

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

The bottom line

Ladies and gentlemen, turn your calculators on. Let's start with what former BRMEMC Board President Terry Taylor is on record as owing the BRMEMC membership - \$45,000-plus. Add in \$30,000 for the Minor Report. Add in \$62,000 for the glitch of all glitches that BRMEMC wrote off the books for Taylor & Taylor Construction.

Now, get ready folks, add in \$57,000-plus and some change for a six-month severance package for former BRMEMC General Manager Matthew Akins. An insurance package is included.

Makes you wonder who has the ink pen to the membership's checking account doesn't it?

Roughly, that's about \$200,000 and some change, out of the membership's pocketbook.

That's right, in a special called session, reportedly on Sept. 1, the Board of Directors approved a six-month severance package for former GM Akins.

A severance package for someone that resigned? I've never heard of that happening. I've heard of that happening when someone is terminated, but never for someone resigning.

The tough news is that the majority of board members followed through with a motion to approve the six-month severance package. They also voted to approve a BRMEMC budget that included \$1 million in miscellaneous expenses - that means no breakdown of how the money would be spent.

How do I know all of this? Well, it's now public knowledge. It's on Facebook, Topix, and on the street; it's in Superior Court documents.

What do we do about it? Well, I think it's a done deal, and there's nothing we can really do about it.

Your votes in the upcoming Board of Directors election can assure that catastrophes like this never, ever happen again.

The make up of the new board, could very well have a 5-4 swing, one way or another. How you vote is extremely important.

We know that the board will have fresh blood in Union and Fannin counties, it's a given. The most important race is in Towns County, where the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald* endorse Roy Perren as the new BRMEMC director in Towns County.

That's the bottom line.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



The Middle Path

by Don Perry

There is much satisfaction in being at home in the places we love, but travel can be good for us as well. Travel refreshes the spirit with a sense of possibility. It challenges our paradigms, and by allowing us to experience the world from different perspectives, travel destroys prejudice and encourages tolerance.

With so much of what we think and feel about the world now dictated by the narrow agendas of the small group which decides what reaches us through media, travel also allows us to see for ourselves what is really going on in the world.

These lofty ideals were admittedly obscured by logistical concerns on a recent trip I made up and down the eastern half of the country. Our destination was Buffalo, NY, and in order to spend more time reconnecting with friends and family there, our planned route consisted mainly of interstate highways in order to reduce the amount of time spent on the road.

I have logged tens of thousands of miles on all kinds of roads. One change I have observed over the years stands out: The level of aggression on the highways has increased significantly. There are regional differences. You can drive the entire industrial corridor of northeastern Ohio in continuous heavy traffic and be tailgated and cut off a fraction of the number of times you would experience this bad behavior just getting from one side of Atlanta to the other, but overall drivers are more aggressive everywhere. Perhaps it is a result of better performing automobiles, more people and the unfortunate trending towards a less civil society, but on our crowded highways the ego reigns supreme.

Another change I have noticed over the years is the gradual, inexorable sterilization of American enterprise. What do I mean by that? Head up the 77 through North Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia and Ohio and you will see repeated over and over again the exit ramps to Walmart, Target, Dicks, Cracker Barrel, McDonald's, Wendy's with an occasional Kohl's and Dairy Queen thrown in the mix with a few outlet stores. The same truck stops and convenience stores, the same hotel and motel chains wait at every exit. The same brand names sprout up over and over again at these off-ramp abominations with their brightly lit billboards and neon-economic trolling nets hoping to ensnare any loose dollars from the continuous river of traffic that fills the highways.

Like the invasive species that they are, these corporate predators have supplanted mom and pop stores and local businesses all across America, and with profits filtered out of local economies, you don't have to get too far off the Interstate to find the dried up towns and peeling paint of rapidly disappearing Americana.

Back on the interstate, the truck traffic told an interesting story. Quite often there were more trucks than cars on the highway, but all of those items being shipped were not necessarily a symptom of a healthy economy. The majority of that traffic seemed to be retail. We were never very long out of sight of a Walmart truck or a carrier for some other big box name. This was very much in line with some of the more sober assessments of our economy and the fact that we are now dependent on service and consumption. We don't make anything here. We borrow money from future generations to buy things we don't need that are made in China.

On our first day in Buffalo, a trip to the riverside parks was a

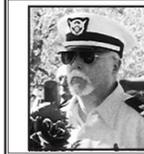
shocking testament to the demise of our manufacturing base. For several miles along the waterfront, fields of grass and flowering plants grow on land reclaimed from the old Bethlehem Steel works. In the glory days of the steel industry, both sides of the road were so packed with buildings that you could not see the river at all. It's all gone now except for a few relics, literal miles of industrial might disappeared in one generation.

Downtown Buffalo, particularly the riverside, is enjoying a revitalization that is the envy of many other cities. There are parks and concessions, restaurants and bars and numerous activities for families. There was a strong police presence when we were there and a high level of comfort, as evidenced by the number of children and senior citizens enjoying the area.

On the surface the festival atmosphere seemed to indicate an economic turnaround, but much of the improvement can be traced to one billionaire who owns the Buffalo Bills and Sabres and who has injected millions of dollars into the local economy. In other words, the economic improvement has not been "organic," growing out of a resurgence of small business and locally owned venues.

