

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Letters to The Editor

### Letter to the Editor:

*New Recreation and Conference Center*

I saw the new center recently. What a wonderful complex we have. 27,000 square feet of space. Two new basketball courts to go along with the old one we're keeping. Adding maybe 10,000 square feet of playing area. A new walking track around the second floor, overlooking the basketball court. Yoga and bridge areas must be 4 times the old space. Thousand of extra feet of space that we've never had before. I couldn't wait to see the new weight and cardio area, surely it would be bigger and better than the old place, everything else was, but boy was I shocked. They had reduced that area by about a third. They couldn't even get all the equipment that we had in the old place into a closet of a space in this mammoth building. I was there for about 30 minutes, just looking and talking to a handful of people who were just as sad as I was. One man said that he tried to use the free weights, but there just wasn't enough safe room to work and he was leaving. Hundreds of adults used that facility weekly. There's a sign-in sheet to verify that. What happened to the one place that more adults used every day, from opening to closing, 6 days a week, 52 weeks a year? Sure, it's better than what they have in Union County or White County, but it's worse than what Towns County use to have.

I called Commissioner Kendall and told him how disappointed I was. I suggested that they move all the equipment back to the old building. It was a great place and they are not going to tear it down. If you feel that same way, call the Commissioner, soon.

*Robert Lumpkin*



### RARE KIDS; WELL DONE

By Don Jacobsen

**Q:** Dr. Don, my 11- and 13-year olds are going to get a generous amount of money from their grandmother soon and they are extremely excited about spending it. Although they have very nice laptops, they want to buy tablets which will contain games and other apps. I told them that they should save their money and not spend it so quickly, but they are determined to get tablets because all their peers have one.

**A:** You ask an important question; how you respond will define you as parents. Let me suggest some general ground rules. You mention they are "extremely excited about spending it." Good place to begin. Money isn't for spending; money is for using. That's an unpopular but important lesson mom and dad need to hand off to their kids. When it's part of a regular income (like a weekly allowance) we recommend you teach them that they save 10%, give away 10%, and the rest is available to use wisely. Since this is likely a one-time gift you will want to juggle the percentages, but the principle is a good one. Every kid needs to learn this while he's still at home and not when he's 28 and up to his neck in debt.

At this age, mom and dad, you are still in charge. In God's grand design it was determined that kids would have parents. A situation like this is one of the reasons why. Have them bring you a spending plan of how they would like to use the money. Make sure they include some to give away and a generous amount to save. This is a great opportunity for some teaching on your part. Explain that part of your role as parents is to help them learn how to manage their money. You don't have to get their permission; they have to get yours.

Should you let them buy tablets? That's your call. Two things concern me about the question, though. You say, "I told them (no)...but they are determined." That should not have any bearing on your answer. You add that they want to get tablets, "...because all their peers have one." That isn't a compelling reason, either. That's why I mention that your managing this incident should be by principle and not be driven by kid-pressure. Incidentally, you may want to talk to grandma; it will help if she sings the same song.

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

## The Middle Path

by Don Perry

As time goes by we gain experience. Hopefully we learn from it. The value judgements of a 21 year old are less informed than someone with more years to consult. When I was 21, the opportunity for adventure was more important to me than another Christmas holiday with all the relatives; another forced encounter with the same old comments and questions: "My, how you have grown!" "What are you studying in school?" "This turkey is so tender - the best one yet!"

And so it was that on Christmas Eve in the year of my 21st birthday I found myself camped out in the mountain wilderness of southwestern New Mexico, unconcerned with the wait in line for the bathroom at my parents' home or the possibility that my cousins would leave any hot water.

I was thoroughly and insufferably pleased with myself for having escaped the holiday family ritual that year, and I was quite content with my travel arrangements. A pickup truck with a rebuilt motor, a new camper top and a fresh coat of paint held all of my gear. A plywood platform covered the wheel wells with storage space underneath and an old futon on top for sleeping. My nose barely cleared the top of the camper, but it was snug and dry and less money spent on motels meant more gas in the tank and more miles toward the indeterminate destinations of my quixotic quest.

What young man or woman does not at some point in time wish to escape the shackles, real or imagined, of family ties and the judgement and control which can accompany those bonds? It was with a great sense of freedom and accomplishment that I watched the embers of the campfire that Christmas Eve, miles away from family and friends and all the concerns of the human race that so often distill to curdle the egg-nog during family gatherings on the holidays. I was unbound, or so I thought, and soon to learn another lesson about what really binds us.

Perhaps it was the lack of tryptophan in the can of tuna I substituted for turkey and dressing in my Christmas Eve dinner or maybe it was the wind, cold and lonesome, whistling down from the mountains above the San Francisco River that disturbed my sleep, but I tossed and turned that night in my sleeping bag and blankets. Every rotation added another layer to my wool and goose down burrito which, by morning, had quite effectively imprisoned me between my bed and the roof of the camper.

I dreamed that morning of being trapped in a dark, cramped space and when I awoke to find

that I was, indeed, trapped in a dark, cramped space, there was a moment or two of sheer panic. My arms were pinned to my sides, my legs were immobilized and my body was so tightly wrapped that I could not take a deep breath to calm myself.

