

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Letter to the Editor:

No Transparency at BRMEMC

We attended the September 12 meeting of BRMEMC. I was the second person to speak at the microphone. I listened to other members speak, and came away with this impression. Both the Board and the Attorney often failed to answer various questions posed by the members.

For example: One member asked the total cost of the elaborate headquarters, its fence and structures surrounding the building. The attorney said he did not have the documentation to answer this question. The truth is that it costs somewhere between \$27 million and \$30 million dollars - most of which is part of the long term debt.

Another member question asked what the amount of the Severance was paid to General Manager Matthew Aikens, who resigned under clouded circumstances. Again, the Board refused to answer this question. Two trusted sources told me it was \$57,000. A six month severance which was voted by the Board 6-2 in favor. Only Steve Phillips and Chris Logan dissented. As I recall, the Board refused to even say which Board members approved this elaborate package, and who did not. A third question by a member, asks the salary of the new General Manager, Dan Brewer. Again the Attorney and the Board refused to answer this question saying that they cannot comment on salaries. My two trusted sources told me that Mr. Brewer's salary is double that of Matthew Akins. Since Mr. Akins earned \$100,000, then this would mean that Mr. Brewer is paid \$200,000! I believe this is more than Governor Nathan Deal earns in a single year.

I have also learned, from my sources, that the Board in its budget, approved a brand new, fully loaded Chevy Tahoe for Mr. Brewer. Again the vote was 6-2, with Steve Phillips and Chris Logan saying no.

We believe this Board is spending money unwisely and without regard for the members. Mr. Brewer tells us of yet another rate increase, with more increases to come - year after year.

Many members are struggling financially, with ever increasing rates and customer charges. Also, we get no capital credits.

In my opinion, the Board is treating the BRMEMC as its own personal Piggy Bank while the members continue to suffer. My point is that change for the better and transparency needs to happen and happen soon.

While they are living it up in the Castle, in that Brasstown Valley Town, in the real world they are shutting people down. I rest my case. Any and all comments, both in agreement and in opposition to this letter would be welcome.

Barbara and Robert Heimanson



RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

Q: Dr. Don, I'm a grandmother and I need your help. I have four grandchildren and I just adore all of them. They live only a few minutes away so I get to see them often. We always have crazy-happy times when they come to see me. But here's my story. One of our favorite pastimes used to be going to the movies together. We especially liked the animated kids' films, like Pinocchio and Charlie Brown. I can't tell you how many wonderful dates I have had with them when they were younger. But as they are getting older I'm having a problem. I can't stand their movies. They're full of monsters and creepy things that I simply can't endure. I don't want to sit through that awful stuff, but I don't want to lose my closeness to them, either. What wisdom do you have for me?

A: You mean one generation doesn't like the next generation's movies, or music, or clothes? Amazing. So, what do you do when your grandkids' taste are polar opposites of yours? You get creative.

I suggest that you not become known as the resident film critic; just think through some good alternatives. You may find some gracious ways to tell them their movies creep

you out, but don't make that your theme song. It sounds to me like their love for you is strong enough that a change of venue for your dates is not going to drive any wedges between you.

Come up with some positive approaches. For instance, "Honey, I just love to hear more about your school and your friends and that new boy you like. Can we go get a yogurt instead of a movie this afternoon so we can just talk?" Or this, "I need to run to the store this afternoon and get a couple of bags of dog food for Max. Could I get you to go with me because they're really heavy, and besides, that would give us a chance to talk a little?" I just love to hear about your school." Or here's one you'll like, "Benny, I know you're coming over to do my lawn today; how about we do lunch afterward?"

You have great memories from the Disney moments you've shared, but there's nothing that says you can't change the venue completely. Who knows, your grands may even like the new setting better than the other one. I suspect it's not the movies they treasure, it's being with grandma.

