

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## 51 Years Ago Airman earns MOH

We often overlook the Vietnam era and try to forget about that tumultuous era. However our men and women who served America during that time should never be forgotten or overlooked. They too are very special Americans and deserve our love, honor, and respect, perhaps even more so as much anguish over misguided political errors were directed upon those in uniform. Entirely wrong! In that effort here's another tidbit of history we've likely never heard of:

**The Veterans' Corner**  
**Scott Drummond**  
 USCG Veteran



On a night mission of February 24, 1969, Sgt. John Lee Levitow, then Airman First Class and assigned as loadmaster aboard an AC-47 gunship out of Long Binh saved his aircraft and crew while seriously wounded by enemy fire. They were providing support and illumination for the Long Binh Army post which was under siege by Communist forces.

In that effort "Spooky 71", as they were known used 7.62 miniguns and Mark 24 magnesium flares, each three feet long and 27 pounds. Those flares were manually triggered and tossed out the cargo door over the battleground below; ten seconds later a parachute would open and an illumination of 2,000,000 candlepower generated by 4000 degrees F. of burning magnesium would assist our ground troops with visually aiding them to eliminate those who were attacking them.

Airman Ellis Owen was on standby with his finger in the safety pin ring of the next flare when an enemy mortar round ripped through the right wing and wounded the entire crew, as the aircraft began to perilously dive out of control. That deadly flare was rolling around the cargo bay as they were pitching side to side. Levitow, dazed and bleeding from his own wounds knew what that flare would do if within seconds it blew open inside the plane. He dove on top to stop it from rolling around, not knowing how many seconds were left. Fortunately he was able to toss it out of the cargo door, just before it ignited, then resorted to aiding his wounded crewmates. And those great USAF pilots were able to regain control of their aircraft and land at their home base in Long Binh. Levitow, after recovering in Japan, and Veteran of 181 combat sorties, went on to fly 20 more missions to complete his Air Force duty as loadmaster aboard the C-141 aircraft at Norton AFB, California. He was awarded the MOH on May 14, 1970 by President Richard Nixon after almost giving his life for others.

In my humble opinion, Sgt. John Lee Levitow has a lot in common with the majority of ALL Honorably Discharged Veterans, who if confronted with the same harrowing circumstances would have done the same thing.

*Semper Paratus*

## Here We Are

"Today the flu season is an inconvenience for most of us. It will be a death sentence for some. Some day the stakes may be higher when a pandemic stalks the public spaces."

We wrote that in December of last year, and we've had similar discussions here several times over the years. It was an easy prediction, like saying the stock market will crash. Eventually you're going to be right. But here we are, not only stalked by a virus we don't fully understand, but by fear and human nature that we understand all too well. This isn't the first pandemic we've faced. HIV is an ongoing problem. The Hong Kong Flu killed one million people in 1968. The Asian Flu killed 2 million in 1956 through 1958. The Spanish Flu killed between 20 and 50 million in 1918. History offers us a perspective that can have a sobering influence. However, we are breaking new ground with Covid 19. It isn't flu. It's a brand new bug and we don't have centuries of herd immunity built into our immune systems to help us fight it. We don't fully understand how the virus spreads. We know it can stay airborne for up to 3 hours, like the flu. We know it can survive on stainless steel and plastic for days. There is no vaccine or cure, and we can only guess how this situation will unfold.

We're not here to go over the same ground that has been well traveled over the last few weeks. There has been little else in the news or on social media. What we're here to talk about is the lessons we can take away from all this, and if the crisis ended tomorrow, there would already be important ones.

We'll start with the crisis of trust that has been so evident during the last several weeks. While schools, nursing homes and public venues close all around us, as people are infected and quarantined and the death toll mounts, there are still those who scoff and say that this is some kind of hoax or conspiracy. One can almost... almost understand the mistrust. It's the boy who cried wolf. It's a government, a cadre of corporate media, a capital full of corrupt and immature politicians who have lied so often and for so long that when they do tell us the truth, we still doubt it. Worse still, we're losing the ability to discern truth, to sift the facts and weigh differing opinions and with logic and reasoning, discover the truth for ourselves.

I don't know the solution, but education must be part of it, and I don't mean education in terms of testing or grades, but a philosophy of education that teaches reasoning and discernment and imparts tools for a lifetime of continued learning.

