provide some of the greatest beauty that the human eye can behold. Trees are not only necessary to maintain human life, but trees are essential in maintaining all forms of animal and plant life.

All of these things are important but think what it would be like to grow up as a little boy or little girl and never experience the joy of a tree swing, made from a discarded old tire and a strong rope tied to a sturdy tree limb? Even worse, would be to grow up and never have a sense of accomplishment by building a tree house and learning to climb a tree.

I am thankful that I don't live in a treeless neighborhood. It is sad to say, but there are areas that once were beautiful forests but they have been denuded and reveal only barren naked soil. The Bible emphasizes the importance of trees and how we should be caretakers of His creation.

The Bible begins in Genesis with the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life (Gen 2:9). It closes in Revelation with the Tree of Life (Rev. 22:2). Between these two tree bookends of the Bible, Jesus, God's Son is crucified on a tree outside the city walls of Jerusalem.

Some of you who are reading this are like Zacchaeus, you are up a tree. You are troubled. Life has been disappointing. You need for life to take a new direction. You need a Friend indeed. The One who was lifted upon a tree calls you out of your tree to

See Parris, page 5A

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Questions and Answers

Q. You striped our road, Jones Creek Road, and then came along behind the new striping and then did one of the worst patching jobs I have seen. Now the gravel is everywhere and the nice striping job is messed up and there is loose gravel on the road making it dangerous. Why was this done?

A. Since this covers four different subjects, I am going to respond with four answers.

A-1: Sometimes a question like this kind of bothers me, but in this case I guess I really can't blame the person complaining. As most of you know we received funding from the Federal government to stripe most of the major county roads this year. The Road Department met with the contractor to tell him which roads needed patching and not to stripe them until we completed the patching. In this case, the company made a mistake and they will be responsible for restriping the road, at their expense, and it may be done by the time you read this.

A-2: If you see pavement patching being done on county roads and there is loose gravel there, it means the patching was done by using tar and gravel (surface treatment). While this may not look as good as asphalt patching, it also is not as rough and bumpy. Once the patching we use settles out, other than the change in sound, you really do not have a bump as you go across the patch. This method of patching saves the county hundreds of thousands of dollars and drastically prolongs our road surface life.

A-3: Any time we patch a road, we also put out caution signs and ask the public to slow down. Small particles of gravel dust and small pieces of gravel are spread over the patches to keep the tar from bleeding through the gravel and getting on vehicles. When driving over the patches, it sounds like the gravel is hitting the vehicle, but it is really only hitting the inside of the wheel wells. However, if you do not slow down when it is fresh, occasionally it could hit the vehicle. That is why we try with signage to ask you to slow down when traveling over fresh pavement.

A-4: While a road like Jones Creek may look just fine to the traveling public, I can assure you that our Road Department would not be patching a road if it did not have cracks in it. Cracks allow water to get under the pavement which can cause severe

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



See Paris, page 5A

Keep Our Roads Beautiful

If you have been in Union County very long, there is no doubt you have heard and most likely used the word beautiful to describe our landscape. Our mountains, lakes, waterfalls, and streams make our county among the most beautiful in the country.

As fortunate as we are to work, live, and visit here, this beauty is an asset that can quickly be ruined by simple carelessness. I'm talking about trash on our roads and the impact it has on all of us. This damaging problem is easy to correct. Only simple changes on our part are required, but it takes a community wide effort. Today I'm reaching out to you and asking for your support in keeping our roadways beautiful.

If you are one who contributes to roadside trash, here are a few things to consider. The beauty of Union County is the product we sell. As a Chamber, we are selling it to our visitors whose loyalty keeps local business profitable and local people employed. Real estate agents use it to sell homes and properties to their clients which also keeps our economy vibrant. Local government uses it to sell the area to businesses looking to locate in Union County which creates more jobs. Finally, each of us uses the beauty of our surroundings for our own happiness and quality of life. A clean, tidy environment is good for the economy, good for jobs,

See Williams, page 5A

Wisdom from the Seat of a Tractor

This morning, before getting dressed to tackle my day, I looked at the projected temperatures for the next 16 hours. The dampness from last night's heavy rain made it feel much chillier than the thermostat indicated. Was I to bundle up, or were those near summer like temps going to re-emerge this afternoon?

I refer to my phone app "Accu weather" (if that isn't an oxymoron); turns out that we are expecting this evening to dip to 40 degrees. I chuckle as I remember being impressed by the number of blackberry blooms I saw all along my morning walk. Never assume the frost is over in mid to late May. Blackberry frost is looming.

I remember back 14 years ago, standing in line in May for my first United Community Bank Customer Appreciation Day tomato plants. I had finally relocated to a climate where I could plant this delectable veggie/fruit, with hopes that I would see a small yield. I was wedged between two men who knew each other well. One was 91 years old and the other, I soon found out, was 90 years old. He'd been farming in these hills all of his life. He cautioned us both not to go home and stick these plants in the ground just yet. He said to wait at least four more weeks. I was in a short sleeve shirt, not enjoying the moisture developing on my skin with the late morning sun beating on me. He couldn't be serious. Another month before I planted?

He shared some wisdom that I've never forgotten. "I've planted after June 10th all my life. I yield the same crop, at the same time, as those who planted by May 10th. And my plants are harder, holdin' up to the hot summer months much better." I waited to plant till June 10th that year, and I have every year since. I don't doubt he was right. I just can't seem to grow tomatoes, no way, no how.

