

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Dear Towns County Editor,

In all due respect, myself, and most of my neighbors, do not read your paper. I submitted a letter with my view point only because *Towns County Herald* rarely (as in this case), covers both sides of the story. I strongly felt folks needed to know some of what had to happen to get this "gift to our county" put in place (mind you, this "gift" came at our expense - our property values are due to plummet).

Upon reviewing the published articles* you rudely referred to in your response, I am even further disturbed by your reporting.

At no time did you question Mr. Kendall about where the new entrance/exit to the County Park would be placed (no mention of it being placed at the Dead End of Shake Rag Road). Truthfully, none of the property owners in upper Shake Rag Road ever thought that he would choose to come up Shake Rag Road - we honestly believed he would come up Kanuga. This would have been a much more logical choice - no homes - wider road - nice grade - easier switchbacks.

When we (a group of property owners off Shake Rag) requested a meeting with Bill Kendall (only after our road began to be shut down on us - with no notification - no notes on our doors - no phone calls - no nothing - just signs reading "Road Closed"), our first question to him was, "Why are you pouring traffic up a 10 foot wide - quiet - residential neighborhood?" "What kind of traffic study has been done?" and "Don't you think this is a bad choice?" and lastly, "Why didn't you feel it necessary to run this past the homeowners up here?" He declined to answer any of these questions in our meeting. I'm betting that if he lived off upper Shake Rag Road - the park entrance/exit would not be placed at the end of this road!

Trust me, everyone that lives up here 'gets' that this is a special place - that's why we bought property up here! And, eyes folks should be able to enjoy the fabulous view atop Bell Mountain but, why in the world would you construct a county park entrance/exit off of a quiet, residential, 10 foot wide road?!

Fair and balanced reporting would have addressed this issue - it was not. This is why we do not read your paper.

Myself and my neighbors appreciate you publishing our point of view,

Catherine Hansen

*I believe it was TCH's January 13th article - Mr. Kendall was quoted as saying this project should run the county \$150,000. Trust me, he has far exceeded that price point!

Letter to the Editor:

Commissioner Kendall Defends His Decision to Develop Bell Mtn. County Park

This is in regards to the letters to the editor incorrectly stating that the park development was done in secret. Several articles were published about Bell Mountain being given to the county and my plans of developing it into a County Park. I had meetings with Bell Mountain residents to get their input on ways that would enhance the co-existence between them and a park, including improving their road by widening some pull offs. We put pull offs only where they requested them. I also committed to them that I would put ELMIG State road maintenance grant in the 2017 budget to put a 1 inch asphalt cap to improve this public county road and that detainees would keep the road clean of any trash.

The writer falsely stated that before the County Park road opened the only vehicles traveling this road were folks that lived up there, 10 to 15 cars a day. I was requested by letter from Shake Rag resident to improve the road to Bell Mountain, before the park road was developed, to discourage the heavy traffic of caravans of as many as 50 off road jeeps tearing up the mountain and coming off the mountain at 2 or 3 a.m. awakening them with loud music. I implemented this request.

I approved closing the Park at night as requested, but not at dark as they wanted. Some Towns County citizens wanted the park left open at night to do night time photography. I reached a compromise, Park hours being: Winter Eastern Standard Time 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. during Summer Daylight Saving Time. This gives time for night time photography in winter and summer.

The letter falsely stated that Shake Rag Road was closed; only the portion beyond where residents live was temporarily closed due to road work.

These letters falsely stated that Shake Rag Road is their private road. This is causing concern from citizens wishing to go to Bell Mountain but not wanting to intrude on the letter writer's private road. It is NOT a private road. It has been a public maintained road for all citizens to use for many decades. The road was paved with public funds almost 50 years ago. The writers wanted to know why we didn't use Kanuga Road instead of Shake Rag. ANSWER: Part of Kanuga Road is a private road.

Some have wanted the road closed at the upper gate and require citizens to walk the last 300 ft. to the summit. I have strongly rejected this request. We have improved this part of the road and have 21 parking spaces at the summit so all our citizens can enjoy their park.

Towns County has the highest percentage of senior citizens. Many, due to age and health problems cannot walk up this steep 300 ft. section of the road. I have met some of our friends and neighbors 94 years of age and some in wheel chairs enjoying the scenic view at the Hal Herrin Overlook. They could never have gotten there if I required them to walk from the gate. We cannot let this happen. I want all our citizens to have the opportunity to see their Park as described below 133 years ago.

