

Cruelty...continued from page 1A

is a comic war film starring George Clooney, Jeff Bridges, Kevin Spacey and Brad Pitt. The film explores the paranormal, psychic and psychological experiments on a herd of goats and some captured locals. The secret U.S. Military program included staring at goats and making them explode.

After the conclusion of the movie, authorities say the three stole a goat from the Allen's residence.

Dyer and Skinner told sheriff's investigators that they urged Johnson to return the goat. Instead, they say he tossed the goat off the porch at 32 Bucks Way. The goat, Jo Anne Allen's pet named *Mercy*, was injured after being tossed off the porch, sheriff's reports show.

Dyer and Skinner told investigators that Johnson then shot the goat several times after he tossed *Mercy* off the porch, sheriff's reports show.

Dyer and Skinner also told investigators that Johnson then tied the goat to the back of his pickup and dragged a snow-deceased *Mercy* around at a high rate of speed, sheriff's reports show.

The following day, one

of the Allen's neighbors came to their home and told them that they had found *Mercy* and that she was dead, a somber and heartbroken Jo Anne Allen said.

"*Mercy* was my sweetest goat," she said. "She was my pet and just like one of our family. She did not know a stranger. She would come up to anyone. Families bring their children and grandchildren by to see our goats and *Mercy* was a favorite. "I guess that is why they got her and not one of the others," Allen said. "I do not understand why anyone — even evil people — would do this to a helpless, lovable creature."

"She was 15 years old and was living out the rest of her goat life in her two pastures, eating hay and pasture grass and treats from the kitchen," Allen said. "Evil does exist in this world, even in Blairsville. Please watch after your animals and families. I pray that this does not happen to any other goat — or any animal — ever."

Johnson is free on \$16,000 bail, Union County Jail records show.

Dyer and Skinner were being held on \$14,000 bail each, jail records show.

Iwo Jima...continued from page 1A

Cooney, U.S. Navy, Radioman, 2nd class, who served on the U.S.S. Navy Destroyer at Iwo Jima, as he was unable to attend, but was with them when it counted the most.

Blairsville resident Gamache, "enlisted on the Marine Corps birthday, Nov. 10th."

He served from 1942-1946.

"People have asked if I was scared when I went down that ramp. I wasn't afraid, it was more a feeling of anticipation. We had a job to do. We had to get mortar carts and machine gun carts to higher ground. We took fortification up the beach," said Gamache.

While attending Emory Medical School, West was drafted at the age of 17 and trained as a navy corpsman (referred to as corpse-man) on the U.S.S. Wisconsin Battleship, BB-64.

He was a pharmacist mate, 1st Class, due to his medical school training.

He soon learned why they were called 'corpse-man' when he arrived in Iwo Jima and was taken off the ship and put on the beach to care of the wounded marines.

"They gave me a handgun. Japs were taught to kill the medics first. If you killed one medic it was the same as killing thirty-five marines," said West.

West said he wore his uniform all the time and they took the red cross off to keep him from being identified as a medic.

West served aboard ship in the operating room, handling and sterilizing all equipment and performing triage.

"The Marines called us angels," said West.

West broke down and wept when he talked about an 18-year-old Marine who had been brought in and "had been torn to pieces."

Gamache shared a similar story that brought tears to the eyes of everyone present.

"I had a best friend. We all had best friends. The first day, we were about half way across Japan, and they were throwing mortar rounds," he said. "We stayed in a concrete revetment. My friend and I were kneeling right next to each other. He was killed right in front of me. His last words were 'help me' and he was gone."

"We were about three feet altogether in space. It could have been any one of us," said Gamache.

Kimsey was barely 17 when he enlisted. He served on the U.S.S. Pasadena, CL-65, as a Fire Controlman, which means he was in charge of directing "big guns."

"I got the fun of going through all the suicide planes and bombings," said Kimsey. "We bombarded that island down there. They would fire and we'd fire back. We had plenty of guns on the ship."

"We were guarding the Missouri Battleship and the Big E (the Essex)," Kimsey said. "We got to bring the ships into the harbor."

An emotional Johnson, said, "For years I couldn't talk about that time. It wasn't about me, but about all the men who never made it home."

"One thing we are all blessed with is that we have a comradeship, a bond that can never be broken," said Johnson.

Johnson, who has served his country for more than 36 years, enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the age of 17.

"I was right off the farm and they gave me a new pair of boots," said Johnson. "I had never had a new pair of boots in my life."

Johnson served aboard the U.S.S. Silverstein, DE-534, as a Chief Petty Officer/Chief Quartermaster on bridge.

"It was my duty to be up at 3:15 a.m. and relieve the charge on the bridge and assist the navigator to take celestial sites," he said. "We were at Iwo Jima and we had pounded three days non-stop."

"I got up. It must have been about the 16th day," he said. "I looked at the radar scope and all I could see was big blips. I had never seen a picture like that before. It was the Fifth and Seventh fleet."

