

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Our Young Folks are Our Future

Without getting into the political aspects of what seems to have transpired, I would like to say that instead of looking at this as "our glass is 75% empty", I believe our "glass is 25% FULL!"

The Veterans' Corner Scott Drummond USCG Veteran



Here's a glimpse of research based upon a news report I saw on TV touting that 75% of our kids aren't qualified for military service. I was surprised to say the least. So I did my own research. Please read: By NOLAN FEENEY June 29, 2014

"Approximately 71% of the 34 million 17-to-24-year-olds in the U.S. would not qualify for military service because of reasons related to health, physical appearance and educational background, according to the Pentagon.

The ineligible typically includes those who are obese, those who lack a high school diploma or a GED, convicted felons, those taking prescription drugs for ADHD and those with certain tattoos and ear gauges, the Wall Street Journal reports, though some requirements can be waived.

Only 1% of young people are both "eligible and inclined to have conversation with" the military about possible service, according to the Defense Department.

So much for that stuff!

I have been very blessed, not just to make my home here in Towns County but to meet some of God's finest people not just us older Veterans but young people who truly love America. Just this last week I met a wonderful young lady with her roots here, who explained to me that her husband was just a short day or so away from enlisting in our USAF when he suffered a permanent injury which prevented him from enlisting. She went on telling me that his close pals, from Towns County High School went ahead with their military service to America. The young man who couldn't enlist, from what I'm told is extremely patriotic and even with his disability would serve America in any way possible today! How inspiring is that?

As it was with those of us who by choice enlisted in one of our five branches of our nation's military, there are plenty of young people that never make the news stories or participate in some of these polls or surveys. And they'd do whatever it takes in order to "buff up" and meet requirements if need be. They are quiet, unsung future heroes who can and will serve when their time comes. And I will always honor and respect those who were drafted during those bygone years, as they sure as heck didn't want any part of our military, but they gritted their teeth and served. Many never returned and just like all who volunteered and never came home, all throughout America's history, they are our true Heroes to be honored forever.

So for those young folks who may read this and their parents, bear in mind that many of us matured and became men and women by the opportunities and challenges offered to us way back when we were young and searching for our own futures.

Semper Paratus

Staying on Target

Whether we want it or not, we're going to be hearing about guns and gun control for some time to come. There is a better than average chance that you already have a strong opinion on the subject, and there is a less than average chance that your opinion will ever change. Nevertheless, in keeping with what we try to do here, we're going to make an effort. We know we're not going to change your mind, but if you are a rational human being, when you are exposed to new information you may change it yourself. At the very least, you may become more capable of compromise, and compromise is needed on this issue, like so many others in these partisan times.

Some of you will already be experiencing a tightening of the jaw and an increase in blood pressure, and we haven't even offered an opinion on guns or presented any new information on this controversial subject. Gun rights belongs to a perennial list of issues that, either by design or by tacit approval, are used on a regular basis to accomplish specific goals. They inflame us. They increase ratings and website traffic. They galvanize political support. We are not suggesting that people on both sides of the issue lack sincerely held beliefs and honorable intentions. But as our culture fragments into almost tribal constituencies, we signal our allegiance to our "tribe" by automatically embracing the opinion that is sanctioned by that tribe. When we become positional, new information has little chance to become incorporated into our thinking processes.

But we will take that chance. First, some new information, particularly for those who are wired for conservative opinions. (Any veterans in this group may want to skip ahead. This is old information for you.) The AR-15, such as the one used in the Parkland, Florida school massacre, is a civilian version of the famous M-16, which has been in service since 1964. It fires a 5.56 mm round. This round, propelled at a muzzle velocity of around 3250 feet per second, was designed for one thing: To kill and incapacitate human beings.

