

Iwo Jima...from Page 1A

Members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion Post #23, Sons of American Legion Squadron #23, American Legion Riders, U.S. Marine Corps League Detachment #783, and North Georgia Honor Guard also attended the event with members of their families, all in the name of remembrance and honor for this 72nd anniversary.

The Battle of Iwo Jima would prove to be one of the most calamitous battles in World War II as well as American history.

From Feb. 19, 1945, to March 26, 1945, American forces suffered more than 26,000 casualties on the island, and nearly 7,000 soldiers lost their lives in the service of liberty and freedom for everyone back in the states and around the world.

Scott Drummond, retired U.S. Coast Guard, began the program by welcoming all in attendance to the ceremony to remember the battle that would pave the way for the end of World War II.

"Today we are fortunate enough to have several Iwo Jima survivors with us," said Drummond. "However, today we are not only here to celebrate their sacrifices for our nation, but each and every one of our fellow brothers and sisters who have served our United States of America in uniform."

"This is not about war so much as our freedoms, liberties and opportunities provided by our constitution, our unique sovereign republic, our United States of America, and each and every American."

Charley Andrews, U.S. Navy retired, introduced Towns County Sole Commissioner Cliff Bradshaw, as well as Mike Roby, District Commander of the Georgia Veterans Service.

Commissioner Bradshaw spoke to the group briefly, sharing his support for the veteran communities and the brave men and women who have served this country.

Roby spoke on behalf of the Veterans Service, congratulating the entities involved in organizing the ceremony. He expressed extreme gratitude for the veterans who have served, both today and in years past.

"It is an honor to be here today to celebrate these great men," said Roby. "Today, we commend men who have upheld a tradition of service that goes back to the founding of our nation, back to the great men who stepped forward to forge a nation dedicated to the principals of liberty and justice for all."

"Those of us who have served understand the need to defend these principals, and we answer our nation's call to do so. When the call came to combat oppression in the Pacific, these men answered."

"They faced an unbelievable challenge at Iwo Jima. They faced that challenge with courage and determination. These men were victorious and headed home to be with us today."

"We also honor those who paid the ultimate price



Commissioner Mike Roby of the Georgia Department of Veterans Service. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



Scott Drummond, retired U.S. Coast Guard. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



The North Georgia Honor Guard presented and retired the colors for the event at the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

at Iwo Jima. Their legacy of honor, courage and sacrifice will always be remembered."

Following Roby was the keynote speaker for the event, Brig. Gen. Bernard Fontaine, U.S. Army retired.

Fontaine enlisted in the military in October of 1960 after completing his education at the University of Massachusetts.

Throughout his career, Fontaine worked his way through the ranks, serving a tour in Vietnam and working in New Jersey and Georgia.

During his speech, Fontaine highlighted the efforts that led to the Battle of Iwo Jima, beginning in July of 1942 and following the U.S. military through its progression in Japan.

According to Fontaine, the victory of Iwo Jima was the result of these decisions and mindful calculations in the years leading up to the battle

in 1945.

"There are three types of veterans," said Fontaine. "The first one is the people who sign up. They deserve to be called veterans, whether they make it to the frontline or whether they don't."

"The next one is the one that's harder to talk about. I call it the survivors. This is something that I feel guilty about because I know there are better people who didn't make it. We shall never forget them."

"The third one is one that most people don't even talk about, and that is the people that stayed at home. These people who stayed home and waited for two years or three years, they are veterans also, and we better not forget it."

The ceremony ended with the laying of the memorial wreaths, followed by refreshments for all those who attended.

Big Green Egg fans and experienced cooks from all across the country and Canada.

"The cooks will be showcasing their skills and talents, and will be preparing their specialty recipes all day long."

"The non-cooks, or tasters, are free to stroll through the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, sample, and experience wonderful "Egged" food while talking to the cooks about their recipes and techniques."

The event grows every year, and though the Chef Tickets have already sold out, there are still plenty of Taster Tickets left for \$25.

"The Georgia Mountain Fair and the Fall Festival brochures have been ordered, so we should be getting those in shortly," said Thomason. "We've got all the talent booked for both the Fair and the Fall Festival."

Added Thomason: "We're just so happy that we've got all these events going on. It's bringing lots of business to the area."

Last year was a huge year for the fairgrounds, with acts like Lynyrd Skynyrd and the opening of the "Mountain Country Christmas in Lights!" winter attraction, but Thomason is confident that 2017 will outshine 2016 in the end.

"2016 was a great year, and 2017 is even greater," said Thomason. "It's just amazing all the things that we have going on. We've been very fortunate to be able to get some really good concerts."

