

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Merry Christmas to all

"A Christmas Poem" written by a United States Marine stationed in Okinawa, Japan. Note: There are several versions of this and of course the official USMC version uses "Marine" in lieu of "soldier".

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
 USCG Veteran



Thanks to a quiet, big hearted Vietnam Combat Veteran we affectionately call "Cigar Mike". May God grant each and everyone in Town's County a Merry Christmas from our Veterans' members of VFW post 7807, American Legion Post 23, Marine Corps League, SAL, American Legion Auxiliary and VFW Auxiliary. May God watch over each and every man and woman who serve our nation in uniform, without whom we'd not have Christmas, or much anything else!

"Twas the night before Christmas, he lived all alone,
 In a one bedroom house made of plaster and stone.
 I had come down the chimney with presents to give,
 And to see just who in this home did live.
 I looked all about, a strange sight I did see,
 No tinsel, no presents, not even a tree.
 No stocking by mantle, just boots filled with sand,
 On the wall hung pictures of far distant lands.
 With medals and badges, awards of all kinds,
 A sober thought came through my mind.
 For this house was different, it was dark and dreary,
 I found the home of a soldier, once I could see clearly.
 The soldier lay sleeping, silent, alone, curled up on the floor
 In this one bedroom home. The face was so gentle,
 The room in such disorder,
 Not how I pictured a United States soldier.
 Was this the hero of whom I'd just read?
 Curled up on a poncho, the floor for a bed?
 I realized the families that I saw that night,
 Owed their lives to these soldiers willing to fight.
 Soon round the world, the children would play,
 And grownups would celebrate a bright Christmas day.
 They all enjoyed freedom each month of the year,
 Because of the soldiers, like the one lying here.
 I couldn't help wonder how many lay alone,
 On a cold Christmas Eve in a land far from home.
 The very thought brought a tear to my eye,
 I dropped to my knees and began to cry. "Santa don't cry,
 This life is my choice;
 I fight for freedom, I don't ask for more,
 My life is my God, my country, my Corps."
 The soldier rolled over and drifted to sleep,
 I couldn't control it,
 I continued to weep. I kept watch for hours, so silent and still
 And we both shivered from the cold night's chill.
 I didn't want to leave on that cold dark night,
 This Guardian of Honor so willing to fight.
 Then the soldier rolled over, with a voice soft and pure,
 Whispered "Carry on Santa, it's Christmas Day, all is secure."
 One look at my watch, and I knew he was right.
 "Merry Christmas my friend and to all a good night."
Semper Paratus

A Time of Celebration

We love this time of year, and the commingling of memories both personal and ancestral. No one knows how many centuries humans waited anxiously during the darkening days until the sun reversed its course on the Winter Solstice. The spirit of western civilization huddles by the fire in the long dark nights of many northern winters long ago, but our soul looks south and east. So it is that about this time every December, we join seamlessly snowflakes and Christmas trees to a manger at the edge of a desert in a land holy to three great Faiths.

Some would pick apart our celebrations, our devotions and our decorations, our shopping spree, office parties and school vacations and say "too commercial." Others might debate the merits of "Happy Holidays" versus "Merry Christmas." There's a war on, we hear.

But there have been no casualties in this family. The Yule log warms our feet as we remember the birth of Christ. We welcome Chanukah, and the festival of lights commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem after the epic defeat of the Seleucids.

Bring on Kwanzaa, a newcomer to our holiday season, created in 1966 in response to the commercialization of Christmas. Kwanzaa is not an "African" holiday, as many believe; it is purely American, and it honors the cultures of the African diaspora in America and other lands. Kwanzaa celebrates unity, self-determination, community, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith.

We will even tip our hat to those who observe "Festivus," a farcical celebration lampooning all of our holidays, with fictional feats of strength and the airing of grievances (a year round observance for some). Festivus was created entirely by humor for humor's sake, and there is always room for that. Is it any less arbitrary than starting the new year on January 1st in the dead of winter?

In truth, the holiday season for many of us begins with Thanksgiving and extends all the way through the 12th day of Christmas, for it is during Thanksgiving that we are reminded of an essential element to carry with us through the holidays and into the new year: gratitude.

We are grateful for all our reasons to celebrate, and for the ability to do so. We are grateful for family and friends, the ones who are with us still, and the ones who have gone on ahead. We're grateful for our long suffering readers in a beautiful and special place where some of the best people we have ever known make their homes.

