

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Little Known Hero

Thanks to a request from fellow Coast Guardsman, Ron Willis.

As Americans it is virtually impossible to know all those who have died for the precious freedoms and liberties we are blessed with. Therefore it is in our best interests to learn and honor their history as our real American heroes and to honor and thank all those that have served our nation with honor and doing whatever they were given to do with the best of their abilities. In mankind's history, freedom has never been free and never will be. Sunday, 27 Sept 1942, almost 79 years ago, nine months after Pearl Harbor, our nation was at war. This is only a small part of our USCG history. A twenty two year old US Coast Guard First Class Signalman, Douglas Monro gave his life for others under intense fire in the bloody Guadalcanal Conflict. Monro was OIC of a detachment of landing craft and had already landed US Marines ashore in order to push back the Japanese assault. As happens far too often in the chaos and fog of war, conditions were far worse than anticipated and our Marines were in danger of being totally annihilated. Once the actual reality was known there were ONLY two options.

1- Abandon our five hundred Marines to certain death.
OR 2- An almost suicidal attempt at rescue the same way they came ashore, by boats. Doug Monro volunteered to lead this extremely hazardous mission. Doug was successful in bringing all our boats ashore under heavy fire, and proceeded to evacuate our Marines from the beach. Towards bringing out our last few Marines, the situation turned even worse, especially for the remaining Marines. Doug, not relenting to danger, placed his boats as cover for the last remaining Marines to be bought to safety and escape the hellhole known as Guadalcanal. Amongst the last Marines was none other than Lt. Colonel Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller then in command of 1st Battalion, 7th Marines.

As this was taking place Doug Monro received a mortal wound and as he lay dying, his last words were, "Did they get off?" Please reread that!

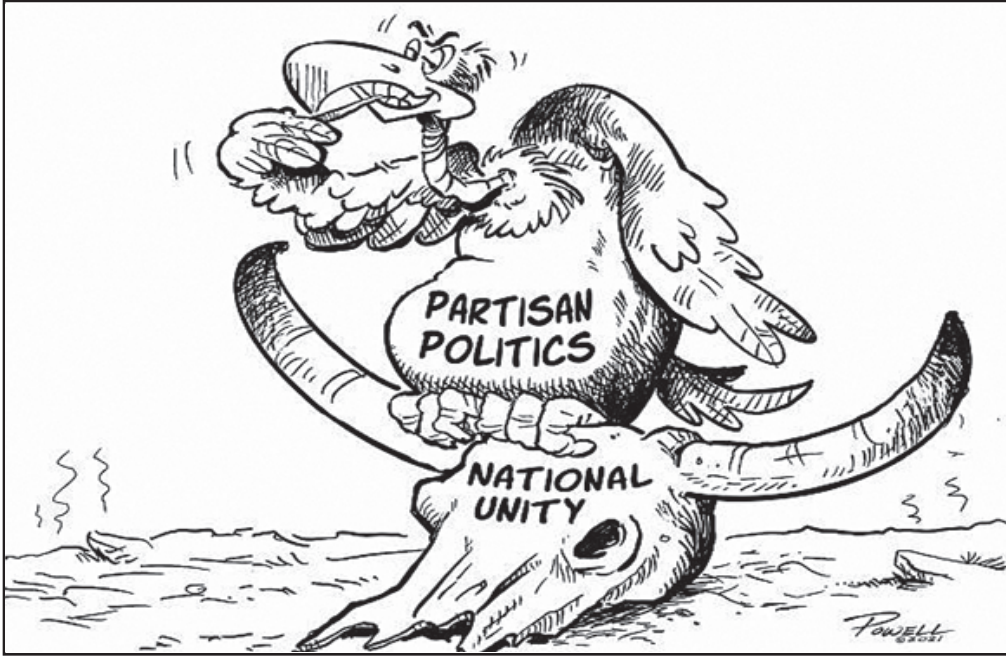
He, like so very many of America's real heroes gave his life for others. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, our only US Coast Guardsman to do so. Doug Monro's devotion to God, Duty and Country is not that much different from anyone else, man or woman who has served Honorably in any of our military services. The only difference is that he was there when the chips were down and like most who have served he did what he had to do. As most of us would have done. You just do the best you can with what you have!

