

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Letters to The Editor

**Dear Editor:**  
In response to Messrs. Gibson and Roberts, the old adage applies: "Everyone is entitled to his own opinions, but not his own facts." When they falsely claim they protected my right to oppose US wars on Vietnam, Iraq and other illegal wars of aggression. Those two wars in particular were illegal and immoral. Those wars did nothing to protect my rights and the rights of Americans. Those wars were based on lies used to justify sending tens of thousands of Americans to an early grave, plus the millions of poor men, women and children slaughtered in their own country. The Vietnamese and Iraqi nations posed NO imminent threat to US national security.

Big Lie techniques employed by Big Brother Government allied with the unbridled power of the Pentagon and profiteering industrial weapons makers used to justify militarization, endless wars and the degradation of Constitutional and human rights, is what threatens our freedoms, not truly patriotic protests by ordinary Americans that resist when ours and the rights of other peoples are being trampled on. Just look at the death and destruction spread by US-led military interventions and regime change across the Muslim world, not to mention the \$4 to 5 trillion wasted and yet, we are LESS SAFE today!

Lance G. Johnson

## Ready, Set, Go! saves lives

The Ready, Set, Go! Program seeks to develop and improve the dialogue between fire departments and the residents they serve. The program helps fire departments teach individuals who live in high risk wildfire areas – and the Wildland-urban interface (WUI) – how to best prepare themselves and their properties against Wildland fire threats. The program's tenets help residents be Ready with preparedness understanding, be Set with situational awareness when fire threatens, and to Go early when necessary. The RSG! Program works in complementary and collaborative fashion with existing Wildland fire public education efforts, like Firewise, and amplifies their messages to individuals. NFPA's Firewise Communities Program encourages local solutions for wildfire safety by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, firefighters and others in creating fire-adapted communities – places where people and property are safer from the risk of brush, grass and forest fires. Firewise principles can help individuals and communities accomplish the "Ready" tenet of RSG by providing the proven steps to empower individual homeowners to lower their property's wildfire risk and to work with their neighbors to make their community safer. Used together, the Ready, Set, Go! and Firewise Communities programs can save lives and property by: Defining the risk and responsibility. Fire is a natural process and plays an important role in our environment. However, loss of homes to wildfire is not inevitable. Once residents understand what causes homes to ignite, they have a better understanding of their role in protecting their families, homes and property from wildfire – all year round. Empowering individual action, Ready, Set, Go! and Firewise provide residents with specific guidelines for reducing risk – which includes the home and extends out to 100 to 200 feet. This includes clearing property of debris and maintaining the landscape, as well as recommendations for fire-resistant home design and construction, such as Class A roofing and tempered glass windows. Encouraging community-level engagement by taking a fire-adapted community approach to wildfire preparedness, communities can greatly reduce their wildfire vulnerability.

Executive Director of RC&D

Frank Riley



The Firewise Communities/USA Recognition Program facilitates this process with a framework for communities to work with partners including state forestry and local fire departments to organize, plan and conduct activities each year that make a difference in community wildfire safety. Furthering firefighter and resident safety during a fire event, a fire-resistant property enables firefighters to focus on containing the wildfire itself, rather than defending individual structures. Ready, Set, Go! also bring fire departments and residents together to build important understanding, preparedness, and action. They may be called Wildland fires, brush fires, grass fires or forest fires, yet the threat remains the same. Our Firewise programs here in Northeast Georgia are making a difference by making our residents aware of the wildfire risks all around them and the numbers prove it. On May 2, 2015 our Firewise team held a full scale Ready Set Go evacuation exercise in Lake Forest community on Ramey Mountain that tested our firefighters, emergency responders, and community residents to see if the RSG program that we have developed in our Firewise/Fire Adapted program over the past 3 years actually works, and it did beautifully. We learned where the weaknesses in our departments are and what we could do to correct them so we will be ready when an actual wildfire threatens our communities. Lessons are easier to learn when you don't have flames licking over rooftops and ridges and can have a "do over" to correct problems. You are much safer because of these trained emergency responders standing between you and the flames. To learn more about how to be Firewise and how to develop a personal "Ready, Set, Go!" action plan contact Frank Riley, Executive Director, Chetatee/Chattahoochee RC&D Council at www.townsfireadapted@gmail.com or go to www.wildlandfireRSG.org or www.firewise.org

