

Big Bear...from Page 1A

Bears have a better sense of smell than they do vision, so the Turpin bear must not have smelled the truck coming.

Considering bears can run at speeds up to 35 mph, Turpin is lucky a bear so big did not do more than \$500 damage to his vehicle. It was a wrecker after all.

With measurements seeming more suited for Bigfoot than a black bear, it was not surprising that photos of the bear went "viral" in no time at all.

It seemed everyone in Towns County with a Facebook page was sharing the photo and trying to figure out whether the image was real, or if it had been edited somehow to make the bear seem larger.

Turpin said it most definitely real, and obviously unexpected.

While the bear did not survive the incident, no one in the vehicle was hurt, just surprised.

According to the Georgia Wildlife Division Web site,

prior to the 18th century bears were very common in Georgia. However, between habitat loss, hunting, and degradation of habitat due to humans, the bear population witnessed a drastic population decline.

Thanks to sound wildlife management practices, bears have recovered to a healthy population of at least 28,000 in North Georgia alone.

With those kinds of numbers, there could very well be another giant bear roaming around in Towns County.

Of course, with the popularity Towns County has had lately between the SPEED channel and ESPN, if more big bears start making appearances, the area could be featured on a Bigfoot hunting show before you know it.

It is always best to remain vigilant when driving in our mountainous community, as one can never be sure what time of mammal may spring out of the wooded areas that line so many of our winding roads.

Chili...from Page 1A

set up tables and the silent auction area.

It was a very cool morning, making the setting perfect for chili.

Firefighters and police vehicles were all over, causing some passersby to wonder if some sort of emergency was happening.

The only actual problem was that the delicious smell of chili wafting through the air made everyone present hungry for food that was not yet ready.

From crock pots and checkered table cloths to fancier table linens and sterling silver cookers, there was chili for every personality.

Pigtorkin Boys Chili returned to the Chili Cook-off with their delicious blend of herbs, spices, and chili.

Another contestant, Scott Dean, half of the "Miller Time" team hoped to be the Cinderella story, competing for the first time but hoping taking home the trophy.

Other cookers present seemed more concerned about cooking than winning.

Regardless, everyone was hard at work.

Bob Seger's "Against the Wind" rang out through the speakers while the cookers worked on their entries.

The breeze blew up tablecloths, only continuing to fan the enticing scent of beans and meat through the air.

That meat included everything from basic ground beef to deer, and even alligator.

While Rob Mawyer, a member of the Fire Corps, strummed his guitar and sang classic rock songs, Fire Chief Mitch Floyd, walked around the Square greeting cookers, wishing them luck, and occasionally attempting to recruit people into joining the Fire Corps.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Forest Service inflated a huge, plush, Smokey the Bear.

They also handed out neon bracelets that read, "Smokey's Friend," and key fobs that exclaimed, "Get your Smokey on!" Young Harris College President Cathy Cox introduced the event saying, "it is a wonderful day for some fire in the mountains, don't you think?"

She went on to praise the Fire & Rescue team and Fire Corps for how much hard work goes into events such as

the Chili Cook Off.

"Most men and women who serve our community are volunteers," she said. "We are here to raise money to supplement them with equipment. Chip in, have fun, and taste some chili!"

Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis, City Manager Rick Stancil and Cecil Dye all came out to participate in the fun, while children, including Stancil's adorable little boy played in the bounce house, unaware of all the local celebrities in their close proximity.

Visitors to the event were all licking their chops, waiting in lines to taste the chili. Some cookers, such as the Towns County Lions Club, were giving out their recipes.

President Cox noticed a hilarious typo in the last note of the recipe. It read, "Recipe will sever at least 8-10 people."

Cox said it was really delicious, but she sure was hoping her head would not suddenly roll off her neck.

The American Red Cross was there to help cleanse the pallet between chilies, providing delicious baked goods,

brownies, and even carrot cake cookies.

The Fire Corps was hard at work selling aprons, T-shirts, and hats to commemorate the occasion.

There was also a Boot Drive in the street to help raise funds.

There was a blind judging to determine the top three winners.

Judges were given a cup with a number on it, unaware of whom the chili belonged to.

Judges rated chili on taste, smell, color, consistency and spice.

There was a People's Choice Award, too.

Third place went to Towns County Bulldogs' game day.

Second place was awarded to the Hoover Sisters, and first place and \$300 went to Pigtorkin Boys Chili, that had alligator meat in it and was cooked by camouflage-wearing chefs.