The difference between an AR-15 and a military issue M-16 is that the former is a semi-automatic weapon (as are most modern rifles and handguns), while the M-16 and other military rifles are capable of automatic firing. When an AR-15 is outfitted with a bump stock, it is capable of firing at a rate that approaches that of a fully automatic weapon. Automatic weapons have been banned from civilian ownership since 1934. New laws have been introduced and modified several times since then to keep military hardware out of civilian hands, but the bump stock exists because of loopholes in current gun law. Your author was an ammo tech in the Marine Corps. You might be surprised, or appalled, at the lethality of some of the ordnance used by the United States and our allies, and the amount of research which has been geared toward achieving maximum destructiveness. The 5.56 mm round is particularly destructive to human tissue. By the process of cavitation, a bullet passing through flesh at a high velocity damages or destroys surrounding tissue at a much greater radius than the diameter of the round itself. But that's not the worst of it. The 5.56 mm round is designed to yaw, or tumble as it passes through its intended target. It is also designed to fragment when it impacts its target. Some of you may remember the boot camp demonstration where a 5.56 round that was fired into the top of a mattress - exited from the bottom, leaving a mangled path of destruction between entry and exit points. The same thing happens in a human body, and an entry wound the size of a pencil can become an exit wound the size of a plate.

No one who hunts for food would use a 5.56 NATO round. It tears up the meat. Yet this type of ammo is readily available to the general public, and apparently available to 19 year olds. If you are one of the people looking for rational solutions to the gun debate, keep this in mind, and to paraphrase an old cliché: Guns don't kill people. Bullets kill people.

Now for those who are wired for more liberal thought processes, one of the rallying cries for your cause is simply false. The recent tragedy in Parkland, FL, was not the deadliest school attack in American history. Not even close. That dubious distinction belongs to the Bath School attack in 1927, where a disgruntled farmer and school board member killed 45 people, mostly children, and injured 58, with explosives.

We can, perhaps, now upgrade our platitudes to the following: Guns, bullets and bombs kill people when they are directed to do so by human hands. If we take away guns and bullets, human ingenuity motivated by sickness of mind will always find a way to achieve violent ends. This is why compromise is desperately needed, because we are not facing a simple problem with a single solution.

Many of you who read this may remember thinking nothing of carrying a pocket knife to school. Some of you who grew up in rural areas might have belonged to a high school gun club, or you may remember driving to school in a pickup truck with a shotgun in the gun rack. You probably didn't even think to lock that truck when you got out to go to class. Things have changed. Our culture has changed. For whatever reason, there is more anger and more mental illness among us, and in the last decade or so, fewer resources for the mentally ill. There is strong evidence of a link between certain psychiatric drugs and the potential for violent behavior - a link which is vehemently denied by the same pharmaceutical industry which produces the opioids that now plague us.

Underneath it all, perhaps, is a culture steeped in violence, confused by mixed messages about what violence is. The same celebrities who shoot the bad guys in the films have the audacity to preach to others about the evils of gun ownership. We could write an entire series on the glorification of violence by hip-hop artists, some of whom have been honored guests in the White House.

At the extremes of this debate are those who would disarm us entirely and those who would arm teachers in their classrooms. In this humble opinion, both are exceedingly bad ideas. More rational minds desiring to meet somewhere in the middle should be asking different questions, and demanding answers to all of them: Why was a 19 year old able to purchase a weapon with an effective capacity of a military rifle? Why was he able to purchase military grade ammunition? More importantly, why did he wish to do so? Finally, why, when the safeguards we have for detecting such potential problems functioned properly, did the agencies responsible for protecting us fail to act?

The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

Winter Weeds

I've found that there are two main opinions on winter weeds: people either love to see the extra splash of color and happy bees in their yard, or they view the unwanted plants as nuisances that need to be dealt with. Either way, it's always good to be able to identify weeds and know what their presence indicates about the environment.

Overall, if your lawn has a lot of weeds, the soil conditions are not that great for your grass. If your grass does not have enough nutrients or the soil is too compacted, weeds can easily take control. While pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicides like pendimethalin and glyphosate can help prevent and kill weeds, you will likely continue to have weed problems year after year if you don't improve the soil enough for your grass to fill in.

