

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Miss Veterans Day service?

We had an excellent turnout but due to rain we held our annual event at our VFW Post 7807. If you didn't attend you really missed an outstanding, entertaining, outspoken lady, First Sergeant Marion Crawford, 91 years young! She IS a great speaker and very funny!

Kudos to Randal Forehand our American Legion Post 23 Commander and all the members of every VSO attached to post 7807 who made this event possible. Especially the ladies of our Legion Auxiliary for their hard work in providing luncheons for everyone.

Marion was at one time the youngest 1st SGT in our nation's Army. It all began back home in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan when she was 11 years old, riding her bike behind a parade of the 501st Women's Army Corps operations unit.

Their HQ being nearby, she and her bicycle soon became their unofficial mascot. Marion knew from an early age the Army was for her. "Pestering" DoD throughout HS to join the Army as post WWII the Army had quit taking women, eventually paid off.

After HS she went to the local PO to apply, was told, and

"No Way" until she showed them the certified letter sent by Army top brass, in September, 1948. Her dad, who joined the US Navy on the day of Pearl Harbor, pitched a fit! She was the first woman in Michigan to join the WAAC Peace Corps. Shortly afterwards this became WAC.

Not to last forever, the Vietnam War required her services managing the first combat detachment of women since WWII.

Administration was their primary duty, but under constant attack by the VC in their Saigon encampment. She remains proud of all our soldiers who protected them during these attacks. The Army would NOT issue them guns! Transferred to Long Binh; safer than but not as much to do as in Saigon. Marion and "her girls" witnessed a lot of horror and deaths of our finest young men. However they never faltered in their assignments and mission.

With 21 years in the regular Army, she became the top recruiter carrying her Army duty over into the ROTC for three years. Married for a short while, she was told by her soon to be ex-husband, "It's me or the Army". No explanation needed!

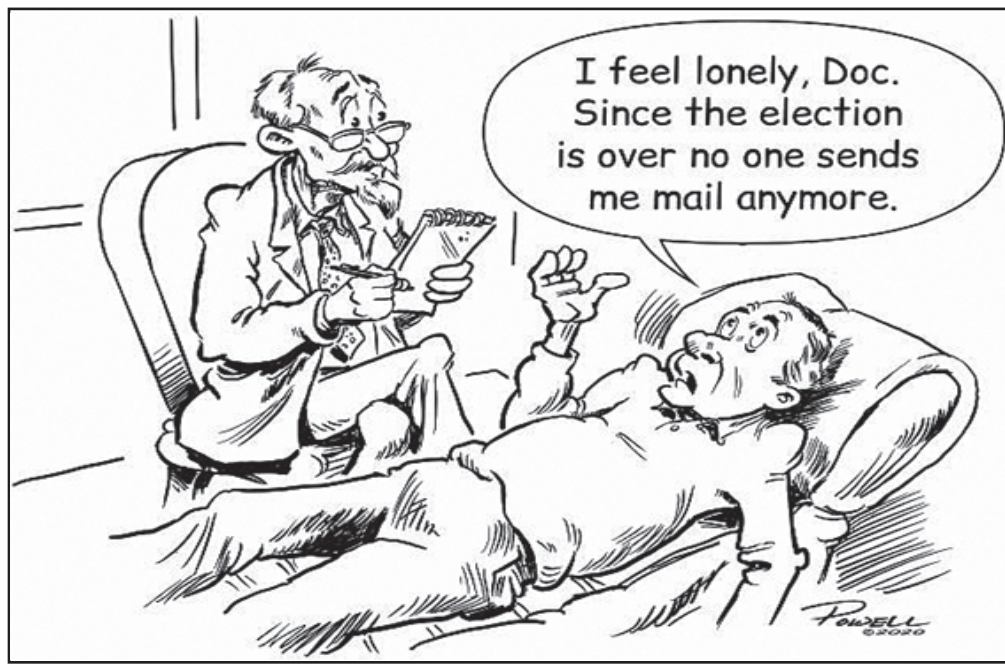
Her troops called her "Mom". Every command officer, from Generals on down that ever met her or worked with her showered her with accolades; she has the documentation to prove it as well as a chest full of awards, and medals. Towns County was blessed when Marion's CO and best friend Major E. Joyce Miller, now resting at the Right hand of our Supreme Commander moved here with Marion.

There were 900 women in Vietnam at one time or another, representing four of our five military services! The majority in our US Army.

