

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY
OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

What am I missing? (from last weeks paper)

It would seem that Mr. Gibson is missing quite a bit. The Homestead Exemption he is talking about has been around since the late 1930's and has been available to anyone who makes his homestead in Georgia and applies for it by act of the Georgia Legislature. Over time it grew from \$2,000 to \$10,000 with the amount that the counties lost by its exercise rebated to the counties by the state. This year, because of the decline in revenue to the state caused by the economic slowdown, the Legislature reduced the exemption and the rebate to \$2,000. As it comes off the bottom of the assessment, it hits all the homesteaders equally and those at the lower end the hardest.

Commissioner Kendall looked at the situation and at the County budget and determined that he could handle the cost of restoring the exemption to the original \$10,000 level (by adding \$8,000) using county money without significant stress to the budget subject to the approval of the county voters. He feels that it is unfair to those who have relied on this exemption, some for many years, to pull it away particularly in these hard economic times. We, the voters of Towns County, must agree.

Mr. Gibson is right in one area. The county could offset the loss in homestead revenue by simply raising the millage rate. That is not the commissioner's intention at this time and his track record supports that. But, times could change and the economy gets stagnant or worse forcing reconsideration of such a move. However, consider this. A millage increase would apply across the entire tax digest, applying to all property and business owners. Thus, any deficit could be made up while retaining a net gain for those holding the homestead exemption.

There is one other nuance which we must be aware of. Your tax bills are made up of charges from four different entities - the County and the School Board which we all pay and one or the other of the two cities for those who live within their boundaries. Proposals such as this must be approved by the voters involved. Thus there should be four referendum items on this ballot. There is only one next week, the County. That is because the other three did not have enough time to get their official paperwork together so that our legislators could get the legislation drafted and passed in the time that was remaining last spring. Rep. Stephen Allison and Sen. Jim Butterworth moved quickly with the county legislation and, to their credit, got it done. It is my understanding that the School Board and the Cities plan to apply early in the 2010 legislative session with the hope of getting their legislation passed in 2010. If this happens, the entire package will apply to the 2010 tax bills.

This proposal is good and fair. The voters of Towns County should pass it easily.

**Charley Kraus
Towns County**

From the Desk of:



Sheriff Clinton of Towns County

There are several things coming up in the next two months which I would like to remind everyone about. First Halloween on the square is going to be Friday night Oct. 30 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 pm. This event is sponsored each year by the City of Hiawassee and is designed to provide a safe and fun environment for children, and families to enjoy trick or treating. City Police and Deputies will be on hand and local businesses help support the event.

Also coming up is the Sheriff's Christmas Parade on Nov. 28. The parade is held to raise money for the Empty Stocking Fund. The annual event helps provide Christmas presents for local children that otherwise would not be able to receive gifts, due to financial hardships. For those that would like to participate in the parade, you can pick up an entry form at the Sheriff's Office, or download it from the Internet (www.townscountysheriffsoffice.com) and return to Vicki

Ellis at the Sheriff's Office. Please come out to enjoy the parade and help us provide a merry Christmas for local children this year.

Also this year, we are sponsoring an Adopt-a-Child program to raise money for the Towns County Sheriff's Empty Stocking Fund. We are asking local citizens that can to help lend a hand and support this cause. Last year we served a record 192 children from 70 local families. The increased demand depleted the fund and we are asking you to adopt a local child or children by helping to provide toys for them this Christmas. More information is available at the Sheriff's Office as well as on the Sheriff's Office Web site at www.townscountysheriffsoffice.com. You may also call the Sheriff's Office for more information at (706) 896-4444 and speak with Vicki Ellis.

Times are very tough right now for many local families and we are trying to make a difference in the lives of young children and families. One of the things I love best about Towns County, Georgia is that the people here help each other. We are asking you to continue that tradition of supporting the community by helping us in this effort to provide for local children. Thank you all in advance for your much needed, and much appreciated support.



Halloween, Truth not to be tricked
**By Dr. Steven Swisher, Pastor
Living Word Revival Center**

When the truth is discovered or revealed to you, it is then that you are able to make an intelligent choice concerning a matter. The Bible says that you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free. This is why I desire to share the truth concerning the pagan and devilish festival of Halloween. When we do have knowledge of the truth, we can easily be deceived and find ourselves participating in things that seem innocent in some appearances, yet opposite of what God teaches us to be involved in.

