

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Smokey's tips for safe debris burning to prevent wildfires

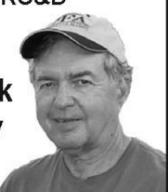
Debris burning is Georgia's #1 cause of wildfire, and it accounts for over 50 percent of all wildfires in the state and burning yard leaf piles is the most common cause of these wildfires. All debris burning requires a burn permit from the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) with the exception of agricultural fields or pastures, which require GFC notification. The burning of household garbage is prohibited and not permitted by the GFC. A major cause of debris burn wildfires is not obtaining a permit and burning with improper weather conditions. Permits are obtained by calling your local GFC county office or dialing 1-877-OK2-BURN. It's free and only takes minutes. Fires should not be initiated before 8 a.m. and should be completely extinguished before dark. Burning permits are for Hand Piled Natural Vegetation and existing small garden spots only, including leaf piles on the premises where they fell, existing small clearings to plant vegetables and flower gardens, vegetative debris disposal from storm damage, weed abatement, and disease and pest prevention. This permit does not include the burning of debris generated by machine clearing of an area for the purpose of establishing a garden spot or other clearings.

If your unpermitted fire gets out and damages your neighbor's house, you can be held liable, or if it burns your house, your insurance company may not pay, but if you have a permit, you are off the hook. You can also be held responsible for suppression costs if you cause a wildfire and do not have a permit... bulldozers, hot shot crews, and air tankers do not come cheap! So think before you burn and get a permit, even for a small leaf pile in your yard. It's the cheapest insurance policy you can get.

Here are Smokey's safe debris burning tips: comply with local regulations: Contact GFC in advance to confirm that burning is allowed and to find out if permits are being issued that day. The call has to be made on the day you plan to burn and is only good for that day. You have to call each day you plan to burn. Check the weather forecast - weather fluctuations, such as sudden gusts of wind, could make debris burning spark a wildfire. Contact the

Executive Director of RC&D

Frank Riley



GFC on the day you plan to burn to find out if the weather is safe enough to burn, and if it is not they will not issue a permit.

Choose a safe burning site - A safe site will be far away from power lines, overhanging limbs, buildings, automobiles, and equipment. It will have vertical clearance at least three times the height of the pile, as heat from the fire extends far past the actual flames that you see. It will have horizontal clearance twice the height of the debris pile. Prepare the site correctly: The ground around the burn site should be surrounded by gravel or dirt for at least ten feet in all directions. Keep the surrounding area watered down during the burn.

Remain with your fire - most important! - Stay with your fire until it is completely out. To ensure the fire has been completely extinguished, drown the fire with water, turn over the ashes with a shovel and drown it again. Repeat several times. Check the burn area regularly over the next several days and up to several weeks following the burn, especially if the weather is warm, dry, and windy. I once burned a large debris pile (with notification), and covered it with dirt to put it out at the end of the day, we had several rains, and 6 weeks later when I uncovered the mound, it still had fire inside so you must monitor it until you are completely sure that the fire is out.

Keep it legal - It is illegal to burn plastic, tires, and most other waste products not from a tree or shrub. It is illegal to burn any kind of building materials including lumber and the debris can only be natural material. For more information on debris burning, burn permits, and wildfires, contact your local Georgia Forestry Commission office - 706-781-2398, US Forest Service district office - 706-781-2593, local fire department or the Chatstate/Chattahoochee RC&D council, Frank.crcrd@gmail.com.

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

Sometimes a title says it all, as in "The Territorial Imperative: A Personal Inquiry Into the Animal Origins of Property and Nations," by Robert Ardrey. Written in 1966, the book was a ground breaking investigation into the human need for "territory," home and personal space. In it, Ardrey explains why "The dog barking at you from behind his master's fence acts for a motive indistinguishable from that of his master when the fence was built."

Fences can be very useful. An electrified fence keeps the bear out of my honeybees and the deer (most of the time) out of my garden. "Good fences make good neighbors" is an honest assessment of tendencies humanity has inherited from ancestors who, for tens of thousands of years had to compete for everything to stay alive.

In a town south of here we have an old family home. The house is in a neighborhood laid out in the early 1950s when building lots were spacious. Most lots in the subdivision were an acre or more, and the property lines are simple, straight lines that, for the most part, have not changed in 60 years.

Simplicity notwithstanding, you might be surprised at the number of times over the years that the family has had to defend those unchanging lines. One boundary in particular, which runs rather close to a house next door, has been resurveyed several times as new neighbors came to terms with a reality they did not want to accept. Few of our neighbors on that lot have been content with the "territory" assigned by their survey.

