

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

The \$62,354 Glitch

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Director Jerry Nichols needs to get more in tune with the Cooperative's customers.

Speaking before the Mountain Movers and Shakers in Young Harris recently, he told the group that the EMC didn't have "any accounts, anywhere on Blue Ridge Mountain EMC that uses \$60,000 worth of power a month."

Well, we had to do a little digging, but, we found a couple of users that do use \$60,000 a month or more, and they are BRMEMC customers.

Following an open records request by the North Georgia News and Towns County Herald, the newspapers learned that Union General Hospital pays more than \$100,000 a month, depending on the weather, for electricity.

Also, the Union County School System averages \$50,000 to \$80,000 a month based on how Mother Nature is cooperating.

We're certain that both the hospital and the school system would be happy for the EMC to declare their monthly bills as meter glitches, much like the \$62,354 correction (glitch) that was made to Taylor and Taylor Construction's bill in July.

The only problem that Mr. Nichols seems to have is that someone made sure we had a copy of Taylor and Taylor Construction's June 10 bill which showed a balance of \$107,998.43.

If we were in Mr. Nichols' shoes, we would be more concerned with the fact that the former president of BRMEMC's board of directors had indeed received a perk of not being on a cutoff list with his commercial operation's ability to continue to use electricity not threatened.

And, as we have learned from the \$30,000 opinion put out by EMC Attorney Steven Minor, Mr. Taylor also was \$4,200 or so in arrears on his residential power bill.

Those are things the EMC Board of Directors need to be concerned with, not whether someone finally spilled the beans.

There will be a final tally of votes for the three seats currently up for grabs on the EMC Board of Directors. The only question we have is who will be counting the votes. And we're also concerned that EMC employees are being directed to vote for the incumbents on the board. We've seen documentation that this has happened.

Until Saturday, all we can do is cross our fingers and hope for a legitimate election. The membership demands it.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



The Middle Path

by Don Perry

One thing that has fascinated me about our community for years is the consistent ill will that many of us seem to harbor for the power company. While we depend on it for almost everything that keeps us alive, safe and entertained, we criticize its policies; we loathe the substations and power poles that keep us from freezing in the winter. We resent the expensive new building and the rates that always seem to be going up. We complain in online forums, emboldened by anonymity, in vile and vitriolic ways. We bad mouth the company at the water cooler, in the checkout line and even inside the church house.

This is not just a recent phenomenon. Ask anyone who has lived here for a long time and they will tell you that this resentment stretches back decades, surviving a succession of Board members and managers.

It is often not logical, but it is very human to resent those who are in positions of power or responsibility. In a metropolitan area we have many opportunities to assign blame. Any number of municipal entities or large corporations can become a target of our ire. In our area, however, the local government and the power company are the only big targets available.

The Board of Directors of BRMEMC, as members of this community, were in a position to recognize the weight of public opinion when they approved the building of an expensive new facility in an area with a depressed economy where businesses were closing left and right. This, on the heels of a controversial placement of gigantic transmission lines through the heart of our most populated area and unfortunately, just before another rate increase. It should come as no surprise to the Board that public resentment, having reached a crescendo in recent years, would sink its teeth into any action that could be seen as a violation of public trust.

Clearly, such a violation occurred when the past president of the Board remained in office after the inability to pay his power bills caused him to no longer be a member in good standing.

As it has been reported in this newspaper and on the BRMEMC website, steps have been taken to correct the mistake. Mr. Taylor has resigned from the Board and new fiscal oversight is being put into place to make sure that this type of thing does not happen again.

The reputation of the power company has suffered in the wake of these events, and in my opinion, much of the venom directed at this organization as if it were a faceless, non-human entity is unjustified. BRMEMC is not faceless. Indeed, it is 200 of our neighbors, friends and family members. The hard working, underpaid and patient voices on the phone who take our calls when we are cranky, rude or misinformed - are not responsible for the company's woes. The crews arriving at work before daylight to begin another day of dodging yellow jackets and hornets in the heat while maintaining our rights of way; the heroes who put themselves into harm's way, day or night, 365 days of year in every kind of weather, driving on icy roads and climbing poles in thunderstorms to keep our lights on, our air conditioners and heat pumps running - are not responsible for BRMEMC's problems. These people, not the Board of Directors, are the real "power company," and we should remember that when we air our grievances.

Let's give credit, and

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.



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

No Laughing Matter

It is sad but it is also a fact that there are some miserable people in this world. They get up every morning with that pharisaical face, a pallbearer pale. They have that look of a forty day fast. For these folks nothing is a laughing matter. They are waiting for something to turn up so that's the reason they are always looking at their toes. Most of these individuals are on a mission to straighten out the world, but the only people I know who are able to straighten out anyone are undertakers. They do a pretty good job but they are not faced with any resistance so to speak.

One thing about some people is that they will never die laughing. They may die complaining, grumbling, criticizing, gossiping, eating or sleeping but they will never be caught dead laughing. People who do not laugh feel bad when they feel good because they are afraid that they are going to feel worse when they feel better. In fact, no matter how much money they have, they are not going to laugh all the way to the bank. Well, all of us need to lighten up and laugh more. When we lighten up we are more able to see the light. Our adversary, the devil is never more pleased with us than when we face the world looking like we had briars for

breakfast. The world needs the friendly, loving, uplifting smile from our faces. Not only does the world need it but as Reader's Digest says "Laughter is the Best Medicine." Laughter is contagious and has physiological and psychological benefits. It increases our respiration, helps us to think better. Laughter helps the blood flow to the brain helping us to think better. Laughter helps to alleviate stress, boosts the immune system and creates a calmness and peace that makes life a satisfying journey. Do you know there are laughter clubs springing up all over the country? Also, there are laughter seminars that you can attend. There are revivals that are labeled "laughing revivals" (I am not sure about the basis of these). The Bible clearly teaches that a merry heart doeth good like medicine. This world is sick and its healing will not come through a hand full of pills but from hearts full of praise.

