

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Reece Center a true treasure

Every time I venture to the Reece Farm and Heritage Center I learn something new about our favorite son, Byron Herbert Reece.

It was Open House on Saturday and Sunday at the Reece Center. One thing I've learned, locals are now embracing the Center.

Unlike last year when tourists swamped the Center during the Christmas Open House, locals came to visit in 2013.

They weren't disappointed as they admired the Center that details the circumstances behind the life of our Pulitzer Prize-nominated poet.

They perused and purchased Reece's works, hats, t-shirts, and practically anything that was associated with the legendary poet's life.

They toured the farm where Reece labored to make ends meet for his family. Not many realize that Reece worked the farm and took care of his terminally ill parents.

When he wasn't working the farm and taking care of his parents, Reece was in his writing studio churning out poem after poem, volume by volume.

He harvested words as often as he harvested crops from the field. His works were synonymous with the land that he tilled and nurtured.

Reece served as writer-in-residence at UCLA, Emory University in Atlanta, and Young Harris College in Towns County.

Atlanta Constitution editor Ralph McGill gave Reece high praise, calling him "one of the really great poets of our time, and one to stand with those of any other time."

However, in his lifetime, Reece never achieved wide recognition. He is known today as the poet whose old-fashioned, finely crafted ballads and lyrics celebrate the life and heritage of Appalachia.

Reece was gone two years before I was born, having taken his own life at the age of 40. He suffered from the chronic respiratory illness tuberculosis and could no longer withstand the physical suffering.

My Granny Potts, one of his cousins, kept me informed about Hub Reece. She was so proud of the man that she believed put Union County on the map.

She read his works aloud, making sure her grandchildren knew his works. Granny Potts was very proud to have known Hub Reece and enjoy his literary labors in print.

She told her grandchildren of the time that Reece was featured in Newsweek magazine in 1951. She believed that Hub Reece's works gave hope to the Mountain folk that resided in the hills of North Georgia.

Reece was an inspiration to the farmer, the young children and those that admired his literary works.

He helped pave the roadway that led to proper education for Mountain folk, he inspired his brethren to reach out and achieve.

But, Hub Reece was a mere simple man that rose to great heights, moreso in death than in the days when he penned *Bow Down in Jericho* which earned him a Pulitzer Prize nomination.

Yes, Reece's legacy lives on and it's right here in front of us.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Keep on Being Thankful

Have you heard about the fellow who wanted to live a quiet and simple life? The story goes that he joined a monastery and took the vow of silence. As a monk he was allotted two words each year. After his first twelve months he appeared before his superiors and used up his two words. He said, "Food cold." Another year went by and he appeared again before his superiors. This time he said, "Bed hard." He lived out his third year in silence and stood for review. His final two words were, "I quit." "Well," said the elder, "Your decision comes as no surprise. All you have done since you have been here is to complain!" Some people do seem to have the gift to gripe, grumble and complain. The weather is always bad. It is too wet, or too dry. Too hot or too cold. The work is too hard and the pay is too small. Youth are going to the dogs and the government is spending too much money. They always have some ache in their body and delight in the opportunity to describe in detail the gory symptoms they are experiencing.

A little old lady entered a department store and was scared half to death when a band began to play, confetti rained down on her head, and a dignified executive pinned an orchid on her dress and handed her a crisp thousand dollar bill. She was the store's millionth customer. Radio and television reporters were on hand and began their usual barrage of questions. One reporter asked, "What did you come here to buy?" The little old lady embarrassingly dropped her head and said, "I'm on my way to the Complaint Department." That prolific writer anonymous warns us about:

The Grumble Family

There's a family nobody likes to meet.
They live; it is said, on Complaining Street,
In the city of Never-Are-Satisfied,
The river of Discontent beside.
They growl at that and they growl at this;
Whatever comes there is something amiss;
And whether their station be high or humble

See Parris, page 5A

It's On My Mind

Danny Parris



Questions and Answers

First, let me say that I hope everyone had a very Happy Thanksgiving!

Q. Why do you think Thanksgiving is such a special holiday?

A. Other than Christmas and maybe a family reunion, there is no other time of year that such an effort is made to bring families together. At a family reunion, you spend a lot of your time speaking to and getting to know new family members, as well as so many very extended members, so your attention is divided. At Christmas, we are not only visiting family members, but we are also saddled with the stress of purchasing gifts, decorating and cooking, perhaps visiting several different families, and as our younger family members come along, we are often divided having to choose which family to see and when. But at Thanksgiving, it seems that other than those responsible for planning, purchasing the food, cooking and cleaning up, the rest of us really have time to do some quality visiting with close family members that we may see often, but seldom have time to just sit and talk. I hope your Thanksgiving was as special as ours.