In 1883 Athens newspaper editor J. A. Gant described Bell Mountain, "as we reached the summit the greatest sight the eye ever rested upon met our gaze. Several famous tourists who have visited this mountain pronounced it 'the grandest view in America,' when railway communication is opened to Hiawassee it will become one of the greatest curiosities on our continent." Gant further stated, "We will conclude this letter by advising all our readers to visit Bell Rock Mountain, if they want to see what we consider the greatest curiosity in Georgia or the south. It is only 35 miles distance from Clarkesville, the road leading through a wild and romantic country."

I do not apologize for acquiring and developing Bell Mountain into a County Park. I have no doubt, the decision wasn't even close, that it was the right thing to do for our county and is an asset with much potential to enhance our economic development. We must work together to co-exist with and protect our "Crown Jewel of the Mountains" which is bigger than all of us and has been drawing visitors for well over a hundred years and will continue to do so.

*Sincerely,
Commissioner Bill Kendall*

Seeing clearly through the smoke

In the aftermath of the ugliest campaign in living memory, we've seen anger, fear, grief, even violence. Friendships have ended or been seriously wounded over differences of political opinion.

But as the smoke from scores of forest fires settles into our valleys and neighbors are compelled to put aside their differences to protect homes and communities, we are reminded again of how much we all have in common when we are not focused on the things we have invented and enshrined as institutions for the purpose of dividing ourselves one from another.

Let's take a moment to consider the remarkable amount of energy and drama that has been focused, especially over the last two years, on selecting one person out of 310 million to occupy one office. The last time so much unresolved antipathy was focused on a single, flawed human being, was the election of 1860. Let that sink in for a moment.

A path forward for all of us might begin the realization that too many of us are obsessed with the office of the President of the United States. Our system of government was not designed to accommodate an imperial presidency. It should not be so important to us who occupies that office.

Now for a little history. Presidents have, during the last thirty years, significantly expanded the coercive powers of the Executive Branch. Bill Clinton expanded the power of the presidency "on the sly." He wrote hundreds of Executive Orders which prepared the country for integration into a narrowly controlled world economy, and few took note. George Bush took the opportunity provided by the September 11 attacks to create an almost permanent state of war. War has always magnified the powers of the Executive Branch, and Bush used Executive Orders and Signing Statements to accelerate the process. Barack Obama, facing an obstructionist Congress, sought to accomplish his own goals through the use of Executive Orders also. Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton both signaled during their campaigns that they would continue the practice.

Now here is where it gets interesting for the people unhappy with Trump's election. With the stroke of a pen, President Trump can undo large parts of the Obama legacy, and he will probably do just that.

In one generation we have mutated from a republic to some hybrid form of oligarchy in which a President can, with very little oversight or accountability, quickly, easily and dramatically change the lives of hundreds of millions of people - for four to eight years - until the next President comes along and abruptly moves the nation in a different direction.

A dumb way to run a country, don't you think? But there is hope. If we can dismantle the cult of the Presidency and return the Executive Branch to the purpose for which it was designed, which is to enforce, not create law, then perhaps we can avoid much of the drama. It will not matter so much who the President is, because our faith in the checks and balances of government will be vindicated.

Consider the two years just passed. We have been possessed by two almost herd mentalities, like rival football teams with supporters willing to vandalize the opposing team's property as some kind of demonstration of "school spirit." That's how we have acted, though we dare to clothe our actions in noble raiment and high sounding platitudes.

In effect, we behave in elections as if we are members of two massive cults, struggling to place our preferred god on the top of the pyramid. We invest an irrational amount of hope and responsibility for our own well being into very human, and very flawed vessels, (including but not limited to the President) and our expectations, our fantasies are so strong, that we are devastated when those expectations are not met.

So what can we do? A good place to begin, for the sake of perspective, might be a very informative book by Gene Healy called, "The Cult

of the Presidency: America's Dangerous Devotion to Executive Power." We have to realize that a problem exists before we can address it.

For a lot of us the next step would be a refresher course on how our government actually works. It has been painfully obvious in this election that many voters and even many people holding elected office are not aware, for example, that the Supreme Court does not make laws. It interprets existing law.

The last part is the hardest. Without legislation to reign in the powers of the Imperial Presidency, and without a Congress with a will to act and an ability to cooperate, it is unlikely that ANY Executive will give up powers obtained by his or her predecessor. It is up to us to demand this of our elected representatives.

Now a word to the "winners and losers" of this unfortunate election. If you are unhappy because Trump won, please stop attacking people who think differently than you do. In painting 60 million people with the same broad brush, accusing them of a litany of negative traits ("All Trump voters are racist, homophobic, misogynist, etc."), you are indulging in the same logical fallacy as a racist, sinking to the same low level that you are accusing others of occupying. Dissent is honorable, but indulging in the right to dissent does not honor the sacrifices that were made to purchase that right.