The People's Choice Award went to The Oaks restaurant, and the best booth award went to ServPro.

A good time was had by all in attendance.

Indicted...from Page 1A

to arrest warrants, occurred on June 17th at 500 Hickory Lane.

Adams-Donaldson's body was loaded in a wheelbarrow and rolled to a home that had not been occupied since 1973, according to testimony during an Aug. 4th bond hearing for the two women.

Adams-Donaldson's body was dumped in an abandoned well on the property, where it was recovered on July 11th, by law enforcement, according to investigators with the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Enotah Judicial Circuit Senior Superior Court Judge Murphy Miller denied bond for both Ledford and Stokes following a hearing on Aug. 4th.

Adams-Donaldson, who spent a portion of her youth in Union County, was discovered in the old hand-dug well at the old Roper farm on Turner Turnpike in rural Towns County.

Adams-Donaldson's remains were recovered approximately at 7 p.m. on July

11th. The well was in close proximity to the residence where Adams-Donaldson lived and was murdered.

Adams-Donaldson was reported missing on June 24th by family members.

Ledford and Stokes have confessed to the crime, which murder warrants allege happened June 17th, following extensive interrogations by Towns County sheriff's investigators and GBI agents, according to the Towns County Sheriff's Office.

Ledford and Stokes were already inmates at the Towns County Detention Center at the time of their confessions, sheriff's reports show.

Prior to the murder charges, Ledford was being held on charges that included first-degree forgery, eight counts of deposit account fraud, and criminal trespass, Towns County arrest warrants show.

Stokes was being held on an obstruction charge, Towns County arrest warrants show.

Gibson...from Page 1A

the problem, he advertised it, unafraid to ask the community for help. He explained that the kids need calculators, and unfortunately, some struggle to be able to afford them. He assured the group he did not come for a handout, but that he does want to make everyone aware of the problem.

Towns County GOP Chair Mark Wolchko has organized help for struggling students before, so he was quick to ask Gibson how he, the GOP, and the Mountain Movers and Shakers could assist in making sure every student has what they need.

Gibson also wants to ensure that teachers have everything they need, too. TCHS participates in a program in which Gibson visits teachers who have taught for more than three years for 30 minutes. Gibson quickly decided that was not a good system, so now it is more formal, and allows himself to observe for a much longer amount of time.

"I am driven in student progress," he said. "It is not just about whether the kids are passing, it is about what the teacher is doing to make them even smarter. Take honors students for instance. Those students are always going to make good grades. So we need to figure out how to

make even more progress."

Sam Fullerton, co-founder of the Mountain Movers and Shakers raised his hand and told Gibson, "After hearing your speech, we understand why you are the new principal."

This drew much applause from the group, and led to a humble Gibson looking bashful.

"My wife and I knew we needed to raise our daughter in a good place, and I needed a job that I love," he said. "I needed a fire."

Gibson is anxious to find the next improvement at TCHS. Gibson also feels the need to give credit to God saying, "God put me here. He has taken care of us. Outsiders do not get these jobs, let alone become principal, so I am blessed."

In order to thank God for that blessing, Gibson said he wants the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) to be so large that they have to move classrooms.

It is obvious that when Gibson wants something he goes after it, because TCHS has 380 students, and more than 200 participated in the first FCA meeting. In fact, the event

became so large that they had to move it to the auditorium.

"Students had their hands in the air, my teachers were worshipping and holding bibles, and I am not ashamed to admit I stood up front and cried," he said. "You only see something like that at TCHS."

Gibson went on to explain that it is uncommon for public schools to even acknowledge God, let alone be able to have such a successful FCA.

Shannon Floyd, the head of FCA told Gibson later that day that in all his years of teaching at Towns County, that day was the best one it ever had.

Gibson wants both students and teachers to be happy, and he has a rare gift of being able to do that.

"Teach 'em, teach 'em, teach 'em, and the scores will take care of themselves," he said. "We are trying to focus on math. We have to show the kids that we support them."

"TCHS is Teamwork, Character, Honor and Service," he said. "When kids focus on the acronym, it keeps them out of trouble."

Gibson said this with confidence, but based on how supported the students feel thanks to Gibson, he probably does not have much to worry about in the first place.

Cora...from Page 1A

mother's accomplishment, and his face lit up when everyone in the room sang Happy Birthday to her.

Cora's sister, Mary, was present. Though her birthday is not until the 19th, she wanted to celebrate her sister's birthday and her birthday simultaneously.

