

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Our Veterans keep contributing

They always seem to find productive and much needed ways to support themselves and families, if the slightest opportunity exists. As one of those individuals, here comes Richard (Rick) Conner. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on July 14, 1953, he and his family didn't intend to stay there long. Moving to Hayesville, NC in 1966, they shortly thereafter moved to Peachtree, NC, just this side of Murphy.

**The Veterans' Corner**  
 Scott Drummond  
 USCG Veteran



Rick couldn't wait until finishing high school, thus at age eighteen he enlisted in our US Navy. He served "three years, nine months and twenty nine days". As per Rick, he followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather both Veterans of the Navy. This was one of his life's goals. Rick had a very interesting time in the Navy, at our US Naval air base in GITMO, Cuba. Refueling aircraft was among some of his primary responsibilities. Rick describes himself as stubborn, as many of us were as teenagers and young servicemen and also stated that he became a crew chief or "plane captain", being the first and last face the pilots see upon takeoff and landings. That responsibility on the ground crew and checking off every detail on an aircraft is no job to be taken lightly. Rick's "stubbornness" may've assured that every little thing was absolutely perfect before those aircraft left the ground. He was also responsible for ground care of the famous A5 Vigilante jet.

Rick says he grew up in the Navy and visited such places like Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy, South Africa, Albany and Key West. Imagine flying to those places in military aircraft! He was discharged from Key West, Florida Naval Base and came back to Peachtree, NC and married his high school sweetheart, Gail. Rick "bounced around" taking on several jobs, mostly in all forms of construction, in and around the North Carolina and Georgia Appalachian Mountain region. The year 1980 was important to Gail and Rick with the birth of their son and starting a successful and much needed chimney sweep business. Then in April of 2003 Rick, Gail and their right hand man Mitchell bought and currently run "The Fire Place" in Hiwassee. They sell, maintain and install all manner of woodstoves, propane gas log inserts, propane heaters, and offer advice on these beautiful home heating appliances. This type heating is sometimes very essential as alternative or even primary warmth during power outages in some of our extreme cold winters. They serve the "tri-state area" and have gone as far south as Atlanta. Rick has managed to master unusual, as well as interesting jobs in both military and civilian life that most of us either take for granted or never think about. As with most Veterans, Rick 'stubbornly' attested to the fact that "I am a Patriot, I love America, and yes I'd enlist in the Navy if I had it to all do over."

*Semper Paratus*

## The Case for Civility

Hands up, anyone whose opinion has been changed by being slammed, punked, embarrassed, humiliated or publicly shamed?

Right. None of us. So what purpose does it serve when we post derogatory things about people, politicians, political parties or x-axis orientations on the internet?

Before we try to answer that, consider this: Most of our friends, the real ones, not the pixelated ones on social media, already agree with us. Statistically (and sadly, if you ask me) we gravitate almost exclusively toward people who view the world just like we do.

When we denigrate people who think differently, we are simply reinforcing our "positionality." (You can look that one up in the urban dictionary.) When we become positional and encourage others to do the same, we are less likely to be open to new information. Yes, it makes us dumber. Yay team.

In many cases our aggressive negativity helps to create or reinforce fear, anger and mistrust, which have very little chance of finding a constructive outlet. Unresolved anger can make us feel bad. It can, in fact, make us sick. It can and does spread like a virus.

None of us are completely without responsibility when it comes to encouraging negativity. I spent much of 2016 writing quite disrespectfully (and occasionally, humorously) about what I saw as two of the most unlikely candidates to ever run for the presidency. I had hoped to contribute in some small way to the erosion of the great cults of personality that seem to form around our leaders and our celebrities. But as we will soon see, many of us are conditioned to take a long list of things very personally these days.

Baked into our political paradigm is a logical fallacy called the "false dilemma," and over the last thirty years the false dilemma of the two party system has made us subject to manipulation through controlled opposition. This is why some things never change, no matter which party assumes control.

But something very interesting happens between the horns of this dilemma. As the political campaign progresses and contenders are eliminated, the survivors begin to take on a mantle of respectability among their respective supporters which is often completely divorced from the facts. This is because we become personally invested in the IMAGE of the candidates, and when those images are attacked, we take it personally. We feel like WE have been attacked.

Meanwhile, the candidate we do not support becomes a straw man (or woman), and that negative image is reinforced by rumor, innuendo and outright deception.

By the end of the campaign we have two candidates and four illusions running for one office: one chimera, and one straw man for each candidate, and millions of people have come to either personally identify with or vilify those images. When one of these illusions finally wins the election, some of us will never again see the real person or the real effects of their actions as president. We see them through the filters of our altered perception.

