

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## In His Own Words

Frank Gibbs: I placed my uniform in my duffel bag.

I walked out of the bathroom, went and got my ticket to Atlanta, Ga. And sat down in one of the seats. Even after I got home, the only people that were really proud of me was my immediate family. There was no fanfare or "welcome home" from anyone else. I had 3 more months to finish out my tour of duty and I was assigned to Ft. Knox, KY. After a month at home, I flew to Ft. Knox and finished my time. When I got home, I started looking for a job and a job was very hard to find at that time. It took me about 3 months to find a job but I finally got one at a mining company in my home town and worked there for 37 years. I retired in April of 2004. The best thing that ever happened to me after I got home was when I met the girl that was to become my wife. We married in July of 1977. After getting home I was very much a loner. I did not want to have anything to do with anyone. I worked in a lab by myself and when I got off, I went home where I lived by myself and I just stayed home. I did not feel that I was as good as other people.

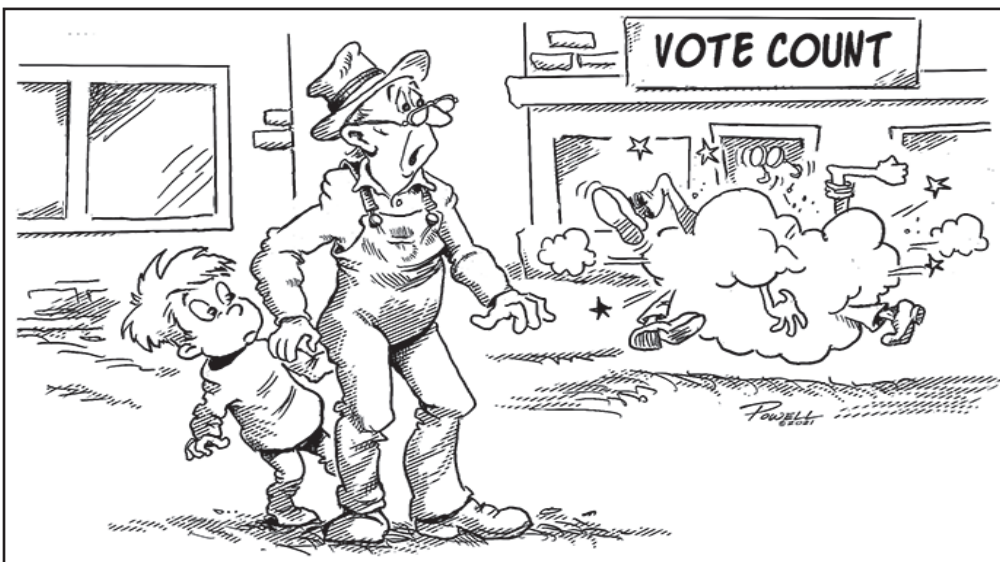
Basically I had no friends and did not want any. In about the year 2000 I started to have nightmares, flashbacks of the war, suffering from insomnia, depression, anxiety and stomach issues. My wife almost left me at this point because I stayed mad, angry, depressed all the time. She told me I had to get help or she was gone. So, I entered a PTSD In House Program at the VA. To this day, I am still under the care of the VA for PTSD. And, I am on medication for PTSD every day. Now, most of my days are good. I still have occasional flashbacks and nightmares, but they are manageable. My wife and I now have a new challenge in that she has been diagnosed with ALS. Probably the most dreaded medical diagnosis that anyone can receive. However, we are taking each day for the blessings and joy that it has, and, let tomorrow take care of itself.

God has blessed me beyond measure and I thank Him each day for His many blessings. And, I stand for our flag. I took an oath to protect the American homeland and its people. That oath will never end. Frank Gibbs 11-26-2020

I sincerely hope that our readers have gained some insight into our Vietnam combat Veteran's difficulties through this First Person experience regarding the political mess that was created for so many. Frank is a great American, a fine man and anyone would cherish him as a neighbor and friend.

