

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

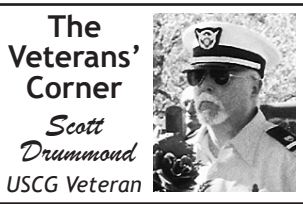
From E-1 Private to General, US Army

We are blessed to have many fine Veterans in the North Georgia Mountain area. Many, like me, have just done their jobs serving our country; many have excelled, not to mention our real heroes who gave their lives for others. Very much like a lot of us, Bernie becomes emotional when thinking of those who gave all.

Amongst those who have strived to excel is Brigadier General Bernard (Bernie) A. Fontaine, now in the process of making a home in Blairsville, GA. Here's a quote from a very down to earth, common sense patriot who shares much with all of us: "I have 30 years active military service. I went from a Private in 1960, to Sergeant, to an Engineer Officer and Management up the line retiring as a Brigadier General (GA) in 1990." Some are determined to succeed, as is Bernie: 1960 - Joined the US Army/Basic Training in Fort Dix, NJ; 1965 - Graduated NCO Academy, Honor graduate; 1966 - Graduated OCS Fort Benning, GA, 2nd Lieutenant (Airborne Ranger, Vietnam Veteran); 1972-90 - Engineering Management Officer responsible for master planning, Real World Environmental Issues, Major Construction, Hands on Energy policies. Vermont (1972-1979) Georgia (1979-1990); 1976 - Graduated from Command and General Staff College; 1990 - Retired from Georgia National Guard as a Brigadier General (GA); 1990-04 - Taught Political Science at Dekalb College, Georgia State University and Georgia Military College. Also worked as the Night Dean; 2014 Served with Georgia State Defense Force as Senior Advisor to the Commanding General for Search and Rescue Training.; 2013 Elected to National Board of Directors for National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR), Instructor, Lead Evaluator SARTECH I (1 of 2 in Georgia). Bernie continues to serve our communities in the following ways: Union County Fire-fighter NPQ 2; Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Instructor; CPR Instructor. Among his many accomplishments are: Associates' Degree in Animal Husbandry; Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration; Masters Degree in Public Administration; Doctoral Candidate Political Science. Also to his credit are "in-service" course work environmental protection, physical security and energy conservation.

As per his wife, Sylvia Brooks Fontaine, who grew up in rural Georgia they were married when Bernie was a young Lieutenant and fresh out of our North GA mountains as an Airborne Ranger. Sylvia had also just graduated Nursing School. She pursued her passion as a family nurse practitioner after bearing four children and earning her MBA degree. Sylvia has written several books and poems, including one titled "Mountain Tribulations", which I have quickly scanned, and appears to be a very enjoyable story, loosely based upon American history right here in our mountain area, and even though fictional, holds very valuable lessons for all of us, as Americans. They have twelve grandchildren and pursue our Christian beliefs with Bernie serving as Deacon. Certainly a genuine American family, having applied themselves, worked hard, sacrificed much and accomplished even more!

Semper Paratus



The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran

Is it business as usual?

In all the years we have been sharing thoughts on this page, chances are that you haven't witnessed a lot of admiration or respect for the political leadership of this great nation of ours. Despite individual examples of integrity and brilliance to the contrary, in my view, "government" in general, is corrupt, bloated and ineffective.

Let's further refine that thought with a focus on the word, "ineffective." Members of Congress, for example, are very effective at serving their own interests, growing their bank accounts, getting re-elected and pursuing careers in the industries that they are charged with overseeing after their public "service" has ended. However, Congress, and every Administration occupying the Executive Branch for as long as I can remember, has not been very effective at managing the economy for or serving the interests of the average citizen.

There is a level of governance which is remarkably effective and very successful in pursuing their goals. Unfortunately those goals and our well-being very often do not coincide. We have referenced this layer of governance from time to time, the "shadow" government that survives from election to election and, according to some conspiracy theorists, from generation to generation.

I'm not prepared to go down that rabbit hole too far, as it is very difficult to stay anchored to the truth in such a bewildering array of "fact" and misinformation. Nevertheless, in some reckonings government, by definition, requires conspiracy to function.

Every election year we are given to believe that chaos is imminent and the wisdom and experience of this candidate or that, or this party or the other one, is urgently needed to halt our descent down the slippery slope. The barrage of headlines in the 24 hour news cycle accelerates to support this idea. This year the western world is struggling with the effects of mass migration: refugees in Europe and immigrants in the US. This is the political football that may decide the election here in November.

Stepping back from the strong emotions inspired by the topic of immigration (or migration) can reveal some interesting anomalies. In the US, for example, even discussing the topic can expose one to charges of "racism." The current and outgoing Administration appears to have adopted a public posture of "all are welcome," particularly in this election year, but looking at the numbers reveals that the Obama Administration has deported a record number of immigrants. Nevertheless, border agents, who are on the front lines of the problem, are endorsing Trump.

