

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

We Will Prevail Against the Pandemic

Since the inception of these great United States, the people of this nation have excelled at setting aside their differences to band together with shared purpose to take on any enemy that would do us harm. Not so long ago, during World War II, the enemy at the gates was genocidal fascism hell-bent on razing the world to create a new one in its own twisted image. More recently, on Sept. 11, 2001, our people became the target of a murderous ideology obsessed with upending freedom by way of indiscriminate bloodshed.

Today, the enemy is a virus that, while wholly lacking in ideology, is no less insidious an adversary spoiling for a fight, and We the People will do what we have always done: we will rally to this common cause, and with our health care workers on the front lines, we will prevail in the face of this crisis.

Ironically, the current situation calls for us to come together by staying apart. Social distancing appears to be, at least for the time being, our saving grace against a virus we still don't understand.

As we work to unravel the mysteries of this highly contagious disease – the exact nature of its communicability, how to deliver the knockout blow, etc. – an untold number of people across the country and globe are falling ill and dying. And among the ever-increasing positive case counts and death tolls are still other victims: our individual liberties, public and private institutions, the economy and labor force, social norms and more. Indeed, these pillars of society are currently under the weather from this viral invader, but they've yet to succumb.

Many of the symptoms our nation is exhibiting stem from a multi-front immune response. Government-imposed restrictions coupled with the volunteer actions of individuals, businesses and organizations are being implemented at every level to slow the spread of the virus and minimize loss of life, and rightly so. From mandated shelter-in-place orders to newly minted social guidelines and the closing of schools and businesses, there are real costs associated with this national fight to save lives. Importantly, it's OK and perhaps necessary to recognize these costs, which we pay right now because we have to.

What of the millions of people with developmental disabilities suddenly shut out of their daily routines? Or the great many single mothers who can't afford childcare during school closures? How about the millions more citizens newly out of work due to illness or layoff?

Unsurprising only in the age of coronavirus, more than 10 million Americans have filed for unemployment in recent weeks, and that record number will undoubtedly increase as the U.S. battles to gain ground against the disease that has infected her. As with any national struggle requiring top-down coordination, keeping an eye on costs for individuals will allow us to maintain focus and more easily navigate the path ahead; the goal should not be an eventual return to normalcy, but the forging of a stronger, more resilient America that will be better prepared to meet future threats.

The insistence of every freedom lover out there should be that our rights, including our ability to assemble peaceably, access firearms and gather for worship, be encroached upon only insofar as any encroachments remain short-term and minimally modified to curb the pandemic. In this unprecedented time, many of the temporary measures being undertaken nationally certainly seem vital and necessary in mitigating the impact of the virus. But how long is temporary? No one knows, and COVID-19 models as forecasting tools are only useful to a point.

Tellingly, the president and his team of health experts acknowledge that the worst is yet to come, though they have expressed a firm belief that we will turn the corner in this epidemic; they just don't know when. Amid so much daily uncertainty, what can we as Americans do for our families, friends, neighbors and fellow countrymen? We can wash our hands, stay home, physically avoid others, not panic, and keep on the lookout for big and little ways to continue making a difference from a distance. We must reach out in our isolation to comfort one another – the virus victims and their families, the lone senior, the mental health patient, our exhausted health care workers and first responders, the struggling addict, our out-of-work neighbors unable to pay their bills, victims of domestic violence – and we must do so without spreading this deadly disease. Let us find strength in purposeful solitude and carry with us the resolute reminder that, though we may surrender to some extent our liberties to engage this unique threat now, we must reclaim the full extent of our natural rights as soon as the smoke clears from this battlefield.

"The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." – Thomas Jefferson, Founding Father, Declaration of Independence Author, and Third U.S. President

Letters to The Editor

On Behalf of Rural Georgians

Gov. Kemp,

Are you sure that the entertainment of those Georgians who live in our largest cities is more important than the health of those of us living in rural resort, lake, beach and state camping areas?

Most of the state of Georgia are rural areas with few grocery stores and very, very small hospitals and health care systems that are strained under the crash of bored Georgians looking to spend the weekend at the lake, beaches or in the mountains for a "change of scenery." You've proclaimed hiking and camping as "essential" while those Georgians flooding our small towns buy up our groceries, order our to-go food, fill their vehicles at our stations and quite possibly also fill our tiny hospitals if they fall ill while here. We are communities of responsible people, sheltering in place for weeks now and who will have to travel hours to make it to a trauma level hospital for care. Many of our County Commissioners closed all camping areas in their respective counties in order to protect their residents.