Exhaustion can sometimes stand in for wisdom. After a few minutes of panicked, superhuman effort to free myself, I was tired and calm enough to begin thinking again. Eventually I was able to pull myself an inch at a time by the heels toward the tailgate, spring the latch with my toes and spill out onto the ground. No breath of free air was ever more delicious than the one I took when I finally unrolled my prison onto a layer of very cold snow which had fallen during the night.

It was beautiful, my white Christmas morning miles away from home. The snow on the mountains, the sounds of the river, the steam from the hot springs in the frigid morning air were all enchanting and, with my recent escape from prison, I was euphoric. For a while.

Beauty is sustained and multiplied when it is shared. The first thing I wanted to do on my beautiful Christmas morning, miles away from anyone, was to tell someone about it. I wanted to call home. I wanted to be home.

Two days later after a marathon non-stop drive I was sitting at the dinner table with my family and enjoying leftover turkey and dressing. The Christmas tree was still up and there were still unopened gifts underneath. Bing Crosby sang "White Christmas" in the background while we ate dinner and I told the story of my adventures. I had not missed Christmas at all. The date on the calendar did not matter. Only the time we were together was important.

Now, many years later, there are more empty seats around the dinner table at the holidays than there are diners. The children are all grown and the family is scattered by time and distance. The years have claimed so many.

I do not regret the adventures of youth. They are necessary and natural. But I would give anything to hear the house full of life and laughter again on Christmas Day. I miss my little family of four that used to trek into the woods to cut our own Christmas tree, and all the grandparents, the aunts and uncles and cousins who would pile into the house and use up all the hot water. The things I thought would bind me in my youth, today define me, and the memories of those days shine as brightly as Christmas ornaments.



### "IT'S ON MY MIND.."

Danny H. Parris

Send me a card  
In December of 1969,

a woman from the state of Ohio wrote a letter to the postmaster in Nashville, TN. Enclosed was 25 cents, and a strange request. It stated, "will someone in Nashville use this quarter to send me a Christmas card?" This lady lived alone in poverty, had never married, and had no relatives. She had been injured physically and was not able to work. She was an avid country music fan and chose Nashville to ask someone in that city to please send her a card. Christmas is certainly a time of joy, love and peace. But it is one of the loneliest times for much of the world's population. Loneliness is very pronounced in the life of the aged who have outlived most of their relatives. Some of these seniors are separated by long distances from their children and grandchildren. Loneliness grips the hearts of portions of our population who live in large cities where people are sometimes cold and suspicious. A lot of people are poor at making friends and feel desperately alone and isolated during the Christmas season. There are multitudes of wives/husbands who look for love, peace and joy, but are so disappointed. They have dysfunctional families and Christmas only intensifies their problems. The saddest segment of our society is children that are lonely because they are neglected and abused. The world was no different the night that

God sent Jesus into this poor lonely world. In fact, Jesus is God's card of Love sent to let us know that we have a friend that will never leave us and will always love us. God is able to take our loneliness and produce a great work through it.

I am reminded of the famous Boston preacher, Phillip Brooks, who had gone to the Holy Land in December 1865. He arrived there very lonely and depressed. His brother had been killed fighting in the Union Army. Phillips had traveled from his pastorate in Philadelphia to the battlefield at Gettysburg where he walked in the aftermath of the carnage trying to minister to the wounded and dying for both the Federal and Confederate Armies. He was disappointed in love and never married. However, he immersed himself, not in pity but in caring for the children of Boston. By the time he reached Bethlehem that December he was terribly despondent. On that Christmas Eve night in 1865, Phillip Brooks attended a five-hour service (from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m.) that made a great impression upon his life. When he returned to America he still had "Palestine singing in his soul." From that experience, three years later he penned the words to "O Little Town of Bethlehem." It was sung for the first time on December 27, 1868 by six Sunday School teachers and thirty-six children. The last phrase of the first verse proclaims "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight."

Why don't you make yourself available as a living Christmas card to some lonely person this Christmas season?



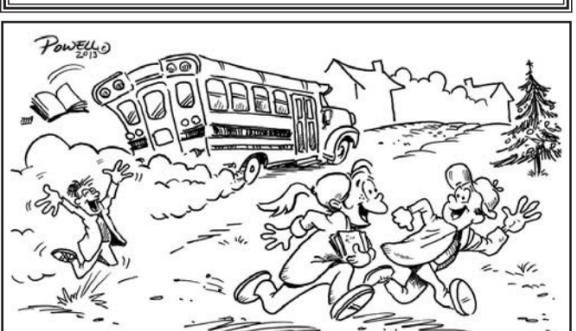
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Publication Number 635540. Entered as second-class matter on November 8, 1928, at the post office at Hiawassee, Georgia under Act of March 3, 1879. With additional mailing points.  
EMAIL Address: tcherald@windstream.net

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) \$15  
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### 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.

**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 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 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/blueridgemountains.

**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 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.