

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

From the Desk of:



Sheriff Clinton of Towns County

Christmas traditions

Most of us have family traditions that we enjoy during the Christmas season. Families with small children may spend Christmas Eve baking cookies for Santa, or listening to Christmas carols while enjoying eggnog by the fire. As a small child I remember the anticipation of Christmas being so intense. I was in awe and wonder dreaming about what might be inside all those presents wrapped so nicely under the tree. I would just stare at the Christmas tree and day dream about Christmas Day.

For me, even at 44, Christmas is still the most magical time of year. I love Christmas lights and the sounds of Christmas carols everywhere. The world just seems to be a nicer place during the Christmas season. I love to watch young children open gifts and see their eyes light up with joy. There is no other feeling like the feeling Christmas. While Christmas is about much more than material possessions, the spirit of Christmas is certainly captured in the joy of a child receiving a gift on Christmas morning.

So, what about the children who are less fortunate? Imagine the child whose family has fallen on hard times. Do they wake up to just another day of struggling to make ends meet? Imagine if you were a par-

ent who loved your child, but had lost a job because of the poor economy. I doubt that there would be anything much harder than not being able to provide your child, whom you love, the wonder of Christmas morning. It breaks my heart to think that as the rest of the world enjoys the most blessed day of the year, some families wake to another day of not having enough. While providing toys for these children isn't going to make the rest of their problems go away, I can't help but believe that, at least for a time, their world becomes a little brighter and things seem a little better than before.

Each year the Sheriff's Office attempts to provide the joy of Christmas gifts for these children. This effort is only made possible by the help of generous people in the community who donate to this cause. Names of children in need are collected and toys are gathered. We try whenever possible to provide at least one item that the child has specifically asked for. The toys are then given to the parents of the child to handle Christmas in their families tradition. It is all done in such a way as to protect the dignity of the family and allow them to share in the joy that many of us take for granted.

This year has been a tough one for many local families. We are hoping to provide for each child, but we need your help.

If you would like to help us with this effort, or if you know of a family with children that needs help, please contact your Sheriff's Office at 706-896-4444. I hope that each of you has a blessed and joyous Christmas this year!

The Middle Path

by Don Perry

One of the results of many years living in the serenity of the North Georgia Mountains is an increased aversion to certain types of noise. I notice it in the city, where the noise includes an amalgamation of aggressive intent as well as the background sounds of industry and traffic. I notice it in those restaurants where the sounds of flatware and conversation combine with the loud music that encourages one to eat and go to clear the table for the next customer.

It's not exactly an aversion to volume alone. I'm quite comfortable with an array of Infinity speakers rattling the windows with Derek Trucks, J.S. Bach, Celtic Thunder or even ZZ Top. Perhaps knowing that a flip of the switch will once again reveal the sounds of birdsong and wind on the mountain allows me indulgence of music played loudly.

Or perhaps it is not the sounds themselves that are the culprit, but the intent behind the sounds. Is it the aggression behind honking horns and racing motors that offends? Probably not. Many of the sounds of nature are pure territorial imperative. Translate that beautiful birdsong into english and one might blush at what is actually being communicated. Indeed, there is plenty of aggression on the field at Sanford Stadium, but 80,000 people manage to gather there on a regular basis without incident.

Of course, cities are not devoid of opportunities for quiet contemplation. The library, the museum, and the little coffee shop on the corner reward those determined enough to find them. But the price for gaining those prizes can be high if you don't live within walking distance. In fact, my own experience of city life lives in the memory of a constant stampede of the mind, constantly calculating how many of the diminishing hours of the day must be invested in each heavily trafficked mile in order to make the money to buy the gas to drive to work to make the money to buy the gas.

No, I think my aversion is something else entirely. I think that what is often carried beneath the urban bustle is that particular kind of human fear which can express itself in a kind of herd mentality. In the city, more people are competing for

limited quantities of space, time and resources, and every stampede is composed of individuals stampeding in order to escape the stampede. Multiply Hiawassee and Young Harris by a thousand and we would see the same symptoms. I'm quite satisfied with one of each.

During the holiday season the noise from all sources and intents reaches a crescendo. This year I am discovering that distance is no protection from the urban herd when I allow it into my own living room through that ubiquitous window and all-seeing eye of the television. My family enjoys the occasional holiday special on television, but this year it seems that every fifteen minutes of programming is mined with astonishing attempts to get us to buy more stuff. The studied combinations of sound, color and imagery are piercing and almost impossible to ignore, even with the sound turned off.

A quick glance at economic numbers reveals the reason that so many retailers are increasingly desperate to separate us from our money. Many are struggling to survive. Others are just greedy, long accustomed to using our holiday impulses to push their numbers further into the black. We are being herded, plain and simple, and every stampede begins with a herd.



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

Shopping and singing

Christmas time is different than any other time of the year. We experience all sorts of mingled feelings. To be honest not all these feelings are positive. Some are very negative. We are frustrated and often depressed at Christmas time. We get caught up in "buying" gifts. A noted preacher said he asked his wife what she wanted for Christmas and she said, "Surprise me." He did. He woke her up at 3 AM, shined a light in her face and said, "Boo!" Another Christmas she had requested something to make her beautiful and he bought her an exercise bike. He may be a preacher, but he is not a "wise man." Sometimes gift-buying and gift-giving does cause some confusion and frustrations. I don't know about you, but some of my greatest joy comes from hearing and singing Christmas carols. When I was a small boy I didn't know all the words to some Christmas carols. I sang but didn't always use the right words. I was like the group who went caroling and they were heard singing, "As Shepherds Washed Their Socks By Night." Or like four-year-old Janie who went through the house singing her favorite Christmas carol: Slick The Walls With bowls Of Jelly! Fa-la-la-la-

la-la-la-la!" You know you have been doing too much shopping and not enough singing when you think the carol says, Hock, The Harold Angels Sing, or I've Heard The Bills On Christmas Day. Shopping will certainly deplete your finances; give you sore feet and tired legs. Shopping does boost the economy. Singing carols will boost your spirit and keep you healthy spiritually and financially. Someone said there is a reason businesses hang all that mistletoe in their stores; it means you can kiss your money goodbye. One fellow said his wife had charged enough last year that he was sure she had made the Master Card Hall of Fame. If you are tired of shopping, stop and sing these two verses.