Why? Because these illusions are constantly reinforced. Currently, there are several corporations which stand to lose power because of the election of Trump, corporate media in

particular. Also, the media giants and Hollywood are still smarting over the realization that they are less relevant than they believed. Being irrelevant not only affects ego; it affects profit.

Therefore, the attacks on Trump, the straw man, continue. For example, the "gag order" on federal agencies being trumpeted by the press and in social media, the one which is supposed to signal Trump's rejection of "science," has long been standard procedure during transitions from one Administration to the next.

Nevertheless, in the current climate, where everything, and I mean everything, is dramatized by media, the future of humanity is at stake at every turn. Don't we all feel better when we are fighting the good fight and defending the weak against evil forces? Sure we do. Trouble is, so do our opponents.

Never forget that the same thing happened during the Obama Administration. Although 5 of the 6 media giants generally supported him, the opposition was well funded; social and "alternative" media was inundated by attack memes, and for many people, no matter what Mr. Obama said or did, he was always wrong and always possessed of evil intent.

We desperately need a more mature understanding of what actually happens in and through Washington. Scratch the surface of the headlines and there is another story about the differing goals and philosophies of the companies that run the nation's capital. Time Warner, Disney and Verizon, for example, have a very different worldview than Exxon-Mobile and the energy giants. Beneath that, when we look at the companies which contribute heavily to both Democrats and Republicans, we see another story.

Have you noticed that the banksters that were heavily represented in the Obama Administration are now taking up positions within Trump's Administration? Hard to miss if you've been paying attention.

If Goldman Sachs can work equally well with Democrats and Republicans, we would be wise to ask ourselves, what purpose might be served by driving a wedge between two fairly evenly balanced factions of the voting population?

The answer to that will probably be found by observing where wealth has accumulated over the last 30 years - and where it has diminished.

The final questions for today are these: When we pass along an attack meme, click "like" and "share," (which for many of us is the extent of our engagement with the challenges we face), when we insult or denigrate someone with whom we disagree, are we helping to drive deeper the wedge that divides our country? Most assuredly.

Also, if we were receiving, rather than giving, a medicinal dose of truth, would we prefer that to be in the form of a lozenge flavored with civility - or a suppository? Let the Golden Rule apply.

## The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

## Soil Sampling

Last week I talked about soil health, and how a soil test is essential to getting the most out of your property. However, there's more to a good soil sample than digging a chunk of dirt out of the ground and sending it off to the lab! Here are some key steps in getting the most out of your soil samples:

**UGA extension**  
 From the Ground Up  
 Melissa Mattee



1. Know how to take cores for your sample. A "core" refers to the portion of soil that you remove from the sampling site using either a core sampler or a trowel. The best way to take a comprehensive soil sample is to collect 5-10 cores in a zig-zag pattern throughout the entire area. As you collect your cores, mix the soil together in a clean plastic bucket. Once you've collected all your cores and mixed the soil well, fill the soil sample bag to about two-thirds full.

2. Decide what you want to plant. When you drop off your soil sample to the extension office, you will designate what crops will be planted in the soil you are testing. Your test results will tell you how suited your soil is to those crops and what fertilizers to apply to make sure they have adequate nutrition and soil conditions. You can select up to 5 plant codes per sample bag, so if you have more than 5 crops you want to test for, you will need additional soil bags. You can get soil bags from our extension offices.

3. Make sure the soil sample is clean. If you're assessing your lawn, clear away any grass or mulch to prevent sampling these materials with your core. If you're sampling a wooded area, clear away leaf litter and pine straw. Never sample your soil with tools that have been used for fertilizer or lime, as this could skew your soil test results.

4. If your soil sample is very moist, you should let it air dry overnight before packing it in a sample bag. Removing the moisture also helps prevent inaccurate results.

Once you've collected your soil sample, you can bring it to the extension office and we will ship it to the UGA Soil Testing Lab for you. We charge \$10 per soil sample bag to cover lab fees and shipping, and we can send you your test results by mail or e-mail. When you get your results, call me with any questions or concerns you may have and I'll be happy to go over your soil profiles with you!

If you want to learn more about soil management, Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center and UGA Extension are conducting a soil health field day on February 17th at GMREC. Registration and refreshments begin at 9:00am and presentations begin at 10:00am. Topics include ideal soil profiles, improving soil health, federal conservation programs, and soil testing and interpretation. Lunch is provided and the program concludes at 1:00pm.

