

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Letters to The Editor

Road Bumps

Dear Editor,
Here's a question for GDOT, KCI engineering company, Mayor Gibby, City Commissioners and other responsible agents of public works: How is it that all the boondoggle monies spent on the newly opened but uncompleted Spung Harris/Murphy Road, aka, SR 66 road and bridge construction project—how is it they are allowed to walk away from a roadway-bridge transition that is both bone jarring to drivers/passengers and damaging to vehicle front-ends and tires? Is this shoddy workmanship what we the public taxpayers are expected to accept? Those responsible need to close the road and repair the bungled bridge-road transition. Then they need to remove the giant caution signs in both directions that read "BUMP." Upon correcting the work, apologies from officials to the public are also in order.

Lance Jobson

A Wound that will not Heal

Dear Editor,
A whirlwind was created by the Democrats and 10 RINOs who voted to impeach President Trump in the House of Representatives. By voting for impeachment the leftist progressives denied President Trump due process and they judged the evidence before it was presented and refused to listen to the arguments made. President Trump did not incite anyone to riot. Read the transcript of what he said or watch the video. We have watched BLM and Antifa in this country riot, burn, kill, maim, loot and destroy cities and communities for almost a year, often with Democrat leaders egging them on, bailing them out and refusing to condemn their actions. The leftists are screaming that what happened on January 6th was the "absurd thing ever in our history" (or similar such claims). That is absurd and shows their lack of knowledge of history. The Democrats are using this to smear the entire conservative movement and all Republicans. Our country's way of life and our entire economic future is under attack. This move to impeach President Trump shows that we have a real reason to fear what is going to happen under the Biden administration. In the words of one commentator "this is a wound that will not heal." I trust that he is wrong. But the impeachment of President Trump makes it that much more difficult for our country to solve the serious problems we have, including Chinese and Iranian aggression, our overwhelming debt, and the catastrophic response to COVID-19.

Tim Groza

You'll Shoot Your Eye Out

Dear Editor,
When I was young I like so many other young boys wanted a rifle. Whether it be a bb, pellet or 22 didn't matter I just wanted to have something for plinking. Something to fight off Black Bart and his band of marauders. A rifle I could call my own that I could learn how to clean and take care of. Something I could use to learn how to identify my target before placing my finger on the trigger. Something I could use to learn respect for other people and things. Something that would teach me firearm safety.

As Sheriff of Dusty Gulch It was my responsibility to make sure Miss Cindy would be safe when she strolled through town and old Mr Ruger wouldn't have to worry about someone running off with his brand new red wagon. To do all this I needed a way to protect their families as well as mine but first I needed to learn.

I was very fortunate that my father understood all this and presented me with my very own 22 caliber pellet rifle when I was 7 years old. It was a beauty! It didn't have a compass in the stock or that thing that tells time but its solid Walnut stock and gleaming black barrel were magnificent.

My father taught me how to pump it, how to load it. How to hold it, both while shooting and while just carrying it to the Number 8 Saloon to arrest the boys from the DD ranch for cow tipping. I learned a lot in those early years and have many fond memories of 'Ol Blacky my 22 caliber single shot manual pellet rifle.

That brings me to the article on the front page of the January 13 edition of the Towns County Herald entitled Former Hiawassee man charged following DC riot. There were a few things that caught my eye looking at the stock photo. He's obviously a far right terrorist wearing his tactical Loafers with, gasp! No socks!

His protective camo shirt designed to help him blend in with the clear blue sky. His fully semi-automatic Assault Rifle with the 2500 bullet high capacity magazine ready to lay waste to everyone who should not agree with his views or God forbid say something he thought to be not PC. But the one thing that stood out the most was his expert handling of his Assault Rifle. I could tell right away he was a well trained operative looking to impress all those around him. With a firm grip on his weapon and the muzzle pointing squarely at his head all I could think was, You'll Shoot Your Eye Out Kid!