More happy birthdays

were sung, and Cora could not stop smiling. Already having a wonderful day, Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall showed up to share in the celebration.

He presented Cora with a proclamation, proclaiming the day in Cora's honor, truly making the celebration a momentous one.

Alexander's celebrates 60 years

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Blairsville - Hoyt and Ruby Alexander shared a vision.

A 50,000 square-foot store on Town Creek Road is the fruit of their labors.

Hoyt was the consummate salesman, learning his trade early in life. During his days working to help build Crater Lake National Park, in Oregon, with the Civilian Conservation Corps, Hoyt often times made extra money selling cigarettes and other items to his campmates between pay days.

He brought that salesmanship back home with him to Union County and worked as a farmer for many years. In the early 1950s, Hoyt and Ruby decided to open a country store, catering to farmers and families. Hoyt was the salesman, Ruby was the business manager, or as their youngest son Eddy puts it, "the bean counter."

Together, they founded a store on a lonely dirt road called Town Creek Road.

For years, Hoyt lobbied local and state officials to pave the roadway, understanding that one day, it would be home to hundreds.

As usual, Hoyt's vision of his community came to fruition.

In the beginning, Alexander's sold farm supplies, hardware, brogans, overalls, and flannel shirts. They sold items likely to suit most farmers. They also sold household items, food, and milk.

When families fell on hard times, Hoyt and Ruby made sure they didn't do without, oftentimes making midnight deliveries of groceries to those that they knew were in need.

Hoyt and Ruby became extended family for many families in Union County and surrounding communities.

Their children, Bonnie, Jim, and Eddy grew up in the store, helping with the family business.

Ruby died in 1995; Hoyt died in 2002.

A tradition of family was born at Alexander's, and it continues today.

On Saturday, Sept. 14th, that store, which started with meager beginnings, celebrates its 60th anniversary. It's also a day to remember the legacy of Hoyt and Ruby Alexander.

The Alexander family will



The Alexanders break bread and enjoy good times.

celebrate the day with door prizes, and refreshments from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. And, the day also features a whale of a sale - 75 percent off many in-store items during store hours.

Hoyt and Ruby's youngest son, Eddy, and his wife Sandy say to come on by and share your favorite memories of Alexander's Store.

The store has gone through a transformation from the days when Hoyt and Ruby first opened its doors.

Over the years, the store has shifted its focus from satisfying farmers in the early years, to today's store featuring clothing, sporting goods, furniture and appliances. They also carry one of the finest displays of weaponry and outdoor adventure gear as you can find in the country.

As the sign above the door reads, *Everything under the Sun*.

Hoyt, Eddy says, was slow in handing the store's keys over to him.

"It took 25-30 years to wrestle those keys out of his hands," Eddy said. "Dad was hands on, he believed he could take care of everything. He started to back off when he got in his early 80s, and let me start taking care of everything then."

Eddy was well prepared to take the reins, having earned a degree in accounting and business administration from North Georgia College in Dahlonega.

The store is in transition today, from Eddy and Sandy Alexander, to a third generation Alexander, Hoyt's grandson and Eddy and Sandy's youngest son Mark.

Together with his wife Kennetha, Mark spends much of his time focused on the store's operation.

Today, Eddy has cut back to working 40 hours a week.

Mark, says if he's not at the

store, he's thinking about the store.

"I work in the store six days a week," Mark said. "Even when I'm not there, I'm thinking about the store. It's not something that you can forget when you go home. It weighs on your mind."

"My grandfather planted seeds that came to fruition when my father started running the store," Mark said. "My father has planted seeds that have come to fruition. My goal is to plant seeds that will come to fruition as well. I want to follow in grandfather's footsteps and my father's footsteps and be a businessman that they can both be proud of at the end of the day."

Kennetha said being a member of the Alexander family has been a natural for her.

"It's like I've always been a member of the family," she said. "Working at the store is an experience. I never dreamed that there was so much to working retail. I never knew there was so much involved in owning your own business. A lot of people think that owning your own business is a real charmed life. Well, there's a lot of work. It's constantly on your mind; even when you're not at work, you're thinking about work. It's a lot of work to stay on top of everything."

Mark's mother, Sandy, says the sky is the limit for the store's future.

"I don't see us backing off," Sandy said. "God has blessed us."

Does the future include another store?

"Well, we've got Hoyt's (furniture and appliances) in town," Eddy said. "The next logical step is to build Ruby's (a mirror store to Hoyt's). Where will we build Ruby's? I think Hiawassee is the logical choice."