

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Gail Thaxton loves NGTC

We all know that Gail Thaxton loves North Georgia Technical College. After more than 40 years in education, NGTC President Dr. Gail Thaxton announced her retirement, effective Aug. 1.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan
Editor



Dr. Thaxton has served at NGTC since 2012 when she moved to Habersham County from Waycross, after serving as president of Okefenokee Technical College since 2005.

We all know that she loves North Georgia Tech with a passion.

"This decision has been very difficult as I love North Georgia Tech – the students, faculty and staff, campus, and the work," said Dr. Thaxton on Thursday, May 19, when her decision was announced to the campus. "I still enjoy coming to work every morning and doing what we do to support students. Serving as president of North Georgia Tech is the pinnacle of a long and rewarding career in education. The future of North Georgia Tech is full of potential."

Technical College System of Georgia Commissioner Gretchen Corbin announced that she will recommend Dr. Mark Ivester, current NGTC Vice President of Economic Development, be appointed as the next president of North Georgia Technical College at the next TCSG State Board meeting on June 2.

I'm going to step out on a limb here. I know someone that would make the perfect choice as NGTC's next president, Dr. Ray Perren.

Dr. Perren is the president of Lanier Technical College. He's also one of the most renowned technical college presidents in the nation. He has ties to our neck of the woods. His identical twin Roy Perren is the Facilities Management Director for Towns County Schools, and a Blue Ridge Mountain EMC board member.

Both men are class acts. With this in mind, I contacted Gov. Nathan Deal and made the recommendation of Dr. Ray Perren as the next NGTC president.

Dr. Ray Perren recently testified before Congress about the need to put more emphasis on the technical college system to help relieve the nation's shortage of skilled labor.

Dr. Thaxton's last day at NGTC is July 31, and a retirement reception will soon be announced. We all love Gail.

With that being said, I'm effectively lobbying for Dr. Ray Perren, as NGTC president, even though he didn't ask me to. Gov. Deal, we wouldn't mind seeing double in the mountains.

Getting rid of unwanted visitors

My grandfather used to say that there were three effective ways of getting rid of unwanted visitors: Talk about politics. Talk about religion. Talk about some work that you need help doing.

I have found all three of these methods to be effective, and the last one is particularly good for clearing a room. But this is an election year, so today we'll take a closer look at political talk.

"Opposites attract" may be true for magnets, but this love song cliché does not accurately predict human relationships, where "like attracts like" is more often the case. Take a look at your closest friends. Chances are that a high percentage of them will have a similar political outlook.

Those of us who find that our beliefs do not conform to the prevalent left-right dichotomy may also find that we have fewer friends, as most people tend to prefer that we chose one horn or the other of the false dilemma so characteristic of American politics. When I was younger, it was easier to be either silent or evasive or accommodating when a discussion became political, but one prefers not to be disingenuous.

After so many years of "divide and conquer" politics, however, it is certainly easier to be accommodating or to try and steer the conversation onto neutral ground. Politics is now seeded with so many divisive issues, we are losing the ability to intelligently and dispassionately discuss issues without quickly becoming positional. We are losing the ability to disagree without being angry. Both "parties" are guilty.

Republicans, you spend too much time worrying about what goes on in other people's bedrooms and republican men, what women choose to do with their own bodies. Your religious beliefs may be 100 percent correct for you, but this country was founded on the separation of Church and State, and if you want a good example of how theocracy works, look no further than Saudi Arabia, where they not only share most of your judgments about other people's business, they are ready to execute those who do not comply.

Democrats, some of the most intolerant and judgmental people I know gather under the "liberal" banner. You talk about republicans and conservatives the way a racist speaks of other races, making broad judgments about a group of people based upon, like skin color, a single attribute, that being the way a person chooses to vote. Some of you vote democrat because you believe you are supporting women's rights and tolerance of diverse lifestyles. Yet many of you seem eager to defend Islam, which traditionally views women as subservient and assigns the death penalty to many alternative lifestyle choices. Meanwhile you condemn Christianity, which is intricately woven into the fabric of your history and culture, and which seeks to love and forgive rather than execute those who do not comply.

