

Towns County Herald

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Local Weather and Lake Levels

Thu: Clouds	64 48
Fri: Rain	56 47
Sat: Rain	55 44
Sun: Clouds	59 41
Mon: Clouds	56 42
Tue: Clouds	56 37
Wed: Sunny	52 38



Upstream Elevation	
Predicted	
12/03/2014	
Lake Chatuge	1,914.86
Lake Nottely	1,759.35
Blue Ridge	1,666.74

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Basketball Fri Dec 5

vs Union 7 PM

WRESTLING Fri-Sat King of the Mountain Tournament

Pearl: A day that lives in infamy

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

On Sunday, Dec. 7, Americans will pay tribute to the brave souls that died that day in 1941.

National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day is Sunday, Dec. 7, in honor of those men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice on that "date which will live in infamy."

This year's observance marks the 73rd anniversary of the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the event that brought the U.S. directly into the fold of World War II.

Towns County resident and World War II veteran Bud Johnson was aboard the USS Rhind, a destroyer, in the Atlantic Ocean when Pearl Harbor was attacked.

"I went in the Navy in April of 1939, when I was 17 years old, so I had two and a half years in the Navy," said Johnson. "I had spent all my time up until that time in the Atlantic fleet. I was serving on my second destroyer when we got the word that morning, with the time difference over here in the Atlantic, and we were aghast at what happened - we couldn't believe it."

Johnson, who was a petty officer third class aboard the USS Rhind, was on watch when his ship was informed of the attack. He and his shipmates were on their way back from a stint in Europe, and their ship was due for upkeep and overhaul.

"All we had, really, was radio and news," said Johnson. "Not like we have complete coverage with television and



The wreckage of the U.S.S. Cassin and U.S.S. Downes on Dec. 7, 1941 following the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor. Photo/Courtesy U.S. Navy.

everything today, minute by minute we get up to date. Of course, we thought it was a drill when everybody heard it. But then they kept coming through and repeating themselves, "This is no drill."

On that day, more than 2,400 Americans died, and the military on the whole suffered extreme losses to its forces - soldiers, ships and airplanes.

"I was not there, but I made a vow, all of us - us sailor boys and Army people - that we would never let Pearl Harbor be forgotten," said Johnson. "On December the 7th, we would always let it be recognized. We lost a lot of heroes and a lot of good people out there. Army, Navy, Marines, civilians out there, with that surprise at-

tack."

Johnson spent five years in the Atlantic fleet before transferring to the Pacific fleet in 1944.

"In 1944, I had Christmas dinner in Pearl Harbor," said Johnson. "It hurt - when my ship that I was on came in to Pearl Harbor, our whole squadron of ships, of course, we went to attention, everybody. The captain had everybody lined up in full dress uniform on the ships when we came in to Pearl Harbor."

The men had lined up to honor the USS Arizona, one of the many ships sunk that day in 1941.

Today, the retired USS

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Christmas has officially arrived in Hiawassee

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

The City of Hiawassee held its first annual Christmas tree lighting on the Square following the Sheriff's Christmas Parade on Saturday, Nov. 29.

Hiawassee Mayor Barbara Mathis rode in the parade prior to the lighting.

"It was a pretty parade," said Mayor Mathis. "They had some pretty floats in it, very nice ones."

While on the float, Mayor Mathis and other city hall employees threw candy to the children who lined the streets in anticipation of a sweet evening.

"There was a lot of candy given out, so every kid got plenty of candy," said Mayor Mathis. "People had contributed to Halloween, and we had candy left, and we wanted to give it to them, so that's what we did with the candy. We're out of candy - we're out of business now until next year."

The lighting ceremony was not as well attended as the mayor would have hoped, but getting the tree in the ground was a last minute affair, as it had been planted only the previous Wednesday, Nov. 26.

"It was pulled together in no time at all," said Mayor Mathis. "We didn't have any time to advertise, and no one knew anything about it or



anything." Byron Davis, an employee of the Water Department, donated the large tree from his property, and he helped to move, plant and decorate the tree in the square.

The Christmas tree has been adorned with colorful lights and ornaments befitting a tree of such size. A family of Christmas light deer can be seen grazing before the tree, and the gazebo in the square has been festooned with lights and festive decorations.

"I'm very proud - it's just something that we've tried to get pulled together," said

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Santa highlights Christmas Parade

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County residents turned out in droves this past Saturday, Nov. 29, to watch the annual Sheriff's Parade, and the long line of floats imparted plenty of Christmas spirit.

"I think it went really, really well - nice participation in the parade and very good turnout," said Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton. "Everybody seemed to be really charged up about it. I've heard a lot of feedback from people who were either in it or watching it, and we're getting a lot of good, positive feedback on that."

Spectators lined the streets, and children made sure to bring bags for the candy that was thrown during the parade.

"That's always a lot of fun, especially, you know, you come by and the kids are all excited," said Sheriff Clinton. "And it always really gets you in the Christmas spirit to see those little eyes lit up."

Everyone bundled up warmly for the event, even though the weather was mild for the end of November.

"That was an added bonus this year," said Sheriff



Clinton. "We don't get that too often. It seems like it's always really cold that night, but it was nice."

