

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Our Veterans

On Saturday, we paid tribute to our many veterans who call Blairsville-Union County home.

The day started with a parade in Downtown Blairsville, and concluded with a heart-felt ceremony at Veterans Memorial Park on Veterans Memorial Drive.

Our honored Grand Marshal was Union County native Evan Legg, who served in the U.S. Army's 25th Infantry Division during Vietnam.

Evan came home from his service in Vietnam with military honors that include the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for Valor.

A quiet man with a spirited demeanor, Evan was accompanied by his family. He was proud to be honored as the 2014 Parade Grand Marshal.

As we celebrate and remember our veterans, we must also remember that the powers that be in Washington, D.C. are letting our veterans down. Never before has the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs been so behind in meeting the services of U.S. Military veterans.

It was the subject of conversation during the annual Memorial Day Services. And it's a point of interest that has Veterans and their family members concerned as the subject continues to be broached.

My father was a disabled U.S. World War II veteran; his first cousin, Woodrow Wilson died in Belgium on Dec. 16, 1944. The DAV Chapter 11 is the namesake of Cousin Woodrow.

My father was dependent on Veterans Services. He received all his medications from the VA. Anytime he was hospitalized, the VA was notified.

Today, U.S. Military veterans are on a waiting list. Most recently 23 deaths in multiple states were attributed to delayed treatment of veterans. The delays occurred at 27 VA hospitals with deaths at 13 of the facilities. The worst record was at the William Jennings Bryan Dorn veterans hospital in Columbia, S.C., where there were 20 cases of delays and six deaths, according to a VA report.

The Department of Veterans Affairs is under fire for claims that hospitals in Phoenix, AZ, used secret lists to conceal wait times for primary care that surpassed the maximum 14-day period. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki has revoked the more than \$9,000 performance bonus recently given to the former director of the Phoenix VA health care system as the controversy erupted. Three officials have been placed on administrative leave amid claims, still under investigation, that the delays may have contributed to the deaths of 40 U.S. Military veterans.

This is inexcusable. Our veterans should not be on waiting lists for medical treatment, and they should not be dying as they are forced to wait for medical treatment.

There was a time when we were faced with the braggadocios display of people claiming to be war veterans and even heroes.

Today, that scandal has hopefully disappeared, but, our remaining war veterans, who actually fought and served are now facing a catastrophic event called healthcare delays.

This scandal should be investigated from top to bottom and those who have falsified documents and hid the truth about the medical waiting lists for our veterans should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

We must stop and assess where we are as a nation and where things are within our veterans' community.

We must evaluate how we handle Veterans Services and search top to bottom for answers of how to improve these services.

Every time a military recruiter signs up a freshly graduated high school senior, basically, a veteran is created.

Freedom isn't free, and we know this all too well from the histories of our foreign wars. Veterans fight for freedom, they carry our mantra with them every where they travel on our behalf.

Our veterans deserve so much better than they are receiving. Let's make sure we do the right thing and make sure our veterans are taken good care of whatever hospital they may choose.

Let Washington hear your voice on this matter. Call your U.S. Senator or Congressman and make sure they get to the bottom of this.

Letters to the Editor ...

You be the judge

Dear Editor,

People misquote "facts" for one of two reasons: either they do so in order to support their biased point of view or they are ignorant of the true facts.

I don't know which is the case with George Mitchell's letter regarding education and specifically the funding of the Department of Education. He states in his letter to the editor that the 2008 budget for the DOE was \$50 billion, when it is \$56 billion. He states that this year's budget is \$100 billion, when it is \$67 billion. He states that the DOE budget has a built in increase of 8 percent annually when the requested increase for 2015 is 2 percent.

Regular readers of Mr. Mitchell's letters can judge whether he is guilty of misleading or ignorance.

Dick Key

Why?

Dear Editor

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking to buy submachine guns — but isn't saying why it needs them.

According to a solicitation filed on May 7, the Department has a detailed list of specifications for its "commercial acquisition of submachine guns."

The Department is seeking .40 caliber submachine guns complete with flashlights, optics, burst fire capability and 30-round magazines.

The guns, the Department says, should have a "semi-automatic or 2 shot burst trigger group, Tritium night sights for front and rear, rails for attachment of flashlight (front under fore grip) and scope (top rear), stock-collapsible or folding, magazine - 30 rd. capacity, sling, lightweight, and oversized trigger guard for gloved operation."