Tim Queen

Working Together is the Only Way

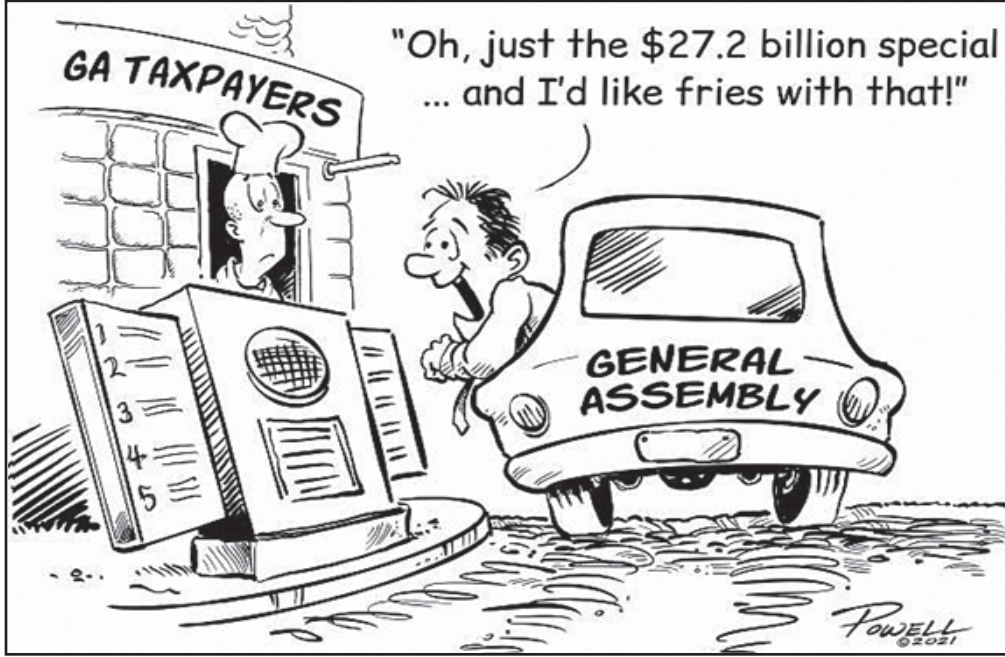
Dear Editor,
We have a new president who has called for us all to work together to solve our great problems, and climate change actually offers perhaps the best example of a problem that both sides can work together on.

There are 2 solutions for climate change. One is government regulation, and the other is proper pricing on the production of greenhouse gases to account for their external damage and returning all the money to all US citizens. Almost all economists agree that a carbon fee and dividend plan is the best policy.

The primary reasons for this are that carbon fee and dividend (CFD) is better for the economy, better for the poor, and will reduce emissions more quickly. Since it avoids government regulation, employs a free market approach, does not hurt the economy and may actually add jobs, it has conservative support, and since it is highly effective and decreases carbon emissions by 90% by 2050, it has great environmental support.

Could this be the way to begin bipartisan work in our new Congress? Let us hope so, and pray that we can find a way to work together.

Vernon Dixon, MD



Soil Health

Soil is a living and life-giving natural resource and as the world population and food production demands rise, keeping our soil healthy and productive is of paramount importance. For generations, farmers generally have done what they do because "this is the way we have always done it!", but those ideas won't work anymore if we are to maintain our soil's health for the future. They must now ask themselves: Why do we do what we do? and why not try something new? By farming using soil health principles and systems that include conservation tillage (no-till), cover cropping and diverse rotations, increasingly farmers are increasing their soil's organic matter and improving microbial activity. Thus, farmers are sequestering more carbon, increasing water infiltration, improving wildlife and pollinator habitat—all while harvesting better profits and often better yields.

