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survivor of the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941.

For 49 years, the soldier turned educator was quiet about the days before, during and after the attack. When the 50th anniversary rolled around, Henry Hedden took his family and went to Hawaii.

A lot had changed in 50 years and Henry Hedden had a hard time finding his way around Pearl Harbor. It was during his visits to Hawaii that he became involved in a joint effort to declare peace among Pearl Harbor survivors and their Japanese attackers.

In 1995, the group unanimously signed a peace accord with the Japanese fighter pilots who took part in the Dec. 7, 1941 attack on the U.S. Naval operations at Pearl Harbor. Henry Hedden, who had retired from teaching – at both Towns County High School and Young Harris College, was a major part



Mazelle and Henry Hedden of that effort.

“He never forgot Pearl Harbor,” Emmalyn Dyer said. “Once he made it back to Pearl, it became a part of him again, he embraced it. From that day forward, he wanted to make sure that everyone in the family remembered; it became his calling.”

Henry Hedden began making sure his moments at Pearl Harbor were recorded for posterity. Emmalyn Dyer has a cache of Pearl Harbor memories that her grandfa-

ther left behind.

“He has boxes and boxes of artifacts,” she said. “In his last years, he was stricken with Alzheimer’s Disease. There were days when he didn’t know who I was, but somehow, the disease didn’t take his memories of Pearl Harbor.”

“If he had been healthy enough to go, he would have been in Hawaii on Dec. 7, 2011,” she said. “He wanted everyone to remember Pearl Harbor. He became really passionate about wanting a memorial to those who died at Pearl Harbor.”

ABC News paid tribute to its Heroes on Dec. 15; Henry Hedden will always be remembered for “the day that lived in infamy” as one of ABC News’ 11 Heroes of 2011.

Henry Hedden was buried with a flag that flew over the U.S.S. Arizona, now a war memorial at Pearl Harbor.

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need to know if their road is too steep to meet county road standards.

They also need to be aware if the road too narrow and if there is a cul-de-sac so that firefighting equipment can turn around.

“They need to be asking if a fire truck can get to their home; if there is a fire hydrant within ISO required distance so that their homeowners insurance will not be drastically increased,” Commissioner Kendall said.

“They need to know if there is a 6-inch water line so a fire hydrant can be installed. Can an ambulance access their road, if not EMT’s will go to emergencies on foot; however, if an ambulance cannot get up the road, pre-

cious minutes can be lost in case of injury, heart attack or strokes.”

They also need to know if their property is located in a flood zone which could cost them thousands of additional dollars for flood insurance which is required in order to get a FDIC bank loan, Commissioner Kendall said.

In sticking to his conservative spending philosophy, Commissioner Kendall said he expects his office staff to lead by example of wearing many hats and requires county department heads and staff to do the same, instead of hiring additional staff when a new service is provided, with the taxpayers footing the bill.

“This is something that I’ve studied and decided that it is something that is definitely needed,” Commissioner Kendall said. “I am concerned and regretful that citizens many times have invested their hard earned money and find out too late that county services to their property are not available. However, I have a responsibility to not saddle the taxpayers with unreasonable and ongoing expensive financial burdens.”

“I urge anyone who is unsure or have questions concerning a pending business transaction to call the Commissioner’s Office of Consumer Protection at (706) 896-2277,” Commissioner Kendall said.



Residents who bought lots in a subdivision off Plott Town Road had no idea that the roadway was a private drive and not county maintained. The road is in disrepair and will cost property owners dearly to repair and maintain. Photo/Marty Roberts

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Colorado to be with his daughter.

Luckily, he had worked out his leave so he could spend Christmas with Hannah.

“We worked it out with my boss so we could surprise Hannah,” Major Wecer said. “It’s awesome to be here; it makes you want to cry, but I’m holding it together.”

Major Wecer had another surprise for Hannah: they’ll spend this week at Disney World.

“We told her we would go sometime in February,” he said. “It’ll be a good time for her.”

Major Wecer was a hit with Mrs. Stephens’ second grade class. He and Hannah handed out USA bracelets to the students and he answered questions about his stay in Afghanistan.

