DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Time to Break for Christmas

Christmas Eve, December 1914 WWI on the Western Front of one of the bloodiest wars ever up through the time; if they could do it, why can't we all? And if it can be done for a day, why not all year round?



What am I rambling about? The historic "Christmas Truce" of WWI. A British machine gunner, Bruce Bairnsfather told the world about it from his memoirs of that brutal time. Those muddy miserable trenches were unfortunately the tortured homes of soldiers on both sides of this conflict. Sleeplessness, fear, cold, shivering in the muck accompanied by stale biscuits and wet cigarettes was their only comforts. The only way any of these guys foresaw going home was death or in an ambulance.

At about 10 PM Christmas EVE all this changed when voices were heard all across the killing fields singing songs and Christmas carols. Then German soldiers were calling out for British and allies to meet them and rejoice. Someway this same scenario caught on all across the Western Front with French, German, Belgian and British troops declaring their own cease-fire in the name of Christ, love of fellow man and joy to be alive. Handshakes, songs, hugs, tobacco, wine and food were shared all across the war zone. There were even some impromptu soccer games to be had. Where'd they get the soccer balls?

Of course all this was unauthorized by high command, not to be excluded from this criticism, was one German soldier of hate, named Adolph Hitler who severely scolded his fellow soldiers with, "Such a thing should not happen in wartime. Have you no German sense of honor left?" British General sin Horace Smith-Dorian wrote "this is only illustrative of the apathetic state we are gradually sinking in to". In my humble opinion I would say that this event and Christmas is more representative of great human beings rising to the occasion of doing an awful job for their respective nations guided by the misguided political class who decided to take a Christmas break as the loving humans they really were. Here at Christmas we should strive to do the same, every day of the year. Hard to do? Sometimes but if those soldiers could do it in the muck, mire, blood and death they were surrounded with, certainly we can.

Please take note there were over fifteen million lives lost in that war, "The Great War to end all Wars", which of course it didn't.

Blessings to ALL in our wonderful North Georgia Mountain community who sent prayers up for my wonderful wife. Sherry and her battle against the brutish killer we all rightfully hate, cancer. It's been a tough year. I'm afraid there will never be a "Christmas Break" in that war which inadvertently affects so many of us.

Semper Paratus

Letters to The Editor

Response to Two Letters

Dear Editor,

Two letters in last week's paper entitled "Carbon Tax Scam" and "I'm from the Government" are very disheartening since they do not take seriously the grave, observable threat of climate change as reported recently by several international, national and state scientific organizations.

While many cities, towns, states, private companies and our military are already making plans to counter the effects of climate change, the current administration refuses to admit its existence and has withdrawn the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accords – the only country of the of the United Nations to do so. The only way to effectively combat climate change is by all of us: private citizens and companies as well as local, state and federal governments, working together. Fortunately, many of our legislators are already working to implement national policies to combat climate change. There are bi-partisan Climate Solutions Caucuses in both the House and the Senate. The Energy Independence and Carbon Dividend Act (H.R. 763) has already been introduced in the House with bi-partisan support. It is, in fact, one of the least invasive ways to cut down on carbon emissions, since it is revenue neutral. The rise in energy prices, which will help reduce carbon emissions, is is more than offset by the dividends that will be returned to citizens. It is estimated that this will reduce carbon emissions by 40 % in 12 years, as well as create over 1 million new jobs. How can we not work together to meet this challenge? **Bob Dalsemer**

'Tis the Season, Again...

We gather often this time of year. We visit our friends and families. We go to office parties. We attend more church services. We go to stores and shopping malls and we make twice as many trips to the grocery store onthemiddlepath.com as usual. We eat out more as our



instinct to gather is at its highest. Little passengers ride along with us on our travels. Viruses and bacteria, which are always present, begin to find purchase on our unwashed handshaking, buggy pushing, door opening hands. They float into our nasal passages which are more vulnerable when they are dry and cracked open because the humidity is so low, as it is in many of our homes now since we turned on the heat. Influenza is already making headlines in the Southeast, and here at home we're being visited by the two week demon cold with the cough that never goes away. Unfortunately the things we enjoy most about the season are also the things that contribute to the spread of colds and flu. Uncle Bert wasn't feeling very good when he got on the plane to visit the relatives for Thanksgiving. Mid flight he wasn't feeling good at all, and didn't quite get that sneeze covered in time. A few days later the young mother who was sitting next to Bert noticed a sore throat when she dropped her kids off at the daycare, and a week later half the kids in daycare and several of their parents were sick.