The problem is that education is paralyzed by politics. Science is paralyzed by politics. Everything from climate to health is measured, not by facts, but by political affiliation. Politics has infected everything it touches, and the disease vectors are corporate and social media.

The second takeaway in this crisis so far is the crisis in citizenship. Have you tried to buy toilet paper lately? Bottled water? Canned tomatoes? These and other items have disappeared from shelves across the country. "I got mine," and the next person is on their own. Unfortunately the next person can't afford to hoard. The next person is on a fixed income or lives paycheck to paycheck, and when that check comes in on Friday, there's no bread on the shelves because you and your neighbor bought a dozen loaves "just in case."

The next few weeks are going to be difficult for some of us. Not for everyone. Some of us have been "social distancing" for a long time. We prefer small groups of family and friends and long walks outdoors, on the mountain or by the lake. We enjoy the stillness of the morning and the last song of the birds as the sun goes behind the mountain. That's why we moved here in the first place.

But we have become the exceptions. Americans are not programmed to be comfortable in their own head space. We are conditioned for perpetual stimulus and distraction and consumption. We have to keep moving. We have to be entertained. We have to shop. With the stunning natural beauty of this land all around us, how many will make an unneeded trip to the grocery store and have a meal out because "there's nothing else to do?" This is the person who goes to the movies when they're sneezing with a cold because being home is "driving me crazy."

The next few weeks holds an opportunity for that person, because selfish behavior now can risk someone's life like few times in our history. This is an opportunity to quiet that incessantly programmed internal dialogue, the hallmark of our addiction to distraction and consumption. This is an opportunity to develop some spiritual muscle. We are well trained in how to do, but we have forgotten how to be. Is it not telling of our current state that when faced with a crisis, instead of turning to our faith, to God, to our neighbors and our community, we put our faith in toilet paper and bottled water?

This crisis will pass. There is already evidence that hot weather and humidity can slow or halt the spread of the virus. If that's true, we here in the South have got it licked. But in the meantime, let's take advantage of this opportunity to disconnect from the normal distractions, to spend some quality time with our families, and though we can't visit them right now, don't forget to call that family member confined to the nursing home. Social distancing is hardest on them.

There is a pathway through this time of trouble. To scoff and to panic are both equally wrong. The way through is to exercise due caution and to stay informed without becoming infected by the marketing of panic that always accompanies breaking news. Stay safe out there, and take advantage of this opportunity for self reflection.

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**The Middle Path**  
 By: Don Perry  
[onthemiddlepath.com](http://onthemiddlepath.com)

## Buttercup (Bittercup) Control

Buttercup is a longstanding problem for many pastures. Fields of yellow can be beautiful to look at when driving down the highway, but large populations of buttercup creates problems for livestock that are trying to forage. Let's talk about these weeds and what can be done to control them in pastures and hay fields.

**UGA extension**  
**Watching and Working**  
*Jacob Williams*

There are several different names for buttercup. I've heard folks call it bittercup. It has a bitter taste that makes livestock not want to eat it. I've also heard it called bitter sneezeweed. That is a common name for a different plant that also has yellow flowers. The scientific name for buttercup is Ranunculus. There are actually different species of Ranunculus. Some of them are ornamental flowers that we like to see and grow. The plant that I am referring to has small yellow flowers that range in size from dime to quarter sized. The flowers have a glossy look to them. For most species of buttercup, you'll see three leaves coming out of one spot. Each of those leaves will have three lobes on it. Generally, if you see those groups of three, that's a good indicator that it's buttercup. Some other plants like clover also have groups of three, but clover's leaves don't have lobes in groups of three on them.

Hopefully, now we're all on the same page and talking about the same plant. So let's talk about how to control it. There are three ways to control it. Growing a good stand of grass that outcompetes the weeds, mowing buttercup before it flowers, or spraying it with herbicide before it flowers.

Growing a healthy stand of grass that is able to outcompete weeds requires regular fertilizer applications, checking soil pH and adding lime as necessary, and managing the number of cattle grazing a field. Fields that are overgrazed will be more prone to weeds growing. Heavily grazed grass won't be able to grow back as quickly because its energy storage down in the roots is depleted. If grass is growing healthily, it will be able to outcompete many weeds, buttercup included.