Your Declaration beginning Friday, April 3, at 6 p.m. overrode those closures, filling our state campgrounds with a majority of Atlanta-area residents who hail from the worst hot spot in our state. All camping areas, short-term rentals of any kind and hotels should be closed again ASAP! Please, please, please put the safety of your rural Georgia residents at least at the level of the boredom or entertainment of city dwellers and close all state parks, cabins, hotels and campgrounds. When does "shelter in place" become travel to another county? COVID-19 doesn't move itself, PEOPLE MOVE THE VIRUS! We all need to "stay home" in our county of residence. Governor, you had many, many votes from Georgia's rural areas... don't forget us now! Save us all, please! It's not too late... yet. Do your part, Gov. Brian Kemp.

— Susan Walker Focke



Heal me, O Lord,
and I shall be healed;
save me, and I shall
be saved: for thou
art my praise.

Jeremiah 17:14

The Price We Pay

Last week some of you thought that the observations about select members of my own generation were a bit harsh, and some thought they weren't harsh enough. I think we can agree that poor judgment and selfish behavior are not confined to any one generation, and neither are sacrifice and good citizenship.

We're another week further into the pandemic, and we're seeing the range of behaviors we would expect. Sacrifices continue to be made for the public good, from the hazardous jobs on the front lines to the private citizens staying at home and exercising caution. At the other end of the spectrum we still have the selfish, mindless and even defiant behavior which is the all too human response to fear and hardship.

It can be argued that the latter behaviors are due, in part, to the weakness and indecisiveness in leadership which we've seen from the national to the local level across the country. A few weeks ago, for example, we were told there was no need for healthy people to wear a mask. Now we're told that everyone who has to leave the home should wear a mask in public.

Some states immediately began imposing restrictions designed to limit the spread of the virus. Individual cities and counties followed suit, or acted on their own in the absence of state leadership. Others waited for the infection rate and death toll to climb before acting. (In the state of Georgia the governor says we have to stay home, but we can go to the beach.)

Many of us are frustrated with the fragmented, sometimes contradictory and often uncoordinated response of our leadership to the crisis. That (and this should never be forgotten by the remnant of Americans who look to individual liberty and not bigger government as the best long term solution to our problems), is unfortunately included in the price we pay for the freedoms remaining to us of our republic.

It takes a while for a democracy, or a democratic republic, to muster a coordinated response to any crisis. Authority is more evenly distributed downward, though we forget that sometimes in the shadow of the enormous bloat of our federal government.

It's easier for autocracies like China to act decisively, though few of us want to pay the price their citizens pay for the ability to make decisions quickly, especially when top down decisions are so often wrong.

And unlike China, we will be given repeated opportunities to purge those leaders who failed us in this crisis, and I think we'll be seeing a lot of incumbents losing their next election. In my opinion, many of them should be tossed out.

Here in the United States we're also handicapped by the crisis of trust that we've discussed here before. We've lost our faith in "science", not because we don't believe in scientific fact, but because we don't trust the people telling us what the facts are. We have decades of misinformation, marketing, spin and pure propaganda brought to us by our "wolf" crying celebrity talkers.

So lacking the best information available we make do with what we can gather, and we sort it with the inferior tools handed us by an educational system designed, not to produce thinkers and learners armed with logic and reasoning, but consumers and producers of goods and services for a society based on consumption.

One of the results of this mistrust is a growing number of resentful and suspicious people, chaffing under confinement and the sudden withdrawal of the drug of instant gratification, who have gone down the rabbit hole of conspiracy theory to conclude that this is all some kind of hoax or manufactured crisis.

Granted, people in power never let a good crisis go to waste, which is an unforgettable lesson for anyone who remembers the world before 9/11. But this does not change the growing death toll from a dangerous and all too real threat.

Ignore for the moment what the politicians and the talking heads are saying. Ask the nurse you know or the doctor you trust, and take note of the exhaustion and the deep, soul crushing concern that is beginning to take its toll on the best of us.

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, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: 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.

Garden Site Selection

As the temperatures are warming up, I know that more and more people are thinking about planting outside. Because of that, I want to talk about site selection for plants, and some general planting guidelines.

One of the most important things is when to plant. There are a couple of temperatures to keep your eye on. If you are planting from seed, you need to wait until soil temperatures have risen to 65 degrees at 4 inch depth. Planting seeds into soil that is too cold will reduce the germination of those seeds. Those seeds will be more affected by seedling diseases. In the next couple of weeks, we will start to have soil temperatures above 65. To check the soil temperatures you can go to georgiaweather.net. This website has a lot of good weather information. The weather stations that I would recommend using are the one in Blairsville and the one in Tiger.

The second temperature that needs to be checked is one that people are familiar with already. That is the air temperature. Annual plants that have already emerged are going to

be susceptible to freezing temperatures. A killing frost for plants is when temperatures dip down below 28 degrees. You can protect plants against those temperatures by placing a bucket, sheet, or floating row cover over them.

