

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Rediscovery in the Pandemic

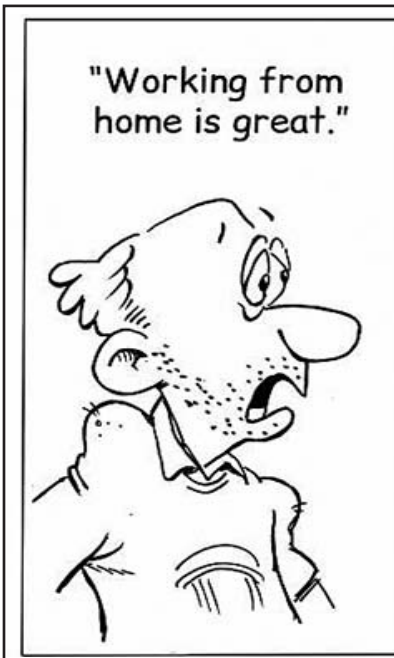
Now the word binge has been familiar to me for decades. It was usually used something like, "I love to binge on the 3 Cs. cake, chips, and cocktails". Since being self-billed, because it's right the thing to do, I have succumbed, ever so briefly, to binge tv watching or as I call it, BGG. Binge, gorge and gag. I am one who is not ashamed to say that I love TV. It has entertained, embarrassed, and enlightened me, but watching that tube until my two eyes morphed into one Cyclops eye, ain't fittin', it just ain't fittin'. Jake, getting on up in years, goes to see the old mountain doctor, complaining, "I'm getting so hard of hearing, I can't hear myself poot." The doc pulls out a drawer and gives the old fellow a handful of large pills. "Will these help me hear better?" Jake asks. "I don't know," the doc replies, "but they'll make you poot louder." I read this recently in Chapter 10, of *Purt Nigh* Gene: The Old Mountain Ways, Zell Miller's informative, historic and down right fun book. You read that correctly. I read.

Somehow over the years, I had misplaced the sheer pleasure of reading. The physicality of reading is almost endless. One may sit in a chair or on a sofa, ramrod straight, slouching or sprawled. Perhaps supine on a floor or a bed, with reading material held aloft and reading glasses perched on the bridge of the nose, better suits. When the tome (and eyelids) get too heavy for comfort, just slip in a book mark or "break the spine" if you're one of those, and know you can resume the adventure later. I've been delighted reading to and with my children, learned that one of my favorite books, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, read in my youth, was also one of my mother's favorites. Nonsensical words introduced by Dr. Suess make perfect sense and books have transported me to times, places and situations that I could never have experienced. A book is as close to some things as I ever want to come.

I detest the reason for rediscovering what once was such a big part of my life. I appreciate the solace, comfort and distraction it is now giving. I leave you with another witticism from Zell Miller's book. Another old dog story has a mountaineer telling his friend, "I got a dog for my wife." The friend answered, "I wish I could get a trade like that." Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to bed with John Grisham.

Health, Happiness, Hope Around Towns.

Around Towns
Dale Harmon



To Catch A Thief

Most of us have experienced theft at some point in our lives. Anger is a normal response, but a sting of betrayal can follow, for thieves take more than material possessions. They take peace of mind and faith in humanity.

Some thieves steal out of need or desperation. Some do it for the thrill. Some thieves are as blunt as a bludgeon. Some are as cunning as a politician. Woody Guthrie said, "As through this world I've wandered, I've seen lots of funny men; Some will rob you with a six gun, and some with a fountain pen."

Like most places on Earth, we have our share of theft. The crime rate here in the peaceful valleys of North Georgia is lower than in many parts of the world; lower than many places within our own state. We have some break-ins and other incidents, but we rarely have to endure anything as dramatic as the nightly shooting report from the city. For this, we are ever grateful.