Certain weeds can actually indicate specific conditions of your soil. Small hop clover is a small weed that has leaves grouped in threes and a small, globe-like yellow flower. If you have a lot of small hop clover in your yard, your soil is much too dry and does not have enough nitrogen. Annual bluegrass, which forms in clumps, usually indicates that there is too much nitrogen, water, and compaction. A lot of moss means there is too much shade, not enough drainage, and compacted soil.

A very common weed that is popping up everywhere right now is henbit. This plant has a dark, square stem with rounded leaves and tube-shaped, purple flowers. Overall, it can be considered a very attractive plant, but it spreads easily and can quickly take over a lawn. Dandelions are also blooming everywhere. These weeds start as bright yellow flowers but eventually turn into fuzzy white or gray globes with seeds in the middle. These seeds are then spread by air movement and begin to infest the rest of your lawns.

Henbit, dandelions and other weeds, though often viewed as pests, are actually the first source of nectar and pollen for bees. If you've ever rubbed your finger over a dandelion flower or perhaps sniffed it a little too closely, you'll notice that your skin is covered in yellow pollen. These ample food sources are very important to help bees recover from the harsh winter.

If you plan on improving your lawn's soil conditions but just can't wait to get those weeds out of your yard, give your lawn a good mow before treating with herbicides. Though there have not been any proven links between herbicide application and bee decline, it is always best to discourage pollinators from being present when chemicals are applied, especially if treating with a combination herbicide/insecticide. Mowing the weeds will also stress them, making them more susceptible to herbicide treatment.

For cool season grasses, which most of us have, September is the most important month for lawn care. What we do in the fall impacts the condition of our lawn in the spring, so it is always important to get a soil test done at least as soon as you see problems.

Union and Towns County Extension will be hosting production meetings over the next month. We have our North Georgia Vegetable Production Meeting on February 28th at the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center from 5 to 8:30 p.m. and the Northeast Georgia Corn Production Meeting March 13th, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. at the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center. Pesticide credit will be available for license holders, and dinner provided at both of these events, but ONLY to those who pre-register by calling Union County Extension at 706-439-6030 to reserve a plate.

UGA extension From the Ground Up Melissa Mattee



Letters to The Editor

Continuing the Conversation

Dear Editor,

Thank you for publishing my letter in January. I want to continue the public conversation and share information about the Environmental Protection Agency that is responsible for cleaning up the nation's most contaminated properties and waterways, among other things. One of their top managers, Barry Breen, told Congress in January that the government needs to plan for the ongoing threat posed to Superfund sites* from climate change in spite of the present Administration's reduction in funds, staffing and belief that climate change is a hoax.

The point is our "sick" waterways, especially in Georgia, need and must be cleaned up---for present and future use. This includes Georgia's multibillion dollar tourism, agriculture and fish industries; all are affected and if they are not healthy, eventually neither are we. This can be solved with the Carbon Fee and Dividend Plan as proposed by the Conservative Case for Carbon Dividends that is currently supported by a bi-partisan Climate Solutions Caucus now numbering 70. That's right, even Conservatives are on board and more are realizing the danger of inaction.

It's not complicated: the polluters are fined, the Carbon Fee, and the net funds (after admin costs) are distributed to legitimate households, the Dividend. We can and must do this. What's the alternative?

Bonny Herman

*A Superfund is created to deal with the clean-up of thousands of contaminated sites that exist nationally due to hazardous waste being dumped, left out in the open, or otherwise improperly managed. These sites include manufacturing facilities, processing plants, landfills and mining sites.

For example, in the late 1970s, toxic waste dumps such as Love Canal and Valley of the Drums received national attention when the public learned about the risks to human health and the environment.

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.

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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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"Why's the General Assembly pushing so hard to finally give us some tax cuts?"



"Gee, I have no idea."

Towns County Community Calendar

Table listing community events: Bridge Players, Bingo, Free GED prep, SMART Recovery, etc. with dates and times.

Towns County Herald

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