The USDA isn't the only federal agency to seek weapons or ammunition in recent months.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Postal Service joined the list of federal agencies seeking to purchase what some Second Amendment activists

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North Georgia News

Published since 1909 • Legal Organ of Union County

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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.
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The High Road

It's that wonderful time of the year when young men and women are celebrating their graduations from high schools, colleges and universities. A lot of moms and dads are equally excited. This is a major event in the life of every graduate. As a minister of the good news of Jesus Christ I would encourage every graduating senior to take the High Road of Life. That fellow, Anonymous has written warning young people to steer clear of the Low Road of Life. He entitled it:

Recipe for a Miserable Life

- Think about yourself.
- Talk about yourself.
- Use I as often as possible.
- Mirror yourself continually in the opinion of others.
- Listen greedily to what people say about you.
- Expect to be appreciated.
- Be suspicious.
- Be jealous and envious.
- Be sensitive to slights.
- Never forgive a criticism.
- Trust nobody but yourself.
- Insist on consideration and respect.
- Demand agreement with your own views on everything.
- Sulk if people are not grateful to you for favors shown them.
- Never forget a service you may have endured.
- Be on the lookout for a good time for yourself.
- Shirk your duties if you can.
- Do as little as possible for others.
- Love yourself supremely.
- Be selfish.

On the other hand Dr. Karl Menninger points people to take the High Road of Life. He states: "People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered; love them anyway. If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; do good anyway. If you're successful, you win false friends and true enemies; try to succeed anyway. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow; do good anyway. Honesty and frankness will get you nowhere; they make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway. What you spend days building may be destroyed overnight;

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It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Questions and Answers

SPLOST - Part 1

On May 5, Union County had a SPLOST Bond Validation Hearing at the courthouse. These hearings are held after every SPLOST vote, which means they are held every five to six years by the county. There is always confusion on this issue of what is a "bond validation" hearing. So over the next few weeks we are going to not only discuss actual questions and/or actual allegations given to the court, but may include some "explanation" questions as we sometimes do.

Q. What is the SPLOST sales tax?

A. While certainly most people know this, since all these questions are going to be related to SPLOST in some manner over the next few weeks, I want to repeat the answer. SPLOST stands for Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax. In Georgia, the law allows for counties and school systems to collect sales tax for different purposes. For every dollar spent on sales taxes (7 percent, 4 percent goes to the State of Georgia, 1 percent goes to the county for a sales tax called LOST (Local Option Sales Tax). This tax is divided between the city and county. The county portion of this sales tax goes directly to reduce your property taxes. So this does not provide any additional revenue to the county, but reduces your property taxes.

The additional 1 percent is called ESPLOST (Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) and it allows the school system to build new facilities and capital equipment purchases. The county then has the SPLOST 1 percent for capital improvement projects and road and bridge construction.

Q. Why does Union County have a Bond Validation hearing?

A. Under Georgia law, 36-82-100, when a SPLOST election is held, as was done back in 2013, part of that election wording is the statement about how much money the voters will approve of being borrowed (bonded) as part of the referendum. In order to legally comply with the law, a public hearing must be held in front of the Superior Court Judge to approve the process.

Q. What is a SPLOST Bond?

A. It is the process whereby money can be borrowed to

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Win \$1,000!

The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce would like to extend a warm invitation to you and all of your family and friends to join us at our annual community fireworks display to be held on Friday, July 4 from Meeks Park. The show will begin after dark and is certain to be a memorable one.

As in past years, the Chamber is again offering chances to win \$1,000 by making a \$10 donation toward the fireworks display. The winner will be drawn on the evening of the fireworks, and does not have to be present to win. Tickets are available from Chamber Board Members, Ambassadors, and at the Chamber office within the Union County Community Center at 129 Union County Recreation Road. Please consider a donation that will ensure the continuation of such a great show in Blairsville.

The Chamber would like to say a special thanks to Woodmen of the World, a not for profit organization offering a variety of insurance and investment options, who is helping sponsor this year's event. We also thank the Union County Commissioner's Office, Union County Sheriff's Office, Union County Fire Department and Union County Recreation Department for providing event support in the form of fire and public safety, traffic control, and parking.

For a list of additional events happen-

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Building Rome at the Farmers Market

It was 1563, Cambridge, England. Thirty-three year old Queen Elizabeth I was addressing Parliament. "Roma uno die non est condita", she announced. Rome wasn't built in a day.

About 40 miles and four centuries down the road, Carole Middleton was in despair over the lack of affordable party bags on the market for her daughters' birthday celebrations. Out of frustration, she launched her own company, Party Pieces, headquartered in the family's backyard shed in West Berkshire, UK. Twenty-five years later, Carole and her husband's net worth is estimated at 50 million (US dollars). And one of those daughters that she was concerned about having party favors that they could afford? Well she is now Princess Kate, mother and party planner of the future King of England.

In 1984, Burt Shavitz and Roxanne Quimby rented a one room school house in Maine. Burt was a beekeeper. He used the excess wax to make candles while Roxanne began making homemade personal care products out of the wax and other natural ingredients. Initially, they sold their goods at outdoor markets. In 2007, the founders of Burt's Bees sold out to Clorox for a reported sum of \$925 million.

