

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Poor, Pitiful Me

Dear Editor,
 Poor, pitiful me, will keep you poor, pitiful you. Whatever abyss common sense fell into also swallowed up personal accountability. The things we do each and every day sets the stage for all of our tomorrows. The place one finds themselves in after ten, twenty or even fifty years from any given yesterday is a compilation of their activities rolled from day to day into a lifetime. Success usually finds a home with those who are willing to put forth the effort to make good things happen. Finding good role models and aspiring to be like them can help one find their way. Felix Kliesner is a German, who happens to be a professional French horn player. Felix has no arms and plays the French with his feet. Feel like having a pity party? Cancel it and get on with being responsible for your own well being. As St. Paul says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:9, NIV)

Gene Vickers

Gen. Robert E. Lee

Dear Editor,
 January the nineteenth, the birthday of General Robert E. Lee, a time to remember and honor one of the world's finest generals in his service to the Confederate States of America. Reflect upon his noble Christian character. His ability to lead an under-equipped-fed-clothed army against an invasion force of overwhelming numbers and resources bent on the destruction and subjugation of his homeland and new country. White, black (free, servant, slave), Indian, and Hispanic Southrons fought in and supported the Confederate armies. General Lee's gift to obtain from the common citizen soldier unequal heights of valor, courage, and perseverance in defense of one's home and family, has no equal. Let's not forget men of such character and devotion to a Cause of freedom in a war for their Constitutional rights in a time when the majority tried to rule and abuse the minority.

Lincoln's words "that governments of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth" falls upon deaf ears today when applied to the citizens of the Confederate States of America. He exterminated from the people of the South their form of government passed down from their forefathers during the War for America's Independence. Lincoln repudiated the dictum of the Declaration of Independence that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.

General Lee in a December 15, 1866 response to a letter received from the great historian Lord Acton: "While I have considered the preservation of the constitutional power of the General government to be the foundation of our peace and safety at home and abroad, I yet believe that the maintenance of the rights and authority reserved to the states and to the people, not only are essential to the adjustment and balance of the general system, but the safeguard to the continuance of a free government. I consider it as the chief source of stability to our political system, whereas the consolidation of the states into one vast republic, sure to be aggressive abroad and despotic at home, will be the certain precursor of that ruin which has overwhelmed all those that have preceded it."

General Lee, he said: "There is a true glory and a true honor; the glory of duty done to the honor of the integrity of principle." Our Duty should be to tell the truth. To do so, we must first learn the truth.

Unfortunately, we are misled by certain people who intentionally distort history and use this principle: If we repeat a lie often enough, the lie will become accepted; by the people as the truth!
 Read the first-hand accounts of the men, women, and children who lived during the War for Southern Independence. As General Lee said "The education of a man or woman is never completed until they die." I challenge you to read what the Confederate soldiers and sailors of all races, religions and educational backgrounds wrote about their just Cause.

Our Confederate history and heritage is not a white or a black thing! It is mostly a Southern thing - an American treasure. Their symbols, monuments and the people themselves are a part of all our rich, honorable Southern History and Heritage that has been and should be American Treasures for all.

David Lamon

New Year, New Beginning

Dear Editor,
 Now is the time for a kinder America. Never in our lifetimes have we Americans been so vocal in expressing our political beliefs. Back in 1942, America was at the low point of a world at war, with truly bad guys threatening our American way of life. By any standard, America was the good force and our enemies were truly the manifestation of evil. As low as our country's morale was, we never doubted America's greatness nor doubted that we would eventually win the war.

With perfect timing, "The Adventures of Superman" radio drama series first introduced the phrase, "Here's to Truth, Justice and the American Way." It became a rallying cry that molded our thoughts and opinions. While we each had differing beliefs on domestic political issues, the important thing was that we were Americans, we had a war to win, and we needed to pull together.

I would hope that with the dawn of 2022 we all begin a period of healing, emphasizing the positive and each our part in making our great America a kinder place. America in 2022 is still the greatest country on earth, and we have come a long way since our beginning. If this weren't the case, there wouldn't be so many people trying to get in. Here's to Truth, Justice and the American Way.

Happy New Year,

John Scott



DRESS WARM AND BE SURE TO WEAR GLOVES OR MITTENS... OR, BOTH! OR... ONE OF EACH ON EACH HAND. OR, PUT YOUR HANDS IN YOUR POCKETS. BETTER STILL, WEAR MITTENS AND USE YOUR POCKETS AND GLOVES! USE ALL THREE... MITTENS, GLOVES AND...

