

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Heinous act of vandalism

The highest percentage of victims anywhere are the dead. For some reason, people steal the flowers from their gravesites, they kick over their headstones and desecrate their final resting places.

Union County Sheriff Mack Mason brings light to yet another violation in a Union County cemetery.

Someone put epoxy all over the date of death of a man's grave in the Choestoe Cemetery.

The crime occurred sometime between May 12th and June 25th. The stone couldn't be repaired because the epoxy was harder than the stone.

The man, whose grave was vandalized, died in 1989, seemingly without an enemy in the world, the sheriff said.

Why anyone would do this to his headstone is beyond me. The sheriff agrees.

Here's where you want to pay attention if you have a clue about who might have had a hand in this travesty.

The family of the man whose headstone was vandalized is offering a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the vandal or vandals. That would indicate to me that they are really upset about this act of vandalism - as well they should be.

About 20 years ago, someone took out several headstones at a cemetery that is close to my family. Those headstones were more than a century old. The vandals destroyed them to the point where no one could figure out how to replace the headstones on the appropriate grave site. That crime has gone unsolved to this day. But, it doesn't make it any easier to forgive and forget.

Losing a loved one is extraordinarily difficult. Affording a nice headstone for that loved one is another battle. Having that headstone defaced and essentially destroyed is unthinkable.

I feel for the man's family and I applaud them for raising the odds that someone will be arrested and convicted of this heinous act of vandalism.

My family knows how you feel. The best word to describe that feeling is having been **violated** to the core of your being. You want justice - now. We hear you loud and clear and we hope that there's someone out there that can help you.

It's hard to imagine what goes through the mind of a vandal. Surely folks have better things to do than go around vandalizing headstones. We don't know who the vandal or vandals are, but, we hope someone collects that \$5,000.

We hope that Sheriff Mason and his detectives get the tip they need to apprehend those responsible for this unnecessary act of vandalism. We hope that the judge overseeing this case hands out the maximum punishment for the crime.

By the way, it's a felony, because the damage to that headstone exceeds \$500.

It is our hope that if you are never apprehended, that you never commit another crime against the dead. However, Sheriff Mason hopes that you have ample opportunity to enjoy the cuisine at the Union County Jail and later compare it to the cuisine served by the state.

In the meantime, Sheriff Mason and his deputies are keeping a close eye on the local cemeteries. They hope to see you soon.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Fear

Please understand that a certain kind of fear is God-given. It warns us of danger. Elijah, that great prophet of God was not afraid to challenge hundreds of Baal's prophets, but he let one ugly woman, namely Jezebel, run him clean out of the country. I believe David, unlike Elijah, did not let fear make his decision. Neither should fear make our decisions. Jesus said in the last days, "there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: For the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Matt. 21:25-26). Fear will cause you to modify your behavior and do things that will make you look insane. When Israel left Egypt they made it fine until they came to the Red Sea. Abruptly, their journey came to a halt. This was the first crisis of fear, but it would not be the last. They must have thought: this is it, our future is over. With the Red Sea before them and the armies of Pharaoh behind them, the future really looked bleak. The people were sore afraid and jumped on Moses with all four feet. "You have brought us out here to die." "Didn't we tell you to leave us alone?" "It would have been better to serve the Egyptians than to die out here in the wilderness." Moses knew they were talking out of fear and he said, "Fear ye not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." (Ex. 14:11-13). Israel probably thought, "What salvation?" Standing still or standing firm requires that we wait. Sometimes we are tempted to go back or lunge forward into trouble. Remember God is never caught off guard. We must allow God time to put His plan into action before we substitute our plan. Abraham got scared. He and Sarah substituted their plan for God's plan. Their plan only brought more trouble and sorrows. "See the salvation of the Lord": means to give the Captain of our salvation a chance to finish. We are to live and act, not out of fear, but in the confidence of God's ultimate victory over every thing that arouses fear. Dear child of God, do not fear. God will take care of you. David said, "I was young, but now I am old: but I have

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



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E-911 Communications Center

Q. When should we call E-911?

A. 911 is for EMERGENCIES ONLY! An emergency is any situation that requires immediate assistance from the police/sheriff, the fire department, or an ambulance. If you are ever in doubt of whether a situation is an emergency, you should immediately go ahead and call 9-1-1. It's better to be safe and let the 9-1-1 call taker determine if you need emergency assistance. 911 is NOT for information, directory assistance, chit-chat, traffic tickets, animals, or pranks. If you do accidentally call 911 without an emergency, please DO NOT hang up. Tell the call taker your situation so they know it isn't an emergency. When a 911 operator receives a 911 hang up call, they have no way of knowing if there is a true emergency, or if it was a false call. 911 operators call back the telephone number to see if there is an emergency and they always send a police officer to the residence to confirm that everything is okay. This can be a tremendous waste of manpower and resources, so if you accidentally call 911, please do not hang up but tell them of your mistake.