My father began teaching us about property - and human nature - at an early age. In Towns County back then there were still many large tracts of land held for generations by the same families. Many of those farms and wooded lots were inherited from ancestors who needed plenty of acreage for living off of the land and acquired their properties when land was cheap. You might think that with such an abundance of property, boundaries would not be an issue. Unfortunately, human nature and the territorial imperative have shown otherwise, and so every spring Dad would lead us into the woods to walk the property lines, mark trees and check pins and markers.

Dad's method of defending property lines was simple and elegant. "You would be surprised," he would say with his wry sense of humor, "how often a piece of iron can move or just evaporate, way up here in the woods." His solution to this problem was to drive survey pins deep into the ground and then add an additional "decoy" on top. If the decoy "evaporated," then the original could still be found with a little digging or, in later years, with a metal detector.

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 EMAILED 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.

"I'm not as generous as your grandfather," Dad would often say on our treks through the woods. Then he would re-tell the story of how his father had "given away" land - to keep his neighbor (and fellow church member) from being a thief. The neighbor had used my grandfather's cattle fence as a property line when he sold land which was not his to sell. There was another story of how one of our own relatives had attempted to sell several acres of grandfather's land and, failing that, did manage to sell the timber from the same parcel. Again, with a generosity I cannot begin to approach, our grandfather "gave" the timber away to prevent a stain on the soul of his in-law.

My grandfather was not as understanding with developers. He was almost 90 when he confronted a bulldozer operator who, innocently following the instructions of a would-be developer who hired him, was attempting to widen the road through his land to another tract. The developer was frustrated that his repeated requests to widen the road had been denied and so apparently had decided to adopt a different approach: bulldoze past the old man and then the job would be done and "just a misunderstanding."

"Misunderstanding" is a common technique of the modern territorial imperative attempting to evade the rule of law. Many times I have seen someone hire a contractor and direct them to do certain things that they can later disavow, claiming no knowledge or no responsibility for the "mistake." When my wife and I were first dating, she came home to the cabin she was renting to find all the trees cut down in the back yard. Those trees had been blocking the view of the house being built on the adjoining lot. The builder took full advantage of an absentee landlord in this "mistake."

Quite recently another developer seeking to domesticate a tract which borders us in Towns County "mistakenly" cut down a large swath of 75 year old mountain laurels on our land. "Oh, I'm sorry - I thought the property line was over there," was his explanation (with our plat clearly visible on the dashboard of his truck).

Now back to the family home down south. Recently we were gifted with new neighbors next door. At least three families, "undocumented," with approximately 11 kids, moved in and began clearing their wooded lot. I marked our property line with survey stakes. When we were away, the neighbors moved the stakes and cut trees on our property, and then piled the brush on our side of the line. We responded by building a good fence. I don't know if this will make a good neighbor or not, but it does give us peace of mind.



The Veterans' Corner

By Scott Drummond, USCG Veteran

VFW Thrift Store, Hiawassee

Veterans have always done and still do many great things for America and community service is not the least of them. Fortunate for all of us our VFW Thrift store, is located at the corner of Lakeside Circle and Berrong Street, just down from the public library in the middle of Hiawassee. Our store is operated by Veterans from our VFW, American Legion, the Ladies Auxiliary from both organizations, SAL, plus anyone who'd like to volunteer some time. Items for sale, at excellent prices, include new and used clothing, shoes, caps, camping gear, household goods, books, videos, tools, arts and crafts, kitchen goods, paintings, furniture, belts, and what not! Furniture usually goes fast, as per low prices.

How does this work? From tax-deductible donations by all our good folks in and around Towns County, an all volunteer staff, a county owned older building maintained by our volunteers which equals low overhead, passed along to those who just might need something.

Who benefits? Our entire community! Just about all profits from sales are passed along to needy Veterans, certain High School organizations such as band, scholarship donations, battered women funds, and other projects.

Have you any unused serviceable items cluttering up your house, cabinets, closets, carport, work shop, attic, basement or left over yard sales? It would be very appreciated by our Veterans, volunteers and Towns County residents

for donations of these items, as listed above and perhaps even some non-perishable food items or in-date food products which will be made available for special needs. Our volunteers do at home pick-ups as well! Sorry no child car seats or old TVs.

Our Thrift Store is dedicated to the Memory of Anne Allison for her loyalty and dedication to Post 7807 the Ladies Auxiliary and their Thrift Store. Also a huge thank you, once again, to our sole Commissioner, Mr. Bill Kendall, for all that he has done for our VFW and all our Veterans, including this community service store. Our parking lot, in disrepair, has just been repaved, slightly elevated and restriped.