*Semper Paratus*

**The Veterans' Corner**  
**Scott Drummond**  
USCG Veteran



"Yes, of course they believe in democracy, Son... as long as their side wins."

## Living In the Future

Reprinted from TCH

January 4, 2017: On New Year's Eve, a friend of mine on the west coast asked some of his friends in the east for a preview of 2017— so that he could go to bed early, knowing that the world had survived into another year. Some of us decided that we would offer him a few tidbits of "wisdom" we had acquired from living in the "future," even though we were only three hours ahead. My contribution was a bit of experiential wisdom purchased at great personal cost, and I share it now freely to keep with you always: Never buy pizza from under a lightbulb at a gas station. Avoiding my mistake will increase your chances of living to see the future. Upon further reflection, I decided that I could offer little else of value from three hours into the future, but how useful it might be to communicate with my friends and associates, or send a note to myself, 12 months into the past. Such are the musings we indulge in January as we reflect on the year just passed and make our resolutions for the future.

So, what might I tell someone living a year in the past? The first thing that comes to mind is this: The hours which can be consumed combing through information pertaining to politics in an election year, even with the goal of extracting a few kernels of truth from the chaff — can never be recovered. That time is gone forever, and would be much more valuable applied to activities like writing letters to friends and reading books. In a note to myself a year ago, I would also remind me that my grandfather, who was right about so many things, was spot on when he said to be careful choosing who can be trusted in a discussion about politics. Friendship is a curious thing. Depending on its foundation and depth, it is subject to erosion. Sadly, many of the relationships we call friendship are shallow, or built on an unstable foundation which might crumble when exposed to disagreement. Books have been written about why people take politics so personally, and when we speak our personal truth about the subject we may discover that we have fewer friends than we thought. This is no tragedy, but the revelation, and the speed with which it can occur, can be quite shocking.

The next message I would send to the past is one which has occupied the pages of the Middle Path for years. We have tried to make the case that corporate media cannot be trusted, and 2016 demonstrated this clearly, with entities on both sides of the political contest going beyond the normal practices of spin and omission to indulge in just plain lying. Of course, propaganda and lying to the public are nothing new; they are far older than even the printing press, but what astounded me last year was the lack of artifice or sophistication applied to the fiction. The lies told by the candidates and their campaigns and disseminated by corporate media, were often outrageous and easy to debunk. But institutional liars are increasingly confident that even a boldface lie directed at the public carries no penalty, and millions of people still tune in to those same sources to guide their opinions about the world.

There is one final message from the future much more important than the sound and fury we have discussed today. It is a truth that can become painfully obvious during the holidays when we are most aware of the empty seats at the table. Both science and religion tell us that past, present and future are concurrent, so perhaps it is our future selves who engender the inkling and the impulse to visit the relative or call the friend we haven't seen for a while. Without a doubt, a future already exists in which that dear one is no longer with us.

## 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 E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

Towns County Herald, Letter to the Editor  
P.O. 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.**

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## New Years Resolutions

At the start of the New Year people are usually optimistic and looking for what is to come. Some people will make goals and write them down. People come up with all kinds of resolutions for the New Year. Some of the most common ones are exercising more, getting organized, saving money, or to read more. As the agriculture and natural resources agent, those kinds of resolutions do not fall under my expertise. However, there are some other types of resolutions that I can help you with. Let's talk about what those are so that we can make 2021 a successful year.

Do you have a garden or farm? Are you thinking about starting one? A large part of my job is to help people troubleshoot agriculture and natural resource related issues. Are you having challenges with insects or diseases? We can talk on the phone, in my office, by email, or by a site visit. One of the best places to start for new or veteran gardeners and farmers is with a soil test. A soil test will tell you what the pH of your soil is, and how much lime or sulfur needs to be added to correct it. It will also have a recommendation for how much fertilizer to apply and when to apply it. I can also do plant tissue samples. Plant tissue samples will tell you how much of different nutrients are in a plant. If compare healthy plant samples with one that looks nutrient deficient we can determine what nutrients are lacking.