Halloween was a festival that erupted out of the medieval times through a pagan people called the Celts. It was a night when the Druid priests of the Celtic people would offer human sacrifices unto Satanic gods and idols. It became a festival where all kinds of witchcraft and divination would take place during this time. This night was truly a night filled with the darkness of evil people doing perverted and destructive acts.

We can easily see the fruits of this festival by examining the decorations and costumes that are used in celebration of this evil festival. Witches, bats, Jack-o-lanterns, spiders and other demonic symbols are plastered everywhere to describe its true roots of evil. These symbols are real and they do attract demonic activity to mobilize. Sometimes we can be deceived by the very obvious things of this evil festival because we get excited about our children looking forward to all the candy that they will receive. But I think that as Christians we must be dedicated to be separate from the unclean things in this world in obedience to God's

Commandments that say in 2 Corinthians 6:17, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

Jesus said in the book of John 8:32, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The truth is that every year the devil uses this night to be highly worshipped by all who will dress up as monsters, witches and other demons. Ignorantly many people partake of Halloween because of tradition, but through ignorance or because you have been deceived in the past, you are still accountable to a holy God that will judge you for your sins. Yes, it is sinful to partake of such an evil festival and should be avoided by every Christian in obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is simply a night of idolatry to magnify the satanic gods of pagan worship. Every encyclopedia will give you the roots of this evil festival that has infiltrated our country based upon Christian faith.

A wise man will count the cost of doing something before he does it. Is keeping tradition worth selling out your soul? I hope that the truth revealed in this article about Halloween will keep you from being tricked into celebrating this ungodly festival, because being tricked is not worth the price of the treats.

Pastor Steven Swisher cordially invites you to join us at Living Word Revival Center for our services on Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. or on Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. We are located at 1762 Hwy. 64 east, just a 1 1/2 miles east of the main traffic light. (828-389-3444).

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GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. Those who feel they have an issue of great importance should call our editor and talk with him about the idea. Others have a strong opinion after reading one of the many columns that appear throughout the paper. If so, please write. Please remember that publication of submitted editorials is not guaranteed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BEE-MAILED OR MAILED TO: Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@brmemc.net. Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc. Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.*
Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

Modern psychotherapy holds that the negative aspects of human behavior are leftover traits acquired over many thousands of years of struggle to survive in a harsh environment. Simply put, the most aggressive and selfish humans were the ones who survived to reproduce and pass on these traits to their offspring. Some evolutionary psychologists believe that violence, racism, war and a host of other negative traits are inevitable, or at least natural, because they are coded into our genes. In this world view, in evolutionary terms any sympathy for another group could threaten the survival of one's own group. Many religious groups reason differently but come to the same conclusion - that war is inevitable because humans are inherently evil.

A brief survey of the history of modern warfare implies that the leadership of industrialized nations since the 19th century has shared the belief that all nations are inevitably locked into a life and death struggle for dwindling resources on a shrinking planet. Consider the terrible cost in human life and national treasure that the leadership of one country has been willing to pay to gain ascendancy over the leadership of another or to vanquish rivals at home. Looking further back in time, wars of conquest killed millions of people. Sometimes competition for resources was the issue, but very often war was about the consolidation or expansion of power for a small group of elites. When the emperor or the commander in chief decides to attack another nation, the citizens pay for it all - with their gold and with their blood. Even today, in so called "modern" times and in nominally democratic nations, a small fraction of the population controls the life and destiny of the rest. Politicians give lip service to democratic, egalitarian or nationalistic principles, but the people who actually make decisions have achieved power through a gauntlet of economic and political survival of the fittest: Economic, because we are not governed by poor people, and political, because we are not governed by speakers of truth.

In the face of this rather bleak view of the human condition, new evidence from archaeology indicates that we have not always been locked in a battle for the survival of the fittest. Cultures around the globe have stories of a "Golden Age," a Garden of Eden, or a time before "the fall." Contrary to the widely held view that prehistoric humans were savage brutes, science is beginning to reveal a different story. Until about 8000 B.C.E, humans lived as hunter-gatherers, and the evidence is beginning to show that life for these people was much easier than for the agricultural societies that followed. Anthropologist Marshall Sahlins has called this the "original affluent society." Many anthropologists believe that ancient humans spent 12 to 20 hours per week acquiring food - a far cry from the 40-60 hours we spend for the right to fall asleep in front of the big screen television.