There is another kind of crime, however, that is not uncommon in our area. It is rarely prosecuted. It is not even considered a crime by some of its well-heeled perpetrators. This crime happens all over the country where there are old farms and old buildings, places that the uninformed or insensitive might consider neglected or abandoned. The perpetrators of this crime sometimes look just like you and me. They are well-mannered and often well-regarded members of our community. Like many of us, they might appreciate quaint old things or enjoy collecting antiques and such. You may even know some of these people yourself, people who do not "need" to steal anything.

Unfortunately they seem to have a misguided notion that it is acceptable to rummage about private property if that property appears sufficiently remote, neglected, or "abandoned," as some have said. They seem to believe that stealing from an old farm is "rescue" or "salvage." You, dear reader, know better. You know that old houses, old barns and old out-buildings may look abandoned. They may actually be neglected. But this does not mean that they are not cherished. Sometimes here in the country we let our old buildings take their own time returning to the ground. They hold memories, better than any photograph ever could, and there is a quiet kind of dignity in just letting them be. We know that some people disagree, but if we had a microscope, we would still be unable to locate the slightest interest in a drive-through opinion of what constitutes an "eyesore."

This does not mean that we don't appreciate beauty and order. We respect natural order and live according to its rhythms. We believe that what time and nature do to old farms, old buildings, and old people - is beautiful. Nevertheless, we still sigh with sadness at the sagging roof or the cracked window at the place where our grandmother once greeted children with smiles and sweetbread. We miss the carpet of flowers that used to decorate the neighbor's farmhouse, before his wife passed away and arthritis limited his ability to garden. Some of us wish that the job that kept us on the road so much had given us more time to drive an extra nail or pull more weeds. There are only so many hours in the day, and so many days in a lifetime. Some of us wish that our backs were straighter, that we still had the strength to mend the old barn where we were mighty in our youth, where our children learned about life and death and where our grandchildren played before they all grew up and moved away. When we look out the window and see someone digging up bulbs from the old "neglected" flower bed, they are digging in our memories. When they put a shoulder to that closed door, and then carry out something "quaint" and "abandoned," we are wounded. We feel an anger that would call down lightning, and when that passes, we feel the weight of the years even more.

Now as to the thief who is the subject of this week's discussion, we must assume you are smart enough to read a newspaper. You were smart enough to earn the money to buy the new SUV you drove. Chances are that you might not even consider yourself a thief, but you are. Be advised: Some of us who love old places still have strong backs, very likely stronger than yours. We are the ones who put up the posted signs that you chose to disregard and climbed the trees to hang security cameras, in the shadows. You won't see them. But we will see you. We were reluctant to do all this, but you, and others like you, keep coming, and digging, and taking. In a quiet, remote grove of an old homestead there is an old log barn that was built a century ago. It is a simple structure, but a family treasure. The roof is kept in good repair. The sills are still sound and the little barn sits high and dry above the ground. You came quite a distance through the woods, thief, to get to that barn. You damaged the frame when you pried off the door. It wasn't locked. Maybe you thought that you would take it with you, but it was too heavy to carry. You forced out a beam from the wall, leaving an ugly gap in the side of the barn. Your desire for that "quaint" old beam did not come close to justifying your theft. It was a load bearing beam, and now the entire wall sags. Left unattended the whole structure would soon have fallen to the ground, after all these years. The wall will be repaired, but a memory of the quality of your character will persist, as well as an electronically preserved image of your face. Remember those cameras we mentioned earlier? They take remarkable pictures. Don't come back.

Have something to sell?
Let the Herald work for you!
Contact us at 706-896-4454
Deadline for the
Towns County Herald is
Friday by 5 PM

Tomato Growing

Tomatoes are one of the most common vegetables in home gardens. They are great on a sandwich or eaten like an apple. You can eat them and use them in all different recipes. My favorite is a fried green tomato. Tomato growing is rewarding and delicious.

Tomatoes are unique in that there are more tomato varieties out there than other garden plants. That's because of the multitude of different ways that tomatoes can be used. So when you're planting tomatoes, start with the end goal in mind. Use a variety that works well for what you want to do with it. Also, take a look at the disease resistance that tomato has in it. This can vary a lot by variety. Disease resistance will give you a serious leg up and give you a lot fewer headaches as the season goes on.

