

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Letters to The Editor

To those opposing the use of the Towns County Conference Center by believers:

The expression "separation of church and state" is not in the First Amendment, nor in the Constitution at all. In 1802 Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptist in reply to their concern that their religious liberties were not seen as their rights, but as privileges granted by their state legislature. Jefferson's letter stated:

I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should "make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.

Thomas Jefferson quoted the First Amendment, and then added his own words "separation between Church & State," in order to assure the Danbury Baptist that their legislature should neither establish a particular religion nor prohibit the practice of religion. Now how does a Christian organization meeting at the Conference Center relate to the First Amendment? Towns County is not establishing a religion. If anything, it is permitting "the free exercise thereof." Believers have just as much right to use the Conference Center as nonbelievers, for believers also pay Towns County taxes.

In response to last week's letter regarding the use of the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center for the National Day of Prayer:

Most people of the persuasion of the writer of last week's letter complaining about the public venue of the National Day of Prayer cite the 1st Amendment to the Constitution as their basis of the Separation of Church and State. I don't recall seeing these words in the Constitution. To be sure of my facts, I looked it up. The 1st Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Regarding the statement about religion causing conflicts across the globe: No doubt much blood has been spilled over religion. In fact, many people crossed the perilous seas from the 1600s onward to be able to escape the threat of persecution and death to worship God freely. Freedom of Religion (as opposed to freedom from religion) was so important to Americans that the Constitution was adopted only after a promise that a bill of rights would be added that would protect the rights of the citizens. In other words, no Bill of Rights, no Constitution. Our nation was founded on Christian principles. Our national motto is "In God We Trust". In *Zorach v. Clauson* (1952), the Supreme Court stated, "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being". Congress opens each session with a prayer. By law the oath of office of members of Congress, federal judges, civil service employees, and the US military concludes with the words, "so help me God". Most of our presidents have voluntarily added that phrase to their own oath of office. It was Christian people who started the movement that led to the abolition of slavery. Hospitals and charities throughout this great land were started by Christians long before the government got involved. Public education began in what is now the United States with the Massachusetts "Old Satan Deluder" law requiring public education so children could learn to read the Bible.

The 20th Century witnessed the rise of godless Communist nations. How did that work out? It is estimated that Stalin in Russia killed 20 million of his own people. It is estimated that Chairman Mao killed 45 million Chinese in four years alone from 1958 - 1962. In godless North Korea, the possession of a Bible is a crime. Anyone caught with a Bible in North Korea, along with three generations of his family, is sentenced to one of the regimes notorious prison camps.

The use of public facilities for prayer is widespread across these United States. Title III of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits state and municipal governments from denying access to public facilities on grounds of race, color, religion or national origin. *Lamb's Chapel v. Center Moriches Union Free School District* (1993) is an important case concerning religious speech on public property. In it the United States Supreme Court by unanimous decision held that even in a nonpublic forum the state cannot discriminate against religious viewpoints when allowing use of public facilities. It also held that permitting religious speech does not violate the establishment clause as long as religious and nonreligious speeches are treated the same. To my knowledge the Towns County Recreation and Conference Center has been used by groups for meetings other than the National Day of Prayer.

Quite contrary to the claim that the use of this facility for the National Day of Prayer is an abuse of what the author of last week's letter calls the separation clause, it can be stated that Towns County followed the letter and the spirit of the law by allowing the Recreation and Conference Center to be used for the National Day of Prayer. While the event was open to all, no one was forced to attend. It was great to see the large number there for the National Day of Prayer exercising their freedom of speech, their right to peaceful assembly, and their right to worship God in prayer.

Roy Perren

## The Middle Path

by Don Perry

The Memorial Day weekend of 2014 is now behind us. School is out and that season of summer we observe a month before the calendar catches up has begun. Many of us passed the time over the long weekend in the ways that have become common practice for any block of time we can tear from the grasp of the never ending work week. We slept late. We grilled and ate and shopped holiday sales.

Some of us remembered what the holiday is about: a recognition of the men and women who died in service to our country. The number of our best and brightest and most honorable lost to war and to all the strokes of a president's pen short of war is no small sum. Since the Revolutionary War, approximately 1.3 million have died and 1.5 million have been wounded while serving in our military. The number grows larger each year.

Everyone who takes the oath of enlistment knows the risks. The vast majority do so gladly. Ask any random soldier, sailor or marine why they serve and they will probably tell you that they do so for the people back home; they do so to defend our freedom.

The sacrifice of blood and treasure and the loss of so many lives is staggering. We need for that sacrifice to be worthwhile. We need for it to buy something of equal value. Soldiers of other countries go to war for many reasons. They fight for their way of life; they fight for national pride; they fight against the threat of the intractable enemy or they fight because they have no choice. In America, we fight for the thing most precious to us - our freedom.

This is what we tell ourselves. This is what our politicians tell us. This is what government tells us. We don't quite understand why freedom in the United States requires over 277,000 troops to be deployed at over 600 military bases in 38 countries, if you believe the Pentagon, or over 900 bases in more than 130 countries, if you believe other sources just as reliable. Unfortunately, so much of what government does we have to accept on faith is decided by people who have better information than we do.

