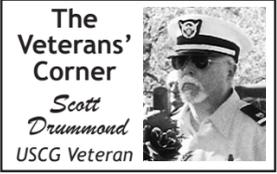


DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Bill Powers, a great American

William McCutcheon Powers was born 11 June 1933 in Detroit MI. A Mackenzie HS graduate of 1951, Bill then went on to earn a degree from Michigan State University in 1955. It wasn't a bought and paid for trip for Bill, as he held various jobs, including pounding dents out of steel forms with a 5 pound hammer; construction laborer; Cadillac Motor assembly line; and in between classes at college he worked in the dish room, delivered 5 gallon bottles of distilled water and loading/unloading of wholesale food warehouse trucks.



The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran

After college and a stint at collecting receipts for Speedway Petroleum, Bill enlisted in our US Army in May 1956. Entry into the Army was at Fort Wayne in Detroit, where his multicultural group of recruits including college grads, HS dropouts, and all sorts of folks were greeted with strict discipline and had their knives, guns and other paraphernalia confiscated. Lots of confusion and chaos reigned there, according to Bill, with boot camp yet to come at Fort Leonard Wood, MO. The train ride there was less than accommodating with smoke, ash, dust entering into the non-air conditioned passenger cars on the Wabash Cannon Ball. Boot camp was physically challenging, in a hot, dirty, dusty and rocky environment. After Basic, Bill went on to Army Intelligence Training in Baltimore, MD. He then spent his time in the immense Central Records Facility, where tens of thousands of records on anti-American and other suspicious activities, were kept the old fashioned way in file folders in precise locations. He or any of his cohorts never thought of sharing any of those confidential records with anyone, under severe penalties of law. Very strict laws apply to anyone charged with the security of our nation and confidential or secret document handling procedures.

After Army life, Bill entered into the life insurance business in Detroit, then on to Chicago. Bill met Carol, married and they both moved back to Warren, MI then retired in 2005. After visiting the North GA mountains, to see his younger brother, Jim, he and Carol decided there was no better place on earth to live, and have been here in their beautiful home atop a mountain, ever since. Both Bill and Carol are very kind, generous and gregarious folks. Carol a former teacher, donates time to the Towns County School and Bill donates time for watching over our four legged friends at a local rescue shelter. Bill is also very proud of his Scottish ancestry and sometimes wears a kilt to certain events. They adopt and care for abandoned kitties.

Bill is proud of his brother Byron who also went into the Army right after college, serving in Germany and two tours in Vietnam, then attending the Army War and general staff colleges. Byron served five years at the Redstone Arsenal, overseeing the entire TOW missile system. He retired after 27 years of service, as a full colonel and lives in Huntsville, AL.

You couldn't ask for better neighbors than Bill and Carol Powers.

Semper Paratus

Wildland Firefighting

In the years since I worked on a fire line the science and technology supporting fire suppression has improved. Infrared imaging from aircraft and satellites give firefighters realtime updates of fire behavior. Weather forecasts and communications have improved. When wildfire breaks out, the Forest Service mobilizes with military precision, working with state and local authorities. Every fire has an Incident Commander and a chain of command right down to the fire line. That there has been no loss of life and very little damage to personal property in the recent outbreak of fire in our area is a testament to how effectively this system works. Out on the fire line, some things have not changed. Wildland firefighting is still one of the most difficult and dangerous jobs anywhere. Between 1987 and 2015 there were 1100 fatalities among firefighters on the job. There is a good reason firefighters carry those heavy emergency fire shelters on every fire line.

There are few professions that equal the level of physical effort required by wildland firefighting. If you have worked right of way for the power company, you understand the level of discomfort. Take that job and add heavy gear, heat, smoke, and a 12 hour day without the ability to go home at night to sleep. If you have been in the military you may understand the intensity. Danger is a constant presence. There is a good reason why in military circles a pitched battle is sometimes referred to as a "firefight."

When the Rock Mountain Fire began burning into Towns County from the Tate City area, one of several command posts for the fire was setup at Mount Pleasant Church in the Upper Hightower community. The church opened its doors to the crews supporting the firefight, offering shelter, kitchen facilities and showers. Local residents donated food and water and some cooked meals for the firefighters. In Clayton, the response was similar, and local restaurants opened their doors early and gave discounts to hungry crews.

Overall, the response from our local communities has been gratifying. Fire houses are packed with donations to support the firefighters. We have seen a cooperative effort between federal, state and local authorities working closely with citizens, volunteer groups and church communities. Just like that, the bitterness of the recent political season vanished in a puff of smoke, as people were reminded of the ties that bind us together and the things that are truly important. We can take comfort in knowing that we live in an area where hard times bring out the best in people.

This past weekend, sustained high winds tested the fire lines all over North Georgia and Western Carolina. The lines held near the populated areas of the Rock Mountain Fire, but the fire continues to spread north into the Nantahala Wilderness. If you have hiked or hunted in our mountains, you can imagine the difficulty of hand digging a fire line on steep, rocky slopes thick with understory and decades of unburnt fuel. There are areas in that wilderness where the only possible response will be to continue dropping water - when and where the winds allow. Without rain, these fires can continue burning for weeks or months.

There are very few of us alive with a living memory of fire in these mountains. If you read the incident reports on these fires, you will often see concern over the possibility of "extreme fire behavior." My grandparents called it a "crown fire." Fire burns many times faster uphill than on flat terrain. Under the right conditions of slope, wind, and fuel, a fire, instead of spreading slowly along the ground, can generate a wave of heat that instantly ignites entire trees as it advances. My grandmother told stories of huddling in fear at night, listening to the sound of explosions on the mountain as pines and hemlocks blew up in front of the advancing flames.