Union and Towns County Extension will hold the Annual Northeast Georgia Corn Production meeting will be Wednesday, February 22 from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. Topics will include best management practices in corn production, corn disease identification and management, pest management, and nutrition requirements. There will be pesticide credit available at this meeting: one hour for private applicators and three hours for commercial applicators in category 21. Please RSVP by 5 p.m. Friday, February 17th to the Union County Extension Office at (706) 439-6030. Lunch will be provided!

## Letters to The Editor

### Letter to the Editor:

There is a rush to hearings for the members of the Trump Administration cabinet. The ethics vetting has not been completed before the hearings began. This is important as we should know what business ties a candidate has with the agency they will oversee. We also need to know more about their experience and how they may lead their agency.

For example Betsy DeVos is the pick for the Department of Education. She does not have educational experience. She is a large political donor and advocate for the takeover of public schools by for profit charter schools. Georgia voters defeated an amendment last year that would have allowed the state takeover of public schools. What do we want for the future of our schools?

Meanwhile, success in business does not preclude public service. I'm sure they bring skill and insight. The ethics review and hearings should tell us if they are a fit for the new role.

President-Elect Trump has not been forthcoming about this vast business interests. He refuses to disclose his taxes, he has not separated himself from his business. As a past purveyor of conspiracy theories himself, he should know how this appears and the rumor and distrust that follows. He continues to defend Russia and denigrate our own intelligence agencies.

Who voted for who last November is not the issue. Where we are now and what we should demand to know of the President-Elect and his administration is the issue.

*Thank You,  
 Andrea Compton*

### Dear Editor:

It is good to see that Mr. Spears is still around and still holding the wrong end of the stick. Mr. Spears like many others who have moved into the area seem to think that they still live in "St. Elsewhere" where they have tremendous zoning laws and regulations all the way to where and when you can wipe the soles of your shoes.

When we say we don't want high rises to spoil the beauty, we are referring to the beauty of the mountains, which has nothing to do with what a property owner can do legally with it. A 5 story building is not legal at this time in Towns County and I hope it never will be. As to the locations mentioned, the old Mohawk building as of last week when I passed by was not in disrepair, yes, empty, but with properly maintained green areas. As to the other vacant buildings in Hiwassee, what exactly does Mr. Spears pretend to do with them? A number of businesses who have been around not only for years but also decades have been forced to close their doors due to the long lasting bad economy. Not having the money to remain in business, are they expected to put a new facade on the buildings as they leave to satisfy the Mr. Spears of the County? And what is the incoming Commissioner supposed to do with them when they are in the city of Hiwassee where he has no governance? Maybe Mr. Spears can get together with the other unsatisfied residents and pool their money and do something about their so called eyesores, for I don't want the new Commissioner spending my tax money doing so, because if he does I know my next year's taxes will be double.

I would also suggest that if someone wants to write about the issues of the 5 story buildings, then do so and not go off on an impossible tangent. And I would also suggest that those who are dissatisfied with the fact that we do not have "St. Elsewhere's" rules and regulations, go back to their St. Elsewheres and leave us to enjoy the real Towns County. This subject has been hashed and re-hashed over the years and it seems that many do not understand the workings of Towns County. Maybe we should institute a new regulation making Realtors sit potential new comers to the County to watch an hour long video showing all of Mr. Spears' eyesores. Lets get real, folks.

*John Fitzgerald*

"Mostly I watch the Superbowl for the commercials and the food..."



"...But not this year!"



## Towns County Community Calendar

	Every Monday:	
Bridge Players	Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
	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
	First Monday of each month:	
Mtn. Amat. Radio	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	6:30 pm
	First Tuesday of each month:	
Alzheimer's Supp.	McConnell Church	1:30 pm
American Legion	VFW Post 7807	4 pm
Hiaw. City Council	City Hall	6 pm
Young Harris Coun.	YH City Hall	7 pm
	First Wednesday of each month:	
Quilting Bee	McConnell Church	10 am
	First Thursday of each month:	
Stephens Lodge	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
	Second Monday of each month:	
Chamber Board	1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
Historical Society	Old Rec. Center	5:30 pm
Mtn. Comp. Users	www.mcug.org	6 pm
Planning Comm.	Courthouse	7 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoy Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
	Second Tuesday of each month:	
Caregiver support	Brasstown Manor	3 pm
Arts & Crafts Guild	Danely's Alliance Chapel	6 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Mtn. Coin Club	N. GA Tech	6 pm

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## Towns County Herald

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