Q. Can I call 911 from any kind of phone?

A. To make a 911 call, you may use any type of phone with service: Push Button, Rotary, Cell, Wireless, Pay Phones (may require coins). Simply dial 9-1-1. Stay calm and clearly state your emergency. You should give your name, phone number, and the address where help is needed. If you are deaf or hearing/speech impaired, you may use a TTY or TTD Text Telephone to communicate with the 911 Center. If you don't have access to this, go ahead and dial 911 and do not hang up.

Q. Why do the 911 Operators ask so many questions?

A. Our 911 Dispatchers are trained to screen your call in order to send the most appropriate response to your emergency. They ask questions so they can provide you with the most efficient resources during your time of need.

Q. Can I speak to a Police Officer when I call 911?

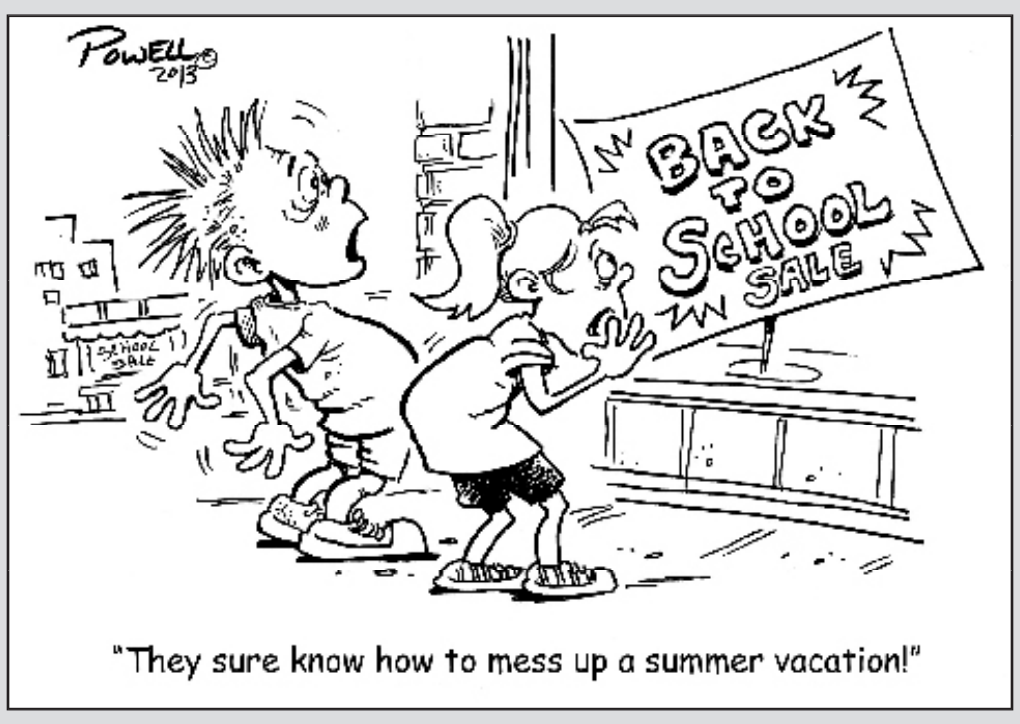
A. No. There are no officers available at the 911 Center. The officers may be contacted by a dispatcher to call you back or go to your location to speak with you if needed.

Q. Can I give my child an old cell-phone to use as a toy?

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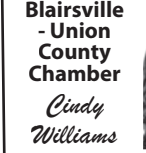
Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Welcome Chuck Smith

The moment we've all been waiting for has finally arrived! The applicants were abundant and the candidates were impressive. After a month long search process, I am proud to announce that we have hired Mr. Chuck Smith as our new Membership Coordinator for the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce.