As our drought persists and fire continues to advance all around the Southern Appalachians, extreme fire behavior is an ongoing possibility. Fortunately the fires have yet to reach populated areas on our steepest slopes, where fire trucks are not able to go.

Some of us have questioned for years the wisdom of encouraging construction on steep slopes and mountain tops, for environmental reasons as well as fire concerns. We have lived in an area where rain was abundant. With a changing climate, we do not yet know whether this drought is part of a cyclic pattern or evidence of a new normal. This may be an opportunity to rethink some of our priorities.

As we move forward hoping and praying for the rains to return, let us continue to support our local and volunteer fire departments. They are burning through resources at least as fast as the fires are burning through our mountains. At the present time they have plenty of donations of food and water. What they will need going forward is financial support. With gratitude for the outstanding job they have done and in the spirit of Thanksgiving. Please give to support our local fire departments.

GUEST COLUMNS

From time to time, people in the community have a grand slant on an issue that would make a great guest editorial. 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. *Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.*

The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

Firewise practices

The burn bans across the state may seem inconvenient, but as these devastating wildfires have proven over the past few weeks, a spark can burn several thousand acres in hardly any time at all during a drought. Though we may think we're safe as long as we do not burn anything in our backyards or fields, there are ways to make your house even safer and more resistant to uncontrolled fires.

Always ensure that a thirty foot perimeter around your house is cleared of any excess vegetation. This critical area is known as the "home defensible zone" and needs to have as little flammable material as possible. If you have any out-buildings such as sheds, garages or guest houses, this perimeter extends to them as well. Plants are obviously some of the most flammable things homeowners can have in this zone, but responsible landscaping can reduce the risk. Keep plants such as bushes and trees appropriately pruned and prevent them from becoming overgrown and too close to the house and roof. When you do prune, remove all trimmings, and rake away any leaf litter. This is especially important around evergreens such as Leyland cypress and arborvitae because they drop large amounts of needles throughout the year that are highly flammable when dry.

If you are in the process of landscaping, opt for stone and brick materials as opposed to wooden rail ties or other flammable materials. Also, though it may be convenient to have your firewood pile right next to the back door, especially on cold nights, it's incredibly dangerous to have such a flammable area near your home. All firewood piles should be placed outside of the defensible zone and far away from any propane tanks, which should also have a ten foot perimeter cleared around them maintained with gravel when possible.

Though many of us strive to keep the natural forest areas around our home, forested areas on our properties still require some maintenance. Be aware of the vertical arrangement of vegetation. This means take down any vines, dead trees that have fallen against live trees, and shrubby weeds that grow around trunks. These cause what are known as "fire ladders," which allow fire to spread along the ground and up trees that would otherwise have not caught if the ground were cleared.

It is equally important to make sure that your house itself is as fireproof as possible, which can be done with some easy modifications if you are in the process of updating your home. Residing your home with brick or stone and re-roofing with class A shingles or other non-flammable material can make your home incredibly fire-resistant. Also, make sure your fireplace as an effective spark arrestor and have your chimney inspected and cleaned annually to remove buildup and check for cracks. Always make sure to clean gutters and roofs to reduce the amount of flammable leaf litter that could catch fire.

Finally, be sure to clear any vegetation that could be obstructing your mailbox or other surface that shows your house number, and keep your driveway clear of low-hanging branches. Firefighters can't help if they can't find reach your house!

Though we may be just experiencing smoky air from fires far away from our homes for now, it is important to always be prepared for a wildfire that might come onto your property. These tips will help keep both you and those who need to fight the fires safer and can prevent the spread of an uncontrolled forest fire.



UGA extension
From the Ground Up
Melissa Mattee

Letters to The Editor

Editor:
Recently we celebrated Veterans Day. I am a Vietnam veteran. My father was a WWII veteran. He told me of 18-year-olds storming the beaches of Normandy, facing almost certain death. And yet today some of our colleges and universities cancel classes, pass out crayons and Playdoh, and offer therapy dogs and grief counselors, all because some 18-year-olds are upset with the recent presidential election. What's wrong with this picture?

Claude Spears

Dear Editor:
A Time for Healing
America has decided. Donald Trump will be our next president. Now it is time for us all to come together and push America forward. We have been stalled in gridlock for too long. For those of you that have read my letters before, you know that action on climate change is of prime importance to me. Obviously, Donald Trump is not a believer in climate change. Despite that, I will pray for him daily and will prayerfully consider all his proposals and will try and support him when I can. Certainly I will try and give him every chance to succeed, for his success is America's success. I urge all Americans to try and do the same. I will probably write him many letters about climate change, but they will be kindly written. It is time to heal wounds and make America even greater.

Vernon Dixon

To the Editor:
My wife and I attended the Lake Cleanup conducted by the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition (HRWC) on Saturday 11/5. This newspaper had a number of articles over the past weeks mentioning this event and the need for participants. However, again this year if it weren't for Young Harris College and the Towns County Homeowners Association (TCHA) many areas would not have been cleaned, and even so there are many, many areas that weren't attended to. The lake is critical to the future, and our personal pride of this area. This letter is intended to reach out to our many churches, civic organizations, and businesses to "Adopt a Section" of shoreline and plan a schedule for your group to clean-up an area throughout the year. There are many public/TVA access areas that have easy access and many private areas may have access through your members. We are also asking the county to allow these groups to take the refuse they collect to the trash transfer station free of charge, and the HRWC to monitor/assign areas to the groups that participate. To get the county's permission to use the trash transfer station we suggest you call our new Commissioner @ 706-896-2276 and for help locating and registering a section, contact the HRWC @ 828-837-5414 or info@hrwc.net.

Dave & Robin Hering



Towns County Community Calendar

Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Bridge Players	Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
	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	5:30 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

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Towns County Herald

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