You'll want to plant in an area that gets 6-8 hours of sunlight and has a soil pH of 6.2-6.8. Tomatoes can grow roots all along their stem. So when planting transplants plant them down to the first set of leaves. Plant them 2 feet apart in row, and set rows 4-6 feet apart. Firm up the soil around the transplants to push out any air pockets.

After transplanting put 2 tablespoons of 5-10-10 fertilizer around each plant.

Most plants will need to be staked. You can buy cages to stake the plants. Alternatively, you can use wooden stakes that are 5-6 feet long. Drive a stake into the ground between every other plant about 1 foot deep. You can take twine or strips of cloth and weave these around the stakes to support the plants. As the plants grow higher, you can add more levels of twine.

Apply 1.5 pounds of 10-10-10 fertilizer per 100 square feet prior to planting. Once tomatoes start forming on the vine and are the size of a quarter apply 1 pound of 10-10-10 per 100 square feet. Repeat that application every 3-4 weeks until harvest is finished.

Tomatoes need about 1-2 inches of water per week. If we don't get enough rain, you can supply the rest. When watering plants it's better to give 1 or 2 heavy soakings, than multiple light sprinkles.

There are many insects that can cause problems for tomatoes. Insecticidal soap does a pretty good job for most soft-bodied insects. It works well for caterpillars and insects that feed on the plants. Scout your garden regularly so that you quickly find new pests. Pests are much easier to control in small numbers and when they aren't full-grown.

Blossom end rot is caused by a calcium deficiency. Maintaining a good pH, keeping plants well watered, and having enough calcium in the soil will prevent blossom end rot. Foliar sprays to give calcium are only short-term fixes. Healthy soil and good water practices will eliminate this problem.

Tomatoes are best if they fully ripen on the vine. However, if you pick them before they are fully ripe you can set them out in a room that's around 70 degrees. I like to use the kitchen window sill.

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

UGA extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Letters to The Editor

Community Water Fluoridation

Dear Editor,
Here are some facts about the health benefits of water fluoridation: Fluoride naturally occurs in most water, but often at levels too low to prevent decay. Community water fluoridation has led to such dramatic declines in both the prevalence and severity of tooth decay the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention named it one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the 20th century. Water fluoridation alone reduces dental decay by 20-40%. Every \$1 invested in water fluoridation saves \$20 in dental treatment costs, saving communities and families money.

As a practicing pediatric dental hygienist in Northeast Georgia, it has been my observation the teeth of children living in fluoridated areas have significantly lower rates of decay than those who do not have access to fluoridated tap water.

For more information on Community Water Fluoridation visit www.cdc.gov/fluoridation.

Regards,
Margaret L. Conrad, RDH, BS
Georgia Dental Hygienists Association's Foothills Chair

Are Towns Countians following guidelines?

Dear Editor,
On April the 10th, I sat outside Ingles while my wife (with gloves and mask) went in for some essential food items. During that 70-minute period, I counted the number of customers entering the store with and without recommended protections against the ever-present COVID-19 virus. The next day, April 11th, I emailed both the TCH and the Mayor's office with the results of my observations.

Yesterday, we had the need for additional items from Ingles and we returned in the same manner . . . I stayed in the car while she (in mask and gloves) went into the store. During the 65 minutes she was shopping, I sat in the car and observed the following: 153 individuals entered the store (age range: children in strollers to elderly); 132 were wearing NO PPE; 8 were wearing gloves only; 7 were wearing mask only; 9 were wearing both.

The numbers below represent the sum of both of my observations for the two days (April 10th and April 17th, over a period of 2 hours and 5 minutes): 350 individuals entered the store (age range: children in strollers to elderly). 258 were wearing NO PPE (73.71%); 33 were wearing gloves only; 29 were wearing masks only; 33 were wearing both. (NOTE: these observations were at only one location in Hiwassee).