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth, to touch their harps of gold: "Peace on the earth, good will to men," from heav'n's all-gracious King. The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

All ye, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low, who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow, Look now! For glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing: O rest beside the weary road, and hear the angels sing!

See, you feel better already. Read Ephesians 5:18-20 and you will feel even better.



RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

Q: Dr Don, my husband and I are thinking of getting a TV for our 5-year old's room as a gift for an upcoming holiday. A friend tells us that's not a good idea. We'd like to know your take on it.

A: Let me keep this brief because I've written a lot on this subject: Based on the overwhelming evidence, placing a TV in your child's bedroom is not a wise parenting decision. Next question? Sorry, I don't want to seem caustic or flippant about your question because it's a serious one, but a constantly growing, indisputable body of research shows strong links between a television in a child's bedroom and a bunch of major health, psychological, and educational issues. I'm convinced that America's families will pay a huge long-term price for what has come to be a cultural norm. Best estimates are that 75% of our kids have a TV in their bedroom. At 18 it's likely; at 18 months - or five years - it shouldn't be.

From your question I can't tell if the TV is a gift for your 5-year old, or for you. It will take up a lot of his spare time. It will entertain him. It will keep him out from under foot a lot. And it will keep you from the incessant ques-

tion, "Why can't I have one, mommy, Benny has one in his room?"

But let me tell you some other things it will provide. Latest studies show, your child will score lower on his school tests. He is more likely to have sleep problems. He is considerably more apt to be overweight. He will tend to consume more unhealthy foods, and there is a strong possibility that he will have an increased tendency to smoke. That's a high price to pay for a digital baby sitter. There's more. He will also get less exercise. He will have fewer social skills, a shortened attention span, be more inclined to depression, and show less interest in reading and in spiritual values.

Sorry to be so rabid on this, mom, but you asked. Parents constantly tell me they are mortified by what their kids are picking up from TV. Me, too. And it's not getting better. So, rather than a TV, buy him an age-appropriate bike or a basketball goal for the driveway. For his inside-times, buy him a set of Lego blocks or some other creativity-enhancing toy. Most of all he needs you.

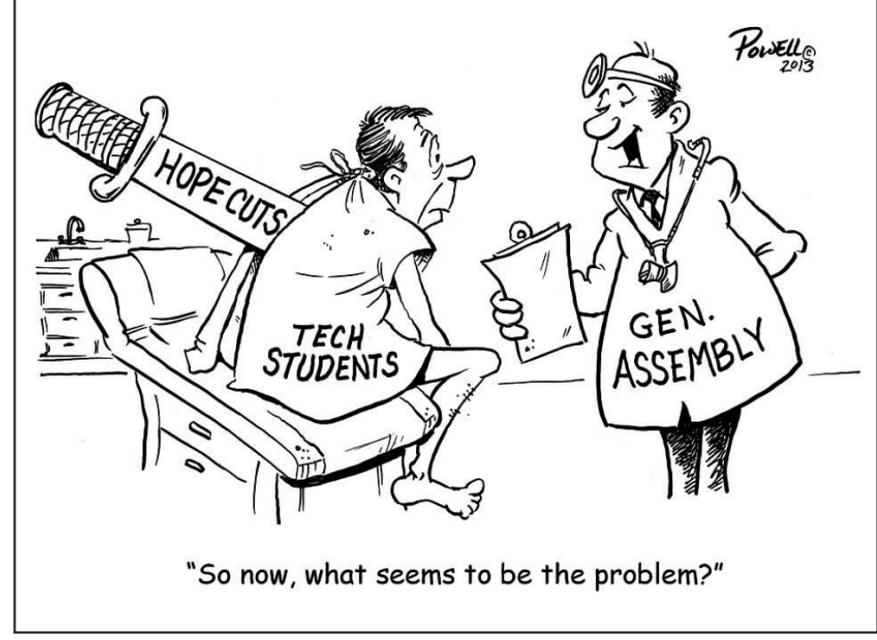
Send your parenting questions to: DrDon@RareKids.net.

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.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE EMAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor, PO Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546. Our email address: tcherald@windstream.net. Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should address issues of general interest, such as politics, the community, environment, school issues, etc. Letters opposing the views of previous comments are welcomed; however, letters cannot be directed at, nor name or ridicule previous writers. Letters that recognize good deeds of others will be considered for publication.* Note: All letters must be signed, and contain the first and last name and phone number for verification.



"So now, what seems to be the problem?"

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 Democratic Party meets the 2nd Thursday of every month at 5 PM at the Senior Center.
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.
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 Hiwassee 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 mtregarts-craftsguild.org.
Mountain Computer User Group meets the 2nd Monday of each month at the Goolsby Center at YHC. Q & A at 6 p.m., meeting at 7 p.m.
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/bluebridgemountains.
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.
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.
Mountain Magic Table 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 St. Francis of Assisi Church 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 (up the hill from the chamber office 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 Hiawassee Senior Ctr. from 7-9 PM. \$5/person to dance. Free to watch. Call 706-379-2191.
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.
VFW Post #7807 will be hosting a fish fry their 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.

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