Maybe you have livestock, either a herd of cattle that you raise and sell or some animals for personal use. If you cutting hay for them, I can help you by doing a hay sample to determine the nutritional quality of the hay. Alternatively, maybe you need recommendations for weed control, or are looking at some new pasture and don't know where to start. Give me a call and let's talk about it. I also have some cyanide paper that can be used to detect cyanide in forages. I also work with the Blue Ridge Mountain Cattlemen's Association. We have educational monthly meetings. If you are interested in joining because you have cattle or are interested in cattle, let me know and I will help you get started. Well water testing is another way that I help people. I offer a variety of different tests. If you are interested in testing your well water because you have a new home, new well, or your water tastes or smells different I can help you with that too. We also sell radon test kits. Radon is a gas that can cause lung cancer after extended exposure. Radon is fairly common in our area.

If you have questions about how I could help you and your new year's resolution contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. There is no charge for consultations by phone, email, or in person. If we do some kind of testing there is a fee, from the lab. If you are interested in testing contact me and I will let you know how much it costs.

**Watching and Working**  
**Jacob Williams**



## Letters to The Editor

### Rainfall Data

Dear Editor,

One of my hobbies is tracking rainfall at our home in the Gumlog Valley. We are surrounded by mountains that may divert some rain from the valley and lessen our measurements when compared with other nearby areas. My measurements for 2020 were 83.4 inches with July being the driest month (3.7") and February the wettest (12.9"). The average yearly rainfall here for the past 13 years was 64.88 inches.

Yearly figures are as follows: 2008 (44.2"), 2009 (72.5"), 2010 (47.7"), 2011 (56.4"), 2012 (50.0"), 2013 (87.0"), 2014 (54.3"), 2015 (79.3"), 2016 (43.1"), 2017 (63.5"), 2018 (85.5"), 2019 (76.6"), 2020 (83.4").

Wm. Ronald Gibson

### Give to Hope

Dear Editor,

Without regard to whether the stimulus check each of us will receive is \$600 or \$2,000, those of us who do not need the money can make a choice about how to use it and thereby correct a flaw in the program's design. Instead of spending the money on some frivolous thing or activity consider donating it to a local charity or food bank.

I understand the rationale for stimulus is to encourage spending that will boost the economy. In the early days of the pandemic that was a sound goal. However now I find myself agreeing with Senator Pat Toomey (R-PA) who was recently interviewed about his opposition to the President's demand for increasing the stimulus to \$2,000. Too many people who will receive checks are doing well and therefore are already able to spend on their needs and wants. Handing them free money does not guarantee they will spend it in a way that alleviates existing weaknesses in our economy. It is equally likely these people will save the money rather than spend it, meaning it will not directly benefit the economy at all. Meanwhile, the checks drawn from an already overextended Treasury will drain federal resources from critical health and public safety programs.

The stimulus checks should have been targeted to people working in depressed areas of the economy such as restaurant and hotel workers. They are suffering during the pandemic because of reduced income from shorter hours or no income due to being laid off. These workers are some of the lowest paid in our economy to begin with and often do not have savings to fall back on. They nonetheless have rent to pay, heating bills due, and children to feed and clothe.

The problem of an indiscriminate distribution of funds without regard to need or effect does not have to result in the funds wastefully going to frivolous spending or worse into savings that would have no immediate impact on people suffering in weak areas of our economy.

The Scriptures tell us that when we meet the needs of suffering people, we are serving God. For my household, our stimulus money will go to Hope House in Union County. Hope House meets the needs of people faced with the crisis of eviction, loss of heat, or other financial troubles when events such as sickness, job loss, or unexpected bills conspire to overwhelm them. It was formed when churches in Union County came together to pool and better administer resources for showing Christ's love to the neediest members of their community.