Hours of operation are 10 AM to 4 PM, Monday-Friday and 9 AM to 2 PM Saturday. We need your donations and volunteers to work with, have fun with, and meet some fine folks! There is a fairly rapid turnover of items, so visit often. Also the first week of every month there is a "\$5 bag sale" of clothes, shoes, belts which can be placed into a store bag. Thank you to all who donate and patronize our VFW Thrift Store!

There's not enough room here to list the names of all those who deserve kudos for their time and efforts at our community VFW Thrift Store, but they know who they are and they know we love and appreciate them and their efforts. Store Manager is Army Veteran, Fred Walker and Assistant Manager is Brian Childress, SAL. Main telephone number for store is 706-896-1953.

Semper Paratus



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!
VFW Fish Fry April - October on 2nd & 4th Fridays each month from 4:30 - 7. \$10 per plate.
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.
Democratic Party of Towns County meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 5 PM at the new Senior Center. For info contact Bill Jones at 706-851-0318.
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 Unicoy 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. Sat. morning breakfast 2nd Sat. of each month from 8 - 10:30 AM. \$6 adults, \$3 12 & under.
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 old Rec Center in Hiawassee at 5:30 p.m. 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 Daniel's Steakhouse, Hiawassee. The Board meets at 4 p.m., and the Guild at 6. Call us 706-896-0932.
Mountain Computer User Group meets the 2nd Monday of each month. Meetings start at 6 p.m. and visitors are welcome. Details can be found at www.mcug.org.
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/blueridgemountains.
Alcoholics Anonymous: 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.
Chattahoochee 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.
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 PM at the Shrine Club, Industrial Blvd., Blairsville.
GMREC Garden Tours every Monday 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Shooting Creek Basket Weavers meets 2nd Wednesday of every month at 10 a.m. at Shooting Creek Fire Hall Community Center. For

more info www.shootingcreekbas-ketweavers.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 evening at 7 PM at the Red Cross building 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.
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 706-896-9614 after 6 PM.
The Board of the Towns County Chamber of Commerce meets the second Monday of every month at 8 a.m. at the Chamber office, 1411 Jack Dayton Circle, Young Harris.
The Quilting Bee at McConnell Memorial Baptist Church in Family Life Center, Room 216. 1st & 3rd Wednesday of each month from 10 AM - 3 PM. Bring a sack lunch. For more information call Kathy at 706-835-6721 or Marilyn at 706-897-4367.
Mountain Coin Club meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at the North Georgia Tech campus in Blairsville. Guests are welcome. For more info, call 706-379-1488.
Monday morning BINGO at Brasstown Manor every Monday morning at 9:30 a.m. 108 Church St., Hiawassee. Players meet in the Bradford. Questions 706-896-4285.

RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

From the Dr. Don Parenting Research Lab (which I just made up) comes this breaking news - the discovery of a brand new disease. Actually, it's been around a long time, but we're just now giving it a name. I suspect you won't find much about it in the typical PDR (Physician's Desk Reference), and you will find very few doctors who are specialists in treating it except the occasional pediatrician. The official name I've given it is: Leadership Deficiency Disorder, or LDD. It affects only parents and they catch it from their kids. No pill is available at this time to treat the dysfunction.

You can probably identify these progressive symptoms: Parent asks child multiple times to perform a specific task which child ignores. Parent grits teeth and exercises admirable self-restraint. Following more pleading, parent finally loses cool and raises voice at child.

Child begins to argue with parent and parent engages child in argument thereby exposing the dormant parental indicators of Leadership Deficiency Disorder. Parent is ashamed at losing cool over child's behavior, apologizes and does chore himself/herself. Parent decides perhaps they should cease asking anything of child that will cause child unhappiness.

Child becomes obnoxious and assumes de facto leadership of family. When LDD becomes highly developed it defies all but the most aggressive treatment. However, there is good news from the above-mentioned lab. When diagnosed early and appropriate interventions are applied, positive outcomes can be expected. Here is the prescribed treatment protocol: Parent decides to give child instructions only once, making sure child hears and understands. Anticipating appropriate response from child, parent turns and leaves area. Child is unresponsive to instructions. Parent does not repeat instruction, scold, beg, threaten or raise voice, thus rendering inert the dreaded LDD virus. Immediately after supper child is sent to bed and is told parents believe that when children do not receive enough sleep they are inclined to ignore instructions. Parents monitor child's subsequent behavior, repeating as necessary, knowing that permanent behavior change often requires two to six weeks. Parents rejoice that they have broken the dreaded scourge of Leadership Deficiency Disorder. You read it here first. Submit your parenting questions to: DrDon@RareKids.net.

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