Quotes: "Young women with half a brain and ambition join the Army"; "Army was best years of my life"; "Military service should be an American institution two years minimum, for all our young folks!"

Semper Paratus

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



Outside the Box

It's a beautiful day for an epiphany. Bright sunshine beaming through a crystal blue sky illuminates glowing patches of color against the graying background of our mountain. We begin the day in gratitude. Gratitude, we believe, is the best life preserver for the spirit.

For a number of years that I don't desire to count, this space has hosted an effort to find a middle path between extremes as we've watched the nation become more divided and partisan.

Our efforts have been based on the premise that the truth can usually be found in a balance between the extremes.

I'm ready to set that theory aside. I think there is some truth in it still, but there is a greater truth. In this zeitgeist of tribalism, the truth is often nowhere near the middle. It's not even on the same plane. It is, in effect, "outside the box" entirely.

We like to think that we're still learning, and that means that when we get new information, we should be able to change our minds. This is what we have observed:

We've seen highly intelligent people so conditioned by a manipulated flow of information that their learning processes are boxed in by their own confirmation bias. When we're presented with information that is outside the tribal paradigm, it's almost like a three dimensional being is attempting to describe a stack of notebooks to those of us who have spent our entire lives on a two dimensional sheet of paper.

We're not two dimensional beings, but we think we are, and that is our comfort zone. Funny thing about "comfort zones." They can be downright uncomfortable, but risking change or the unknown seems even more so.

When information appears that challenges our bias, we don't understand. It makes us uncomfortable or angry, or we just ignore it.

That's why logic and reason fails to reach intelligent people who are more than capable of both.

Back to the epiphany. It's been at least four years in the making, and the recent election sealed it. When we shared information here that we thought (from our own confirmation bias) was reasonable and non partisan, we often received either tribal anger from both sides - or stone cold silence.

So we are departing from the "middle path," because that path, in its entirety, is inside "the box." We want to look outside. We want to look inward. We want to look up. What we propose to do now is to present stories and perspectives that invite us to do that.

We hope you will join us on this new adventure. We intend to explore some new ideas and perspectives, to look in some dusty corners, to revive some forgotten histories, to peek behind curtains and to circle back to some roads not taken.

I want to thank all the friends and fellow travelers who have walked the path with us to this fork in the road, but we're weary of treading on this same old map.

We're tired of the box, and our efforts have become onerous. They taste medicinal, like an off brand of artificial grape flavored antacid, and quite frankly, they haven't been much fun lately. So let's have some fun now and find more opportunities to laugh when we can. Life is a gift and an adventure. That's the path we want to share now, and we think it's the best path outside the box.

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:

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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, editorially 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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Tree Dormancy

The leaves changing color and falling is a sign that colder weather is getting closer and closer. Trees are entering into dormancy. Dormancy is an important process to allow the tree to survive through the winter. Let's talk a bit about how dormancy works in trees and why they need to do it. Dormant trees will stop growing above the ground. Dormancy is partly brought on by temperature change, but even more so by the change in day length. The college word for this phenomenon is 'photosensitive', meaning the trees change in response to day length. Leaves will begin to change color and fall off. Leaves begin to change color because chlorophyll begins to break down. Chlorophyll is a green pigment that plants use to turn light energy to chemical energy. There are other pigments in the leaves too. As the chlorophyll breaks down the other pigments are left, resulting in the wide array of leaf color that we see. Evergreen trees like pine trees of hollies will have a needle drop in the fall and again in the spring. As we move into winter trees will enter what's called endo-dormancy. In

endo-dormancy an unsatisfied chill hours requirement will keep

plants from waking back up.

Different plants have a different number of chill hours, or hours spent below 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Chill hours are supposed to keep plants from waking back up too soon. In 2019, we had a couple of days in February that were over 70 degrees. While my pale legs might like to see some sun, February is not time for plants to begin waking up, as we have more freezes that are coming. Hopefully, those plants haven't met their chill hour requirement, so even though I'm wearing shorts, the trees are still dormant.