Q. We see that you post on Facebook quite often. Why do you use this public medium?

A. I first consented to trying to use Facebook during my campaign back in 2012. Until then, I knew nothing about it and was determined not to learn. However, with advice from others, it was utilized on a limited basis during the campaign. But after that, my assistant (my wife) said if I wanted to continue, it was up to me to learn. So it was sometime in early 2013 that I made my first nervous post.

Q. Do you enjoy posting on Facebook?

A. Yes I do. It certainly is not for everyone, but it just seems to fit my makeup. First, I love photography and have been involved in it for many years. I also like to be able to communicate with people about what is going on with my work as your commissioner. Facebook gives me the opportunity to marry these two interest and hopefully give you more insight into what goes on in county government.

Q. Are there other reasons you enjoy using Facebook?

A. The people you accept to be placed on your list are appropriately called your "friends,"

See Paris, page 5A

Jingle Bell Buys

Need a reason to shop local this Christmas? How about 32 of them!

The Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce invites you to take part in our Jingle Bell Buys weekend event. Thirty two local merchants are offering discounts on hot Christmas gift items during normal business hours on Thursday, Dec. 5 through Saturday, Dec. 7.

For three days

only, savvy shoppers can take advantage of a variety of "buy one get one free" deals and featured 50 percent off items. Whether you are a newcomer to the area, ready to discover all that Union County has to offer, or a long time resident who believes in supporting the businesses who make our local economy strong, this event is for you.

To receive this year's coupons, simply go to www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com or call the Chamber of Commerce at (706) 745-5789. If you would like to subscribe to future email coupon promotions, and never miss another great sale, go to www.VisitBlairsvilleGA.com, click Newsletter Signup and subscribe to Buy Local Coupons & Events.

As you wrap up your shopping on Saturday, Dec. 7, be sure to stop by the Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce located in the Union County Community Center between 3

See Williams, page 5A

My Treasure Hunt

Every time I trudged up those 10 mammoth stone steps, I felt like a great explorer who was nearing the treasure. I'd get to the top, take a deep breath and open the heavy doors in front of me. The musty smell of old paper would be faint, but distinguishable from the cheap, heavily doused perfume of the librarian.

I was five years old when we walked to the Dunkirk Free Library to get my first library card. I remember well, sitting with my mother at the miniature wood table, where she held the small, eraserless pencil, carefully printing the three lines of information needed for me to receive a key to the knowledge of the world.

The children's reading room was to the left of the front door. When I entered that room designated just for me, and turned left again, quietly toeing past the librarian's desk, I would find my favorite section of books on the north wall. They were the series of Beatrix Potter books.

I can't tell you that I "read" these books, at least not with any attention to the story. It was the illustrations that had me captivated. The rabbits dressed in Victorian attire were my favorite. I adored the little mice that seemed to wiggle right on the page. The frogs, with their long legs and velvet knickers, were painted with the most soothing shade of green. They waddled in puddles that were wet to my imagination. The tiny pages of these books were thick and shiny, and I always felt like I was holding something very valuable, each page turning to another layer of beauty.

Eventually I was tall enough to see what the drawers of the card catalog had hidden within. The cards were like a well worn treasure map. They were dog-eared and stained by the fingers of countless children before me. The immense brick and granite stoned building was more than a half-century old, and I dare say that some of the cards in those drawers were placed there, that many years ago. Here I could find books by author, by title or by subject. Let's go to the drawer that included the letters Si-So. I want to look up snakes. (I had a fetish for reptiles as a youngster). In just a matter of moments, I would find the book that would tell me, at a third grade level, why snakes hissed.

See Leone, page 5A

Letters to the Editor ...

Evaluating Charter Schools

Dear Editor,
Probably like most other Union County residents I was not aware that the Union County Board of Education was applying for charter status for the county's school system until I saw the recent article in this paper reporting approval of the application by the school board. I wondered why our Board wished to make this change. Doing a bit of homework on line, I learned that subject to various statutory exceptions, a charter system is not subject to Georgia Code provisions governing education, or to any rule, regulation or policy established by the State Board or the State Department of Education. In exchange for this waiver, the county system "agrees to meet or exceed the system-wide performance based on goals included in the charter."

I read the charter application and came away wondering why exposure to the risks inherent in waiver of state statute provisions and regulations was necessary. Why couldn't goals included in the charter be achieved without conversion to a charter system?

I invite you to visit ucschools.org, click

See Cheves, page 5A

Thank you

Dear Editor,
I'd like to thank, publicly, the 911 operator, the fire department, ambulance service, and Union General Hospital doctors and staff for the fine response to my wife's emergency on Nov. 8. On that night, my wife passed out and I couldn't get any response out of her. The 911 operator got things rolling fast. The first to arrive were the firemen, who started looking after her. Then the ambulance crew arrived. All got her into the ambulance quickly. When I arrived at the hospital, She had been rushed to an MRI. The emergency staff was great as was the ICU and regular room services. She was discharged on the following Tuesday.

