

Lecture...from Page 1

had experienced terror from afar via embassy bombings and the like, but nothing as devastating as the acts of terrorism committed on Sept. 11, 2001.

"We had a few things that happened to us, but we didn't have a worldwide network of terrorists that we knew about that wanted to attack us, and particularly attack our homeland," said Sen. Chambliss. "But boy, did that ever change. Leading up to Sept. 11, my subcommittee was focused on nothing but that issue."

Sen. Chambliss highlighted his work in those days leading up to Sept. 11, with U.S. Rep. Jane Harman, a Democrat from California.

"While we didn't vote alike on other matters, when it came to national security, we were in lock step," said Sen. Chambliss. "Jane and I put this trip together in January of 2001, where we were going to the Middle East, where the storm was brewing. And we knew it was brewing because of the information that we had received behind closed doors."

The trip included a visit to Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Israel. During the trip to Israel, Sen. Chambliss said his group wished to speak with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

"We started our trip in



Egypt, and Hosni Mubarak was the president of Egypt at that time," said Sen. Chambliss. "President Mubarak came into a room where all of us were and were waiting on him. We had a schedule of about 15 or 20 minutes with him, and we were going to be very fast-paced trying to interrogate him about some issues that we needed to know about."

"He came into the room, he went around and shook hands with everybody, and he looked at me and he said, 'Congressman, I'm here, I'll tell you anything you want to know, and I'm at your pleasure.'"

That 15 or 20 minutes turned into two hours.

"Now, he was a dictator, and he's sometimes referred to as a cruel dictator," said Sen.

Chambliss. "And he may have been, but he ran that country like nobody else could run that country at that time, and you've seen what's happened since he was overthrown. It's been a very contentious part of the world, obviously."

"That started us off, and the last thing he told me was, as we wound up our conversation - he knew we were going to Ramallah, and he knew we were going to see Arafat," said Sen. Chambliss. "He did not like Arafat, even though they were Arab brethren together. But he looked me in the eye, and he said, 'Congressman, here's what I want you to know about Yasser Arafat. When you meet with him, he's going to look you in the eye, and he's going to lie to you.'"

This stuck with Sen. Chambliss, who said that when he met with Arafat, Arafat told him, "Congressman, I really do want peace in the world for my grandchildren."

"And I said, 'Well, Mr. President, if you're serious about it, you heard what I said about my president's commitment to you,'" said Sen. Chambliss. "And if you want peace, we will work with you."

It wasn't long, however, before Mubarak's warning to Sen. Chambliss about Arafat rang true.

"Two days later, I picked up the paper, and here's a group of Palestinians who had gone into a bar mitzvah in Israel, and had started firing automatic weapons and had killed 21 young Jewish folks," said Sen. Chambliss. "What I knew was that what Mubarak had told me was exactly right - that he'd look me in the eye and he'd lie to me. And he never showed any signs of accepting peace from that point forward."

That was just one of a few anecdotes Sen. Chambliss shared Thursday on his time spent in American intelligence.

As for the future of peace in the Middle East and for Americans around the world, Sen. Chambliss is hopeful but realistic.

How much longer will the War on Terror last?

"It's going to be a long and enduring war, and it's obviously totally unconventional from anything we've ever fought before," said Sen. Chambliss. "We're going to win it in the back alleys, and we're going to win it by fighting against people who won't look us in the eye and try to take us out on the battlefield. They're going to hide behind women and children, and in hospitals and whatnot, and shoot at us, and just dare us to shoot back at them."

"That's the kind of mentality that we're facing from an adversary standpoint right now, and it's just going to take a whole different mindset. We'll prevail. We have the world's greatest military, but all the F-22s in the world are not going to win this war. It's going to take the meaningful development of a strong attitude by the neighborhood, i.e., the folks who have the most to lose from this."

And the U.S. is not the country that has the most to lose, according to Sen. Chambliss.

"It's the Arab neighborhood," said Sen. Chambliss. "It's the folks in the UAE, and Saudi Arabia and other parts

of the Arab world that have the most to lose, because their economies are just tanking. Unemployment in all of those countries is 30 to 40 percent. It's going to take the Europeans standing up and saying we've had enough."

"And again, America's going to have to lead, but it's going to take a strong commitment on the part of the Europeans, the Middle East, and you're going to have to engage the Russians and the Chinese on this," said Sen. Chambliss. "Everybody's going to have to circle the wagons. If you don't do that, then it's going to be a very dangerous world that your children grow up in, and none of us want to see that happen. I think it will happen eventually - I think this latest thing, we're seeing the Jordanians and the Egyptians all of a sudden come to the forefront and provide good, strong leadership."

