

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Another Fine Child of the Mountains

To meet this gentleman is to love him. He's just one of those kind souls. Bill McClain was born in Okmulgee, OK on May 24, 1930, his parents having just moved from their home in 1929 trying to escape the hardships of the "great depression" so they could actually earn a little money. That didn't pan out too well, so in 1933 Bill's dad swapped two mules and a wagon he'd been making payments on for an "A" model car to bring the family back home to Rabun County, GA. Bill grew up extremely poor, hard and strict, admitted to being a sometimes "mischievous" boy, in a crowded family of six boys and sometimes "girl" better than a "barn". Attending all grades of school in Rabun County, and going through with his two best friends that have already passed on, Bill misses them.

He went on to attend Junior College in Cleveland and learned to cook while working in a restaurant in Clayton. Upon graduation from college, Bill was drafted into our Army in 1951, but missed Korea due to being sent to Germany where he drove a 1000 gallon water tanker up and down the mountains. After Germany Bill was assigned to Fort Hood and Fort Bliss in Texas, where Bill's cooking skills landed him a job with "special privileges", as a cook. He took full advantage of his free time, making trips hitch-hiking and otherwise back home to Georgia and grinning the whole way. Even though he was offered OCS, due to his college diploma, he had already decided Army life wasn't his "cup of tea". Neither was making rank and by that time, the returning Korea War veterans were filling the ranks of Sergeants rapidly.

After leaving the Army and moving to Decatur, GA, Bill completed a career at the General Motors assembly plants in both Lakewood and Doraville, earning a retirement in 1994. He married his wife, Celia, in El Paso, and pursuing his old family tradition, they parented seven children. One of his daughters died and Bill said it was the saddest days of his family's life. In 2014 he came home to Rabun County. He lost his wife, Celia to cancer.

Bill suffered a very serious life-threatening condition, landing him in Chatuge Nursing Home, where I first met him months ago. He is recovering now and has a wonderful daughter, Sonja, a Delta Airlines retiree who lives here in Hiawassee, and takes superb care of her dad. While in rehabilitation, Bill "had a visit from our Lord", thus rededicated his life to "spreading the Gospel." Even though a long-time Christian, Bill said until that point in his life, he hadn't even thought of praying in 65 years.

Bill McClain's special message for all veterans is to please "give your heart to Christ". Above all else, this is Bill's message.

Semper Paratus

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
 USCG Veteran



The side effects of Civilization

When my father was a child, there was a remote spring in the mountains alongside a forest road traveled by horse and wagon or on foot. Travelers would sometimes water their horses at the spring, or take a drink and rest awhile in the shade of the tall chestnut trees. The spring was tiled with "pretty rocks" collected by a farmer who found them in the creek that ran nearby. My dad said that when the sun shined on the pool, it sparkled and cast dancing lights all about the shaded grove around the spring.

The "pretty rocks" were actually amethysts, which can still be found in Northeast Georgia, if you know where to look. My father understood that the spring had been dug in his grandfather's day, sometime in the late 1800s, and lined with the amethysts soon after. He estimated that the spring had been there for at least 40 years by the time he first saw it, respected and maintained by the travelers who used it.

One day my uncle, who was a few years older than my dad, came home with some amethysts in his pocket and my grandfather asked him where he got them. "At the old spring," was his answer, and sensing that he might be in trouble, my uncle added, "but everybody else is taking them."

"You'll put those right back where you found them," said my grandfather, "and see that you do it quick if you want any supper."

But the magic spell of the spring had been broken, and first by ones and twos, then by pocketful and at last by the bucket, it was not long before all the amethysts had disappeared. The valley was growing. What had once been frontier to the white settlers (it was home to many peoples before them) was becoming more civilized, and greed is often a side effect of civilization.

When I was a child I went with my grandmother to visit the old homestead where she grew up. There was a chimney still standing there, and some stone works around the site where the house once stood. I remember the deep shade of huge trees, and numerous flowers and herbs surviving from plantings made a half century before. Water still flowed over a stone watercourse made by hand. The summer sun was hot, but the old homestead was cool, quiet and peaceful.

Not a trace of it remains. As the property changed hands and divided under, the creek dammed, and the variety of plant life replaced by some kind of hybrid fescue over ground that cracks open during dry weather. Another shaded grove I once knew disappeared in more recent times, during the big real estate boom that started here when the Olympics came to Atlanta. There was an avenue of giant maples and poplars that followed a meandering stream. Numerous springs fed the creek along the way. One spring was particularly intriguing, as it emerged directly from the roots beneath an ancient maple. The roots formed a grotto over a deep pool of water where mayflies danced in the summer. One might have fancied it as an entrance to the underworld guarded by fairies, though my nosy hound once found it guarded by yellow jackets instead.