For those who have enough, I hope you will also consider contributing your stimulus check to one of the many organizations — your church, a local charity, or a food bank — which are meeting the needs of the disadvantaged for housing, warmth, and food this winter.

David Plunkett

## Fire History of the Appalachians

A hundred years ago, forests were being logged in every corner of Appalachia and fires burned widely through the cut-over lands, threatening forest recovery. The logging operations left slash strewn over the landscape, providing fuel for catastrophic wildfires. Ignition sources were abundant. Lightning undoubtedly ignited some fires, but most were apparently set by humans. Log trains threw out sparks, and residents fired the cutover lands to promote pasture grasses and blueberry production, or to reduce populations of snakes, ticks, and chiggers. Concerned that forests would fail to regenerate under the incessant burning, the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and State foresters sought to deter fire through a campaign of prevention and suppression.

These efforts often provoked local resistance, including incendiaryism, but wildfire detection and suppression were largely succeeding by the early to middle 20th century. Through labor- and capital-intensive campaigns against wildfire, the incidence of fire plummeted. Forest vegetation rebounded in Appalachia and throughout eastern North America, and today the region contains the largest area of temperate forest remaining on Earth.

White settlement began at different times in different areas of Appalachia. Many Appalachian settlers were of rural English or Scotch-Irish descent, a background that included a heritage of burning to facilitate hunting and open-range livestock herding. These burning traditions were perpetuated in the New World, with the result that a culture of extensive burning emerged in Appalachia and the South. This woods-burning tradition remained intact as populations rose and as the wave of industrial logging and mining spilled across the region in the late 19th century.

Logging would have facilitated traditional land uses, especially livestock herding, by opening the forest and promoting the growth of forage and berries. Therefore, many of the fires that coincided with industrial logging were probably ignited by local herders, not necessarily by the loggers or log trains. This burning continued after the wave of logging had passed.

By inhibiting forest regeneration, the wildfires became a powerful motivator for fire prevention and suppression during the early 20th century. In the present we find that fire exclusion has been more successful than early foresters might have expected a century ago. But this success has its drawbacks, as recognized by many researchers and resource managers.

Forest density and canopy closure have increased to the point that fire-favored trees, especially oaks and pines, are failing to reproduce and are being replaced by less desirable or invasive species. The oaks and pines are important for wildlife habitat, timber, and aesthetics, and as the canopy dominants die and they are being replaced by species such as red maple that have colonized the shaded forest understory in the absence of fire. Other desirable plants, such as blueberries, have also waned while thickets of mountain laurel and rhododendron have expanded.

Such changes have prompted a considerable amount of recent research on fire ecology and fire history, and have motivated resource managers to implement prescribed burns to attempt to restore fire-dependent ecosystems forage and berries.

When you see a prescribed fire on the Forest Service or private lands, be glad that the professional foresters and fire managers are working to help restore our forests to their natural state and are reducing the risk of catastrophic, destructive wildfires in our mountains by reducing the many years of built-up fuel in the forest.

Wildlife also have more tender plants to eat on the clean forest floor and water quality increases after natural fires and NO Bunnies and Bambi do not get burned up in a fire. It is the way Mother Nature intended it to be!

For more information on fire in the Mountains, contact Frank Riley at info.ccrd@gmail.com.

**RC&D**  
**Frank Riley**  
Executive Director



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Publication No: 635540

Advertising, News deadlines: Friday at 5 p.m.

Towns County (1 Year) \$25. Out of County (1 Year) \$35. 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. The Towns County Herald is not responsible for errors in advertising beyond the cost of the actual space involved. All advertisements are accepted subject to the Publisher's approval of the copy and to the space being available, and the Publisher reserves the right to refuse any advertisement. **Postmaster:** Send change of address to: Towns County Herald, P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546.

Office located at: 518 N. Main St. Suite 7 "The Mall", Hiawassee

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