

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

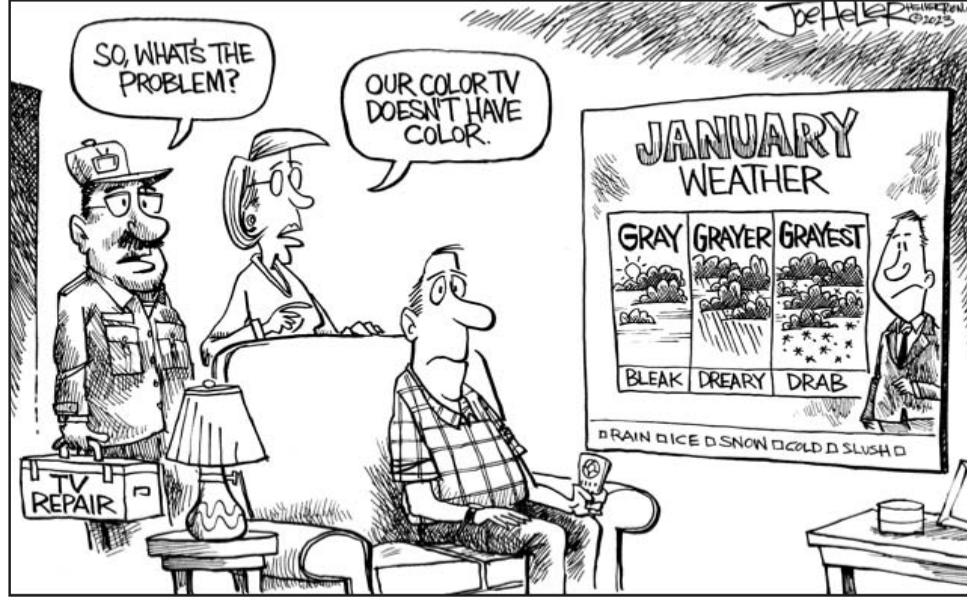
Another Icon for a Brotherhood

Whereas we are all familiar with the Japanese sinking of the USS Indianapolis, the horrific loss of lives, and the extremely political blame the Navy placed upon Charles Butler McVay III, commanding officer of cruiser Indianapolis when she was destroyed in 1945. We may be remiss if we fail to remember "the rest of the story", Lt. Commander Adrian Marks, blatantly disobeying orders to NOT land in the open Philippine Ocean waters, rescued 56 crewmen adrift in shark infested waters.

After spotting men clinging onto flotsam, each other and anything else that would float, spread asunder he radioed their position to the USS destroyer escort Cecil J. Doyle which arrived on scene at midnight. Several other U.S. Navy vessels arrived later to continue plucking sailors, who had survived unimaginable conditions for several days. Out of approximately 900 initial survivors only 316 lived through shark attacks, dehydration, fatigue, salt water poisoning, hypothermia, and extreme stress. Marks was dispatched to try and identify those who were seen earlier adrift in the sea. He was flying an amphibious PB5Y-5A Catalina. Upon learning that these were his brothers of the USN he and his crew decided against orders to try and land their aircraft in 12 foot seas so as to rescue as many near death as possible. He and his crew knew the risks, but brothers, NOT BY BLOOD BUT SOMETHING MUCH LARGER, lives were at risk. He came in and his aircraft bounced not once, not twice but three times, however he and his crew managed to pull aboard 56 sailors and gave much needed hope to others off in the distance who witnessed his semi-crash landing. They darn well knew their rescue was now imminent. For some of those 56 men the flight crew had to splash them to the top of the damaged wings of their aircraft. As the several other Naval vessels arrived all survivors and Marks and his crew were transferred to other Navy ships, as this aircraft was severely damaged and UN-flyable. Our forces destroyed it and sent it to the bottom of the Philippine Sea. In spite of those who would declare Marks as foolish or reckless he and his crew were awarded the Air Medal. ("Following the war, Marks returned to Frankfort, Indiana and practiced real-estate law. He died on March 7, 1998, aged 81. He was survived by his wife Elta, five children, and twelve grandchildren.")