## The Middle Path

by Don Perry

This is the first "work week" after the holiday season and for most of us, the decorations are packed away and the Christmas tree is part of a mulch pile. Not so for your humble scribe. We insist on a full complement of Christmas days at our house, at least 12 of them each year. The decorations are put away gradually, and a bit of green and red from the holly trees around the house is a comfort on these cold winter nights.

For one reason, we love the holidays, all of them, but particularly the one that brings a bit of light and color to these gray winter days. For another, should we be grateful or generous, or compassionate, or enjoy a bit of childlike merriment just one day a year? I don't think so. Actually, the week after Christmas can be much more "Christmassy" than the months of incessant marketing that precede it. The noise has diminished; the induced sense of urgency has gone and the meaning behind our inherited rituals and observances is easier to find.

Perhaps the main reason that I personally cling to the holidays is a form of cussedness. I refuse to be herded, or to accept the appropriation of generations of tradition and meaning by calculated efforts to squeeze every possible dollar out of every day, every hour of the year.

The development of the calendar was a pivotal breakthrough in the rise of civilization. The calendar is also a mechanism of control. Think about it: Eight-hour work days and five (or six) day work weeks overlaid with schedules and deadlines and sprinkled with just enough congressionally sanctioned holidays to provide some psychological relief, but relief that is increasingly diminished by the pressure to spend in order to match the images given to us by media.

Holidays have evolved from the observance of natural cycles and the commemoration of historical events. As technology developed and we became divorced from the natural world, holidays, and the calendar which contained them, became more a tool for social, political and economic control. The Romans understood this very well. When they conquered new lands, they allowed the residents some license in observing their own traditions, but the Roman calendar became the

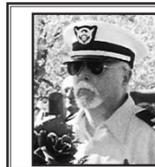
official template for daily life – and for the purposes of taxation and tribute.

The month of January inherits its name from the Roman god, Janus, a deity with two faces that represented gateways. Julius Caesar decided that the first day of the time of Janus would be the first day of the year, and so centuries later we begin our calendar on a day with no terrestrial or sidereal significance.

The fact is, many of the main holidays observed by western civilization bear the mark of Roman influence. Christmas occurs at the climax of the Roman festival of Saturnalia, a time of celebration, (debauchery) and gift giving. Easter derives its name from the goddess Ishtar or Astarte and an ancient observance of fertility rites. When the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, the church of Rome began its rise to become a form of world government, and it was the Roman church which appropriated a number of ancient pagan observances in order to establish more control over the lives of the people within its empire.

Today we have Congress to tell us when our holidays occur and when the clock moves forward or backward, and the empire is a financial one dependent on consumption rather than a religious one dependent on agriculture, but the calendar is used in much the same way as it has always been.

Nevertheless, I will take down my Christmas wreath when I'm good and ready.



## The Veterans' Corner

By Scott Drummond, USCG Veteran

### This guy can really sing too!

Born 29 May 1931, Don Kelly came into this world in Natick, MA, about 17 miles from Boston only to move close to Philadelphia, PA where his dad, a disabled WWI vet made their living working for the Mint.

Like most of us Southern boys, Don grew up playing baseball, football, basketball, marbles, hide and seek, mumbly-peg and made his own bows and arrows.

Don's brother was wounded in Korea as a 3rd DIV Ranger, sent home, just as Don was drafted, and sent to boot camp in Fort Leonardwood, MO, referred to as "Fort Misery" as the training in those Ozark Mountains was rough and Don thought he'd freeze to death in January, February, and March of 1952.