The spread of cold and flu viruses is a natural consequence of the season. But there are two factors which contribute heavily to the spread of disease, and both of them are avoidable. The two things we're going to talk about this week are: Stupidity and selfishness. Here's a flu season vignette for your consideration Let's see how it compares with your own experience. We were eating in a restaurant in "another town." (No one would ever do something like this in Hiawassee or Young Harris, right?) The waiter approached the table with a complexion which evoked an image of the skin on a bowl of cold gravy. We exchanged greetings, and in response to "How are you?" he said, "I was really sick yesterday but I feel a little better today. I should probably still be at home." At that exact moment we noticed his thumbs in the plates he was bringing to our table. One thumb was cozied right up to my pancake. My appetite evaporated like a drop of water on a hot skillet. I noticed that unconsciously my wife and I had both retreated to the far side of the booth we were sitting in, and I was holding my breath. My first instinct was to say nothing, get up and leave the restaurant. What would you do? With an airborne virus, the damage was already done, and while we live in an age where making a scene is, sadly, growing more commonplace, it would have accomplished nothing. We opted to have a quiet word with the owner instead (and I discarded the part of my pancake with the thumbprint).

'But you have to understand, some people can't afford to miss work, and they might not get paid for being home sick!"

I understand. I also understand that for the elderly and people with compromised immune systems, getting the flu is far more than an inconvenience. I understand that some people who do get paid sick days at work use them for paid mini vacations, and when they really do get sick, they show up for work. I understand that when an employee does not demonstrate enough responsibility to stay home when they're sick, it's up to the manager or owner of the business to be accountable and send that person home. It would behoove them also to avoid punishing an employee for being out sick, and to allow that person to make up lost time. We all understand that economics is a big factor in this equation.

The sick employee is trying to make a dollar and the business is trying to save one. But as a business owner, consider this. Which would you prefer? Would you rather lose a few dollars having to pay someone overtime to cover the shift of a sick employee, or would you rather lose my business for the entirety of the flu season while I tell all my friends and associites why I'm not eating at your restaurant? Here's a conversation I overheard at the grocery store when a woman ran into someone she knew: "I can't seem to shake this cold. I've been so miserable at home, I just had to get out of there." She said this while picking up tomatoes and examining them before putting them back in the bin. She paused to sneeze into her hand before resuming her tomato inspection.

Dogwoods

This week I am going to talk about dogwoods. Dogwoods are always a favorite of mine in the spring. They also have great fall color in their deep red leaves. They are not difficult to grow given the right conditions, and



they are found naturally, as they are a native plant. Let's talk about varieties, where they like to grow, taking care of them, and pests that can be a problem for them.

The showy flowers on dogwoods are actually not flowers. They are bracts that turn white. Bracts are usually there to support the flower. The actual flower is the in the center of the four white, showy bracts.

Dogwood varieties are split into white bracts and red/ pink bracts. Some white bracted varieties are Barton, Cherokee Princess, Bay Beauty, and Welchii. Some red/pink bracted varieties are American Beauty Red, Cherokee Sunset, and Junior Miss. Most of the dogwoods planted in Georgia are the native white bracted variety. Most white varieties are grown from seed. You can also purchase dogwoods that are grown from vegetative cuttings. Plants grown from vegetative cuttings are usually more expensive but they may flower earlier or have more showy flowers.

Since they are native, dogwoods are well adapted to the soils that we have in the mountains. However, there are a couple of things to keep in mind if you are selecting a site to plant them. They do like well-drained soils, so planting them in a place with some slope will help. Planting them in a poorly drained area will most likely result in the tree dying. Dogwoods also like areas that have partial shade. If they are planted in full sun, they're more likely to have health problems down the road. If they are planted in dense shade they can grow, but won't flower as much. Planting along a tree line is a good place for them. When planting make sure you dig a hole 2-3 times the size of the rootball. You want the root ball to be level with the surface of the soil, and then backfill the hole with soil. Place mulch on top of the bare soil. Container grown trees can be planted at any time so long as you take care to keep them watered. Balled and burlapped trees can be planted when the trees are dormant (November - March). Newly planted trees don't need fertilizer because that can actually make it more difficult for them to take up water.