In Europe we see the same, almost schizophrenic attitude toward the refugee problem. While some cities and towns are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of people, and crime, particularly rape, is a very real phenomenon in places where thousands of young male refugees have landed, citizens of Germany, for example, are officially scolded for daring to acknowledge that the problem exists.

The problems would seem to defy logic. Why would governments appear to embrace policies that are unpopular and that seem to be so detrimental to the best interests of their own citizens? Is the sky falling? Is the world descending into chaos?

Unfortunately, I believe that things are proceeding exactly according to plan. Germany, for example, has one of the oldest populations in Europe. Germany is not replacing its aging population fast enough to remain economically competitive. The influx of young bodies, who will eventually assimilate to some degree, who will have children of their own and intermarry with the current residents, will balance the declining birthrate. The corporatists who have engineered this plan will certainly not feel the consequences of the unrest that their actions will cause, nor will they feel the loss of cultural identity that will be experienced by the German people.

A bold assertion, perhaps, and one that needs to be supported by fact. The facts are certainly there and open to interpretation. In this limited space, I would point to one in particular, and that is the number of refugee processing centers that are currently operating in Turkey, our NATO "ally," many of which were built BEFORE the refugee crisis materialized.

There are parallels between the refugee crisis in Germany and the immigration problem in the US. The problem has been discussed here for decades. Democrat and Republican Administrations and several sessions of Congress have been unable to address the problem. Either they are and have been incompetent, or they don't really want to solve it. In any event, the flow of people into the United States, which also has an aging population that would afflict our ability to "compete," has continued unabated.

Refugees have long been used as weapons of war and as pawns in international games of chess. Consider for example the concessions gained by Kaddafi, who threatened to unleash hordes of refugees into Europe from Libya. This was before, of course, it was decided to destroy Kaddafi's government and the infrastructure of the entire nation, allowing western companies access to Libya's oil and gas and accelerating the refugee problem.

Whether the refugee crisis is an unintended consequence, or acceptable collateral damage in the international fossil fuel game, or whether things are going exactly according to plan, one thing is for sure. The people responsible, the Clintons, Bushes, Obamas and the people who pull their strings, will not be standing in long lines with all their worldly possessions on their backs. They will not be paying the taxes necessary to foot the bills. They will not be watching their cultural heritage diluted or marginalized. Chances are, business will continue as usual.



By: Don Perry

Keeping Bluebirds happy and healthy

Once referred to as "blue robins" because of their vibrant blue hue and rust colored chest, bluebirds are a desired addition to any homeowner's backyard. Because of numerous challenges, most importantly a loss of habitat, these charismatic little birds have been facing a population decline. However, you can promote the presence of bluebirds on your property by crafting houses for them and maintaining a bluebird-friendly habitat.

Bluebirds eat insects such as grasshoppers, crickets and caterpillars, as well as berries during the colder months when insects are not as abundant. They are also cavity dwellers, meaning they normally nest in tree holes. However, as development increases, the number of trees suitable for bluebird nests is rapidly decreasing. Homeowners can help to combat this problem by placing their own bluebird houses. Installing a bluebird house is much more complicated than nailing a birdhouse to a tree, though. In order to ensure that bluebirds will be the one living in the happy little home you provide for them, you need to make sure it is well suited to their needs.

When building the house, use untreated wood that is about one inch thick. Pine, cedar, and cypress are all good choices. If you would like to paint the house, choose a light color as it will reflect the sunlight and prevent the shelter from becoming too hot. Also be sure to provide small ventilation holes at the four corners of the bottom to allow air movement and any accumulated rainwater to escape. Make an entry hole of about one inch but do not provide a perch for the house. Bluebirds do not use perches, so this will only encourage other species to inhabit your houses. Contact our extension office if you would like a publication that includes plans for how to build a bluebird house.

After the house is built, it is important to choose an appropriate place to install it. It is always best to put bluebird houses on their own separate pole about with a conical shield on it to minimize the chances of a predator such as a snake climbing the post. Houses should be placed about six feet above the ground and at least 100 yards apart because bluebirds are very territorial when nesting. The entry should also face southeast to protect the nesting birds from winds. Once nesting and breeding season has ended, it is important to clean out the box to ensure the return of our beloved little blue friends. Bluebirds will not return to a house if they think it is occupied, so in the winter make sure to remove any nests leftover from the previous year.

While the appropriate shelter will encourage bluebirds to come to your yard, providing ample amount of food for them to eat when insects are scarce will help to make sure they stay there and return again to nest the next year. Bluebirds, and most other songbirds for that matter, love any sort of berry bush. Blackberries, blueberries, hackberry and numerous other native shrubs provide food that will keep bluebirds happy and healthy.