Serving as a Combat Engineer, Don took the well known route of most Korean vets out of Fort Lewis, Washington via one of those "luxurious cruise ships" to Tokyo, then another boat ride to Incheon. Another one of our soldiers spoke of that ride in the little, tiny Korean train with hardly any seating, and a pot bellied wood-burning stove up to the North Korean Upper Chumwa Valley. Serving 18 months in-country, "seven days" a week, rebuilding roads, bridges, and hauling anything and everything our troops needed to stay alive, he suffered from frostbite and has certain disabilities as a result. Don was promoted to Corporal, left Korea to come home to Philly and serve the rest of

his six years total in the Pennsylvania National Guard, in Indian Town Gap, PA, achieving the rank of Sergeant First Class. These were enjoyable times for Don and his NG engineers.

Meanwhile Don has started his own business as a private contractor, building houses, home improvements, and siring two sons who now still work in and around Philadelphia, one landscaping and the other as a supervisor over a motor pool for the USPS.

1980 rolled around and it was time to move to Bonita Springs, FL and continue in his construction business. Meanwhile vacationing and visiting Helen, GA and then the Brasstown Mountain observatory, Don spotted a wonderful, beautiful sight below, a little mountain town surrounded by a lake, the very area we all have come to love, Hiawassee, GA.

Goodbye Florida and hello home! Don also met his fine lady friend, Billie Shelburn here and they are still strong after that Saint Patrick's Day at our VFW/American Legion Post five years ago! It should be noted that Don came close to leaving us once with a heart attack and another with a stroke but has maintained his always cheerful, upbeat, outgoing personality the whole time. And YES! Don really can sing! He, like so many other Veterans, said he served with honor and, "Yes, I'd do it all again."

Don Kelly's words for all of us are for us to "Be nice and to get along!"

There's no one does that better than Don.

Semper Paratus

"Remember, it's up to you to warn every man, woman and child!"



The General Assembly is coming!



## Community Calendar

### 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 EMAILED 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.

**American Legion Post 23** meets 1st Tuesday of each month at 4 PM at VFW Post 7807, Sunnyside Rd., Hiawassee. Call 706-896-8387 for details. We need your support!  
**VFW Fish Fry** April - October on 2nd & 4th Fridays each month from 4:30 - 7. \$10 per plate.  
**Towns County Water Board Meeting** 3rd Monday of each month at 6 p.m. in the TC Water Office Building.  
**Mountain Community Seniors** meet the second Thursday of each month at the Senior Center in Hiawassee at 1 p.m.  
**Towns County Republican Party** meets at 6:30 PM the 4th Thursday of each month at the new Senior Center. For more info call 706-994-3919.  
**Democratic Party of Towns County** meets 2nd Tuesday of each month at 5 p.m. at new Senior Center. Newcomers welcome. Questions please contact the T.C. Dem's at Townscountymocrats@gmail.com.  
**Towns County Planning Commission** is held the 2nd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Courthouse.  
**Towns County Commissioners** meeting is the 3rd Thursday at 5:30 p.m. in the courthouse.  
**School Board Meeting**, 2nd Monday each month at 7 p.m. in the auditorium.  
**Hiawassee City Council** 1st Tuesday of month 4 p.m., at City Hall.  
**Young Harris City Council**, 1st Tuesday of month at 7 p.m., Young Harris City Hall.  
**The Unicoy Masonic Lodge #259** meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 p.m.  
**Stephens Lodge #414 F & AM** meets the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:30 PM in Young Harris. Sat. morning breakfast 2nd Sat. of each month from 8 - 10:30 AM. \$6 adults, \$3 12 & under.  
**Towns County Board of Elections** holds its monthly meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 4 p.m. at the Elections Office (Old Rock Jail).  
**Towns County Historical Society** meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the old Rec Center in Hiawassee at 5:30 p.m. 706-896-1060, www.townshistory.org