The springs survived the first couple of attempts to develop the property, but then came a developer who was more aggressive than the others and decided to try and "recover" all that "wasted" land. Trees were cut. The springs were bulldozed, filled in, destroyed. Of course this was a violation of environmental regulations, and the property owner was fined a few hundred dollars. He eventually lost his land to the bank. What once was forest is now another field of fescue in a vacant lot that has been sold and resold. The mayflies are long gone, but the yellow jackets are still there.

We humans have always been greedy. We have always been prone to treating the natural world in a ham-fisted manner. But as our negative impact on the earth has escalated, some of us have tried to seek comfort in the past, looking for that magical time and place and that special people possessed of a set of values that were kinder to the earth, and more sustainable.

Sadly, no such time, place or people ever truly existed. Perhaps the closest our species ever came was the First Peoples of North America, who cultivated and nurtured field and forest. It was not a wilderness that European settlers found here, but managed land, empty, but recently occupied by a million people or more who had died from the diseases brought here by the first explorers.

But even among the indigenous tribes that we like to think of as being fundamentally purer in some way than we are today, we find those who were responsible for deforestation and the extinction of species. We have also seen a community of conservative Christians, (the same people who today are stereotyped for an eagerness to drill and mine and develop) who were able to leave a public spring full of semi-precious stones untouched for two generations. If respect for the land is not a function of culture, then what?

Such thoughts seem appropriate as we observe Earth Day, and consider that many of our current 7 billion inhabitants may live to see 10 billion. We are in the midst of a great extinction event that some fear may grow to rival the Permian, when three fourths of life on the Earth was extinguished. Meanwhile our tapeworm economists worry where we will get the extra population to pay the bills we have already run up.

So far the tapeworm view is the dominant paradigm, supported by the myopic impulse to reproduce that continues to plague those parts of the world least able to afford more mouths to feed. The economy must always be growing, and we seem to lack the imagination necessary to grow it without also growing the population. Population growth (by birth) has slowed in the developed world, but it will continue through immigration in order to sustain the current economic model that is dependent on borrowing from future generations.

When there are more people, there are less natural resources to go around, and as freedom requires a certain amount of elbow room, there must also be less freedom. There will be fewer shady groves and cool springs to enjoy. When we had a choice to value such things, we often sacrificed them for short term gain. Today, separated from the natural world by the virtual, we value Nature less. Who knows what we will value tomorrow.

The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

Azalea and Camellia Leaf Galls

The cool, moist weather we've been having has brought on a new problem that we need to be on the lookout for in our gardens: azalea and camellia leaf galls. Unlike some galls, these are not caused by insects, but instead are a symptom of a fungal infection with an Exobasidium fungus. Though these galls usually pop up in the spring to some extent, this is an exceptionally bad year for them. This means that even though you may have never experienced this before, you should still be on the lookout for it.

These galls are green or sometimes pink and look like marshmallows dangling from branches. The fungus responsible for these unsightly growths in azaleas is called Exobasidium vaccinii and it can also infect other closely related ornamentals such as rhododendrons. Though these growths look ugly and harmful, they typically will not kill the plant. In fact, a common name for them is "pinkster apples" because people used to eat them. However, I wouldn't recommend that, seeing as how rhododendrons are poisonous and I've heard the azalea galls don't taste very good at all! In camellias, infection with Exobasidium camelliae causes abnormal, pale green, fleshy leaves at the tips of branches.

You will typically see leaf galls form just after flowering and spring green up. Eventually, if the galls are not removed, they will turn white and look powdery as the fungus forms its spores and will finally turn brown as the plant tissue dies later in the summer. Once the spores are produced, they are spread by the wind and by water droplets bouncing on the affected branches. They can spread from branch to branch and plant to plant. Once the gall turns brown and hardens, it will drop off and if it remains close to the plant, it can be a source of fungal infection for next year's growth. The fungus can also remain dormant in leaf tissues that seem otherwise unaffected, as well as underneath bud scales on stems.

Leaf galls appear exclusively on new, tender growth, which makes them a little easier to deal with than many fungal diseases. The best option for controlling this disease is to prune out any and all galls that you can find, preferably before they turn white and form spores. The spores disperse so easily that by the time you find a white gall, they have probably spread to another branch or plant. You can also prevent major leaf gall infection by inspecting azaleas and camellias before you purchase and plant them, as well as by leaving adequate spacing between bushes so leaves can dry well after watering and bouts of rain.

The best course of action is to monitor your plants for these symptoms and remove any abnormal growth as soon as it appears. In some cases, you can apply a protective fungicide such as chlorothalonil, mancozeb, or myclobutanil. If you take this approach, always make sure to read the label and use the fungicide appropriately, or contact the extension office if you have any questions.