"For three solid days and nights, my battle station was on the wheel as chief helmsman on the ship," he said. "The smoke got so bad from Iwo Jima that you couldn't see or breathe. The smoke was acid."

"Admiral Spruance called a cease fire for all ships and planes," Johnson said. "There was almost an hour that nobody fired. During that period of time there was no breeze. Smoke settled thickly over Iwo Jima."

"We could not see anything," said Johnson.

One thing they all agreed on was how much they enjoyed and looked forward to listening to "Tokyo Rose" daily on the radio.

Tokyo Rose was broadcast by Japanese radio everyday as she played the great hits of the 1940s.

"Even though she used propaganda and brainwash techniques to get inside your head, she did more for morale than anything that could have happened there," said Kimsey.

They recalled the cheering and excitement when the U.S. Flag was raised atop Mt. Suribachi as well as the celebration that took place when they learned of the news that Admiral Yamamoto had been killed in 1943 as "he was the brains behind the attack on Pearl Harbor," said Johnson.

Although kept quiet at the time, the strategic value of the island was as an alternative landing field for the B-29 bombers that carried the atomic bomb that struck Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

"We all questioned the bomb," Johnson said. "I questioned killing kids, but they were all armed. The kids were trained to kill. Once I realized what it would have cost us in allied and American lives, I was glad we had the bomb."

"I was able to justify it in my heart," he said. "Without the bombs, it would have cost us more than 1 million American lives."

These unsung heroes brought their books of memorabilia and photos and were more than will to share, but many things had to remain unsaid as it was too difficult and emotional for them to be able to speak the words of what they had witnessed and experienced in what has been referred to as 'America's Battle.'

These great men are worthy of our respect, honor, and tribute.

Weather...continued from page 1A

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton said, "There are many roads that are impassable and others are becoming increasingly treacherous. For your safety, and the safety of emergency personnel, please stay off the roads."

In spite of safety warnings, there were still plenty of vehicles on the roads although they were traveling very slowly and many of them sliding as they traveled.

It was just a bad day to be out on the roads.

This did not, however, deter the avid snow lovers from



Local motorists try their luck on the local roadways as Mother Nature dealt a frozen deck on Saturday. Photo/Libby Shook

Ice...continued from page 1A

praisal value.

Speculation homes and cabins were popping up everywhere to support potential residential and second home buyers.

Many of who were moving here from Florida and other key states where the boom was even bigger.

According to National Home Builders Association statistics, there was on average more than 1.35 million new home starts annually during a time when banks were just handing out money because of lax federal guarantees.

It was unsustainable and the bubble burst starting in the final quarter of 2007.

In 2008 and through the end of 2012, national statistics show that beginning at the start of the fiscal crisis in the U.S., new home starts dropped to an average of only 459,000 per year, but held steady at that rate. This meant that the economy had been drastically affected and unemployment rose throughout the nation with a drastic decrease in housing jobs.

The General Election in November 2008 saw a new U.S. president and related Congress come into power. They took center stage in January 2009 and promised help in the form of a stimulus package that was supposed to help with the housing deficits and create new jobs all throughout the nation's economy.

The stimulus did quite

get to the right people and the housing market hit rock bottom, costing several million Americans their livelihoods.

Many of those jobs were associated with new home construction. New federal lending regulations went into effect and the results bore a negative result on the economy.

Money for new housing starts became hard to come by for almost everyone and with the loss of so many jobs, foreclosures became commonplace.

The housing market became flooded with distressed loans that caused an almost immediate halt to America's economy. Builders could not, and still can't, compete with the deals banks were offering on foreclosed homes and land that included lower interest rates, less money down and easier qualifications to purchase their overload of foreclosed properties.

Many builders were forced to abandon their businesses, terminate their employees and look elsewhere for employment.

This was caused in a large part to their inability to compete against the guaranteed loans by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, who worked with the banking institutions to clear the foreclosed inventories the banks had on hand.

Times were now bad and the local housing industry suffered untold hardships that still exist today, but are slightly im-

proving as time goes by.

Bill Pierson, owner and broker of ReMax Hiawassee has lived through the bubble collapse and can see things improving.

"Things are getting a little better in Towns County, but are still not great, nowhere near where they were before 2008," Pierson said. "It is still very difficult for solid qualified people to obtain new home loans and many just walk away without buying anything because of the frustration involved in getting a home loan."

"The regulations have gone from one extreme to the other and it is hurting new home start-ups and sales," declared Pierson.

The housing market is now seeing a new type of clientele that is driving the slight improvement in the local market, "Baby Boomers" and others who want to live here full time.

"We are seeing an influx of people who want to become full-time residents instead of the second home buyers of the past," Pierson said. "Many sales are cash purchases, which means they don't have to qualify for a mortgage."

"Our market is actually short on residential style homes for these buyers and this is helping to create some demand for new homes," he said. "This fact in turn is helping stimulate the housing market here. It is a strange time because the homes

getting outside.