Copeland...from Page 1A

in any marine accidents or incidents that may occur.

"We have the only dive team in this area," said Chief Copeland. "If there is a drowning or a recovery needed, we're trained to do that. These guys are highly trained to go in and get the job done."

"The thing about the lake, we do so much. We have to look at heart attacks on the lake, strokes on the lake, taking care of people getting lost on the lake. Sometimes there are boat crashes and Jet Ski crashes. This is just another aspect of what we do."

According to Chief Copeland, many of the calls received by the fire department consist of Appalachian Trail

related rescues that are executed by the department's search and rescue team.

"The Appalachian Trail is tough business," said Chief Copeland. "Last year, we started implementing what we call long-line rescue. This is where we fly a helicopter over and then, weather permitting, we drop a line down to help whoever is down there."

Providing safety and rescue are not the only contributions the fire department makes to the community. It also provides an educational program throughout the Towns County School System and to children at McConnell Baptist Church, something that Chief Copeland takes great pride in.

In addition to the programs within the schools, the fire department operates under the Firewise Program and promotes education for communities and individuals throughout the area.

"Any time your groups or your families want fire education, we're here for you for that as well," said Chief Copeland. "Public education is the most important deterrent to fires there is."

Before leaving, Chief Copeland assured the group that he would be back to speak again, and reminded all in attendance that the fire department was there to help out in any way possible.

Chief Copeland was elected County Coroner during the November elections.

LifeForce...from Page 1A

provided.

"AirMedCare owns the Erlanger Life Force helicopter," said Morse. "We're not a third party, we own our membership program. It's not insurance, that's why there isn't a co-pay, no deductible, no catastrophic cap, and there are no exclusions."

"Whatever insurance company you have, they find exclusions. While many insurance companies have policies that say they cover air medical, they do not include what percentage they cover, and that's where they get you."

"That's why this program was created. It's not just the program locally, it covers you nationwide, if you chose to get that \$35 upgrade. Right now, our customers in this area are covered within the city. The \$35 upgrade would cover all of the states, and it's a yearly fee."

This program through AirMedCare is something called a Municipal Site Plan, which allows municipalities to pay a fee upfront to provide citizens with free and/or discounted rates for the membership, depending on the

membership level.

While the coverage is available for anyone inside the city limits, there are certain stipulations that go along with the service pertaining to where a patient can use the services.

"The closest base to customers here is in Fannin County, Life Force 4," said Morse. "So, a person is covered within the county limits. If a person is flown from anywhere within the county, if the pick-up is there, then that person will never see a bill."

"While we're based out of Erlanger and it says Erlanger on the side of the helicopter, you don't have to be flown there. If you want to go to Piedmont or Emory, we will accommodate that, as long as it is a Level One or Level Two trauma unit."

Additionally, anyone who wishes can purchase an upgrade at the cost of \$35, and \$65 if outside city limits. This upgrade is available to residents at any time during the year, covers all members of the household and will be up for renewal annually.

Now, along with the traditional services,

Society honors history of black families in region



Annie Coker Burch, 1882-1910, lived in Towns County. Granddaughter of Newton Coker.

By Lily Avery
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

In honor of Black History Month, the Towns County Historical Society recently paid tribute to the region's rich heritage of black families that once lived in the county and surrounding areas.

"Finding the Forgotten: The African-American Families of Towns County," was the name of the well-attended program held on Monday, Feb. 13.

More than 100 history enthusiasts from Towns County, Union County and neighboring North Carolina towns Hayesville, Murphy and Franklin gathered together last week to learn about the lesser-known history of black families in Northeast Georgia.

Special guest Annie Lloyd of Hayesville began the evening with a performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner," before society member Jason Edwards dove into the history he spent months researching, a journey through time reaching back to the tail end of the 18th Century.

"The black community in Towns County existed until the early 1910s," said Edwards. "It was a vibrant, vital part of the community and went a long way to make us what we are today, even if we don't know that."

"When you do historical research, and I'm guilty of it, too, you tend to think of names on papers as just names on papers, but that's not the case. These were real people who lived and loved and worked and died and were missed."

"It just happens that over time, this community, with a few notable exceptions and stories passed down, slowly forgot that there used to be a fairly sizeable African-American community in Towns County."

According to Edwards, through the act of legislature, the slaves of Ezekiel Hudnall were freed in 1799. These slaves included a family, Bridget Walters and her children. At that time, Hudnall lived in Augusta.