To further your knowledge and appreciation of America please read, "Guardian of Guadalcanal" written by Gary Williams, and released on September 27, 2014.

Never forget!

-Semper Paratus

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



RC&Ds and Americorps

Cherokee-Chattoohoochee Resource Conservation & Development Council (CCRCD) is the Georgia Firewise Liaison, administering the Firewise USA program in Georgia and the administrator of Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition. CCRCD was one of the original 8 organizations invited to join the Fire Adapted Communities Network in 2013 where they promote wildfire education, and community risk reduction with communities in the Wildland Urban Interface where wildfire risk is ever-present danger. This is where people are living their dream of living in the forest, among woodland critters, and do not recognize the wildfire dangers that nature holds that can quickly destroy their plans, hopes, and dreams. In 2015 CCRCD was asked by the US Forest Service to take the successful wildfire risk reduction work developed in Towns county and spread it up the Appalachian Mountains through western North Carolina into Virginia using the Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition. AmeriCorps has the people power and manual labor necessary to get the job done to satisfy the goals of any project. AmeriCorps volunteers work full-time for about a year, and in return, they receive housing, a living allowance, college tuition assistance and the satisfaction of knowing they have improved lives in the communities where they work. AmeriCorps provides resources and people power for organizations dedicated to the improvement of communities and is the only federal agency that is for community service and volunteerism.

One of our own, Jessica Hoc, an AmeriCorps Veteran is Executive Director of Mountain Valleys RC&D and an Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition member knows AmeriCorps very well having been an AmeriCorps volunteer for several years. Here is her story: "In 1998 I had the opportunity to work on a trail crew in the Emigrant Wilderness of Stanislaus National Forest, in the Sierra Nevada backcountry. The AmeriCorps program had recently partnered with the California Conservation Corps Backcountry Trails Program, which required spending an entire five months at remote backcountry camps with your 15-20-person crew. No phones, no showers, and your only possessions were what you had carried in on your back. The food, tools, and kitchen tent were brought in on horseback. 1998 was one of the most powerful El Nino events in recorded history, and it rained every day for the first ten weeks that we were out there.

I knew that learning to live and work together with my crew was going to be a challenge, but this had literally become wilderness survival. My socks, work gloves, and tent floor were always wet, but morning Physical Training still started at 7am, followed by a long day of rolling rocks in the rain and digging in the mud. Around July 1st the rain stopped, three crew members had quit, and the rest of us had to learn to live and work as a collective unit. By October, this way of life felt completely natural, and I went on to work trails for another five summers in Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest and Glacier National Park. In 2009 I faced a new adversity. I had just completed a master's degree in Landscape Architecture from NC State University, and the economic recession that had started in 2007 was now a total crisis. I had recently married and moved to a small-town north of Asheville to build a life with my new husband after graduation. My job search began, and I came across an AmeriCorps position at Mountain Valleys Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D). The non-profit was in the same town where I had moved, it offered the experience to work with communities and natural resources. In addition to environmental stewardship, working with communities had become the focus of my work at NC State, and this is the fundamental nature of what RC&Ds do. This shared vision led to joining the Appalachian RC&D FAC Coalition in 2016. Resilience in the face of adversity is also an underlying theme in the Appalachian RC&D Coalition work. Six RC&Ds work together as a regional collective, creating a wildfire resilience initiative that spans the southeastern part of the Appalachian Mountains. Each RC&D covers several counties, and we all face the same challenges of helping communities in steep remote mountains become more prepared for wildfire emergencies. The Appalachian RC&D Coalition and Firewise programs also cultivate collective action at a community level. This approach involves networks of neighbors, involvement with local wildfire agencies, wildfire prevention, increased fuel mitigation, and emergency access improvements.