Keep in mind that once the galls are formed, the only way to truly get rid of them is to prune them out. Applying fungicides will not shrink the galls or heal the plant, but it can protect it from the Exobasidium fungus the following year. In the meantime, keep an eye on your azaleas, rhododendrons, and camellias and cut out any galls you find!

If you'd like more information on leaf galls, stop by your extension office for a brochure.

UGA extension
From the Ground Up
 Melissa Mattee



Letters to The Editor

Letter to the Editor:

Tuesday, April 18, 2017 was a wonderfully entertaining evening. Along with a room full of people, I was enjoying fifteen young students in grades 6-12 speak on a subject they picked to enlighten the audience. What a good job they did!

Some won monetary prizes, but they all walked away with more confidence than when they started this journey of learning to speak in front of a crowd.

Kudos to the Mountain Movers & Shakers for putting on this speech contest for the past seven years, and kudos to the parents who have raised these bright young people. Our future is looking up!

Joan Crothers, Hiawassee resident

Dear Editor:

Towns County High School SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) will join local professionals such as law enforcement officials, prosecutors, attorneys, businesses, and other organizations in an effort to raise awareness about the real and legal consequences of underage drinking.

On Saturday, April 29 Towns County will hold their annual Junior-Senior Prom. The SADD club is working to raise awareness about the risks involved with underage drinking and drunk or buzzed driving. During the days leading up to prom, students were asked to sign a Prom Pledge promising not to drink and drive. In addition, prom-goers will receive a friendly reminder not to drink and drive as they leave the prom.

Towns County SADD wants to get the word out that underage drinking is against the law and is a crime that can result in serious consequences. It is imperative that our community members work together to educate the youth and adults in the community about the consequences. Underage drinking is the nation's number one youth drug problem, killing 6.5 times more young people than do all other illicit drugs combined.

These efforts serve as a valuable opportunity to heighten SADD's commitment and efforts to reduce the occurrence of underage drinking. Please help support these efforts by communicating with teenagers you know and love. Stress the importance of not drinking and driving on prom night or ever. Let's work together to keep our teens healthy and alive.

Sincerely,
 Libby Dayton
 TCHS SADD Sponsor

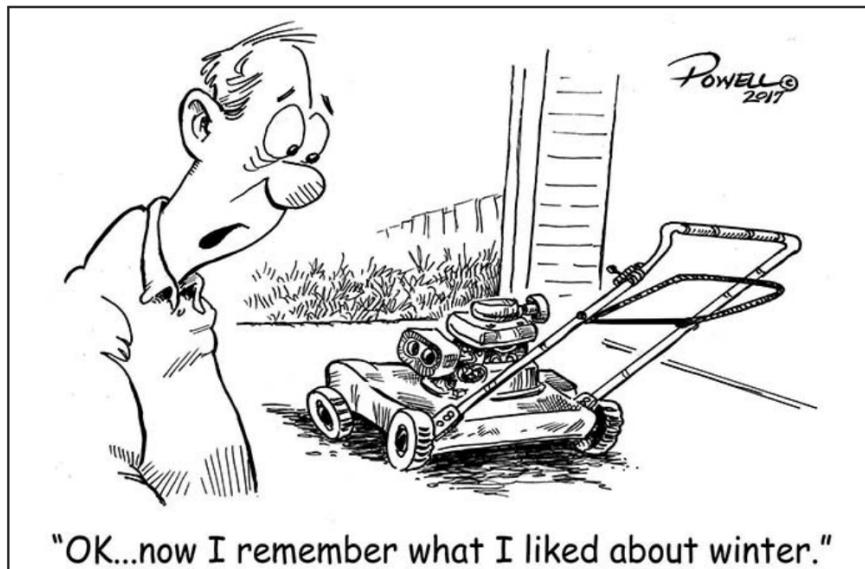
GUEST COLUMNS

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.



Towns County Community Calendar

Every Monday:		
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Bridge Players	All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Every Tuesday:		
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Every Wednesday		
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:		
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
Third Saturday of each month:		
Goldwing Riders	Daniel's Restaurant	11 am
Fourth Monday of each month:		
Red Cross DAT	1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	5:30 pm
Fourth Tuesday of each month:		
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Fourth Thursday of each month:		
Republican Party	New Senior Ctr.	6:30 pm
Fourth Friday of each month:		
Square Dance Club	Rec. Center	7 pm
Last Thursday of each month:		
Humane Shelter Bd.	Cadence Bank	5:30 pm

Towns County Herald

Legal Organ of Towns County

Kenneth West Owner/Publisher
Charles Duncan Editor
Shawn Henrikson Copy Editor
Lowell Nicholson Photographer
Derek Richards Advertising Director
Shawn Jarrard Staff Writer
Lily Avery Staff Writer
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.
 Office located at: 518 N. Main St. Suite 7 "The Mall", Hiawassee
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