Family Traditions

Most of us have family traditions that we enjoy during the Christmas season. Families with small children may spend Christmas Eve baking cookies for Santa or listening to Christmas carols while enjoying eggnog by the fire. As a small child I remember the anticipation of Christmas being so intense. I was in awe and wonder dreaming about what might be inside all those presents wrapped so nicely under the tree. I would just stare at the Christmas tree and daydream about Christmas Day.

For me, even at 49, Christmas is still the most magical time of year. I love Christmas lights and the sounds of Christmas carols everywhere. The world just seems to be a nicer place during the Christmas season. I love to watch young children open gifts and see their eyes light up with joy. There is no other feeling like the feeling Christmas. While Christmas is about much more than material possessions, the spirit of Christmas is certainly captured in the joy of a child receiving a gift on Christmas morning.

So, what about the children who are less fortunate? Imagine the child whose family has fallen on hard times. Do they wake up to just another day of struggling to make ends meet? Imagine if you were a parent who loved your child, but had lost a job because of the poor economy. I doubt that there would be anything much harder than not being able to provide your child, whom you love, the wonder of Christmas morning. It breaks my heart to think that, as the rest of the world enjoys the most blessed day of the year, some families wake to another day of not having enough. While providing toys for these children isn't going to make the rest of their problems go away, I can't help but believe that, at least for a time, their world becomes a little brighter and things seem a little better than before.

Each year the Sheriff's Office attempts to provide the joy of Christmas gifts for Towns County's less fortunate children. This effort is only made possible by the help of generous people in the community who donate to this cause. Names of children in need are collected and toys are gathered. We try whenever possible to provide at least one item that the child has specifically asked for. The toys are then given to the parents of the child to handle Christmas in their family's tradition. It is all done in such a way as to protect the dignity of the family and allow them to share in the joy that many of us take for granted.

This year has been a tough one for many local families. We are hoping to provide for each child, but we need your help. If you would like to help us with this effort or if you know of a family with children that needs help, please contact your Sheriff's Office at 706-896-4444. I hope that each of you has a blessed and joyous Christmas this year!

The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

From the Desk of:



Sheriff Clinton of Towns County

Camellias

I love a good fluffy snow and cold winter weather, but lately I've heard a lot of people already wishing our summer temperatures were back! Though it might be a few months before we can go outside without gloves and hats, we can still have a taste of spring with our brightly colored, winter-blooming camellias.

Camellias are large, broadleaf evergreen shrubs that are known for their beautiful blooms that are present throughout winter. The most common cultivar is the Japanese camellia. It can grow up to 25 feet, but more often is maintained between 6 and 12 feet. The leaves are a deep green and the flowers range from white to red. Depending on the variety, blooms could appear between September and April and come in many different forms such as single, double, semi-double, and even peony. These different forms describe the number of petals present on the flowers. Single will be a bloom with one round of petals with the center easily visible, while double and peony type flowers will be very full with many rows of petals. Japanese camellias grow very slowly but can live for upwards of a hundred years. The camellias surrounding the emperor's palace in Japan are known to be over 500 years old!

While some varieties do grow faster than others, camellias in general are very slow to grow and establish. They require well-drained soils and thrive in areas where they are protected from full sun and winds that may dry out their shallow roots. Because they are so slow-growing, it is best to remove as much competition as possible from their root system. Plant them in a protected area with plenty of room to spread. Dig a large, deep hole and remove any roots that are found, and break up any tough clumps of clay so the roots can easily spread. Fill the hole partially with loose soil, and plant the shrub shallowly. Cover the roots with 2-3 inches of mulch to conserve moisture and prevent winter injury to the roots.

Dropping buds is incredibly common in camellias as many will set more buds than will actually bloom. However, if you notice that the majority of buds are dropping throughout summer and fall, it can actually be a sign that the plant needs more water. Camellias need very little pruning beyond the most basic of maintenance. Dead branches or leggy branches can be removed to preserve the overall pleasing shape of the shrub. If a camellia is heavily diseased or damaged, rejuvenation pruning may be done between Valentine's Day and May 1st, where the entire plant is taken down to almost nothing more than the trunk. Less severe pruning can be done at any time throughout the year without affecting the number of blooms.