Just a few miles away on the east side of Buffalo, another story is being told. We wanted to visit an old family home on the east side, but we were warned to stay away from those neighborhoods. We decided to go anyway, and were saddened by what we saw. Once proud homes built by steel and manufacturing jobs are now boarded up and crumbling in neighborhoods where crime is commonplace. Like so many other American cities with a similar history, those who can afford to have fled the cities for the suburbs.

Next time we will continue our travels of the good, the bad and the ugly, as well as the hopeful that is still to be found in this nation of change.



The Veterans' Corner

By Scott Drummond, USCG Veteran

USMRA

It is a blessing to have met so many decent, great American Veterans and active duty folks in my years here in the beautiful North Georgia Mountains. Education, history and maybe, just maybe encouraging others to honor and remember those who do so much, sometimes with so little, is what this week's article is about. One evening I was invited to visit with a very outstanding group of active duty and retired US Army Mountain Rangers, of which I knew very little. An evening visit and fellowship over at Camp Frank D. Merrill in Dahlonega has only served to peak my interest in this small segment of highly trained and highly skilled outdoorsmen who gained and earned their qualifications right here in our mountains. A lot of old time mountain folks, living here their whole lives have seen, witnessed and appreciate their drills, missions, and exploits consisting of hard work, in the heat or freezing cold, in order to stay in top condition for whatever, whenever and wherever the need arises for Ranger's deployment to protect America, and very possibly to prevent something far more serious from occurring.

Unfortunately I don't have a lot of room here for the very exciting and detailed history of the Mountain Rangers. No doubt there will be some continuum and possibly some personal stories from some of those fine folks I met last evening. I admit, I have been remiss on my knowledge of Rangers and am by no means

a military history expert, but am blessed to try and arouse interest in all of our military men and women who serve, and have served. Here's a website I was advised to go to by a great friend, fellow American Legionnaire, a kind, decent very humble man who doesn't want to be mentioned here, even though he was (or is!) a Major, Viet Nam Combat Veteran, and very recent inductee into the Ranger Hall of Fame: usmountainranger.org/. You will learn a lot here from these community minded patriots by visiting their website, and no secrets or classified information there either!

I was also asked by a renowned, heavily decorated Ranger, twice, to pass along something concerning any rumors about the first women to earn their Ranger Tabs just this August, as a part of the grueling "tests" to become a Ranger. The young folks who were there have testified that these two women are as tough and dependable as any man in the training exercise. As advised, the training, expertise in methodology has changed and modified many times in Ranger history and these two ladies have honestly earned their tabs, in spite of all who started but could not complete the course, just last month. Capt. Kristen Griest and Capt. Shaye Haver are the first women to earn Ranger tabs. Who is to question these folks who have been there, done that, plus a whole lot more?

My intent is to do more "follow up" articles on our Rangers.

Semper Paratus

RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

Dear Dr. Don: We have two children, ages 2 and 3, and we have a difficult time in church. We haven't been attending for quite a while because my husband has had to work on weekends. But his job has changed now and we can go as a family. The problem is that the girls are in motion all the time we're there. The whole family is upset by the time it's over, and so is everyone around us. What do you suggest?

A: Even with all of your maturity, mom, if you had to go somewhere and sit perfectly still on a hard bench for an hour and listen to someone speak in a language you didn't understand you might find it difficult, too. I respect your desire to take them to church. My bias is that the home and the church are the two most ennobling and stabilizing influences in the life of a youngster and even though it's sometimes difficult, it's worth it. Christian families have a great advantage in having help shaping their kids' characters.

Some suggestions on surviving the early years: Establish a daily quiet time in your home schedule. A quiet story just before bedtime, or even singing some fun little songs together

can help a youngster begin to understand there are times when it is expected of them to settle down and be hushed. For church, choose some special toys and reserve them just for church. I love the little cloth books that contain buttons they can fasten, zippers, laces to lace up, and a whole array of other activities that aren't noisy.

This is a good time for mom and dad to cultivate their patience skills. Even if the kids need some guidance, keep it light and friendly. The last thing we want is for them to decide that there is this painful hour every week that they dread. We don't want them to end up feeling like your dog did the second time you took him to the vet, when all of his memories were painful.

Do you park them in the church nursery? Second best in my view. On occasion you may want to drop them off there, or take them. If they're fussy, you don't want your pastor to have to out-shout your toddler. But early-on it's important for them to begin to understand how important this weekly worship time is for all of you.

Send your parenting questions to: DrDon@RareKids.net.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Let YOUR Light SHINE

Suicide Prevention Week
September 7-13

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 2nd Tuesday of each month at 5 p.m. at new Senior Center. Newcomers welcome. Questions please contact the T.C. Dem's at Townscountydemocrats@gmail.com.

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 & Crafts Guild meets 2nd Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Calvary Chapel on Hwy. 76 in Hiawassee. All local artists and crafters are welcome, for information call 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 Gary at 706-896-4308 or visit www.moaa.org/chapter/blueridge-mountains.
Alcoholics Anonymous: 24 hour phone line 828-837-4440.
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.
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.shootingcreekbasketweavers.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.
Towns County Lions Club meets 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Daniel's Restaurant, 273 Big Sky Drive, Hiawassee.

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