**Bridge Players** intermediate level meets at 12:30 p.m. on Mondays & Fridays at the Towns County Rec Center.  
**Mountain Regional Arts & Crafts Guild** meets 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Calvary Chapel on Hwy. 76 in Hiawassee. All local artists and crafters are welcome, for information call 706-896-0932.  
**Mountain Computer User Group** meets the 2nd Monday of each month. Meetings start at 6 p.m. and visitors are welcome. Details can be found at www.mcug.org.  
**Chattahoochee-Nantahala Chapter, Trout Unlimited** meets 2nd Thursday of each month at Cadence Bank in Blairsville. 5 p.m. Fly Tying - 7 p.m. General Meeting. Everyone welcome. www.ngatu692.com.  
**Military Officers Association of America (MOAA)** meets the 3rd Monday of each month at various area restaurants. For information call Gary at 706-896-4308 or visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridgemountains.  
**Alcoholics Anonymous:** meets every Friday and Sunday evening at 7 at Red Cross Building at 1293 Jack Dayton Circle. 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.  
**Chatuge Regional Hospital Auxiliary** on the 3rd Monday of each month, except the months of July, October and December, in the hospital cafeteria at 1:30 p.m.  
**The Humane Society Mountain Shelter** Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of every month at 5:30 p.m. at Cadence Bank in Blairsville.  
**The Towns County Alzheimer's Support Group** meets the first Tuesday of each month at 1:30 PM in the Family Life Center of McConnell Memorial Baptist Church. For more info call Carol at 706-896-6407.  
**The Appalachian Shrine Club** meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6 PM at the Shrine Club, Industrial Blvd., Blairsville.  
**GMREC Garden Tours** every Monday 9 a.m.-1 p.m.  
**Shooting Creek Basket Weavers** meets 2nd Wednesday of every month at 10 a.m. at Shooting Creek Fire Hall Community Center. For more info www.shootingcreekbas-

ketweavers.com.  
**Friendship Community Club** meets the 3rd Thursday of the month at 6 PM at Clubhouse, 1625 Hwy. 76, 706-896-3637.  
**Golding Road Riders** meets the 3rd Saturday of each month at Daniel's Steakhouse in Hiawassee. We eat at 11 and meeting begins at 12.  
**Narcotics Anonymous (NA)** meets every Wednesday evening at 7 PM at the Red Cross building on Jack Dayton Circle.  
**Caregiver support group** meets 2nd Tuesday of each month, 3 p.m. at Brasstown Manor, located at 108 Church St., Hiawassee. Call 706-896-4285 for more info.  
**Enchanted Valley Square Dance Club**, Dances 2nd & 4th Fridays at Towns Co. Rec. Ctr. from 7-9 PM. \$5/person to dance. Free to watch.  
**Brasstown Woodturners Guild** meets 1st Saturday of month at 9:30 AM in HHS shop. For more info call J. C. at 706-896-5711.  
**Mountain Amateur Radio Club (MARC)** meets 6:30 PM the 1st Monday of month at 1293 Jack Dayton Cir. (next to EMS), Hiawassee. For info call Al 706-896-9614 after 6 PM.  
**The Board of the Towns County Chamber of Commerce** meets the second Monday of every month at 8 a.m. at the Chamber office, 1411 Jack Dayton Circle, Young Harris.  
**The Quilting Bee** at McConnell Memorial Baptist Church in Family Life Center, Room 216. 1st & 3rd Wednesday of each month from 10 AM - 3 PM. Bring a sack lunch. For more information call Kathy at 706-835-6721 or Marilyn at 706-897-4367.  
**Mountain Coin Club** meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the North Georgia Tech campus in Blairsville. Guests are welcome. For more info, call 706-379-1488.  
**Monday morning BINGO** at Brasstown Manor every Monday morning at 9:30 a.m. 108 Church St., Hiawassee. Players meet in the Bradford. Questions 706-896-4285.  
**Towns County Lions Club** meets 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Daniel's Restaurant, 273 Big Sky Drive, Hiawassee.

**Towns County Herald**  
Dedicated to the promotion of Towns County

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