Though camellias do well for the most part, they are susceptible to some diseases such as flower blight, leaf gall, and canker. Flower blight is a fungus that causes the flowers to turn brown and infects in early spring. Leaf gall is also caused by a fungus but affects the leaves, which turn a pale green or white and enlarge to fleshy masses. The best way to prevent both of these diseases is to remove any infected tissue on or around the plant, and put down a fresh cover of mulch to suppress any mulch spores that have fallen to the soil. Canker is also caused by a fungus but can often kill entire branches. Having enough nutrients and well-drained acidic soil will help prevent canker infections.



From the Ground Up
 Melissa Mattee

Letters to The Editor

One News Network?

Dear Editor,
 I'm sure that most everyone who visits the Atlanta Airport notices that the only news channel offered on all their big screen TVs is CNN. I guess a lot of it has to do with CNN being based in Atlanta. However, most all of the major airports use CNN as their default news network. It is evident by the ratings that the only viewership CNN gets these days is through the captive audience of those sitting in the airport waiting on their delayed flight. It seems that CNN has convinced these airports that they are the only provider of "fair" news. Now that's a hoot. And this has been going on ever since I can remember. Allowing one news network the right to encroach on our public spaces is ludicrous, especially since we are growing more and more to distrust this network, as evidenced by their recent phony reporting on anything to do with President Trump. Its unlikely that the CNN dominance in these major airports will ever change. I suppose money has a lot to do with it. My remedy, while waiting on a flight, is to get out my iPhone and watch another news network.
 Tim Groza

On the Bandwagon

Dear Editor,
 I guess I have to jump on Tim Groza's bandwagon. I too am getting a little tired of Vernon "The End of the World is Coming" Dixon. He always talks about his so called facts which are backed up by over 99% of the same mad scientists who drink the same kool aid and have the same agenda. Vernon, all your figures come from erroneous computer models... and that is a fact. You talk about caring for our children and grandchildren and the disastrous effects man-made global warming will have on them. Well I am equally concerned about the effects of your agenda-driven so-called scientists and their lock step little army of "Letters to the Editor" writers on our children and grandchildren.
 Paul Miret

Recent Snow Storm

Dear Editor,
 The recent snowstorm left our neighborhood without power, and roads that were difficult to navigate. Fortunately, our neighbors were able to clear enough snow for a single lane in and out of the neighborhood by mid-day Saturday morning. By late afternoon, the power company was finally able to restore power, so we did not endure another night without power. Today, the county roads department cleared both lanes of the road getting us on the road to normal.
 I would like to thank my neighbors for their support. I also wish to thank the EMC for restoring our power. And finally, the county roads department for getting our roads back to normal. I know this was a widespread power outage. I know the road department had a lot of work to do as well. Finally, I have a great appreciation for my neighbors who are there to help us if necessary. They are our first line of help during these events. It is their support that is important during a major weather event!
 Towns County is a great place to live. Everyone knows us here. The utilities and county maintenance follow up bring us back to normal after weather events such as this.
 Craig Earon

"Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."
 Luke 2: 12-14

A gift worth sharing
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Towns County Community Calendar

Bridge Players	Every Monday: All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Free GED prep.	Every Tuesday: Old Rec. Center	4 pm
SMART Recovery	Every Wednesday: Red Cross Building	7 pm
Bridge Players	Every Thursday: All Saints Lutheran	12:30 pm
Free GED prep.	Old Rec. Center	4 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Every Friday: Red Cross Building	7 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Every Sunday: Red Cross Building	7 pm
Hospital Auxiliary	Third Monday of each month: Cafeteria	1:30 pm
Water Board	Water Office	6 pm
YH Plan Comm.	Third Tuesday of each month: YH City Hall	5 pm
Co. Comm. Mtg	Courthouse	5:30 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.	Blairsville store	5:30 pm
Quilting Bee	Third Wednesday of each month: McConnell Church	10 am
MOAA	Call Jack @ 828-321-2896	
Friendship Comm.	Third Thursday of each month: Clubhouse	6 pm
Democratic Party	Civic Center	6 pm
Goldwing Riders	Third Saturday of each month: Daniel's Restaurant	11 am
Red Cross DAT	Fourth Monday of each month: 1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	5:30 pm
Lions Club	Fourth Tuesday of each month: Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Republican Party	Fourth Thursday of each month: New Senior Ctr.	6:30 pm
Humane Shelter Bd.	Last Thursday of each month: Cadence Bank	5:30 pm

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Towns County Herald

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