Cindy Williams

Mr. Smith joins the Chamber after spending the last 10 years doing audit work for Brasstown Valley Resort in Young Harris. Prior to his career with Brasstown, Chuck lived in Conyers. There he became the Founder/Owner/Operator of a successful paper and packaging business, which ultimately sold to a major competitor for a profit in 2000. Chuck has a strong background in sales, customer relationship building, and accounting. He is a graduate of the 3M Company Business Sales School and the 3M Company Business Negotiations School.

Chuck has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Business Management from the University of Nebraska. He is a native of Georgia. He and his wife of 27 years, Kimberly, currently reside in Union County. They have two married sons and three grandchildren.

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Wildfire Safe, Sound and Code Smart Program

Chest/Chatt RC&D has hit another home run by being selected to host a national program called Wildfire Safe, Sound, & Code Smart to be held at Brasstown Valley Resort on October 7 & 8, 2013. This is yet another high profile wildfire education program that is one more piece of our Wildfire safety puzzle that we are putting together here in Towns County and it fits perfectly with our highly successful Fire Adapted Communities and Firewise programs.

Executive Director of RC&D

Frank Riley



Chest/Chatt along with the National Association of RC&D Councils is working with our local, state, and national partners to help our citizens that live in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI or up here called... living in the woods) be prepared for the inevitable devastating wildfires that always happen in somebody else's community, but one day it may be ours!

2012 was yet another record-setting year for wildfires, burning deserts, mountains, valleys, houses and business, almost 10 million acres, leaving behind an extraordinary toll of well over 2652 homes lost. The worst part of this year's wildfire trend is that 36 lives have been lost, both civilian and firefighter. Each year this trend seems to worsen with more and more impacts to communities and homeowners throughout the United States. Despite the fast-growing number of WUI areas throughout the U.S., study after study shows that rural areas lack proper building, fire and WUI codes. Less than 10% of WUI communities (about 7000 communities) have adopted a WUI code or prepared a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) (Towns was the first CWPP in Georgia); less than 2% (about 1200) of WUI communities currently implement wildfire prevention programs.

The majority of communities that incorporate such programs have already experienced wildfires. Simply put, most communities are only taking steps after a fire incident occurs, as opposed to preventively working to protect life and property before disaster strikes. Several

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Letters to the Editor ...

Convenient heritage

Dear Editor:
Justin Welby, the present archbishop of Canterbury, recently announced that he had just "learned" that his father was a German Jew. Surprise, surprise!

On June 26, during a five-day tour of the Middle East, as the archbishop was preparing to join Jews in prayer at the Western Wall, a sharp-eyed photographer caught the prelate tucking his cross inside his vestments - presumably so as to not offend Jewish sensibilities. All Christians should, however, see Welby's capitulation as being comparable to Peter's denial of Christ.

The previous archbishop of Canterbury frequently spoke compassionately about the plight of the Palestinian people. Under the circumstances, it is not likely that the same can be expected from the present occupant of Lambeth Palace.

For several years now, a number of prominent individuals - in Britain and the United States - have made public their hitherto unknown Jewish ancestry. One can easily wonder if there might be a group of dedicated Jewish genealogists pouring over the birth records of the influential in an effort to "out" them; and, in doing so, make these individuals beholden, politically or otherwise.

Sincerely,
Ruth Elizabeth Ramsey

Whipsaw tough

Dear Editor,
Every year, several weeks before the Western North Carolina deer season opened on the Monday of Thanksgiving week, I'd scout the high tops of the Pisgah National Forest.

It took much younger legs and lungs than what I have now but even though those days are long gone, I still have deep, fond memories of Cold Mountain, Sixteen Canyon, Ivester Ridge, Buck Ridge, Green Mountain: the blue mountains which the Cherokee called "The Grandfathers."

The Blue Ridge was once taller than Everest is now -- and is far older. These blue hills contain no fossils. They are older than Life itself.

A close, personal friend and I were scouting the eastern ridges of Green Mountain -- a gigantic, three-mile-long hogback of a ridge -- when we came upon the rotted remains of a cabin.

There was evidence of a homestead, carved out of a flat on the lee side of that mountain long before chain saws, front-end loaders, diesel-powered chippers, bucket trucks, gas-fueled tillers.