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

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

We recognize these words from the Statue of Liberty, which is probably the most recognizable symbol of America and American values. The words have been quoted so many times over the years that they are welded to our self-image as a melting pot of immigrants and a people who embrace the ideals of freedom. In the minds of many people these words are on equal footing with the Declaration of Independence and the principles of our Founders, but their origin is somewhat less storied than that.

The quotation is from a sonnet, "New Colossus," written by Emma Lazarus for a fundraiser to purchase the pedestal upon which the Statue of Liberty now stands. It was read at the opening ceremony for the statue in 1886 and then forgotten. In 1901 a friend of Emma Lazarus began a campaign to memorialize Lazarus and her poem, which resulted in a plaque bearing the quote from the poem being mounted on the pedestal of the statue in 1903.

In 2015 with 310 million residents and 14.8% of those living in poverty, many of us are beginning to ask just how much of today's "huddled masses" we can afford to accommodate. It is a fair question, and one which challenges our concept of Christian charity as well as our American ideals. It is a question now being asked all over Europe, as waves of refugees seeking sanctuary threaten the very stability of the European Union.

Prince Charles invited controversy recently when he went on record saying, "The radicalization of people in Britain is a great worry, and the extent to which this is happening is alarming, particularly in a country like ours where we hold values dear... You would think the people who have come here, or are born here, and go to school here, would abide by those values and outlooks."

His point is well taken. Immigration is one thing, and when it is undertaken to provide skilled, educated or trainable contributors to our economy and our communities, it can be of great benefit, and nothing illustrates the point better than the history of the United States. However, a nation which embraces immigration must also decide at what point immigration becomes migration, and migration becomes invasion. The history of the Native peoples of America illustrates that point very well.

What Charles has said, and what many Americans are now saying is this: When a nation has built a system of values and traditions over time, it has a right to defend those values and traditions. It has a right to require that new members of its society respect those values and traditions.

Media has given us images from Europe of desperate families seeking sanctuary and a particularly tragic and evocative image of a young refugee child drowned on a Turkish beach. Less widely distributed are the images of young unemployed Muslim men chanting "Allahu Akbar" and throwing rocks at border police, demanding to be allowed entry.

During the Cold War, and before the nation became burdened by a tyranny of political correctness, the practice of ideological exclusion helped to ensure that the United States did not import enemies into its midst. Dr. James R. Edwards Jr. of the Hudson Institute writes, "With the end of the Cold War, Congress effectively repealed ideological exclusion, meaning that only active terrorists on watch lists could be barred, while those promoting the ideologies of such terrorists would have to be admitted." The Immigration Act of 1990 was written by the majority democrat Congress and signed into law by the republican president, George H.W. Bush. In addition to allowing the entry into the United States of our ideological enemies, the new law ended the English language requirement for naturalization.

Currently the United States allows over a quarter of a million Muslims to come here to live each year. Over seven million Muslims live here already, the majority of which are as peaceful and prosperous - and American - as anyone else. Among that number, however, there are over half a million

women and girls who have undergone or are at risk of genital mutilation, a relic of medieval thinking which demeans women and condemns them to servitude; thinking which, unfortunately, is not uncommon among the more radical elements of the Muslim faith. Clearly, this is one instance where some form of ideological exclusion would be of benefit.

Much has been said and written about immigration reform and the issue has become quite the political football. The issue is emotionally charged and difficult to discuss in our media enhanced climate of politically correct posturing. Immigration, or migration, from Muslim countries is for the most part a European problem at present. Here in the USA, the issue is illegal immigration from Mexico. Along our porous southern border, ideological exclusion is a moot point when pretty much anyone who can cross the border is allowed to do so and the government seems paralyzed to act. It may be cynical to assume that democrats see Mexican immigrants as extra votes and republicans view them as cheap labor to enhance corporate profits, but without any logical explanation for the inability of the government to address the problem, that explanation is certainly plausible.