As an author of opinion I run the risk of offending someone on a weekly basis, especially when those opinions seek to chalk the sidewalks of people's safe spaces. (That's not a stealth Trump endorsement – I just like the metaphor.) But I will gladly accept that risk if it serves to stimulate a thought process which leads to thinking outside the box that thickens and hardens around our national consciousness. Inside that box we accept an ever growing and increasingly intrusive and coercive ruling class. Inside that box we are dumbed down and docile. Inside that box we get to vote, but the ruling class picks the candidates. Inside that box we have Clinton versus Trump.

Every four years now (and sadly, every year in between), media baits us with the same issues guaranteed to divide us into our two camps: Abortion, gun rights, immigration, and this year bathroom privileges joined the litany of issues over which we argue. We attack the straw men of the opposing party, so skillfully portrayed by our pundits. We become so focused on defending our camps that we miss the bigger picture of freedom and economic power sacrificed to the imperial designs of the elite.

However, this year there may be a glimmer of hope. The ruling class may have overplayed its hand in anointing another Clinton for the White House. The extreme aversion to Clinton has produced an equally noxious candidate in Trump, and people of both parties are fed up. A majority of Americans recently polled would now vote for a third party candidate. If such a candidate appears, it would behoove us to take a look at their candidacy, if only to begin the process of digging out of the rut in which we find ourselves.

The Middle Path

By: Don Perry

Azalea and Camellia leaf galls

The cool, moist weather we've been having has brought on a new problem that we need to be on the lookout for in our gardens: azalea and camellia leaf galls. Unlike some galls, these are not caused by insects, but instead are a symptom of a fungal infection with an Exobasidium fungus. Though these galls usually pop up in the spring to some extent, this is an exceptionally bad year for them. This means that even though you may have never experienced this before, you should still be on the lookout for it.

These galls are green or sometimes pink and look like marshmallows dangling from branches. The fungus responsible for these unsightly growths in azaleas is called Exobasidium vaccinii and it can also infect other closely related ornamentals such as rhododendrons. Though these growths look ugly and harmful, they typically will not kill the plant. In fact, a common name for them is "pinkster apples" because people used to eat them. However, I wouldn't recommend that, seeing as how rhododendrons are poisonous and I've heard the azalea galls don't taste very good at all! In camellias, infection with Exobasidium camelliae causes abnormal, pale green, fleshy leaves at the tips of branches.

You will typically see leaf galls form just after flowering and spring green up. Eventually, if the galls are not removed, they will turn white and look powdery as the fungus forms its spores and will finally turn brown as the plant tissue dies later in the summer. Once the spores are produced, they are spread by the wind and by water droplets bouncing on the affected branches. They can spread from branch to branch and plant to plant. Once the gall turns brown and hardens, it will drop off and if it remains close to the plant, it can be a source of fungal infection for next year's growth. The fungus can also remain dormant in leaf tissues that seem otherwise unaffected, as well as underneath bud scales on stems.

Leaf galls appear exclusively on new, tender growth, which makes them a little easier to deal with than many fungal diseases. The best option for controlling this disease is to prune out any and all galls that you can find, preferably before they turn white and form spores. The spores disperse so easily that by the time you find a white gall, they have probably spread to another branch or plant. You can also prevent major leaf gall infections by inspecting azaleas and camellias before you purchase and plant them, as well as by leaving adequate spacing between bushes so leaves can dry well after watering and bouts of rain.

The best course of action is to monitor your plants for these symptoms and remove any abnormal growth as soon as it appears. In some cases, you can apply a protective fungicide such as chlorothalonil, mancozeb, or myclobutanil. If you take this approach, always make sure to read the label and use the fungicide appropriately, or contact the extension office if you have any questions. Keep in mind that once the galls are formed, the only way to truly get rid of them is to prune them out. Applying fungicides will not shrink the galls or heal the plant, but it can protect it from the Exobasidium fungus the following year. In the meantime, keep an eye on your azaleas, rhododendrons, and camellias and cut out any galls you find!