I HEARD HER LAST JOB WAS WRITING COVID GUIDELINES FOR THE CDC.

The Quilt

We all grieve differently, in our own way and in our own time. The process cannot be forced, or rushed, or altered by good intentions and unsolicited advice given us by well-wishers.

In time, the sharp edges of grief are worn smooth, and sadness remains, but where grief cuts, sadness guides us instead. Sadness softens hearts made rigid by the cold vulgarity of our times. A touch of sadness can be a wise companion.

Grief can strike at any time. When we are younger, we feel immortal in a culture that has not experienced the hardships endured by other parts of the world. Death for us is virtual and pixelated. It is a bad ending for a game that can always be replayed. Just be sure to save your game often.

We hide away the natural process of aging with technology and disguise, and when aging becomes inconvenient, we store our elders in institutions, out of sight and mind, to be cared for by someone else. We visit grandma for an hour at Thanksgiving and tell her how nice her room looks and how comfortable it must be, glancing at our watches.

One day time catches up to us, and we are shocked, as if we have been victimized by some kind of injustice. We take it personally. It is personal, but so it was also for everyone we chose to disregard until it was our turn.

I think there may be such a thing as generational grief. We ignored it when our parents spoke of the way things used to be, shook their heads in disapproval at our puzzling attitudes, and watched their friends and family start to disappear one by one. Now it's our turn. A generation is retiring, stepping back, and exiting the stage. It is being gradually and inexorably replaced by people as different from them as they were from their parents.

Strauss and Howe examine this process in detail in their seminal work, "The Fourth Turning." According to their theory, every hundred years or so, the generations line up in a way that the differences are irreconcilable, and the result is discord and unrest. The last time such an exchange occurred was just before WWI.

These thoughts were bouncing in my head one day like Pachinko balls. The anniversary of our mother's passing was coming up, and I was revisiting the sadness. It's bad to lose a parent. It can be even worse when you stop to consider that you're next in line.

Sometimes synchronicity and serendipity combine to confront our sadness and remind us that we are not alone in God's creation.

I was looking through dusty boxes stored in the old family home and beginning the process of cleaning out the basement. Tucked away in a corner was a tightly sealed tub labeled in my mother's handwriting. It said simply, "Quilt pieces."

When I opened the box, I found hundreds of carefully cut squares of material and memory. There was part of a jacket I used to wear to grammar school, a small stack of squares cut from the curtains that hung in the bedroom I shared with my brother, a piece of the lining of Dad's old hunting jacket, and part of an apron Mom had made for herself and worn on countless occasions.

The memories unfolded with each piece of cloth, and I handled them gingerly, almost reluctantly, like something precious and ephemeral. For a moment I saw through my mother's eyes, the memories, the sadness and the hope of watching her children grow up and leave, growing out of their old clothes, venturing ever farther out the door until one day to live under her own roof never again.

Through her eyes I watched us coming home from college on the weekends with a load of dirty laundry, and there were the squares of the clothes we left behind, abandoned to ever changing fashion. I pictured her in the empty nest looking forward to the holiday visits and the phone calls. There was a piece of that ugly Christmas sweater we gave her one year. I saw her give up her children one square at a time, and each time a little farther down the road.

The making of a patchwork quilt is a tradition which has all but disappeared from American life. Like so much that is lost in the turning of generations, it is a cherished memory for some and a quaint anachronism for others. A quilt is a bridge between the past and the future. My mother's box of cloth was a box of hope. She pictured a quilt that preserved for someone else the memories that were precious to her.

Like so many hopes we have in life, she never got around to making that quilt. I feel a sense of loss because of that, not so much for the sake of a quilt, but for all the other hopes and dreams she had that were either sacrificed for the sake of her family or taken from her by life itself. It is another of the "injustices" we disregard until it happens to us.

Though our mother never made the quilt of her vision, her handiwork still endures. Her love and sacrifice, her integrity and wit are still remembered by all who knew her. Her humor would sneak up and catch you by surprise, and it still makes us smile so many years later. An act of kindness is like the light of a star which travels on forever. Her wisdom and kindness are forever woven into the tapestries of the lives she touched. Because of her, I learned how to overcome sadness with gratitude, and I'm thankful for every square in the patchwork quilt of my own life.

Perhaps one day I will also learn to sew, but until then, I can still weave together the stories she left me, and pass them on.

The best possible companion for sadness is gratitude.