Members of the Towns County Indian Raider Band regaled parade-goers with festive music, and the parade, which began its route from the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds at 5:30 p.m., showcased floats with themes appropriate for the Christmas holiday.

First place for the float contest went to WRC Masonry, which featured an actual fireplace and a warm Christmas

setting in the home.

Riverbend Campground took second place in the contest, and McConnell Baptist Church placed third, each with imaginatively festive floats.

"There were some tough decisions to be made," said Sheriff Clinton on the judging of the floats.

One of the main purposes for the parade every year, besides bringing the community together in a spirit of celebration, is to kick off the Sheriff's

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Shoppers find their way to Reece Center

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
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Choestoe - Hundreds came to look and shop. The crowd was steady; the rewards were rich.

It's the best description of the Third Christmas Open House at the Reece Farm and Heritage Center on Saturday and Sunday.

Guests were treated to holiday snacks and beverages that included fresh Apple Cider. It was Black Friday at the Reece Center, and customers were obliging to take part in the festivities.

"It was a great weekend," said Reece Society Chair Dr. Jon Kay. "The response to the Center was tremendous. Everybody was impressed with the farm and exhibits."

The Third Christmas Open House brought newcomers, passersby and lots of locals out on Saturday and Sunday.

Scores of people attended the event intent on showcasing one of North Georgia's historic attractions, the literary works and way of life of Byron Herbert Reece.

The curious came to learn the origins of the words, so eloquent and prolific, that defined the poetry of the Farmer Poet, "Hub" Reece.

Reece, who attended



school in rural Union County, was a farmer first, and a self-made poet second. He read books that would seem strange to locals in those days. The books of choice in Reece's day included manuals on farming and learning how to operate a tractor.

At an early age, Reece had read the Bible and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, penned in 1678, books that would often influence his writing. By the age of 15, he was publishing poems in the *North Georgia News*. After high school he attended Young Harris College where he found a close group of friends who encouraged him to continue to write his poetic prose.

Reece didn't disappoint. *The Prairie Schooner*

journal published *Lest the Lonesome Bird* in 1943. *Ballad of the Bones and Other Poems*, a collection of Reece's poetry, soon followed, in 1945.

Reece was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for *Bow Down in Jericho*, his 1950 follow-up to his first, critically acclaimed publication. That same year, Reece published *Better a Dinner of Herbs*, his first novel. In 1952, he received a Guggenheim Fellowship for fiction, and he also published a third volume of poetry, *A Song of Joy*. In 1955, he unveiled his second novel, *The Hawk and the Sun* and his final volume of poetry, *The Season of Flesh*.

The Reece Farm and Heritage Center is a lasting ex-

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Invasive plants threaten Lake Chatuge's economic viability

By Charles Duncan
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A potential threat to the life engine of the Towns County economy isn't going overlooked.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall has shifted the location and time of the December commission meeting from the Towns County Courthouse at 5:30 p.m. to the Towns County Conference and Recreation Center at 6 p.m. to allow for more room for residents to learn more about the invasive aquatic plant, hydrilla.

Over the summer, there were larger than normal infestations of these invasive plants that resemble hydrilla, according to Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition Director Callie Moore.

"Hydrilla and Brazilian elodea, a similar nonnative aquatic plant, form dense mats of vegetation that interfere with recreation and destroy fish and wildlife habitat," Moore said.

Although winter drawdowns typically help keep aquatic invasive plants from becoming widespread in mountain lakes, hydrilla is widely regarded as the most dangerous nonnative aquatic plant



because of its extremely effective methods of proliferation, Moore said.

"Hydrilla will grow with less light and is more efficient at taking up nutrients than native species," Moore said. "Hydrilla will quickly displace plants like riverweed that serve as important habitat for native aquatic insects. The displacement of native riverweed is particularly threatening to a rare and unique fish in the Hiwassee River basin, thus making it a

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Santa will be at Mayor's Park Tree Lighting

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Young Harris - Christmas is on its way, and as proof, the year's much anticipated Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony in the Young Harris Mayor's Park promises to light up the night on Friday, Dec. 5, at 6 p.m.

The ceremony is a long-standing annual tradition, with this year marking the 42nd time Young Harris has sponsored a tree lighting.

Santa Claus is a regular guest at the ceremony, and children should come prepared with their wish lists.

Also, Towns County Elementary School students are expected to continue their traditional Christmas Carols.

Mayor Andrea Gibby will welcome all to the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony at Young Harris Park. The festivities of the night also will include Towns County Elementary students singing Christmas carols, a scrumptious array of refreshments, all followed by the arrival of Santa Claus.

Refreshments will be provided inside city hall following the lighting, where Santa Claus will greet the evening's visiting children.

The ceremony is made



possible each year with the help of the Enotah Garden Club of Young Harris, which helps to coordinate the lighting and also provide the refreshments free to all who would attend and take part in the merriment.

Patrons of the event can expect plenty of Christmas music and good cheer to be had by all, as the ceremony is renowned as a festive experience complete with cold weather and Christmas spirit.

Mayor Gibby and the entire City of Young Harris welcome any and all visitors, regardless of age, to come out and enjoy the Young Harris yuletide delights.

Mayor's Park is located at 51 Irene Berry Drive.

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