If you are happy with the election, reach out in kindness to those who are fearful. Join in condemning the hatred that is causing so many to fear, and commit to holding the government that you just helped to create, accountable.

In moving forward as wiser citizens we should take careful notice of how we vacillate between creating impossibly perfect images of people that we all but worship, and then tearing those images down with righteous indignation. We either ignore or rationalize fatal flaws of character in our leaders and celebrities, or we magnify out of all proportion imperfections common to all of us.

This is the risk we take when we become sycophants, followers, disciples or fans of other humans, rather than embracing accountability and owning the responsibility for our own lives.

The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

Carpenter Bees and Bumble Bees

This warm autumn has brought another home invader to look out for right now! Boxelder bugs are medium-sized black bugs with thin red markings and are better than stink bugs at finding ways into your home. These bugs usually start looking for places to overwinter in early autumn. Because this fall has been so warm, plenty of them have had a chance to find their ideal shelters, which in many cases are our houses. They are typically found near the south side of the house, as these walls will get warmed by sunlight throughout the day.

Boxelder bugs emerge late in the summer and early fall and begin to congregate on boxelder trees, though they are known to feed on a variety of hosts. They then hunt for warm, safe places to spend the winter in groups, where they will stay until the temperatures begin to warm again in early spring. Sometimes, you may see these bugs come out of nowhere in the middle of winter. This is most likely because we may have had a winter day that was just barely warm enough for the bugs to wake up and think that winter has passed. Once the cold winds return in a day or two though, they return to their hiding places. These shelters can be doorframes, windows, rock piles, tree holes and housing foundations.

In March or April, the adults wake up and feed on boxelder trees for about two weeks before mating. Females will lay eggs in clusters in crevices near host plants so the nymphs will have easy access to food once they hatch. As their name suggests, these bugs are known for feeding on boxelder trees, but they are also found on apple, ash, buckeye, maple, plum, cherry, peach and grapes as well as a few ornamental woody plants. In the middle of summer, adults lay a second batch of eggs, which will hatch and eventually overwinter as large nymphs and adults.

Boxelder bugs prefer feeding on maple seeds, but they also suck sap from leaves and twigs. They do very little damage to the plants that they are found on, but if they are on your outdoor siding or windows for an extended period of time, their feces can stain it. Typically this is not an issue because by the time they wander to houses, they are ready to take shelter in crevices. However, with the warm autumn, they have been more active than normal and will naturally be producing more feces. Though they are more invasive and in larger numbers than the brown marmorated stink bug I wrote about in a previous column, they do not stink when they are agitated.

The best way to control these critters is exclusion: make sure your window screens do not have any holes in them, put weather-stripping on your door if the fit is not tight enough, and cover any outdoor vents with as fine a mesh as possible. These insects are small and flat and can fit through even most small holes and cracks. Populations seldom become large enough to require pesticide treatment, but spot treating with readily available pre-mixed treatments produced by major brands found at hardware or home garden stores can be effective. Even with all this preparation, you will inevitably get some in your house, but they do not bite humans or pose any health risk beyond a minor annoyance.



Towns County Community Calendar

	Every Monday:	
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Bridge Players	Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
	Every Tuesday:	
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Wednesday	
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Thursday:	
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Friday:	
Bridge Players	Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Sunday:	
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
Mtn. Amat. Radio	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	6:30 pm
	Third Monday of each month:	
Hospital Auxiliary	Cafeteria	1:30 pm
Water Board	Water Office	6 pm
	Third Tuesday of each month:	
YH Plan Comm.	YH City Hall	5 pm
	Third Wednesday of each month:	
Quilting Bee	McConnell Church	10 am
MOAA	Call Jack @ 828-321-2896	
	Third Thursday of each month:	
Co. Comm. Mtg	Courthouse	5:30 pm
Friendship Comm.	Clubhouse	6 pm
	Third Saturday of each month:	
Goldwing Riders	Daniel's Restaurant	11 am
	Fourth Monday of each month:	
Red Cross DAT	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	5:30 pm
	Fourth Tuesday of each month:	
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
	Fourth Thursday of each month:	
Republican Party	New Senior Ctr.	6:30 pm
	Fourth Friday of each month:	
Square Dance Club	Rec. Center	7 pm
	Last Thursday of each month:	
Humane Shelter Bd.	Cadence Bank	5:30 pm

Towns County Herald

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