Melissa Mattee

Letters to The Editor

To the Editor:

I would like to thank Towns County Fire and Rescue, Sheriff Clinton, and DNR officer David Webb for saving my burning home and saving my cat "Precious" (front page March 3 issue) The response was fast and professional.

Thanks again,
Jim Matthews

Letter to the Editor:

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Yes, we can end child abuse

No one should simply shake their head and sadly lament the horrific stories of child abuse that is often in the media. With April being Child Abuse Prevention month, let it serve as a galvanizing call to action for us all to commit to ending abuse and securing the safety and future of every child in Towns County. Yes, we can end child abuse. We can end it when we all become advocates for children. For some of us, that advocacy comes in a formal role. Teachers, child care workers, health care providers and others who come into daily contact with children can be vigilant for signs of abuse and neglect. Their actions to report suspected abuse or to offer extra time and attention to fragile children can do more than make a difference. It can save lives.

CASA volunteers – court-appointed special advocates – also put their passion for the well-being of children into action. Assigned to watch over and advocate for abused and neglected children, CASA volunteers make sure kids don't get lost in the overburdened legal and social service systems or languish in unsupportive foster homes. Volunteers stay with children until their court case is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home.

For many abused children, their CASA volunteer is the one constant adult presence in their lives.

A CASA volunteer's intense advocacy can break the cycle of abuse and neglect. When children grow up in homes where their only adult role models respond to them with violence and disregard for their needs, they repeat that cycle with their own children. When a CASA volunteer intercedes, it not only changes the course of one child's life, it makes an impact for generations.

Not everyone can be a CASA volunteer – although Enotah CASA certainly welcomes more caring adults into our volunteer ranks – but everyone can be an advocate. Here are a few steps you can take to make our community safer for our children.

Be mindful of the signs of abuse and neglect in children, many of which appear before an obvious physical mark: lack of adult supervision, extreme passivity or aggression, poor hygiene, or watchfulness, as if waiting for something bad to happen.

Also be aware of warning signs in parents: showing indifference or rarely touching or looking at their child, constant verbal criticism, demands for perfection, blaming the child for family problems, or other irrational behaviors.

If you think a child is being abused or neglected, report your suspicions confidentially to our state's toll-free child abuse hotline at 855-GA-Child.

Take new or stressed-out parents under your wing. Offer to baby-sit, run an errand or share your own challenges and insights about being a parent.

Volunteer your time and/or donate to community programs that support children and families.

Your advocacy for children not only will help end child abuse, it will improve our community for everyone who lives here. Children who are abused and do not get the support they need to heal are more likely than other kids to drop out of school, end up homeless, turn to crime, and rely as adults on social welfare programs. When we work together to protect vulnerable children, it saves lives and tax dollars.

There are many life-threatening and incurable diseases that sadly afflict children. But we have the cure to child abuse. It lies within each of us. Now is the time to act. Find out more at www.enotahcasa.org.

Linda D'Angelo, Executive Director, Enotah CASA, Inc.



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 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. 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.

Towns County Community Calendar

Bridge Players	Every Monday: Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Bingo	Brasstown Manor	9:30 am
Free GED prep.	Every Tuesday: Old Rec. Center	4 pm
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Bridge Players	Every Friday: Village Condos Clubhouse	12:30 pm
Alcoholics Anon.	Red Cross Building	7 pm
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Mtn. Amat. Radio	First Monday of each month: 1298 Jack Dayton Cir.	6:30 pm
Alzheimer's Supp.	First Tuesday of each month: 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
Quilting Bee	First Wednesday of each month: McConnell Church	10 am
Stephens Lodge	First Thursday of each month: Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
Chamber Board	Second Monday of each month: 1411 Jack Dayton Cir.	8 am
Historical Society	Old Rec. Center	5:30 pm
Mtn. Comp. Users	www.mcug.org	6 pm
Planning Comm.	Courthouse	7 pm
School Board	Auditorium	7 pm
Unicoy Masonic	Lodge Hall	7:30 pm
Caregiver support	Second Tuesday of each month: Brasstown Manor	3 pm
Arts & Crafts Guild	Calvary Chapel	6 pm
Lions Club	Daniel's Restaurant	6 pm
Mtn. Coin Club	N. GA Tech	6 pm
Basket Weavers	Second Wednesday of each month: SC Fire Hall	10 am
Board of Elections	Old Rock Jail	4 pm
Mtn. Comm. Seniors	Second Thursday of each month: Senior Center	1 pm
Democratic Party	Civic Center	5 pm
Square Dance Club	Second Friday of each month: Rec. Center	7 pm

Towns County Herald

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Office located at: 518 N. Main St. Suite 7 "The Mall", Hiawassee
Phone: (706) 896-4454 **Fax:** (706) 896-1745 **Email:** tcherald@windstream.net
Or mail to: PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546