Former U.S. Senator and Georgia Governor Zell Miller, who attended the lecture with Shirley Miller, his wife, closed the evening by thanking Chambliss for his time.

"Thank you for your service," said Gov. Miller. "May you have a wonderful time back home. You are a great, great senator, and we're all very, very proud of you."

Bee...from Page 1

of you, you are winners to do this. I am so proud of you."

Towns County Public Library Branch Manager Debbie Phillips presented awards to first place and first runner-up, and all in attendance applauded the accomplishments of every speller who took to the stage.

Judges for the event were Towns County Middle School Principal David Turner, Towns County Elementary School Principal Dr. Sandy Page and Thompson.

Third-grade teacher Ruth Taylor acted as word caller.

Ninth-grader Chase Wil-

liams, who experienced spelling bee success in his younger days with victories in the fifth and eighth grades, served as honorary helper for the evening.

"All 12 of them are winners," said Dr. Page just before the competition, to an audience consisting of mostly nervous parents. "They've had challenges and competitions in the classroom. If you remember when you were in elementary school and you had the spelling bee in the classroom - nothing's changed from how we did that. It's still the same list, and

the teacher would call them out. Everyone had to sit down if you missed the word, and the children still love to do that, and it's a great way to learn the spelling list."

Towns County Schools extended a special thank you to fourth-grade teacher Debbie Nicholson, who served as spelling bee coordinator.

The next step for young Fairless will be the District Spelling Bee, where he will spell against other third through eighth-graders on Saturday, Feb. 28, at Mabry Middle School in Marietta.



Budget...from Page 1

were undetectable at the beginning of the fiscal year.

"What we try to do is go through each department budget, look at the income that has come in so far, try to annualize it with a best guess for the rest of the year, just to be more accurate," said Stancil. "More often than not, we're pretty much on track, because a lot of our costs are fixed from year to year, plus, we can control some replacement and repair costs depending on the finances of the department and how bad things are or how good things are."

The ultimate goal of the midyear budget amendment is to make sure that budget projections are met by the end of the budget year.

Hiwassee City Council approved the first reading of the midyear amended budget ordinance for 2014-2015 in its regular meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 3.

"We actually have two



readings and a public hearing, even on an amendment, because, again, this is an amend-

ment," said Stancil. "Now, when we propose a budget for next year, we will do an end of

the year budget to see what happened and how close we were, what the carryover was, were

there any things that happened from the time that we worked the midyear that we didn't

anticipate, and we'll put forth two budgets next year - an end of the year budget, and we'll do the projection for the following year for a 2015-2016 budget."

According to the announcement from Mayor Mathis concerning the Feb. 17 public hearing, "the mayor and city manager will make a report of the hearing that will be provided to the city council prior to their regular meeting on March 3, 2015, at 4 p.m."

The proposed 2014-2015 amended budget for the City of Hiwassee will be submitted to the Hiwassee City Council for consideration at their regular monthly meeting on March 3, 2015."

Other departments within the city, such as the water department, water treatment plant and sewer plant, will also be receiving amended budgets that reflect a drop in total expenditures anticipated by year end.

Snow Days...from Page 1

"The way the state department works, they give you leeway of three days," said Dr. Berrong. "So, you can actually miss three days, and you don't have to make them up for students. Teachers have to make up all of the days, but students don't have to make up three days if you only miss three days. Once you miss four days, then you have to start making all the days up."

But again, with so many models in play for trying to determine the weather - more than two dozen, with each one

predicting something different than the next - Dr. Berrong concedes that this week may bring the need for calling more snow days.

"A lot of things go into the decision," said Dr. Berrong. "I feel like we got lucky some throughout this week, and fortunately, I can say I feel like the decisions we've made have been the correct decisions. Honestly, what goes into the decision-making process is what's going to keep our students safe. That's the number one factor - keeping our students safe."

Last Friday marked the first time students returned to school in a week, and even then, Dr. Berrong called for a two-hour delay.

"We were still concerned that some of the private drives were still a little slick, and so what we did was put the all-call out last night that we would be having this two-hour delay," said Dr. Berrong on Friday. "But if you felt that it was unsafe to come out of your drive, please give a call to your principal this morning and we'll give you an excused

absence today. So, if that's the case, we're not going to hold that against a student. But then, on the flip side, we knew that all of our busses could travel all of their routes. So, with that being known, we felt like we could have school today."

Overall, Dr. Berrong, who is still settling in to his position as superintendent, has had an interesting first month and a half on the job.

"I have to say, this has been a very stressful week," said Dr. Berrong. "I've had some definite sleepless nights,

because you just don't know if it's going to come in, and the weather channels don't seem to know when it's going to come in. I've been so frustrated to go to weather.com, and it says we're going to get 3 inches of snow, and then we go to the NOAA, which is another weather service that we really watch, and it says we're getting nothing whatsoever."