The most common insect pest dogwoods have is the dogwood borer. It's a moth that in the caterpillar stage will bore into trees. The best prevention is to make sure you don't damage the bark of the tree with lawn mowers or weed eaters. Dogwood anthracnose is a disease that can kill dogwoods. The symptoms are leaf spots and stem cankers. Spot anthracnose can also cause leaf spot, but is usually not fatal to the tree.

Kousa dogwoods have become popular because of their brilliant blooms in the spring. They will put on a ton of large flowers. Our native dogwoods are Cornus florida and the kousa dogwood is Cornus kousa. Kousa dogwoods are originally from Japan, Korea, and China.

If you are ever in Chattanooga on the Incline Railway there are some beautiful dogwoods planted along the ascent. Dogwoods are beneficial to wildlife and well adapted to our environment, so they are a great choice for planting. If you have questions about dogwoods contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.



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.

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Exposure to cold and flu viruses is unavoidable. Being selfish and stupid is entirely avoidable. If you're sick, STAY HOME. It doesn't matter how bored you get or how bad your cabin fever becomes. That is no justification for exposing people to your germs. If you simply must go out, wear a mask and gloves. I will be forever grateful to the sick woman I saw last week who wore a mask to the drugstore to pick up her medication.

Staying home is also an option for people with weak or compromised immune systems, and a mask and gloves is a good idea for you as well on those occasions when you just have to go out. It doesn't matter how it looks, and if people recoil or give you extra space because they think you're sick, so much the better. Perhaps we should also learn to politely confront situations where we are needlessly exposed to germs. God knows we're becoming adept at confronting people about things that don't matter, like political opinions. The guy holding the damp Kleenex in one hand, stocking the grapes at the grocery store with the other, nose dripping into the bin, should be ashamed. Should we confront him, or talk to the manager? Every situation is different.

Probably the best we can hope for, however, is to better manage our own behavior during flu season, and common sense is a good guide. We can shop during hours when there are fewer people in the stores (and most of us could shop less this time of year). We can treat every surface that can be touched by human hands as contaminated. We can wash our hands as many times as needed. We can program ourselves to keep our fingers away from our faces in between hand washings (and teach our kids to do the same). We can wash our produce with vinegar and/or peroxide. We can reschedule gatherings of family and friends for a time when everyone is healthy. Science continues to battle sickness, but there is little we can do in the battle against stupidity and selfishness. Yet we continue to try, and if one person listens, if one sick person decides it's probably not a good idea to go to the movies; if one manager decides to send home the waiter with the gravy complexion, then our effort has not been wasted

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.

"You know, cracking into the issues is a good way to get egg on your face!"

Towns County Community Calendar

	Every Monday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
	Every Tuesday:	
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Sharp UMC (Men)	7 pm
	Every Wednesday	
Alcoholics Anon.	Hiawassee UMC	Noon
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Thursday:	
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
	Every Friday:	
Movers & Shakers	Sundance Grill	8 am
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	Every Sunday:	-
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
	nd Tuesday of each month:	
Conv./Vis. Bureau	Civic Center	8 am
Gem & Mineral Club	Senior Center	1:30 pm
Arts & Crafts Guild	Calvary Church	4 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Mtn. Coin Club	N. GA Tech	6 pm
Second	Wednesday of each month:	
Basket Weavers	SC Fire Hall	10 am
USCG Aux.	Senior Center	7 pm
Second	d Thursday of each month:	
Hiaw Writers	Hiaw Pk. Comm. Rm.	10:30
Awake America Prayer	Civic Center	Noon
Mtn. Comm. Seniors	Senior Center	1 pm
Democratic Party	Civic Center	6 pm
Thire	d Monday of each month:	-
Hospital Auxiliary	Cafeteria	1:30 pm
Planning Comm.	Civic Center	6 pm
MOAA	Michael email mva62sgn@	@brmemc.net
Thir	d Tuesday of each month:	
YH Plan Comm.	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

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