Mowing is another option for buttercup control. Buttercup is a short-lived perennial. If you mow before it flowers, you eliminate the seed production for that plant. This is a strategy that takes several years to become fully effective.

In some cases, forage stand management and mowing are not going to be enough and an herbicide must be used to effectively control buttercup. 2,4-D or an herbicide containing 2,4-D is the best option. Because buttercup is a perennial, a pre-emergent like Prowl, won't be effective. For the 2,4-D to be effective the timing of the application is critical. If you see buttercup flowers, it's too late. The 2,4-D application must be done when the buttercup plant is still small. Ideally, you want daytime temperatures to be 50 for two or three consecutive days. 2,4-D does have haying and grazing restrictions. Generally, you must wait 30 days before haying after spraying, and wait 14 days before grazing lactating dairy animals. As always, follow the label.

If you have questions about buttercup, identification or control contact you County Extension Office or email me at [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu).

I will be hosting a Spring Garden Kickoff class. April 1 will be in the Union County Civic Center, and April 2 will be the same program in the Towns County Civic Center. Each time the program will run from 2 pm - 3pm. If are interested in attending please call the Union County Extension Office at 706-439-6030 or email me at [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu).

**"Today, class, we are discussing the handshake, an ancient custom that disappeared in the year 2020."**

## Towns County Community Calendar

Bridge Players	<b>Every Monday:</b> All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	<b>Every Tuesday:</b> Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Sharp UMC (Men)	7 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	<b>Every Wednesday:</b> Hiwassee UMC	Noon
Bridge Players	<b>Every Thursday:</b> All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Movers & Shakers	<b>Every Friday:</b> Sundance Grill	8 am
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	<b>Every Sunday:</b> Red Cross Building	7 pm
Hospital Auxiliary	<b>Third Monday of each month:</b> Cafeteria	1:30 pm
Planning Comm.	Civic Center	6 pm
MOAA	Michael email <a href="mailto:mva62sgn@brmemc.net">mva62sgn@brmemc.net</a>	
YH Plan Comm.	<b>Third Tuesday of each month:</b> YH City Hall	5 pm
Co. Comm. Mtg	Courthouse	5:30 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.	Blairsville store	5:30 pm
Water Board	Water Office	6 pm
Quilting Bee	<b>Third Wednesday of each month:</b> McConnell Church	10 am
Book Bunch & Lunch	Daniels Steakhouse	11:30 am
Friendship Comm.	<b>Third Thursday of each month:</b> Clubhouse	6 pm
Republican Party	Civic Center	5:30 pm
Goldwing Riders	<b>Third Saturday of each month:</b> Daniel's Restaurant	11 am

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## Letters to The Editor

### No Dog In This Fight

**Dear Editor,**  
 I read with interest the disparate perceptions printed in the Towns County Herald's March 11 edition by the lacrosse parents on behalf of their sons and the YHC administrators, respectively. I preface my remarks by saying (a) that I "have no dog in this fight" and (b) I certainly do not know all of the facts and circumstances; but I do have a lot of experience, on both sides, as to similar issues involving players, parents and administrators. Bottom line: if the players and parents truly believe that there have been injustices, they should procedurally undertake, as Dr. Van Horn suggests, filing a formal NCAA Title IX complaint (to include any appeals they deem appropriate), in order that the truth may be ascertained.

**Claude Spears**

### The High Cost of Denial

**Dear Editor,**  
 If we have learned nothing else from the coronavirus, I hope we have learned that if you deny science and reality, you pay a very high price in human suffering, death, and financial losses. The longer you deny, the greater the price. The price we are paying now for this over the coronavirus is minuscule compared to the price we will pay from the continued denial of the science and reality of climate change. Our scientists, economists, financial institutions, and our military have been warning us of the eminent and possibly catastrophic human and financial consequences of the failure to act on climate change.

There will be a price to pay for combating climate change, but it will be insignificant compared to the price we will pay if we do not act quickly and decisively. It is time to listen to science or suffer the consequences. Denial of the truth does not change the truth. We have the means to do this, and now all we lack is the political will. It is time to act!

**Vernon Dixon, MD**

### 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 BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiwassee, GA 30546. Our email address: [tcherald@windstream.net](mailto:tcherald@windstream.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.*

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