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Skinny Dipping

The Baker girls were supposed to stay away from the upper swimming hole on Little Bear Creek. The water was deep and Dad Baker was afraid the girls might drown in the deep water. Besides that it was early spring and the water was still cool. As the young girls rambled through the woods, around the woods, around the Gray Rocks area, they noticed the clear cool water. It was hotter than normal for early spring and the girls wondered what the water might feel like on that spring day in 1932. The girls sat down for a rest and began rationalizing the merits of taking a dip in the inviting water.

The girls knew their father, Dad Baker, would spank them for swimming in the upper hole of the stream. However, the water was cool and the girls knew their brothers used this swimming hole frequently. My grandmother, Delphia, and her sister, Lucille, were strong willed girls and they knew they could do anything their brothers could do. They also knew Dad was hard at work in the logging woods and would never find out about their escapade. So, the girls came out of their clothes and laid them high on the rock overlooking the creek. They played and swam in the water for 40 minutes or more never giving another thought to the consequences of their actions.

The girls were unaware of the presence of their older brothers hiding in the bushes. Mack and Rufus had secretly followed the girls through the woods to the swimming hole. While the girls swam the boys stole away with their clothing. Mack and Rufus slipped back into their home and placed their sisters' clothes on their beds and then left the house to explore the woods around the Gray Rock area.

Delphia and Lucille left the water refreshed and proud of themselves for getting away with a dip in the creek. However, they were soon paralyzed with fear as they reached the top of the rocks and found their clothing gone. The girls were petrified. Their clothes were missing and the Baker house was 1 mile from the upper swimming hole on Little Bear Creek. The sisters had only one choice. They slipped back through the woods to their house. Fortunately, the woods provided them with adequate cover until they reached the Baker Farm. They stopped short of the house to make sure their father was not home. They called out to their mother, "Mommy, please bring us some clothes to put on." Mommy Baker was somewhat confused by their request. But, she quietly walked to the girls with the clothing she had found on their beds.

The girls were surprised to see the same clothes they had left on the rocks when they went swimming. Mommy Baker was surprised to see

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Green Bean Festival Drives Up Property Values

I know I have the attention of every Realtor right now. It may seem like a ludicrous statement, so I'll take it a step further. Your property in Union County will be worth more in September than it was in April because of the likes of the Downtown Block Parties, the Concerts at the Old Courthouse, the rodeos and horse riding competitions out at the Saddle Club, the weddings held at the new Community Center, and of course, the Farmers Market.

What about this community prompted you to exchange where you lived for a life here in Union County? I contend that most of us that relocated came because we found a spirit here that we were longing to be a part of. For some of us raised in small towns, back in the 40s, 50s and 60s, it was a way to rekindle that secure feeling you had that your neighbors knew who you were and had your back. For those who came from more metropolitan regions, Union County offered a peacefulness that the spirit needed.

I always get a kick out of tourists mentioning how many more stars in the sky we have than they do where they are from. At night, we have no artificial lights diffusing the blackness, so Mother Nature commands the dark with her light show. So, without the imitation light, the naturalness of the solar system shines bright. And that's very similar to what happens when our leaders focus on enhancing the natural nature of this community. It lets all our natural resources look brighter. When visitors are blinded by our brightness, they are led into this honest to goodness feeling of community...and then they are hooked.

That's when they start to call a Realtor. That's when they buy a property in a place they may never even know existed a year before. That's what happened to me 15 years ago. Some of you may remember the Dough House restaurant that was located back in the 90s in the Seasons Inn Plaza. I was visiting and went there for breakfast a few times. I met a lot of nice people. I felt a comfortable coziness that I hadn't felt since the old days at the local diner back in my hometown on the shores of Lake Erie. It wasn't just the Dough House experience. The donkey, Padre, out at Pappy's lured me, too. But I probably shouldn't go there. TMI, as the kids say...

When folks walk into the old courthouse for the first time, they are surrounded by more than history. When they walk through the Farmers Market on a bustling Saturday, they are drawn to more than yellow squash and turnip greens. When they participate in a rodeo with the backdrop of the mountains instead of a Hawks game with the backdrop of some hundred corporate sponsor logos glaring and blaring at them, their

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Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Farmers Market Moment

JoAnne Leone



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