For site selection, you need 6-8 hours of full sun for a vegetable garden or annual ornamentals. Finding enough sun can be difficult in the mountains, but plants that don't have enough sun will be stressed. Stressed plants are going to be more susceptible to diseases and insects. They also won't produce as much or any fruit.

Another thing to consider is soil drainage. With the heavy clay soil that most sites have, this is a challenge. Some river bottoms will have a loamy clay soil that has better drainage. Tillage and aeration will improve soil drainage.

Planting on a slope also improves soil drainage, because you will have more runoff. You don't want a slope that is too steep, because then erosion is a problem. In addition, if the slope is too steep it's difficult to get equipment in there, like a hand tiller.

Placing your garden close to a water source is also a good idea. A spigot nearby means that you can water when there is no rain. A good thing about clay soil is that the water holding capacity is much higher than other soils. However, if we have some dry spells as we did last year, plants will need to be watered. When watering, the water has to soak into the soil, down to the roots. Simply wetting the top of the soil won't provide enough water. You want to water plants deeply and thoroughly. Overwatering plants leads to problems as well.

The ideal time to water is in the morning so that plants have time to dry off throughout the day. Sending plants into the nighttime with wet leaves is a recipe for disease.

If you have questions about getting your garden started contact your County Extension Office. At this time, Towns County Extension Office is closed. The Union County Extension Office is going to be closed for the duration of the shelter in place order. In both offices, we are checking voicemail periodically.

The best way to contact me, any day of the week, regardless of where I am is by email. My email is Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. If you need a site visit email me, and we can work out the parameters to protect our health.

Here's Some Good News

We have an elder WWII US Navy veteran who just celebrated his 98th birthday!

Wow! QMC C.E. "Bud" Johnson, USNR Ret., just celebrated his 98th birthday here in Hiawassee, and we are blessed to have him drop anchor here. His Navy exploits and outstanding awards are far too many to even begin listing here, enlisting in the Navy at age 17 on 14 June 1939, right out of Gibbs HS in Canton, Ohio. He participated in a naval blockade at Martinique, French West Indies in late 1939 aboard the USS Hughes, and then went on to North Atlantic patrol and convoy duty, constantly under attack by German U-boats known as "Wolf Packs". Not allowed to fire, as America was neutral at that time, the Navy had the latest sonar gear and would track down and report positions of those German subs to the Canadian and British corvettes who would then engage the hideous German submarines.

After serving all over the Atlantic, and chasing the German battleship, the notorious Bismarck, Bud served aboard our minesweeper, YMS-21 out of Charleston, SC to Savannah, GA clearing floating mines placed by the Germans on a regular basis. Bud was already being promoted through the ranks to second class QM by this time. Bud reported aboard commissioned Fleet Tug, USS Choctaw out of Charleston, SC for towing, salvage and fire fighting duty on our US Atlantic coast, Chesapeake Bay, Bermuda, and European Africa areas of operation.

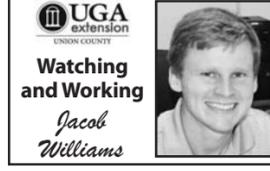
In 1944 Bud proudly served in the very tough naval operations in and around Iwo Jima. After promotion to Chief Quartermaster, Bud reported aboard our USS Missouri in December, 1945. On 1 March, 1983 Bud retired from his Navy and US Naval Reserve duty with 36 years and 4 months service. He has captained sail and power yachts, and served passenger ships for Grace Lines Steamship Co. As a part of his civilian sailing career having obtained through much hard work and studies his USCG Masters License.

Fast forward to today, several weeks after Bud celebrated his ALMOST 100 YEARS, and realize that no matter how long we live, or how few years we occupy this earth, we are always blessed to be living amongst some great Honorably Discharged Veterans, who although they may have not accomplished as much as Bud, every one of them did something much needed by our USA.

Bud and several friends in a quiet private setting enjoyed fellowship and worship, which with all of us doing our part will get us through these trying times. Just ask Bud! He's been through it all in his almost 100 years! We will indeed get through this current catastrophe. It will indeed change our nation and people.

But, using Bud's long life as an analogy we ALL must do our part, which to many may seem silly, boring, or unimportant. These things we must do as directed by our nations and community leaders, however, are very important. So let's all stay the course, just like Bud has!

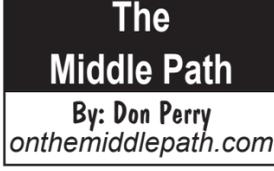
— Semper Paratus



Watching and Working
Jacob Williams

From the Editor's Desk

Shawn Jarrard



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