

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Letters to The Editor

**Letter to the Editor:**  
*Response to Wm. Ronald Gibson's Letter to The Editor of 3/15/17*

On March 9, 2017, I attended the meeting concerning a change to a single voting precinct in Towns County presided over by the Towns County Board of Elections. Each member of the board gave a portion of the presentation which was very well prepared and presented. The Board has spent a year researching and discussing their options on what they needed to do in order to be in compliance with all the new voting laws. It was apparent that some in attendance did not understand the process clearly. It is not easy to explain quickly.

The Towns County Board of Elections and Registration (all Boards in Georgia) fall totally under the jurisdiction and authority of the Georgia Secretary of State's Office. The Board's primary responsibility is to be in total compliance with all of the current Georgia voting laws. Board Members are subject to severe legal penalties if they do not comply. Board of Elections officials answer to the public through the offices of the State Attorney General and Secretary of State.

The Towns County Board of Elections and Registration dictates the structure of our county precincts and how many workers for each. However, the Secretary of State requires certification of all workers and sets office hours for operations. Being a poll worker requires strict dedication that few people are willing to make. It is not a part- or spare-time job. Poll workers can't just show up if they don't happen to be busy or not show up because they have something else to do. They have to be trained, certified, and able-bodied enough to perform a wide variety of election related tasks over the entire election period. Simply showing up is not enough.

The budget for the Board is established by Towns County. The Board cannot provide any money for one big reason. They do not have any income, except what they get from the county budget.

Towns County owns 33 voting machines. Using Mr. Gibson's 5-minute vote time, reveals the following: Election Day turnout in all 4 precincts was 1,857 votes. Thirty machines would have processed them in 5.15 hours in a single precinct setting. The rules have changed considerably since the previous boards operated 4 precincts. The current board has to conform to the new rules. Some present stated this would disenfranchise the new voters. Not true. The new systems would make voter registrations, corrections on addresses, name changes and identification of voters far more accurate and quick to do.

Some problems don't change much. Those that live in the far corners of the county still have the problem of traveling to where the action is, whether it is for the doctor, dentist, schools, groceries, gas or voting.

The Towns County Board of Elections has done a tremendous job of navigating through the landmines, torpedoes and potholes of mandates and rules of state compliance. A new and improved computerized system will insure an honest, valid and accurate vote that is compliant with the State requirements. Due to the Secretary of State's requirements that this computerized system be housed in a secure location and accessed by only certified staff, it is only available at the board's central office location and cannot be accessed from any remote location or precinct.

Thanks to efforts by the Board and Cliff Bradshaw, Towns County Single Commissioner, the Civic Center will serve as the new Single Precinct and Board Main Office. It will expedite voting and also serve as quick, accurate Voter Registration and Voting Information Center. It is a good location with good parking and easy and safe accessibility.

There has been an agreement between the City of Hiawassee and the Board of Elections that they will conduct City elections concurrently with County Elections using electronic voting machines. This will eliminate the use of the problematic paper ballot of the past. All of these changes also result in much more efficient operations with less people and considerable less expense. Great job by a dedicated group of citizens despite tough obstacles and tight monetary restrictions.

If you wish to be a volunteer poll worker, contact Dr. Janet Oliva, Towns County Board of Elections.

"Freedom isn't free". It doesn't cost much to pay vote regardless of where it is located. It is a small price to pay for an honest, true and fair election. That is the responsibility of the Towns County Board of Elections.

*John Holmes Voter & Taxpayer*

**Dear Editor:**

Where are our values?

It is time for us, as a country and as a civilization, to choose. What are the things that are really important to us? We can choose to exploit our earth and make as much profit as we can in the shortest period of time, or we can choose to protect our earth for future generations? Are my immediate financial gains more important than passing on a livable world for my children? History has taught us that proper decisions now about caring for our earth saves us many times what we pay for them. Damage done cannot be easily undone. What is the value of clean air, clean water, and protecting our world from the dangers of climate change? Are my immediate needs more important than the needs of billions of people that come after me? As Christians, perhaps we should ask ourselves what choice Jesus would make. Yes, it is time for us to choose, knowing that we live with the consequences of those choices.