This true story represents that which so many folks will never understand, in that men and women in combat, or in other very dangerous, often almost impossible situations will risk everything to save the lives of those around them and even total strangers who would die without those who live for and serve something far greater than self. Marks and his crew are indeed icons for any of us who have simply gone forward to do what must be done. Even sacrificing ALL for our brothers, sisters and strangers. In the USCG, we called it SAR, Search And Rescue, where often the "best laid plans of men" would go awilder. I suspect just about every one of our men and women in uniform are cut from the same cloth. Something far greater than self. -Semper Paratus

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



Concerning the Practicum of Good Humor

I was chatting with a friend recently. This was an actual friend, not a pixel "friend," such as someone on Facebook you've never actually met, or might have known years ago but you never talk on the phone or sit across a table from one another. Such a person I would call a "pen pal," or updating that for the Age of Information, a "pixel pal." Words are important.

My friend and I were discussing what we observe to be a decline of laughter in younger generations. We decided that maybe they're laughing on the inside. Perhaps their laughter, like so many other things, is pixelated, manifesting in LOL abbreviations or emojis rather than contractions of the diaphragm and an exercise of the abdominal muscles. I know the traditional type of laughter is healthy for body, mind and spirit. I'm not sure that clicking and finger poking is, but what do I really know? I'm not an expert associate professor at a junior college to be quoted by mainstream media in the continuing narrative of the falling sky.

"She spends a lot of time up in her room on the phone," said my friend of his daughter. "Sometimes she has company but I don't hear them laughing like we used to when we were that age." He was talking about the red faced, belly laughing, can't-catch-your-breath type of laughter that is both cause and effect of a good friendship.

Upon reflection we had to agree that we also don't laugh like that as much as we once did. (I was trying to be kind. Tracey and I frequently laugh out loud with each other but I didn't want my friend to feel bad.) A common but unfortunate side effect of "adulthood" is the loss of that very innocence and trust we all strive to provide for our children, without which good natured silliness and abandon is difficult.

It's hard to exercise the abdomen with a good belly laugh with the weight of a billion pixels laying across your chest, and so many, perhaps a majority of us who consume media are hooked on the dangerous drug of feeling upset and angry. "I may be vile and pernicious, but you can't look away," wrote Frank Zappa, and we look from dawn to dusk, at the breakfast table and in the bedroom.

Overall, I think the older generations still have an advantage when it comes to enjoying humor. We're not as constrained by ever evolving language taboos and we still remember the slapstick adventures of growing up out of doors. Oh, there is plenty of laughter to be seen and heard, but I'm not talking about the snarky, SNL political derision type of humor, or studio audience humor where you never see the sign that flashes "laugh," or award show humor where the camera pans across a field of celebrity faces opening their mouths to display their expensive dental work.

The "field" of celebrities brings to mind something I thought was funny. The School of Social Work of the University of Southern California recently announced that it was eliminating the word "field" from their curriculum, to "honor and acknowledge inclusion and reject white supremacy," among other lofty goals. The school intends to replace the word, "field," with "practicum." In other news, the Estate of the Late W.C. Practicum could not be reached for comment. Amazon announced that it was considering rebranding the popular Kevin Costner movie as "Practicum of Dreams." Future Farmers of America declined to comment.

Perhaps there is a clue here to the decline of heartfelt laughter. Younger generations are growing up and entering adulthood immersed in a sea of concerns that were absent from our own youth. They are habitual consumers of falling sky information which has escaped the containment of "news" reporting to infect all forms of social media. Not only that, but they are constrained by a host of loosely defined but tightly enforced rules about microaggression, so careful not to offend, so vulnerable to being offended.