In 1950, 2900 people lived in Bentonville, AK. Sam Walton opened Walton's 5 and 10. Twenty years later, the company went public with an initial offering of \$16.50 a share. My dad was figuring out how he could afford to send my sister and me to college about that time, so I'm thinking that he would have passed on investing the \$5000 he had saved for our future in the stock of a 5 and 10 chain. But if he had, and then never cashed it in over the past 44 years, it would now be worth about \$65 million dollars. That would have proven to have been more profitable than our educations have been, monetarily speaking, that is.

Most amazing success stories have very humble beginnings. And that fact has been playing loudly in my head whenever I hear folks talking about how slow Thursday "Trash and Treasures" is at the Market, compared to the

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Relay For Life

Dear Editor,

Our Union County American Cancer Society and Relay For Life volunteers are sincerely appreciative of the support of our entire community in this fight against cancer. We are sincerely fighting back and are ready to finish this fight.

The staff at North Georgia News has again stepped up with their generous help and coverage of our team events, our fundraisers, as well as helping inform the community about research, patient services, education, and advocacy efforts to end the fight against cancer.

The cooperation of these professionals has contributed to the overall successes of the past 20 years that Relay For Life has been active in Union County. Prior to that our local newspaper was also a large part of the volunteer efforts to support the mission of the American Cancer Society. There is a strong community dedication to lessening the burden of cancer in our area and the American Cancer Society volunteers here acknowledge that.

We certainly hope that the general public will want to join our teams and supporters on Saturday, May 31 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. at the Union County Farmers Market.

There will be plenty of food, fun and great fellowship...all in support of cancer survivors, caregivers, and in honoring those we miss so dearly.

While many readers of this letter to the editor will be able to list family members, neighbors or co-workers who have been touched by this dreaded disease, our volunteers would like to mention two dedicated cancer fighters who passed away recently.

Ralph Carr, whose wife Millie had also been a cancer survivor, passed away at his home in Inverness, FL. Ralph had been a 40+ year cancer survivor, a volunteer worker for spaghetti dinners, for RFL games, and many fundraisers including our annual Daffodil Days, Flower of Hope, Project.

Another cancer fighter we lost this year was Alan Johnson, a longtime resident of our local nursing home. Alan was confined to a wheelchair but that never slowed him down as he raised funds for Relay For Life and so many other worthwhile projects in our community. Our volunteers named him our 2014 Honorary Grand Marshall for our survivors lap.

Both of these cancer fighters as well as others will be remembered during the 6 p.m. Caregiver/Survivor Ceremony and the 9 p.m. Candle Lighting Luminaria Ceremony.

Please come over to the Farmers Market and bring your chair to celebrate, remember and fight back with our 2014 Relay For Life teams, volunteers, and our 2014 Presenting Sponsors United Community Bank and Union General Hospital.

Allyson McGraw and Sue Upchurch, 2014 Co-Chairs

Fred McGhee

Fred McGhee was a coon hunting machine. He hunted 6 or 7 nights a week 52 weeks of every year. Fred was extraordinarily poor and a large portion of his income came from the hides he captured through coon hunting. Fred had a large family which required a lot of food and his regular job of logging just would not pay for all the food required by his family. At least that was his excuse for all the time spent in the woods away from his wife and children.

Fred was also described by many in our little community as a "big blow". Fred was adept at making you think that he was better than anyone else at almost anything. He had better dogs, better hunting territory and was more knowledgeable about the woods than anyone else. Even with all that was known about his bragging Fred was well liked and people enjoyed his company on a hunting trip. My Dad said that he enjoyed hunting with Fred because he was entertaining and fun to listen to.

One night in August Dad set up a hunting trip with Uncle Mack, Uncle Rufus and Fred. They decided to hunt over in the "Section". This area is now a part of the Bankhead National Forest close to Double Springs, AL. The area is drained by the Sipsey River which eventually feeds into the Black Warrior River. The topography of the "section" is comprised by rolling hills with the occasional deep hollow. At one time there were many farms located in the area. But, during the depression many of these marginal land farms had been abandoned. The federal government came in during the 1930s and bought up all these old farms and created the national forest.

On this particular hot and sultry night in August these three men and my dad, who was a teenager, walked far back into the area to the treeing dogs. A treeing dog has spent some time trailing a raccoon to a tree. When the coon climbs the tree the dog comes to the tree and belches out a different type of bark than when the coon is still on the ground. Anyway when the four people came to their dogs they knew there was a problem. The raccoon had climbed a massive Tulip Poplar. The coon was hiding in the top of the tree amongst all the leaves and to make matters worse the trunk of the poplar was covered with gigantic Poison Ivy vines. The men could not find the coon and normally, Dad would climb the tree to find the animal. However, Dad didn't want to develop a bad rash from the Poison Ivy. So, three of the men began gathering their dogs to leave the scene.

As Dad was leashing his dog he noticed Fred sitting down and taking off his shoes. Dad looked at Fred as if he were crazy and asked, "You're not climbing that tree are you"? Fred

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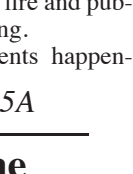
Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



Farmers Market Moment

JorAnne Leone