Contrary to the TCH article (April 15th, page 1B "Towns Countians keep social distance to persevere in public", I have seen way too many "Towns Countians" paying no attention to the recommended protocol and guidelines handed down by local, state, and federal agencies.

Mr. Jarrard, I am, by no means, an alarmist! However, just based upon my random sampling as an example, and given the current estimated population of Towns County (11,852), the current risky behavior of citizens in our county could become more catastrophic as this pandemic continues. Unfortunately, we have too many citizens who either do not care or are convinced that it can't happen to them.

There must be some way of educating and warning the population of negative outcomes if they insist on disregarding proven procedures and defying common sense etiquette. All citizens (personal and corporate) must assume civic responsibilities in this time of need.

Please help spread the word . . . not the virus!!!

Thank you,
Gregory E. Powers

Response from Hiwassee Mayor Liz Ordiales

Mr. Powers,
I forwarded your earlier email to Ingles and tried to contact them with no response from their headquarters. I will continue to try to make contact. As I responded to you last week, thank you so much for your emails, I truly appreciate the factual content and the concern. I will continue to be as dedicated to this issue as you are. Have a great week.

Liz Ordiales
Mayor, City of Hiwassee

Polar Security Cutters

Our own US Navy WWII Veteran Bud Johnson asked me to do this column. Even though he is a Navy Veteran, he reminds me frequently that he loves our nation's USCG and says we Coasties don't often get credit for what we have done and still do. For us, and I speak for those I served with, we never did seek glory, whatever we did, it was just our job.

And yes, Bud we still have active duty icebreakers, but only one working heavy icebreaker, the 44 year old USCGC Polar Star (WAGB-10) based in Seattle, Washington. As well as one medium icebreaker, USCGC Healy (WAGB-20).

At year's end 2019 the Polar Star bashed its way through ice up to ten feet thick, creating a 23 mile channel through pack ice to reach our National Science Foundation's research center in Antarctica, McMurdo Station. This is an immensely important annual job to allow passage for a convoy of supply ships to deliver 19.5 million pounds of dry cargo and 7.6 million gallons of fuel to McMurdo Station, whose mission would be impossible without these supplies.

There are NO vegetable gardens or cattle farms in this extremely harsh environment! Plus this sea route will freeze over only to be "busted open" again a year later by our only heavy USCGPSC.

It needs to be noted that our nation's mission at McMurdo is critical for those dedicated scientists and other personnel to test theories, learn and discover unknown variables in this extreme environment which will benefit all of mankind. Our 44 year old heavy icebreaker has taken many beatings over the years and requires the dedicated hands, working 24/7, of all those courageous and devoted Coasties who have sacrificed to work and live aboard her. McMurdo Station is scheduled to be rebuilt by 2026.

Hopefully with much Congressional negotiation having transpired a new class of icebreakers will be built to replace the aging two PSCs. VT Halter Marine in Pascagoula, Mississippi was awarded the contract for the newly designed and advanced heavy icebreaker to be delivered in 2024. Seattle, Washington will remain the home port for this first new heavy icebreaker in decades.

With luck the USCG will have the entire fleet of icebreakers with six new modern breakers whose duty includes our national security especially in the Arctic region which has become an area of focus by Communist China and her allies the Russians with their own heavily armed icebreakers.

As well our Arctic region around Alaska requires similar icebreaking missions in order to maintain shipping routes. These jobs are not an easy task to monitor, plan for, or accomplish each and every year. The expensive nature of maintaining these specialized ships would be considered as too many of our tax dollars by some people, however considering what we would lose as a nation without our Coasties taking on these missions in the harshest environments on our earth, makes these Coasties and their highly specialized ships a bargain!

Semper Paratus

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



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Kenneth West
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Todd Forrest
Staff Writer

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Shawn Henrikson
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Office located at: 518 N. Main St. Suite 7 "The Mall", Hiwassee
Phone: (706) 896-4454 Fax: (706) 896-1745 Email: tcherald@windstream.net
Or mail to: PO Box 365, Hiwassee, GA 30546