Ultimately, we hope this leads to a large-scale social shift in increased risk awareness, making residents in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) better prepared for the future. AmeriCorps helped build resilience in me and taught me that working together is our best chance for building resilience when we face community, regional, and global challenges."

For more information contact CCRCD at www.info.ccrcc@gmail.com.

RC&D

Frank Riley
Executive Director



Crepe Myrtle Pruning

Crepe myrtles are a very common tree that many people like to plant in their home landscape or you may see them lining roads in towns. There are couple of reasons why crepe myrtles make great landscape trees. The first is that they are very disease and insect resistant, as there are not too many pests that will bother them. Powdery mildew is the most serious disease issue that crepe myrtles will usually have, and it rarely kills the tree.

Ambrosia beetles will attack crepe myrtles, but generally they only attack trees that are already dead, dying, or stressed. Crepe myrtles also come with a variety of flower colors, making them very attractive. Finally, crepe myrtles come in a variety of sizes. Varieties range from dwarf to semi-dwarf to full size, meaning mature tree heights range from 3 to 30 feet tall.

Pruning is important for crepe myrtles, because the blooms only form on new growth. Even more important is selecting the right sized variety for your location. If you select

a variety that will grow to a good height for the spot where you're putting it, the pruning will not be difficult, because you won't be as concerned with managing the plant's size.

Now is a good time of year to prune your crepe myrtles. Excessive pruning can lead to problems with disease and insects, because the tree is stressed. Bad pruning practices are called CREPE MURDER. Crepe murder generally involves topping the tree, or cutting back all the branches to 3 to 4 feet above the ground. This will result in an oddly shaped tree that produces a lot of suckers.

To properly prune a crepe myrtle start at the base of the tree and work your way up. You're looking for suckers, if you find them prune those off. Once you get to where the branches are, remove crossing branches. Crossing branches will rub against each other when the wind blows and create sites where disease and insects can get in. As the tree grows you can remove branches from the lower third of the tree. Removing those branches will expose the trunk character. Some people like to prune off the old seedheads. I think they're an attractive feature. With new growth in the spring the old seedheads will fall off.

On some varieties of crepe myrtles you can prune in the summer after the blooms are spent to create another flush of flowers. A second bloom is difficult to force on varieties that bloom after mid-July.

A common misconception is that crepe myrtles have to be pruned to produce flowers. This is not true. Pruning allows you to shape the tree. If you have a spot where the tree can grow and does not need shaping for space concerns, pruning is not necessary.

I encourage everyone to do some research on finding the variety that will fit in the space that they have, because that will solve a lot of pruning issues before they arise.

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

UGA extension
Watching and Working

Jacob Williams



Letters to The Editor

A Christmas Rescue

Dear Editor,

I'm so grateful to those who serve on the front lines of emergency services, those who provide medical, law enforcement and fire protection for the rest of us. There are times you might sacrifice service or even a necessity in a small town. Christmas was NOT one of those times and I don't know if I've ever been more thankful for anything in my life.

My wife, Cynthia, and I moved to Ramey Mountain in September. We love it here and this is our forever home.

It rained much of the day Christmas Eve, turning to snow late in the afternoon. We knew there was ice under the snow because before dark, cars were stranded coming up on Ramey Mountain Road, effectively blocking both sides of the road leading to our home. We awoke to our first white Christmas together, and it was spectacular. Not a single car had come up or down the mountain past the cars stuck on the road while we slept, so we ate a leisurely breakfast, opened gifts and enjoyed coffee by the fire. We were only disappointed the icy road conditions meant we couldn't join family for Christmas dinner.

The whole beautiful winter-wonderland day stretched before us with no obligations! About 10:15 AM I decided I needed to go outside to capture a few photos of the snow-covered scenery. My wife wouldn't let me go alone, convinced I might get hurt. We bundled up, armed with walking sticks, she with a bag of goodies for one of our neighbors, as well, and me with my camera. Not far from the house, near the edge of our driveway, I paused to take a photograph. In those few seconds, my wife's feet slipped out from under her on the ice and she came down hard, striking the back of her head against the ice on the concrete drive. I was by her side in a heartbeat, horrified to see bright red blood against the snow. Her eyes were closed, but thankfully, she was conscious. I slid her down the slope to level ground where I was able to help her stand and get into the house.