Major Wecer and



Hannah and her Daddy share a moment on Friday. Photo/James Reese

Hannah also signed autographs as Mommy Rebecca and Grandma Barbara took pictures of the glorious occasion.

“It’s nice to have him home for Christmas,” Rebecca said. “He’s excited, Hannah’s excited. It’s a big day.”

Grandma Barbara

Carruthers said the day was magic.

“It’s great to see him home with Hannah,” she said.

Hannah was all smiles as she answered questions about how excited she was to have Daddy home for Christmas.

She said it was the best Christmas ever.

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Officer James “Speedy” Harkins lived up to his nickname, arriving at the crash scene two minutes after it was reported.

Towns County Fire and Rescue and Towns County EMS were also on the scene quickly. Firefighters stayed on scene for several moments removing the crash debris.

Store Manager Kim Moxley was standing in front of an ice cream cooler near the door and was knocked to the floor when the vehicle came busting through the brick wall and glass door.

Moxley was taken by ambulance to a local medical facility. The extent of

her injuries were unavailable at press time.

Michaels refused medical transport. No other injuries were reported.

The store didn’t miss a beat during the Christmas shopping season. Ford Motor Company would be proud: damage to the Ford Escape was minimal at best.

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serve as Secretary of the Agriculture Committee and also will sit on the Education, Health and Human Services and Economic Development Committees.

The 153rd Legislative Session of the Georgia General Assembly convenes Jan. 9 at the State Capitol.

As Executive Director of Georgia’s Future Farmers of America, Sen. Wilkinson worked for 30 years preparing young leaders to grow jobs in Georgia. He holds a bachelor’s degree in agriculture and a master’s degree in education, both from the University of Georgia in Athens.

“I am overly pleased at my new committee assignments,” Sen. Wilkinson said. “I pledge to use my backgrounds in agriculture and education to further the needs of my constituents and the needs of all Georgians as we move to make this great state even better.”

Senate President Pro Tem Tommie Williams and Senate Majority Leader Chip Rogers said they are looking forward to working with Sen. Wilkinson.

“I am honored to wel-

come Sen. Wilkinson to the State Senate and I am encouraged by his enthusiasm to take on many important roles in these vital committees,” Williams said. “He has given countless years of service to the agricultural community in Georgia, and we are eager to utilize his experience in the Agriculture Committee, among others.”

“John Wilkinson has a long history working in education and agriculture,” Sen. Rogers said. “These two issues are among the most critical for our state. He will be a significant voice for common-sense legislation from Day One. It will be an honor to serve with him.”

Also welcoming Sen. Wilkinson are Sens. Jeff Mullis, Renee Unterman and Greg Goggans.

“As a new state senator, I believe Sen. Wilkinson will play a vital role in providing fresh insight and expertise to the committees he serves,” said Sen. Mullis. “I am excited to work with Sen. Wilkinson and anticipate the many contributions that he will make on behalf of the

citizens of this great state.”

“I sincerely look forward to working with the new committees this upcoming legislative session,” said Sen. Unterman. “I consider it a great privilege to serve alongside these senators and believe they will do an outstanding job helping the citizens of this great state.”

“I am excited to welcome Sen. Wilkinson to the State Senate,” said Sen. Goggans. “I am confident that he will prove to be an outstanding legislator and great addition to his committees.”

Wilkinson takes over for Sen. Jim Butterworth, who was appointed to head the Georgia National Guard by Gov. Nathan Deal

Sen. Wilkinson earned 59 percent of the votes in the Dec. 6th run-off election earlier this month over former State House District 10 State Rep. Rick Austin.

Sen. Wilkinson represents Georgia’s 50th Senate District which includes Towns, Rabun, Habersham, Stephens, Banks, Franklin, and Hart counties along with a portion of White County.

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denced by the fact that teams from six different states have made appearances during the first 17 years the event has been held.

The Fannin County (Georgia) Girls and Boys Teams and the Piedmont (Alabama) Boys will be replaced in this year’s tournament by the Dawson County (Georgia) Girls and Boys and the Southside-Gadsden (Alabama) Boys. This will be the first appearance in the tournament for Dawson County but the Southside-Gadsden Boys won the tournament in their only prior appearance two years ago.