What we do know is

that our system of government, with all its vaunted checks and balances, has for many years allowed one person sitting in the Oval Office to defend our freedom by sending our young men and women overseas to kill foreign soldiers and civilians. The last officially declared war of the United States was WWII. Over a hundred thousand of our troops and several hundred thousand foreign troops and civilians have died for our freedom since then.

The year 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of the "War to End All Wars." World War I began in August of that year and caused over 37 million casualties over the next four years. Over 116,000 American troops were killed in 1917 and 1918, and their deaths had very little to do with freedom. Over the next few weeks we plan to spend some time discussing the economic and political factors which contributed to the disaster of 1914 and some of the uncomfortable parallels between that time and today.



"IT'S ON MY MIND..."  
Danny H. Parris

### The high road

It's that wonderful time of the year when young men and women are celebrating their graduations from high schools, colleges and universities. A lot of moms and dads are equally excited. This is a major event in the life of every graduate. As a minister of the good news of Jesus Christ I would encourage every graduating senior to take the High Road of Life. That fellow, Anonymous has written warning young people to steer clear of the Low Road of Life. He entitled it:

### Recipe for a Miserable Life

- Think about yourself.
- Talk about yourself.
- Use I as often as possible.
- Mirror yourself continually in the opinion of others.
- Listen greedily to what people say about you.
- Expect to be appreciated.
- Be suspicious.
- Be jealous and envious.
- Be sensitive to slights.
- Never forgive a criticism.
- Trust nobody but yourself.
- Insist on consideration and respect.
- Demand agreement with your own views on everything.
- Sulk if people are not grate-

ful to you for favors shown them. Never forget a service you may have endured. Be on the lookout for a good time for yourself. Shirk your duties if you can. Do as little as possible for others. Love yourself supremely. Be selfish.

On the other hand Dr. Karl Menninger points people to take the High Road of Life. He states: "People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered; love them anyway. If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; do good anyway. If you're successful, you will have false friends and true enemies; try to succeed anyway. The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow; do good anyway. Honesty and frankness will get you nowhere; they make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway. What you spend days building may be destroyed overnight; do it anyway. People really need help but they attack you if you try to help them; try anyway. Give the world the best you have and you get kicked in the mouth; give the world the best you have anyway."

The high road is the way to travel. It will lift you above and beyond the black dungeon of selfishness and guide you to a destination that is eternal and perfect. Our Captain has gone before us. His name is Jesus. Follow Him.

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"After hearing how tight education funds are, I'm just relieved schools can still afford summer vacation!"

## Community Calendar

**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!

**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.

**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 Hiawassee River Valley Kennel Club** meetings are held at 7 p.m. the 1st Monday of each month at Brother's Restaurant in Murphy. Call Kit: 706-492-5253 or Peggy: 828-835-1082.

**The Unity 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.

**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 Senior Center in Hiawassee at 5:30 p.m. Annual dues \$15, PO Box 1182, Hiawassee, GA. We do oral family histories of residents. 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 and Crafts Guild, Inc (MRACG)** meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at ArtWorks Artisan Centre, Hiawassee. Refreshments at 6 p.m., meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. Call us by 706-896-0932 or mtregarts-craftsguild.org.

**Mountain Computer User Group** meets the 2nd Monday of each month in Young Harris. Meetings start at 6 p.m. and visitors are welcome. A "Q & A" session follows. Details can be found at www.mcug.org.

**FPL Retirees Breakfast** will meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Hole in the Wall Restaurant on the square in Blairsville at 9 a.m.

**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 John at 706-896-2430 or visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridge-mountains.

**Alcoholics Anonymous:** 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.

**Mothers of Preschoolers** meets the third Thursday of each month at First Baptist Church of Blairsville from 6 - 8 p.m. Call the church at 706-745-2469.

**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.

**Mountain Magic Table Tennis Club** meets 3 p.m. Thursdays at Pine Log Baptist Church Fellowship Hall in Brasstown. Ping Pong players welcome. Call Jerry (828) 837-7658.

**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 6:30 PM at the Allegheny Lodge in Blairsville. For more info call William 706-994-6177.

**Georgia Mountain Writers Club** meets at Cadence Bank the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 10 AM.

**GMREC Garden Tours** every Monday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**Shooting Creek Basket Weavers** meets the 2nd Wednesday of every month at 10 a.m. at the Shooting Creek Fire Hall Community Center. For more info www.shootingcreek-basketweavers.com.

**Friendship Community Club** meets the 3rd Thursday of the month at 6 PM at Clubhouse, 1625 Hwy. 76, 706-896-3637.

**Goldwing 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 evenings at 7 PM at the Red Cross building (up the hill from the chamber office 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.

**VFW Post #7807** will be hosting a fish fry they 2nd & 4th Fridays of each month April - October. \$9. all you can eat from 4:30 - 7 PM.

**Mountain Amateur Radio Club (MARC)** meets 6:30 PM the 1st Monday of month at 1298 Jack Dayton Cir. (next to EMS), Hiawassee. For info call Al 706-996-9614 after 6 PM.

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