Even though we have a four-wheel drive vehicle, it would not get us past the abandoned cars, and there was no sense in calling 911 if an ambulance couldn't make it up the mountain. I called two close relatives, both RNs, for advice. They instructed us what to do for the moment, but both insisted she should get to a hospital. Aware we were losing valuable time, I finally called 911 because I was out of options and didn't know what else to do. To my great surprise, the calm lady who answered and patiently listened to our challenges assured me, "We will be there shortly!"

I'm not sure I believed her, but minutes later, two men in a green and yellow John Deere emergency ATV came down our drive. They went right to work on my wife and it was decided she should be transported. Co-vid restrictions dictated she had to go alone, but I felt confident she was in good hands with those guys. They carefully loaded her into the ATV, took her slowly down the mountain to a waiting ambulance, then transported her to the hospital where she was able to have the wound closed and get that all-important CAT scan to make sure the damage was external.

To those who gave up their Christmas with loved ones to be there for us in our emergency, my heartfelt gratitude. Sincere thanks to the sweet lady who answered my 911 call, the doctor, technicians, and staff who themselves were stuck at the hospital because of the weather. Most of all, special thanks to EMTs Jonathan Wilson and Brett Denton for their courage, tenacity, and abilities. You saved our Christmas!

Respectfully submitted,

Ted "Bear" Ensminger

The Towns County Herald is an independent and nonpartisan publication. As such, third-party views contained herein are not necessarily the opinions or positions of this newspaper, e.g. advertising, press releases, editorial content, perspectives expressed in articles covering local events, etc.

Better Luck Next Time

This column usually appears online a few days before it gets published in the newspaper. Online readers have the advantage of participating in a discussion about an event before it happens (which is somewhat of a national obsession).

However, pixels tend to go in one eye and out the other and what we read online is soon forgotten. I believe this is how information technology has contributed to the impairment of our national short and long term memories.

Readers of the printed word are more given to hindsight, but they retain what they read longer. The printed word is absorbed more slowly. It takes more effort. We can't pump up the font to make it more readable, but we're not distracted by the videos that won't stop playing or the headline below about the celebrity who "stuns in her bikini." Plus, when the pixel page is long forgotten, the newspaper is still around to wrap something fragile or line the bottom of a bird cage.

The printed version of this page will be available for most people about the time a new president and vice president are being inaugurated. On that day, I'll be chopping wood and carrying water, the same as the day before. I won't be among the two most opinionated factions, the one celebrating and the other wearing sackcloth and ashes.

It's not that I don't wish the new government well. I will pray for them as I hope all Americans do. It's just that I don't expect much to change in the same way that a fresh coat of paint doesn't repair termite damage.

I do expect the new regime to be heavy on symbolic actions and platitudes. They've got four years to justify their "win at all costs" victory and to come to terms with their new bosses. If you think I'm referring to the voters who supported them, then you haven't been paying attention. Neither do I speak of the tremendous effort of grass roots supporters who knocked on doors and motivated people to vote. I refer, instead, to the mind games that motivated them.

"Meet the new boss. Same as the old boss." Almost. The new boss is the handful of tech companies and billionaires who control the flow of information, who went out of their way to obscure any facts that would threaten their candidates and silence dissent. Today they support democrats. Tomorrow, who knows?

Bosses may change, but as the years go by and I read and read again about the history of economics and war, I begin to suspect that the ownership of the company never changes. The new boss will celebrate diversity and pronouns, legislate symbols, create stacks of executive orders - and conjure trillions of dollars of new pixel money. Bread and milk will be more expensive, but stocks in whiskey and gunpowder will soar.

*"I'll tip my hat to the new constitution
Take a bow for the new revolution
Smile and grin at the change all around
Pick up my guitar and play
Just like yesterday
Then I'll get on my knees and pray
We don't get fooled again"
Too late. Better luck next time.*

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