"And so, you're sitting there trying to decide, well, what is it going to do? And that's the hardest decision, when you don't know. And so,

you're really trying to guess, and you're trying to make the best decision for the safety of these kids. And that is so stressful, because the last thing we want - we don't want to make a decision just for a majority of a group, because if it's that one kid that had a car accident, I don't think I could live with myself saying, I decided to go to school, and that's the reason that kid had a car accident. I take this very seriously in trying to keep these kids safe, and I'm going to err on the side of caution every single time."

Weather...from Page 1

911 - if any of those agencies are overtasked, then we activate our EOC. That hasn't happened yet, so we're just on standby, and everybody's ready to open that up if need be."

Commissioner Kendall urges people to be safe in these kinds of conditions, which can wreak havoc on the 450 miles of county road once they become susceptible to black ice.

"We just ask people to stay home," said Commissioner Kendall. "We can't get on these steep, icy mountain roads with the truck, so stay home. If they have an emergency, for food or medicine or medical assistance, call us, and our EMS people will be there, even if they have to go on foot. Our fire department rescue group will also be available. I just want to commend all of our groups for working and coordinating together."

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton and the rest of the sheriff's office stayed busy pa-

trolling iced over Towns County last week, in the wake of a series of storms that left much of the county unsafe for travel.

"Overall, considering the circumstances, it could have been worse, but we've had a handful of wrecks, and a couple of them overturns that we've worked," said Sheriff Clinton. "A lot of people kind of paid heed and stayed at home or were careful driving. Unfortunately, sometimes people, when they see the road's pretty clear, they'll speed up, and they'll realize that right around the curve is a shady spot with ice."

Fortunately, none of the car accidents around the county last week resulted in serious injury, including the few that involved overturned vehicles.

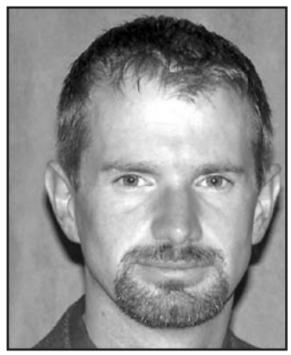
"That's always a very serious situation when you're in a motor vehicle accident," said Sheriff Clinton. "And you get used to it - we drive all the time, we get very used to it. But

I guarantee you, when you're in a motor vehicle accident, you realize how extremely fast even the speed limit is.

More winter weather is expected to hit the county this week, and the office of the sheriff is prepared for anything.

"It's kind of similar to what we've had in the past," said Sheriff Clinton. "One thing about it, the roads definitely are better than they could have been. The DOT was out working pretty hard, trying to keep the roads clean. Of course, you can only do so much sometimes with the weather, but I think that there's been a lot of engagement with people. We've tried to keep them updated in real time with the social media and that sort of thing."

The Towns County Sheriff's Office regularly updates its Facebook and Twitter accounts, where up-to-date road conditions may be found in icy weather.



Sheriff Chris Clinton

"People have been really engaged and kind of paying attention to what the conditions are like," said Sheriff Clinton. "A lot of them decided to stay put rather than chance it. Of course, that's always my immediate suggestion when the roads are bad. If you don't have to go anywhere, don't."

"Probably the biggest advice I tell them if you do have to

go somewhere, allow that extra time, be very careful, but always make sure somebody knows when you should arrive and what direction you're traveling, what route you're taking, just in case the situation occurs where you get stranded and somebody has to come look for you."

There is an element of risk that must be considered any time people do decide to travel in unsafe road conditions, no matter the reason. Sometimes that risk goes unpunished, but other times, a high price is paid.

"Obviously, we're going to keep sending that message out there that when the weather's bad and the roads are bad, we'd prefer people to stay home, especially with the ice," said Sheriff Clinton. "The thing about ice, when that stuff's coming in, it makes it hard for rescue workers to get to you, as well. I think one thing that we had a little worse last year

with the ice, which still remains to be seen - what will we get tomorrow, we may get the same situation - when you get that sheet of ice, quarter inch of ice on the road, there's really nothing magical about an emergency vehicle that it can go better than other cars. And sometimes it can make it very hard to even get to them. Fortunately so far, we haven't had that issue."

Should more icy weather move in this week, Sheriff Clinton urges residents to take the appropriate precautions not just on the road, but in the home.

"A lot of things that people don't think about when ice is threatening you, we joke about everybody thinks about bread and milk, but they need to make sure they have plenty of water, and that if they're on prescription medications, make sure they have those things, because with an ice storm, if could be a little while before somebody can get to you," said Sheriff Clinton.