Returning from last year will be Gordon Lee (Georgia), Union County (Georgia); Hayesville (North Carolina), Murphy (North Carolina), and Polk County (Tennessee) Boys and Girls Teams; and the Hokes Bluff (Alabama) Girls along with our host Towns County Teams. Polk County and Towns County are the only two schools to have appeared in all seventeen previous tournaments.

This is our annual review of winners, details from some of the earlier tournaments, and a look at some of the teams and individuals who have played in previous tournaments. For many readers, most of the quite lengthy article will be largely old news with a few updates

but it is provided for newcomers to the area and visitors to the tournament who have not previously had access to the information.

Past Champions – Previous Battle of the States Girls Tournament Champions have been Smoky Mountain (North Carolina) in 1994, Polk County in 1995, Elbert County (Georgia) in 1996, McEachern (Georgia) in 1997, Holy Innocents’ (Georgia) in 1998, Polk County again in 1999 and 2000, White County (Tennessee) in 2001, Robbinsville (North Carolina) in 2002, Fannin County in 2003, White County (Tennessee) again in 2004, South Cobb (Georgia) in 2005, White County (Georgia) in 2006, Fannin County again in 2007, Polk County for the fourth and fifth times in 2008 and 2009, and Gordon Lee in 2010.

Boys Champions have been Walhalla (South Carolina) in 1994 and 1995, Tavares (Florida) in 1996 and 1997, Loganville (Georgia) in 1998, Andrews (North Carolina) in 1999, Union County in 2000, North Forsyth (Georgia) in 2001, Cherokee County (Alabama) in 2002, North Forsyth again in 2003, White County (Tennessee) in 2004, Chapin (South Carolina) in 2005, Union County again in 2006,

Fannin County in 2007, Pendleton (South Carolina) in 2008, Southside-Gadsden in 2009, and Union County for the third time in 2010.

The Towns County teams have never won the tournament although the Lady Indians have finished second on seven occasions, including each of the first three years and the most recent three. They have also finished third on two occasions and fourth on three. The Indians have made it past the first round on nine occasions, finishing second on one occasion, third on another, and in fourth place seven times.

Fans interested in top flight basketball action involving current and future individual superstar athletes and championship games, seventh place games, or anywhere in between, should give serious consideration to attending the 2011 Battle of the States Tournament. Complete girls and boys brackets are included in this week’s paper but in their opening games the Towns County Lady Indians will face Polk County at 7 p.m. on Tuesday with the Indians to follow against Polk County at 8:30 p.m.

Starting times and opponents for future games in the Tournament for all teams will be based upon the results of the contests as they are played.



Towns County’s Ali Bleckley celebrates last season as the Lady Indians make it to the finals of the Battle of the States prep basketball Christmas Tournament in Hiawassee. Photo/James Reese

Shop With A Cop...continued from page 1A

organizations, and donations from previous celebratory community events, such as the recent Halloween on the Square, to help put Christmas within reach for these eager youths.

The youths are selected by Towns County Family Connection based on individual needs.

Hiawassee Police Chief Jimmy Wright said this is the happiest day of the year for him.

“Wow, it’s all about the kids,” he said. “When you get

older and you see some of these young people who don’t have anything and they’re families are struggling, it warms your heart to make Christmas happen for them.”

Ten community volunteers loaded up with Chief Wright and went on the Wal-Mart adventure with the 20 youths. It took two hours for everyone to pick out their gifts and Chief Wright stood by the cash register with his shopping card paying for each youngster’s Christmas.

Afterwards, the youths were treated to pizza at Papa’s Pizza in Hiawassee.

While Shop With A Cop gave these youths a Christmas they wouldn’t otherwise enjoy, the program accepts donations year-round, Chief Wright said.

“When we hear about kids that need some Christmas help, we’ll do what we can for them,” he said. “The main thing is the kids. We want them to have a good Christmas. That means everything in the world to us.”

**Merry Christmas from the staff of
The Towns County Herald**