Endo-dormancy also makes trees cold hardy. Trees will behave in a couple of different ways to make themselves cold hardy. One strategy that trees use is to keep all their water inside their cells. Frozen water expands. If all that water froze and expanded the cells would burst. To combat this trees move minerals and hormones in to mix with the water. Mixing water drops the freezing point, so that plants' cells don't freeze and burst. Another strategy is to move the water out of the cells so that it can freeze safely in the intracellular space. When spring rolls around temperatures start to rise and trees will start to bud out because they have satisfied their chill hours requirement. However, if plants start to bud out and then we have another freeze, that can kill off the buds and cause damage to the trees. We saw that happen this year with a couple of freezes in April and then one on May 10. Evergreens will continue to need water throughout the winter. If the soil freezes for long periods, the roots can't take up the water. Deciduous trees, trees that lose their leaves, will not need as much water. Roots in trees will continue to grow as long as soil temperatures are over 40 degrees. Soil temperatures are warmer than air temperatures in the winter because they are insulated. If you have questions about trees and dormancy contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.



Watching and Working
Jacob Williams

Precision Agriculture

Precision Agriculture is a farming management concept based on observing, measuring, and responding to inter and intra-field variability in crops. The goal of precision agriculture research is to define a decision support system for whole farm management with the goal of optimizing returns on inputs while preserving resources. The practice of precision agriculture has been enabled by the advent of GPS and GNSS. Similar data is collected by sensor arrays mounted on GPS-equipped combine harvesters.

Precision agriculture has also been enabled by unmanned aerial vehicles like the DJI Phantom which are relatively inexpensive and can be operated by novice pilots. These agricultural drones can be equipped with multispectral or RGB cameras to capture many images of a field that can be stitched together using photogrammetric methods to create orthophotos. These composite maps contain multiple values per pixel in addition to the traditional red, green blue values such as near infrared and red-edge spectrum values used to process and analyze vegetation indexes such as NDVI maps. These drones are capable of capturing imagery and providing additional geographical references such as elevation, which allows software to perform map algebra functions to build precise topography maps.

It is expected that by 2050, the global population will reach about 9.6 billion, and food production must effectively double from current levels in order to feed every mouth. With new technological advancements in the agricultural revolution of precision farming, each farmer will be able to feed 265 people on the same acreage.

The first wave of the precision agricultural revolution came in the forms of satellite and aerial imagery, weather prediction, variable rate fertilizer application, and crop health indicators.

The second wave aggregates the machine data for even more precise planting, topographical mapping, and soil data. Prescriptive planting is a type of farming system that delivers data-driven planting advice that can determine variable planting rates to accommodate varying conditions across a single field, to maximize yield.

Precision agriculture is usually done as a four-stage process to observe spatial variability: Precision agriculture uses many tools but here are some of the basics: tractors, combines, sprayers, planters, diggers, which are all considered auto-guidance systems. The small devices on the equipment that uses GIS are what makes precision ag what it is.

You can think of the GIS system as the "brain." To be able to use precision agriculture the equipment needs to be wired with the right technology and data systems. Geolocating a field enables the farmer to overlay information gathered from analysis of soils and residual nitrogen, and information on previous crops and soil resistivity. Many farmers operate the same way their father and grandfather did because it's what they were taught, but this day and time with the cost of all of the inputs into a crop spiraling upward every year, the modern farmer can't afford to do what they have always done and must adapt to the best technology available to maximize yields and maintain the soil's fertility so the next crops will benefit from the current practices on the land. The goal of farmers must be maximizing profits and to produce crops to feed the ever-growing world.

For more information on Precision Ag, check with UGA Extension Service.



RC&D
Frank Riley
Executive Director

Letters to The Editor

Wilderness Scouts

Dear Editor,

Thank you for publishing the excellent article on "Wilderness Scouts". As fairly new residents of Young Harris, we had never heard of this vital and worthwhile organization which helps families in need in Appalachia.

This is a heart-warming, well-written, first-hand account of the crucial assistance which Wilderness Scouts provides. We will be making a contribution to such a worthy cause and encourage others to do the same.

Jim and Linda Worl

Can You Believe It?

Dear Editor,

Can you believe that Sleepy Joe came out of his padded basement and kicked Trump's butt all over the country, including Georgia? Why did this happen?

For the last four years we have had the worst president in modern history. He has damaged our standing around the globe, abused the power of his office, engaged in rampant corruption and incompetent statecraft. He is a racist demagogue who made America more polarized, more paranoid and meaner.

Yet, over 72 million people voted for a second term. Given his offensive rhetoric toward women how could any enlightened Christian think about giving Trump a second term?

Today, over 77 million Americans have said they are sick of Trump's act. The bigger picture appears the descent of the Republican Party which now prefers conspiracy theories over facts and magical thinking over science.

Looking forward to several years of Biden/Harris leadership.

Bill Day

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