*Vernon Dixon*

**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.*

**The comfort of hindsight**

Some of us are sentimental and some of us are not. Some of us have very good reasons for wanting to put the past behind us. Some of us treasure the past, or perhaps even cling to it. Nostalgia can be accompanied by an attachment to keepsakes and memorabilia. I'm not talking about people who simply like to collect things or those who suffer from the poorly understood behavior of hoarding, though if we live long enough with a strong enough attachment to our memorabilia, our collections might begin to resemble hoarding to an outside observer.

I'm somewhere between those extremes, but with one foot firmly planted in the nostalgia camp. If it is possible to inherit a tendency towards nostalgia, I know exactly where I got it. I can remember relatives from both sides of my family who filled their homes with memorabilia from the past. Both of my parents treasured their keepsakes. As they got older and began to lose family members to time, their collections swelled with inherited items to the point where it got a bit out of hand.

Number and volume of items aside, they tried to make sure that everything they kept was carefully preserved, labeled and neatly stored away. But one side effect of getting older was that their collection started to resemble hoarding as they began to lose control of it. If you live long enough and are lucky enough to be able to stay in your home, see if the same thing doesn't happen to you. Gravity gets much stronger as we age, and when you apply aches and pains and sickness to a steep flight of stairs, the antique quilts and handmade furniture stored in the basement and in the attic just don't get as much attention.

Every member of a new generation can become nostalgic for the halcyon days of youth, but I will always wonder if the generation of my parents was even more sentimental because of the hardships they endured. Both my parents grew up during the Great Depression when country folk who lived without ready access to goods and services or money to pay for them, learned that you don't throw away anything that might be useful. My aunt, who had all the money she needed when she got old, kept a drawer full of plastic bags and rubber bands that she did not throw away, because they were useful.

A large part of my dad's collection was his WWII memorabilia. He was a combat veteran who served in the navy during some of the most intense campaigns of the war. One of his most prized possessions was an old periodical with a picture on the cover taken in Tokyo Bay on VJ Day, 2 September, 1945. Near the end of his life when he struggled to speak, he could still point out his destroyer, the USS Kalk, among the Allied ships escorting the Missouri during the official surrender of Japanese forces.

It was a cruel irony, but thankfully a short-lived one, that the little strokes known as TIA took away my dad's "gift of gab," as he called it, about six months before he passed away. He was a storyteller from a long tradition and a legendary talker among family and friends. On a family road trip to Canada he once talked non-stop across the entire state of Ohio. By the time we crossed the Michigan state line, even my mother's indomitable patience was wearing thin when she very quietly said to him, "Can't we just listen to music for a while?"

As a teenager, I would roll my eyes when my dad would say, "I've probably told you this before, but I'm going to tell it again." As an adult accompanying my senior dad on many outings, I did penance for my youthful impatience watching how people would react to the old man who had just cornered them at the coffee shop intent on telling a story. I must say that there is no doubt in my mind that veterans are the most patient and respectful listeners on the planet. Dad's "Tin Can Sailors" hat attracted quite a few conversations, and not once did a fellow veteran show any sign at all that they did not have all the time in the world to listen to one of the last of the Greatest Generation telling a story.

My folks have been gone now for several years, and their stories, (along with their collections of keepsakes) live on with me. I'm grateful that I realized something very important while my parents were still alive. The collection of keepsakes, the telling and re-telling of stories - these were not foibles of old age. They were an effort to keep memories intact, to preserve a sense of self.

Think about it. If we live long enough, everything that we hold dear, everything that is familiar, changes or goes away. We can find ourselves more and more alone in a world of rapidly accelerating change. Our senses begin to betray our understanding of the present as we lose the context of what is familiar. Our memories of the past can become more real, and more comforting, than what we think we see around us.