The world needs not canned laughter but Christian laughter that gives evidence of forgiveness. The Christian may not laugh all the way to the bank, but he can laugh all the way to heaven because we will have the last laugh that lasts throughout eternity. It is no laughing matter that some people never laugh. Learn to laugh and help someone else to laugh.

My personal prayer is that I can laugh and encourage others as long as I live. As someone has said "laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face."

Letters to The Editor

Dear Editor:

Surely the BRMEMC management and Board of Directors are aware that we the members—who pay the bills—are more than a little angry about the new headquarters that is an extravagant monument to someone's ego. It's a disgrace the debt that members now owe, the fact that the board president was allowed to rack up a \$49,000 bill while enjoying full benefits, and the half truths and stonewalling that have been going on since these matters came to light.

If board members had integrity or concern for their reputations, any regard for concerns of the membership, they would voluntarily resign. But they apparently don't. Every last one hopes to retain his position, and continue collecting payment for attending meetings where they see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil, just like the three monkeys who represent turning a blind eye.

Since not one of them will do the right thing, we members who own the co-op have to unseat them. We have just one opportunity to get rid of one third of the board this year. We MUST VOTE them out. If you cannot attend the annual meeting on September 13, you can vote online by Wednesday, September 10, no later than 4 p.m. It is urgent that everyone who wants an open and honest board of directors vote. Use the voter ID and verification code on your August power bill and vote. Reach out to family members, friends or neighbors who do not have a computer and help them vote. If we don't vote out the incumbents, we have only ourselves to blame. Take back the BRMEMC for its members (and bill payers). Vote out all incumbents!

Carol Gibson

Dear Editor:

This year marks the 20 year anniversary of our family as a member of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC. During that time we've experienced some great service. This includes the Engineering department, locating personnel, installation crews, tree trimming crews, as well as accounting, bookkeeping, and office staff. The emergency response during hurricane Ivan and during other periods of extreme weather has been outstanding.

It has come with both sacrifice and tragic loss for the BRMEMC family.

Time and time again, BRMEMC has proven to be a well-managed utility with many highly qualified and caring professionals at all levels.

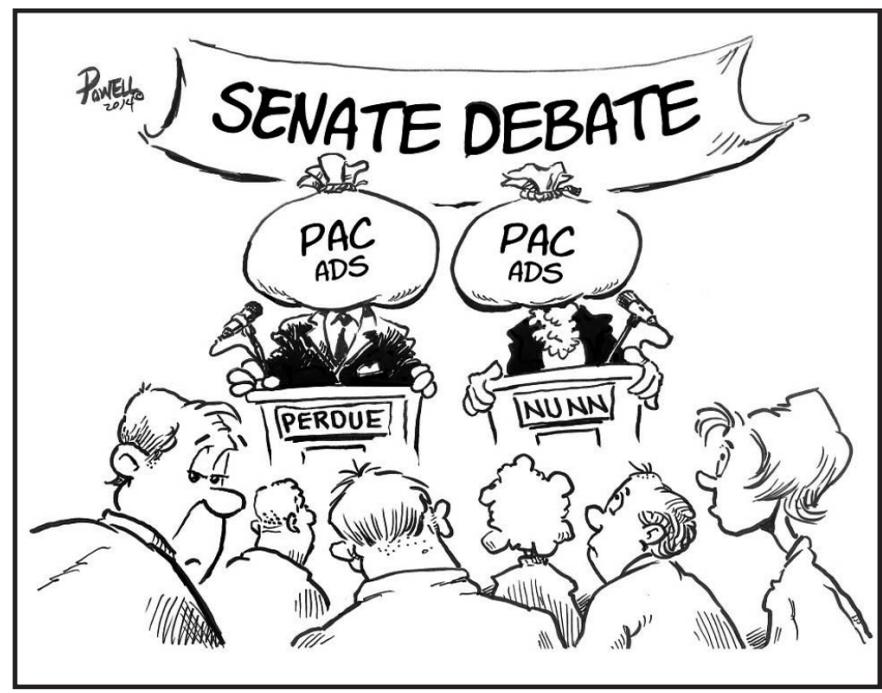
Too often it can be too easy to forget. Thank you to all the professionals at BRMEMC. What you do every day is greatly appreciated.

Michael Frketic

Dear Editor:

Thank you for a fine job of investigative reporting on matters pertaining to BRMEMC. Only those who have lived here for a while can appreciate what an uncommon service you have provided. As you well know, the norm is for a reporter to drive up here from Atlanta, with the help of a local informer uncover something that stinks, go back to the city, get his 15 seconds on camera and the matter ends there and is never heard from again. I highly commend you for all you have done.

Wm. Ronald Gibson



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. Democratic Party of Towns County meets the 2nd Thursday of each month at 5 PM at the new Senior Center. 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 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. 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 artguild-store.com. 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. Chatahoochee 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 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 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. FVH 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 706-896-9614 after 6 PM. The Board of Directors of the Towns County Chamber of Commerce meet the second Monday of every month at 8 a.m. at the Chamber office, 1411 Jack Dayton Circle, Young Harris.

Towns County Herald
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