If immigration is at best beneficial, or at worst, unavoidable, then it would be logical to ensure that the immigrants we do accept are not enemies of our way of life; that we select from the huddled masses those who have the best chance of making a positive contribution to our way of life, and that our way of life be supported by a common language. It would be logical to ensure that immigration does not become migration. The inability, or the refusal, of government to do what is logical raises many questions.



The Veterans' Corner

By Scott Drummond, USCG Veteran

An amazing series of events

Herb Hair, born in Chicago in 1928, he and Judy now reside in Young Harris, GA, is still amazed by his two year stint of Army duty and Korea. He was drafted under President Truman in 1951, assigned as squad leader in Fort Jackson, SC for basic training of 14 week duration. After boot camp the company was loaded aboard a troop train from South Carolina to Seattle. Herb remembers the steam engine powered train needed an additional locomotive at front and rear to make it across the mountains in Fargo, ND.

Arriving in Seattle, after a layover, his company was loaded aboard a troop ship, the "Private Sadao S. Munemori," enroute to Japan. 100 miles out into the Pacific one foggy night they collided with an oil tanker, tore a huge hole in the bow, thus back to Seattle. After another layover boarded a sister ship resulting in a fourteen day pleasure cruise finally to Japan. Most of his company was sent immediately to Korea, Herb being selected for training in Gotimba, Japan, living in an old Japanese Calvary barracks at the base of Mount Fuji. As infantry support they trained for 3½ months in heavy weapons, i.e. 4.2 mortar teams requiring 4 to 5 men per gun. His newly formed heavy weapons company departed Japan aboard ship, arriving in Korea, to re-board a very undersized passenger train for a cramped ride to near proximity of their encampment. In that extremely hot summer, Herb was delighted that they were surrounded by plenty of cold, clear pure creeks and

freshening bath, changed clothes, and emerging from the wooded trail happened to notice for the first time a sign, "Beware Minefield"! He didn't go back!

As a corporal in the 8th Army 25th Division, his company in their small convoy was shelled en-route to their final destination supporting our front lines. They and their small Korean teenaged "house-boy" took cover in a huge concrete culvert and only one soldier was slightly injured.

After arriving, setting up with team, he was again reassigned as an FO (Forward Observer) on a hillside with another FO for artillery, a lieutenant.

After a couple of months he was reassigned again to Division as Major General Ira P. Swift's aide, the entire 25th Division Commander. Herb states "he's one very fine man, a great leader." The "point system" determined time in service thus in 1952 Herb left Korea, to Seattle, was flown to Florida for a while, then finished up his Army stint back in Fort Jackson as a "mail truck guard". What a whirlwind of moves and assignments!

Herb has served 3 years as Chaplain for the oldest Veteran organization in America, formed in 1886, the Army-Navy Union, Garrison 66, here in Young Harris, right at our North Carolina state border. As a very small membership exists they need members! Go here: sites.google.com/site/armynavyunionusa/

And yes! Herb would do it all again!

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 2nd Tuesday of each month at 5 p.m. at new Senior Center. Newcomers welcome. Questions please contact the T.C. Dem's at Townscountymocrats@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 Unicorn 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.mcutg.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/blueridgemountains.
Alcoholics Anonymous: meets every Friday and Sunday evening at 7 at Red Cross Building at 1293 Jack Dayton Circle. 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.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.
Enchanted Valley Square Dance 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 Doyling 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.

Towns County Herald
 Dedicated to the promotion of Towns County

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OFFICE LOCATED AT 518 N. MAIN ST. SUITE 7
 "THE MALL" HIAWASSEE (706) 896-4454
 Publication Number 635540. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawassee, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points.
 EMAIL Address: tcherald@windstream.net

POSTMASTER: Send change of address to:
 TOWNS COUNTY HERALD
 P.O. BOX 365 HIAWASSEE, GEORGIA 30546

DEADLINE FOR ALL NEWS COPY & ADVERTISING
 Fridays at 5 PM

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
 TOWNS COUNTY (1 YEAR) \$20
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