All and all, well done!

Allan L. Pruitt

Give the AFA a chance

Dear Editor,
On Wednesday evening, after several weeks of hearing the many horror stories about the Affordable Healthcare website, healthcare.gov, I went online and much to my surprise had no difficulties what-so-ever establishing my account and shopping for insurance. Every aspect of my experience went smoothly. Since then, I have been on the website several times to work with my account and again, the experiences went smoothly. If anyone has been put off by the experience, I would encourage them to return to the website and try it now.

Megan Maloney

Reading the columns

Dear Editor,
The letters in the Nov. 20 edition being less than inspiring, I turned to the columns, an enjoyment I hardly ever avail myself. Just think! I might have otherwise missed Mickey Cumming's hilarious - yet horrifying - tale of Miss Pollardi, the 80 year old stripper. Horrifying, in that those of us well past the 80 year mark know all too well what time does to the "body beautiful." With this column, Mr. Cummings might have found his real calling: less bucolic schmaltz and more good-natured humor that all readers can respond to. It will be a while, I fear, before the image of Miss Pollardi will be erased from my memory.

There is hardly a column by Don Jacobsen (Rare Kids, Well Done) that does not offer parents intelligent and reasonable advice; he is always spot-on. Not to trivialize matters, President Obama might be well-advised to ditch Kerry and appoint Don Jacobsen as Secretary of State. His sound thought and judgement would appeal to all sides, and his no-nonsense attitude would surely make the Israelis toe the mark.

The columnist, Rebecca G. Collins (Did You Know??), has been guilty of a number of inaccuracies about matters religious in the past. In her current column, she states: "Of the 56 signers of the Declaration (of Independence), most were Protestant, with the notable (sic) exception of Charles Carroll of Maryland." (But, why necessarily "notable"? He just happened to be Catholic.)

It would have been more accurate for the columnist to have said "Episcopalian," which is not the same thing as "Protestant." (Incidentally, on the other hand, hardly any would have claimed to be "Anglican" (meaning "English"), since they were fighting to be free of the English yoke.) Raised as an Episcopalian in my youth, the catechism I was taught stated, in no uncertain terms, that Episcopalians were

See Ramsey, page 5A

Excellent coverage

Dear Editor,
Thank you so much for your coverage of the Panther Wrestling!!!! These are amazing young people that are bringing a much needed sport to Union County. I'm very proud of the coaching staff that takes this sport seriously and teaches our children not only the sport but teamwork. The coaches are very dedicated to the children of this sport. I'm a proud parent of a Union County Panther wrestler!!!
Thank you for the coverage! We Salute you for covering our wrestling!
Jennie Richardson-Cook

Better Times Are Coming

After graduation Paul worked around his Dad's farm for a couple of months and then left to attend college at the University of Arkansas. He had been offered a scholarship to play

baseball for the Razorbacks. Back in those days student athletes were allowed to practice more than present day athletes. So, the Arkansas baseball team held late summer baseball practices. Paul was exposed to some really good pitching that he was able to handle. The young man was left handed and was able to hit the best pitchers on the team.

However, there was a young man present who had recently left Arkansas because he had received an invitation to try out with the St. Louis Cardinals. This lefty pitcher had a wicked curve ball and slider. The fellow's fast ball approached 100 mph and trying as much as possible Paul could not connect with this fellow's pitches. Just when he thought he'd catch up to a fast ball Paul would receive a curve ball. Then even though Paul knew it was coming the fellow's slider would always strike him out. He would say, "I knew the slider was coming and it was always in the dirt, but, I couldn't help it. I would always swing at the last pitch!"

So, by the end of fall practice Paul was really discouraged. He couldn't get a hit off this guy. On top of his batting problems Paul was worried about his girlfriend back at home. Paul just knew his old nemesis was going to steal his gal. On top of everything else was the fact that he was bored. The young man was in a new town and didn't know anyone except those other folks on the team. He had no idea about what he should study so Paul was just taking core classes. In essence the young man was discouraged, lonely and confused about his future. So, he left Arkansas and went home to North Alabama.

Paul's father, Columbus, cried like a baby when his son came home from college. But, soon things got back to normal for the young man. He found a job at a textile mill where he worked during the week and played baseball on the mill's team on weekends. Paul also loved basketball and soon landed a job as a basketball referee for local high school games. This job soon landed him in hot water. Paul's old High School team, Phil Campbell, was playing their arch rival, Hackleburgh. Paul's brother, Bud, played for Phil Campbell as well as many of his younger friends.

Paul said the game was generally nip and tuck with first Hackleburgh being in front and toward the end Phil Campbell was leading. Phil Campbell was closing in on a victory with 4 seconds left in the game when Bobby

See Cummings, page 5A



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