Hudnall claimed that Bridget's children were his own

and wished to leave his entire estate to them. However, Hudnall also had children from a previous relationship, and the Walters children never received their inheritance because of the color of their skin. So, they moved to Franklin County.

Daniel, a son of Hudnall and Bridget, married a white woman named Francis Sexton. During this time, under a law passed in the state of Georgia in 1850, all freed slaves had to pay a tax of \$2, which was significantly more than the \$0.25 tax required of white men.

A product of this time period, free slaves, while still required to pay taxes, were also treated as children and were required to have a guardian to conduct any legal business. Daniel's wife, Francis, was documented as his legal guardian.

Although the state would not have sanctioned the marriage between Daniel and Francis, they bore 14 children together. However, through Edwards' research, he found that this family had a very interesting family tree.

"As you trace these children across the Southeast, some descendants, even now, are black and some are white," said Edwards. "The two groups often don't know the story here and what happened. That, in my research, has been quite a common thing."

One of Daniel's daughters, Lucinderella, married a man named Newton Coker, who was the son of a black man and a white woman. The couple moved to Towns County in the 1850s.

During the Creek War in 1836, Coker was in South Georgia building cabinets at a fort when the camp was attacked, so, he took up a gun.

For 30 years of his life, Coker tried unsuccessfully to receive a pension. At the time he picked up the gun, he was not

allowed to be in the army, and therefore was legally restricted from receiving funds for his service in the war.

"When the Cokers came to Towns County, they had to have a guardian, too," said Edwards. "Their guardian was S.Y. Jameson. In 1861, Georgia seceded from the Union, and one of the concerns that the state fathers had was what about the freed black people that were around."

"One of the senators proposed a bill that gave freed blacks 90 days to get out of the state of Georgia or to pick an owner. Now, you'll notice Mr. Jameson was in the notice as well and he offered up that Newt Coker and his wife be excluded."

The senate accepted Jameson's proposal, however, the proposed legislation never came to fruition.

Coker later became a well-respected doctor within the community, so much so that he was even allowed to treat white patients throughout the area. He died on March 16, 1906. He and his wife were buried at Pleasant Hill.

Edwards went on to share historical accounts of other black families in the region and the interesting lives they once lived, such as the Alston and Coffee family. These stories are only a small glimpse into the countless people who resided and thrived in the area until the 1910s.

"I'm often uncomfortable with the language, of saying owner and slave, and often want to water it down," said Edwards. "But I'm concerned that if you water it down, it takes away the sting."

"These were real people that somebody else thought they owned, like you would own a kitchen table. It's bizarre to me and I hope it's not something we ever forget."

ZZ Top...from Page 1A

welcome.

"The only time we ever have any concerts through the week is when the Fair's going on or the Fall Festival," said Thomason. "We've never had a big hard ticket concert through the week."

"So, this is exciting, and makes me happy that people want to come out and see a concert through the week when they have to work the next day."

"But that's great, and it's bringing a lot of people to town. A lot of the hotels are filling up because of it. We've sold nearly 1,900 tickets already."

There are still about 1,000 tickets available for the 7 p.m. show, which run \$77 per ticket, though sales are likely to pick up now that the show is less than a week out.

"We've had some calls for tickets from Arkansas and Texas, different places," said Thomason. "One guy called from Montana wanting to know what the closest airport was because he's going to fly in for it."

Of course, Thomason is

excited about other shows that are on the horizon, with some closer than others.

Wynonna & The Big Noise will be performing just a few days after ZZ Top, on Saturday, March 11.

Tickets to her 7 p.m. show run \$33 and \$43, depending on how close to the stage people want to sit, and there are still plenty of tickets left for that show.

Judd has several No. 1 hits to her name, including "To Be Loved By You," "No One Else on Earth" and "I Saw the Light."

"We got Martina McBride confirmed for June 23," said Thomason. "We also got Corey Smith confirmed for June 10. Of course, we've got Clint Black coming (April 7) and Trace Adkins (April 28)."

Thomason would also like everyone to mark their calendars for the 7th Annual Georgia Mountain EggFest, which will run two days at the fairgrounds on May 19 and May 20.

According to MountainEgg.com, "an EggFest is a gathering of

So. Appalachian Modern Quilt Guild meeting

Come join us on the second Thursday of each month, 6 p.m. at Bless My Stitches quilt shop in Murphy, NC. Our guild serves the tri-state area of Western North

Carolina, North Georgia and Eastern Tennessee. Come explore new ways to create modern quilts! Questions call Pam Howard - 828-835-6025.

(N.Mar.21)CA



Annie Lloyd of Hayesville, North Carolina