If you'd like more information on leaf galls, stop by your extension office for a brochure.



Melissa Mattee



Letters to The Editor

Letter to The Editor:

Congratulations are due to the new City Council Members. They have been able to do something the previous Council has been dilly - dally, dithering for months. That never moving project has been the "Beautification of the City Square". I have heard that project named for years. The City Square has reached a critical point... again... and is need of major overhaul.

The new City Council Members are on the way with help. In single meeting, several issues concerning the Square were brought to the floor, discussed, evaluated and action taken. Now. The issues were not tabled until the next meeting, they were not to be studied any further and they were not referred to a committee. Dithering is over.

Proof? The dead Christmas tree is gone. The big pine is gone. Funds are being sought in the form of beautification grant or grants. Professional design assistance is being sought for long term development and ease of maintenance. Paint (chosen color is white) is being bought and a possible paint party is being planned to paint the Gazebo. A new Christmas tree will be planted... when the time is right.

Before the extremely dedicated members of the Hiawasse Garden Club and the Master Gardeners come and dig up my yard in revenge, let me say that the majority of any previous improvements or maintenance of the City Square over the years, has done by those very loyal and dedicated people. They did an outstanding job considering what they had to work with. They truly deserve a very big thank you for their persistence and undying dedication. If anyone would like to become part of a positive impact on the community, and learn something in the process, join the Master Gardener's or the Hiawasse Garden Club.

Please hang in there while the new Council Members work to get you some help. Come to the City Council Meetings. That is where the action is... or will be.

John L. Holmes

Taxpayer, Property Owner, Hiawasse Resident

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, Hiawasse, 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.

A Toxic Deadly Legacy - Agent Orange

Agent Orange, having been ignored, denied and once mischaracterized as harmless to our men and women of our military forces who were exposed to this herbicide has now finally been acknowledged by the VA as the likely cause of many cancers and diseases amongst those exposed. Vietnam Veterans in particular were exposed to this poison. However there were other locations where AO was used or tested. It is also believed, now thanks to research and data that birth defects in children and even grandchildren of military personnel who came into contact with AO are caused by this exposure. These diseases may even skip a generation. Birth defects for offspring of certain groups of Veterans who were exposed to AO are 840x those of non-AO exposed people. Dioxin is stored in fatty tissue and one may NOT show any symptoms or signs of illness for years. Much RESEARCH needs to be done immediately, for future generations, as our Vietnam Era Veterans, many of whom have been ignored or overlooked by the "system" and who are approaching their final years, are the very ones who are spearheading and bringing recognition to the plethora of health problems caused by toxic chemicals. As such it is imperative that you call your Senator and demand they pass S.901 and your Congressman and demand passage of H.R. 1769. You may go here: www.congress.gov/ to fully read these bills. Qualifications for presumptive service connected AO disability compensation: Those who served in the military, naval, Coast Guard, or air service in the Republic of Vietnam during the period 9 January 1962 to 7 May 1975; in Korea between 1 April 1968 and 31 January 1971 in a unit recognized by the VA and DoD to have operated near the DMZ; in certain occupations at certain air bases in Thailand; if you served with the U.S. Navy or U.S. Coast Guard between 9 January 1962 and 7 May 1975 and operated in inland waterways, or ventured inland. Or you have been diagnosed with one of the diseases found on the VA's list of conditions linked to herbicide exposure. Please go here for an incomplete list: www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/militaryexposure.asp.

Please contact the VA or any other VSO for any concerns about AO exposure. Do not wait! If you have private health care, by all means ask your doctor and even request testing for dioxin in your system. The very folks affected most by exposure to this horrendous toxin, our Vietnam Vets, have taken responsibility to sponsor seminars all over America, and to support research and help for those who need it most. We owe a debt to our VVA Dawson County Chapter #970, National VVA Committee, VVA Chapter 1101, Blairsville, GA and many others for all they have done in order to try and bring this information to the forefront.

Semper Paratus

The Veterans' Corner

Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



"You didn't forget us. We can't forget you."

Towns County Community Calendar

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

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Towns County Herald

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