There is also growing evidence that our pre-agricultural ancestors were healthier than their descendants. Meat comprised only 10-20% of their diet. There was no dairy, and a large variety of nuts, fruits, vegetables and roots were eaten

raw. The skeletons of hunter gatherers are robust and show few signs of regenerative disease or tooth decay. Male hunter gatherers in Turkey and Greece averaged about 5'10" in height. After the advent of agriculture, the average height was 5'3". An excavation in the Illinois Valley in the US indicates that after people settled in communities and began cultivating maize, there was an increase in infant mortality, stunted growth in adults and a large increase in diseases related to malnutrition. In fact, evidence is beginning to suggest that hunter-gatherers may have been among the healthiest humans who ever lived, a theory supported by the fact that many of the diseases to which we are now susceptible came from our domesticated animals. We got colds from horses, influenza from pigs and poultry, smallpox from cows and measles from dogs. Between the time we began drinking milk until the advent of pasteurization, humans were exposed to over 30 milk-borne diseases alone.

There is compelling evidence pointing to a wider view of human possibilities than is evinced by drive-by shootings, corporate takeovers, and holy wars. Archaeological evidence from around the world shows very little evidence of warfare among hunter-gatherer societies. Hunter-gatherers also appear to have been largely egalitarian. There was equality between the sexes, and judging from the evidence in graves, there was little or no class distinction.

Believing that certain things are inevitable can lead to acquired helplessness syndrome. To avoid feeling helpless, we are eager to believe the daily lies of politicians and corporations, many of whom are indeed locked in a battle for the survival of the fittest, or we accept without question negative and fearful pronouncements from the podium or the pulpit. Bread and circuses help us avoid the uncomfortable awareness of what is really going on, and we will do or believe just about anything to avoid being uncomfortable. Those of us who do wake up to the awareness that the emperor has no clothes find ourselves in sparse company, frustrated into inaction when we think that the deck is stacked against us, that too much power is concentrated in places beyond our reach. If we truly believe that the tyranny of evil men is as inevitable as two dogs fighting over a piece of meat, we can completely miss opportunities to change our lives and our small piece of the world for the better.

No one knows for sure what triggered our shift from egalitarian hunter-gatherers to hierarchical, patriarchal cannon fodder, or why our paradigm shifted from cooperation to competition. It may have been hardships imposed by widespread climate change that beat plowshares into spears. The crux of the biscuit is this: once again we are facing widespread climate change and social unrest along with dangers our ancestors could not conceive. We know the bloody history of competition, and archeology tells us that this is not the only choice we have. This time around, will we choose cooperation instead?

Elected Officials

- Governor Sonny Perdue, Georgia State Capitol Atlanta, GA 30334, 404-656-1776
- Sen. Johnny Isakson, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510, 202-224-3643
- Sen. Saxby Chambliss, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510, 202-224-3521
- U.S. Congressman Paul Broun, 10th District, Washington, DC 20515, 202-225-4101
- Rep. Stephen Allison, Georgia House of Representatives, 404-656-0177 or 0185
- Sen. Jim Butterworth, Georgia State Senate, 404-463-1367
- Towns County Commissioner Bill Kendall, 706-896-2276
- Clerk of Superior Court Cecil Dye, 706-896-2130
- Tax Commissioner Bruce Rogers, 706-896-2267
- Magistrate/Probate Judge David Rogers, 706-896-3467
- Sheriff Chris Clinton, 706-896-4444
- Coroner Ricky Mathis, 706-896-6254
- Enotah Circuit District Attorney Stan Gunter, 706-896-6489
- Board of Education: 706-896-2279, Michael Anderson, Donna Hedden, Bob Gibby, Larry Kimsey, Emily Phillips. Superintendent: Dr. Richard Behrens
- Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis, 706-896-2202
- Hiawassee City Council: Janet Allen, Jay Chastain, Joan Crothers, Howard Cunningham, Annie Johnson
- Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby, 706-379-3171
- Young Harris City Council: Terry Ingram, John Kelley, Donald Keys, Matthew Miller, Jennifer Mulkey, David Sellers

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