In a recent national study, by *Farm Pulse Journal*, 75 percent of farmers said they spend 10 to 14 hours a day working in their fields. By my calculations, if this 91-year-old farmer had been in the fields 6 months of the year, on an average of 12 hours a day, for, let's say 70 years, he had about 153,300 hours to garner the kind of wisdom that comes when you are collaborating with Mother Nature.

A few years ago, there was a posting going around the Internet, titled "Wisdom from the Seat" **See Leone, page 5A**

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



THEIR TRUE MONUMENT IS FREEDOM



Misinformation

Dear Editor,
When a letter writer last week, John Adams, railed against misinformation from other writers, he should have done his homework. According to the Social Security Administration, "The Social Security Trust Fund was created in 1939 as part of the Amendments enacted in that year. From its inception, the Trust Fund has always worked the same way. The Social Security Trust Fund has never been 'put into the general fund of the government'." So President Johnson could not have done what Mr. Adams says he did with the money collected from Social Security. Actually, the government "borrows" the money in the form of bonds from the SS trust fund and has to pay it back. Remember that President Bush (II) called the bonds "pieces of paper." This "borrowing" accounts for almost half of the country's debt.

Mr. Adams also implied that President Clinton started taxing Social Security benefits, up to 85 percent. His statement on this front was half true. Actually, Social Security benefits were entirely tax free until 1984. Again, according to the SS Administration, "Congress passed and President Reagan signed into law the 1983 Amendments. Under the '83 Amendments, up to one-half of the value of the Social Security benefit was made potentially taxable income." Not that it matters, but it was a Republican who first implemented SS taxation, up to 50 percent of benefits. Even then, the taxable threshold was means tested so that only higher income tax payers were taxed on SS benefits. About 10 percent of SS beneficiaries in 1984 were taxed, a percentage that rose to 18 percent by 1993. The SS Administration has this to say about the taxation increase to 85 percent: "Prior to this change, 81.8 percent of Social Security beneficiaries had no

See Fitzgerald, page 5A

Thank you

Dear Editor
On May 14, following a memorial service at the Mountain View Funeral Home, my sister, Clarena Stewart Keller, was laid to rest in the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church Cemetery. As the funeral procession made its way from the funeral home in town and down the Blue Ridge Highway to the cemetery, police halted traffic and stood outside their vehicles with their hands over their hearts. All along the route oncoming cars pulled off to the side of the road. People stopped tending their gardens, mowing their lawns and collecting their mail to stand at attention. Even busy construction workers likewise paused to honor the passing mourners.

In other parts of the country, this sort of honor is reserved for our fallen heroes, beloved leaders, or heads of state, but in Blairsville, GA the honor is paid to the ordinary people. On this

See Saradnik, page 5A

Wyatt and John

John Cummings was my great grandfather and Wyatt was his father. Wyatt's father had moved the Cummings clan to North Alabama soon after the Creek Indians were defeated at Horseshoe Bend. The battle was a decisive one for Andrew Jackson and his band of Tennesseans. Wyatt had not been married for very long when South Carolina fired the first shots on Fort Sumter. After this event states across the South held Secessional Conventions to determine whether to stay in the Union or secede from the Union.

Alabama held their convention in Montgomery. Wyatt Cummings and the other people of Winston County elected a man by the name of Chris Sheets to represent them at the convention. The people of Winston County were settlers and homesteaders in Winston County. There were only a handful of plantations in the county and most people did not own any slaves. So, in an overwhelming vote the people of the county decided that Chris should vote against secession at the convention. All the people of Winston County wanted was to remain neutral. They empathized with their brothers in the southern part of Alabama. But, the thought of fighting to maintain the right to own slaves was something the people of Winston County didn't understand.

During the first day of the secessionist convention Chris Sheets was not allowed to speak. When he tried to speak he was thrown into jail and beaten for his stance on the subject of secession. Chris was held in the jail in Montgomery during the entire convention and was only turned loose when the convention ended. He went home battered and bruised as well as feeling he had failed. As you know Alabama did secede from the Union and the War Between the States began. Many of the planters who had vigorously supported secession and war did not want to fight and began paying others to fight in their place during the war. Soon the state created a Home Guard to help protect the interest of the citizens of Alabama.

One of the objectives of the Home Guard was to encourage the enlistment of young men into the fighting ranks of the Confederate Army. At first the Home Guard was a decent group of people and they protected local interests. But, soon most of the Home Guard became part of the main army. As a result the Home Guard became infiltrated with rogues and less desirable men. In Winston County the Home Guard began to terrorize the very people they were supposed to protect.

Wyatt's neighbor was a man known only as Uncle Billy. One day the Home Guard came to his house and told him he needed to enlist in

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

Kenneth West
Owner / Publisher

Charles Duncan
Editor

Lowell Nicholson
Photographer



Joe Collins
Advertising Director

Todd Forrest
Staff Writer

Website: www.nganews.com
E-mail: northgeorgianews@hotmail.com
Mailing: POBox 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514

Publication No: 001505

Advertising, News deadlines Friday at 4 p.m.

Mail Service for all subscriptions except 30512, 30514 & 30572 - 1 Year \$35.00. In county, carrier delivered subscription is \$3. All subscriptions must be paid in advance. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is published weekly by NGN/TCH, Inc., 266 Cleveland Street, Blairsville, Georgia, 30512. Entered as Second Class Matter as of Dec. 10, 1987 at the Post Office in Blairsville. NORTH GEORGIA NEWS is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. Advertising and subscriptions can be paid by cash, check or credit card.
Phone: (706) 745-6343 **Fax:** (706) 745-1830 * P.O. Box 2029, Blairsville, GA 30514