Outside The Box

By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

Blueberry Pruning

Blueberries grow pretty well in Georgia. Rabbiteye blueberries are native to the southeast, so they're well adapted to our climate. Let's talk specifically about pruning blueberries.

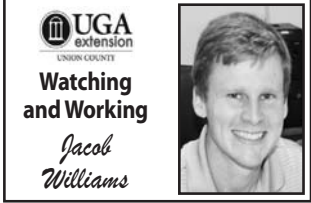
Blueberries don't need to be pruned every year to be fruitful. However, if you start doing some cane renewal pruning every year on a mature plant the bushes will be more fruitful and have more longevity. The ideal time to prune blueberries is late winter because the plants are dormant. February is late winter for us in the mountains. Plants in their dormant state are going to be less prone to infection or stress from the pruning.

Blueberry is a multi-stemmed bush. Each one of the stems that comes out of the ground is called a cane. Cane renewal pruning is removing old canes from the plant so that there is space for new canes to grow. Ideally, under cane renewal pruning you'll remove old canes each year so that in five years all the canes on the plant will be completely different. Each year go through the plant and cut out the oldest canes that you find. Also, remove any diseased or dead canes. Ideally, you don't want to remove more than 25% of the canes in a single year. If you have a blueberry bush that hasn't been pruned for a couple of years it may take a couple years to get it back into shape. If you have a blueberry bush that hasn't been pruned for many, many years cane renewal pruning probably isn't going to get the plants back into shape. In that situation, I'd recommend something that may seem very drastic, but is better for the plants in the end. Mow the bushes down to the ground. Mature plants will be able to take this hit, and put up new suckers, that turn into canes. This is going to give you fresh growth, and a new healthier plant. You'll go without blueberries for a couple of years. Therefore, if you have several plants that need to be mowed, you could do a couple a year, until they are all back under control.

New plants should be pruned to have the healthiest plants. Prune back 2/3 of the top growth on bare root plants, and 1/2 of the top growth on potted plants. If the new plant has many canes prune out all but 1-3 of the best looking ones. You also don't want a first year plant to produce fruit, so pick off any flower buds. If you prune plants like this the first year, the second year won't need much pruning. In the second year pick off flower buds again, and remove any diseased canes. The third year, remove diseased canes, but you can leave the flower buds on vigorous shoots. The fourth year, the plant should be able to handle full crop, but if you have some weak looking canes, thin out the buds to prevent over fruiting, which can cause permanent bending of canes from the weight.

Each year after harvest is completed cut plants back so that they don't become too tall. Tall plants are more difficult to harvest for people; bears and birds probably won't have that same problem.

If you have questions about pruning blueberries, contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.



Watching and Working
 Jacob Williams

The Importance of Literacy

Literacy is so important. Here are some statistics: 82% of inmates are high school dropouts; 1/3 of juvenile offenders read below the 4th grade level; 43% of adults who don't read well live in poverty, as opposed to 4% of adults with strong literacy skills.

Over a lifetime, high school dropouts earn an average of 42% less than those who completed high school.

As a former teacher, I can tell you that when I was working with elementary students, I could easily tell who was read to, and who was not.

Those children whose caregivers routinely read to them not only had academic advantages, but they had better social skills, were generally more curious and eager to solve problems, and, in general, were more successful.

All that being said, we have wonderful libraries in both Union and Towns Counties! When our four children were little, trips to the library were weekly occurrences. There is nothing they liked better than to snuggle up on the sofa and have someone read to them.

Here at the Habitat ReStore, we want to help kids have even more access to books. So, we installed a "Little Free Library"!

The Blairsville Kiwanis funded the project, and one of our ReStore Volunteers (who won't let me tell you who he is) built our Library. Parents can just open the door and grab some books that their kids can keep! It's just outside the ReStore front door, with 24/7 access to the public.

The plan is for us to keep our Library full of exciting books at all times. Each Little Free Library, all over the world, has a number, and there is a map online so you can find them, no matter where you are!

The Restore are some great book donations to fill up the shelves of our Little Free Library. Once in a while, we will sneak in a few adult books and some DVDs, too!

We do need your help, though. First and foremost, please spread the word about our Library. The more it's used, the happier we will be!

If you have some books around your house that the kids or the grandkids have outgrown, we would love it if you brought them to us.

You can just put them in our library, or (if there's no room) drop them off inside the Store.

Thank you so much for your help!

And, to quote Dr. Seuss, always remember... "You're never too old, too wacky, or wild, to pick up a book and read to a child!"



Habitat Happenings
 Cathy Wheeler

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