My dad told stories, and my mom collected quilts, to keep their memories alive. They knew many years ago, that I would not be giving them any grandchildren, so the stories and the treasured objects were a way to pass on their legacy to the future.

Hindsight is not universally comforting. It can be like seeing the answers to a test that you can't take over again. I hope I passed the test. Perhaps I'll find out when I'm an old man telling my own stories.

**The Middle Path**  
*By: Don Perry*

**Lichens**

Lichens are complex parasites of trees, shrubs, and other woody ornamental plants that many people believe to be the downfall of their plants. However, the truth is that these pests are actually indicative of a bigger problem with your plant and don't harm anything they grow on at all.



The lichens that we typically find on our woody plants are made of a few different organisms that rely on each other for survival. The main part of the lichen that we see growing on bark and stems can be any one of a variety of different fungi. Some are broad and leaf-like, and some are slender and look like clumps of thread. This fungus will absorb moisture from the air, and eventually algae will take advantage of the moist surface of the fungus and begin to grow on it. These algae are what give lichens their characteristic blue-green color, and they use sunlight and air to create nutrients, much like the green leafy plants we have in our own gardens. The fungus will also get some of the food the algae make, and in turn give the algae a safe, damp place to live.

Despite their ability to take over a large percentage of a tree or shrub, lichens are never the cause of its decline. Usually, when plants become stressed because of disease, undesirable weather conditions, or a lack of nutrients in the soil, they will not produce as many leaves. This means more sunlight will hit the stems and promote the growth of lichens and their partner algae, which allows them to produce more nutrients and continue to thrive. As long as your plant is unhappy and its canopy is reduced, the lichen will continue to grow and become unsightly. Lichens are also common in the winter, especially if it has been a damp season. As plants naturally lose their leaves, the fungal spores have more access to the bark and more light availability. If a plant is healthy, the lichens will hardly be present in the summer as the leaves keep out sunlight. However, if they are still around at the end of summer, there is a bigger problem at hand.

As tempting as it may be, spraying your plant to get rid of the lichens will not solve your problem. Currently, there are no recommended treatments for lichens that are also safe to use on plants. Spraying a plant that is already stressed and in decline with a home remedy or unapproved chemical could injure it or make its condition even worse. Instead, manually remove any unwanted lichens by gently scraping them from the bark. If you have an extensive lichen problem, you should also examine your plant for signs of disease or an insect infestation. A soil test is also recommended because most of the time, plant stress comes from a source under the surface that we can't see. The soil test will show what nutrients are deficient in the soil and it will tell you what to add in order to improve it.

Though lichens can be an unsightly pest on our plants, they are actually a warning sign that there may be something wrong with your soil or the plant itself. It's important to scout your plants throughout the growing season, even your ornamentals, to make sure that there are no diseases or insects stressing them and ruining all your hard work!

"Surely we have seen the last of the flu germs. They can't possibly survive all this spring pollen!"



## Towns County Community Calendar

Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
SMART Recovery	Red Cross Building	7 pm
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
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Mtn. Amat. Radio	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	6:30 pm
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
Quilting Bee	McConnell Church	10 am
Stephens Lodge	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
Quilting Bee	McConnell Church	10 am
MOAA	Call Jack @ 828-321-2896	
Friendship Comm.	Clubhouse	6 pm
Goldwing Riders	Daniel's Restaurant	11 am
Red Cross DAT	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	5:30 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Republican Party	New Senior Ctr.	6:30 pm
Square Dance Club	Rec. Center	7 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.	Cadence Bank	5:30 pm

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## Towns County Herald

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**Website:** townscountyherald.net

**Publication No: 635540**  
 Advertising, News deadlines: Friday at 5 p.m.  
 Towns County (1 Year) \$20. Out of County (1 Year) \$30. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawassee, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points. The Towns County Herald is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. **Postmaster:** Send change of address to: Towns County Herald, P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546.  
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