"No one can offend you without your permission," said a mentor to me when I had taken offense at something inconsequential. It's ironic. There is such animosity between left and right, young and old in this time of generational change. Yet fundamentally all agree. Words are indeed important. Proverbs tells us that "Death and life are in the power of the tongue. And those who love it will eat its fruit." The conservative balks at the efforts by the young which acknowledge this very truth. The liberal becomes a pharisee of this truth, inclusive of all but dissenting opinions. They both "eat its fruit," but no one laughs when someone slips on the banana peel.

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.

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Apple Tree Pruning

Deep winter is prime apple tree pruning time. Pruning apple trees is important early in the tree's life so that it gets started off right. Later on, if you properly prune the tree each year the tree will be more productive, more disease resistant, and have a longer life. Keeping all these things in mind, let's talk about apple tree pruning today.

The general advice that I give people when it comes to pruning apple trees is to prune as much as you feel comfortable, then go back and prune a bit more. Most of the time people are afraid of damaging the tree if they cut too far back. However, if trees are pruned at the right time of year and the right branches are cut off, it will be better for the long-term health of the tree.

If you have a tree that has not been pruned regularly, and you're trying to get it back into shape you'll want to start out by pruning out and dead or diseased branches. Second, you'll want to cut out any crossing branches. Crossing branches create open wounds that can be easily infected. After you've pruned out dead, diseased, and crossing branches you want to try to open up the canopy. An open canopy will allow airflow. That's going to reduce the humidity, and therefore reduce the severity of disease occurring. The saying is that you want the canopy to be so open that a bird could fly through it without hitting any branches. A tree that has too many branches will not be as productive. An apple tree is only able effectively produce a certain amount of fruit. Adding fertilizer can boost the productivity. Therefore, pruning might affect the number of fruit you tree produces, but you'll have better quality and they'll be more likely to make it all the way to maturity.

Trees that have been properly pruned their whole lives will have more a Christmas tree shape than a teardrop shape. If you have a newly planted tree, you'll need to prune it as well. If you have planted an unbranched whip, you'll need to cut it back to 24 to 30 inches above the ground. This is going to encourage the new tree to branch out. If you don't prune an unbranched whip, you'll probably end up having a 20-foot tall tree that doesn't have any branches on it.

Sometimes people will plant a seed from an apple core that they've eaten. This can be a fun experiment for kids to see an apple tree grow. An issue that you may run into with this is that there is no telling what kind of apple tree will come up. If you plant a seed from your favorite apple, that fruit could have been pollinated by a different variety, leaving you with an unknown cross. Another issue is that nowadays most trees have been grafted onto a rootstock. The grafted rootstock will provide more protection from root diseases and may dwarf the tree, which cuts down on the difficulty of managing the tree.

If you have questions about pruning apple trees, contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

UGA extension
TOWNS COUNTY
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Outside The Box

By: Don Perry

worldoutsidethebox.com

Habitat for Humanity

"A World Where Everyone has a Decent Place to Live."

Habitat for Humanity Towns Union Counties is a 501(c)(3) faith based, charitable organization dedicated to helping those less fortunate within our community. Our community has continued to be gracious, and because of your support, the lives of 26 families have been blessed to be a part of our home repair program this past year.

Our 25th home build will be completed for a well-deserved Towns County family within the coming weeks. For May of 2023, our 26th Habitat home is scheduled to be completed by our partners at Union County Schools. UCS began an extensive construction training program, where students build one Habitat house a year for our local affiliate. Habitat would not be able to accomplish these strides if it wasn't for your support to our Mission.

Due to inflation and rising building costs, our affiliate is facing its greatest challenge to keep up the ability to continue our dedication to our Mission.

Our local Restore is our largest funding source for our projects. The Habitat Restore accepts gently used items to include furniture, housewares, clothing, appliances, building materials, and sellable items that contribute to our Mission. We offer free donation pickups Monday to Friday during business hours.

Habitat for Humanity Towns Union Counties is grateful to our partners and friends. By supporting our local Restore, you will continue to contribute to our Mission.

Contact us at www.townsunionhabitat.org to schedule a free donation pickup, or inquire about our programs and partnership opportunities.

Habitat Happenings
Executive Director
Charlotte Randall



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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