Kids of all ages were outside enjoying the white-out conditions as they built snowmen and had snow ball fights.

After all, it had been quite some time since this opportunity to play in the snow had presented itself.

By 10 a.m. Sunday, after a brief period of snow showers, the sun peeked through the emerging blue sky and the snow began to melt.

General Lee must have been relishing in the fact that quite possibly his prediction could be accurate.

on the market at this time are very affordable for say first time homeowners and blue-collar workers.

"But with the scarcity of jobs and the difficulty of getting a loan, these affordable homes are just not moving well," Pierson said.

Towns County has seen a slight increase in residential permits in the first month of 2013 and there are actually several new home applications being processed at this time, according to the county building permits department.

"We are seeing an increase in the high-end homes here in Towns County and that is helping with the increase in building permits," said Pierson.

The number of residential permits totaled 46 in 2012 and that matched the numbers for 2010. Those totals represent the two lowest totals of residential permits applied for in the years since the bubble burst.

This year looks like it might be the beginning of a new era for Towns County with a change in clientele looking for homes.

That is something positive for the builders, local businesses and job seekers following on the heels of five straight years of a depressed housing market.

Here's hoping that the economy truly has turned the corner in our neck of the woods.

All signs point to yes.

Sims...continued from page 1A

new rock jail that we now call the old rock jail," said Sims.

A most interesting story was when he described how the Georgia Mountain Fair came to be.

According to Sims, it started out at the elementary school grounds known at that time as Blackwood Brothers Circus and Carnival.

E.N. Nichols, the local county agent at the time, displayed farm products/items in the gymnasium.

The Fiddler's Convention was held in a tent above the gymnasium.

"When they moved to the high school grounds, Mr. Tabor (could not recall the first name), the President of the Lions Club at that time, said the Lions Club would do the parking," Sims said. "That's how the Lions got involved with the Fair. When they moved to where they are now, the Lions Club assumed sponsorship."

He also recalled that there was no theater at that time, but a gentleman came up from Florida and set up a tent and "showed old westerns."

"The cost was on 25 cents, but I liked to save all the quarters I could so some of us town boys would try to sneak in," said Sims.

The group got a good chuckle when he told them of a time when he rolled up under the tent while sneaking in and sat down right next to his



Towns County Historical Society members listen to Bruce Sims. Photo/Libby Shook

sister. You can draw your own conclusion as to what happened when he got home.

The stories were numerous and very entertaining and Sims left his audience longing for more.

Several folks stopped to talk with him before leaving and asked him questions about various locations and businesses of the time.

Sims is a retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel who combined an Air Force and Civil Service Career.

He served 10 years ac-

tive duty and 25 years in the Reserves joining at the age of 17.

Sims spent 20 years in Texas and California serving five years as a U.S. Border Patrol officer and 15 years in immigration services.

He is a published author and poet.

In fact, several folks purchased one or more of his books before leaving.

Sims' writings are based on true experiences.

His assignments in the Air Force have taken him into

the Far East, Africa, Europe, and Puerto Rico.

He and his wife Dorothy Jeroline "Jerry" Sims "lived out of a suitcase as we moved 14 times in 16 years," said Sims.

"She got so used to moving that when I would say honey it's time to move again, she would just say 'okay,'" said Sims.

His travels and interest in people influenced him to get a bachelor of science degree in Geography from Florida State University.

Shakers...continued from page 1A

Garrett wears many hats as agriculture teacher, FFA advisor, and coordinator of the work-based learning program.

She also helps students prepare for competition at the local, regional, and state level.

Several students will be traveling with Garrett to Oglethorpe County High School on Feb. 12th for competition in the areas of poultry judging, woodworking, and wildlife management.

In regard to preparing students for National Certification in an agricultural area, Garrett said, "We focus on agri-mechanics, welding, electrical wiring, woodworking, and small engines."

Garrett teaches plant science and general horticulture as well and gave the

group a tour of the shop and the greenhouse.

The students are required to take a safety test and score 100 on it before they are allowed to participate in the shop.

"Safety is key," said Garrett.

At the Movers and Shakers meeting on Jan. 11th at Mary's Southern Grill, Sam Fullerton announced the group's plans to back Garrett and the agriculture program at TCHS.

"Anything Sabrina needs for her program, we are going to supply her with it," said Fullerton.

Fullerton clarified that statement Friday morning as he said, "The reason we're backing them is because with the economy the way that it is, there are kids

coming out of college and can't get a job. With the skills they are learning in Sabrina's classes, they have an increased chance of getting a job or starting their own business."

The Movers and Shakers, Family Connection, The Gold Academy, and the Towns County Chamber of Commerce will be sponsoring a fund raiser for the Towns County FFA on Feb. 16th at the TCHS cafeteria from 1-4 p.m.

There will be live entertainment, food and beverages, and a silent auction.

"These kids are the future of North Georgia and our country. They deserve our support," said Fullerton.