Landowners and farmers across the nation increasingly realize that healthy soils are the key to fostering more productive, profitable, and sustainable farms for healthy, sustainable, long-term returns. A growing number of America's farmers are using soil health management systems to improve the health and function of their soil. Soil is a living and life-giving substance, without which we would perish and we believe that improving the health of our Nation's soil is one of the most important endeavors of our time. By focusing more attention on soil health and by educating our customers and the public about the positive impact healthy soils can have on productivity and conservation, we can help our Nation's farmers and ranchers feed the world more profitably and sustainably - now and for generations to come.

Soil health, also referred to as soil quality, is defined as the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. This definition speaks to the importance of managing soils so they are sustainable for future generations. To do this, we need to remember that soil contains living organisms that when provided the necessities of life - food, shelter, and water - perform functions required to produce food and fiber. Only "living" things can have health, so viewing soil as a living ecosystem reflects a fundamental shift in the way we care for our nation's soils.

Soil isn't an inert growing medium, but rather is teeming with billions of bacteria, fungi, and other microbes that are the foundation of an elegant symbiotic ecosystem. Soil is an ecosystem that can be managed to provide nutrients for plant growth, absorb and hold rainwater for use during dryer periods, filter, and buffer potential pollutants from leaving our fields, serve as a firm foundation for agricultural activities, and provide habitat for soil microbes to flourish and diversify to keep the ecosystem running smoothly. Healthy soil gives us clean air and water, bountiful crops and forests, productive grazing lands, diverse wildlife, and beautiful landscapes.

Soil does all this by performing five essential functions: 1. Regulating water - Soil helps control where rain, snowmelt, and irrigation water goes. Water and dissolved solutes flow over the land or into and through the soil. 2. Sustaining plant and animal life - The diversity and productivity of living things depends on soil. 3. Filtering and buffering potential pollutants - The minerals and microbes in soil are responsible for filtering, buffering, degrading, immobilizing, and detoxifying organic and inorganic materials, including industrial and municipal by-products and atmospheric deposits. 4. Cycling nutrients - Carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus, and many other nutrients are stored, transformed, and cycled in the soil. 5. Physical stability and support - Soil structure provides a medium for plant roots. Soils also provide support for human structures and protection for archeological treasures. Soil has both inherent and dynamic properties, or qualities. Inherent soil quality is a soil's natural ability to function. For example, sandy soil drains faster than clayey soil. Deep soil has more room for roots than soils with bedrock near the surface. These characteristics do not change easily. Dynamic soil quality is how soil changes depending on how it is managed. Management choices affect the amount of soil organic matter, soil structure, soil depth, and water and nutrient holding capacity.

One goal of soil health research is to learn how to manage soil in a way that improves soil function. Soils respond differently to management depending on the inherent properties of the soil and the surrounding landscape. Understanding soil health means assessing and managing soil so that it functions optimally now and is not degraded for future use. By monitoring changes in soil health, a land manager can determine if a set of practices in the fields are sustainable.

For the world to survive in the future our soils must be sustainable because our farmers must produce more crops from less land in-order to feed the ever-increasing world population. Many of our programs are about no-till farming, cover crops, and minimum tillage to help improve soil health.

For more information on soil health, conservation tillage, and cover crops and programs provided by Chestatee-Chattahoochee RC&D contact Frank Riley, Executive Director at: info.cercd@gmail.com.



RC&D
Frank Riley
Executive Director

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. But, 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 get easily infected. After you've pruned out dead, diseased, and crossing branches you want to try and open up the canopy. An open canopy will allow air to flow through. 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 also 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
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams

Failure to be Semper Paratus

Sadly and avoidably on January 28, 1980, 23 US Coast Guardians lost their lives in the largest peacetime cost of innocent lives in our proud history. In the aftermath of the collision between the USCG Blackthorn and the tanker Capricorn, there is nothing to be proud of. Tampa Bay, Florida has long been known to mariners as a dangerous passage for entrance and egress of seagoing vessels. No place to let your guard down.

However, the USCG Blackthorn had been in dry dock for three long months, receiving a thorough rebuild and overhaul. Meanwhile the ship's crew was relaxing and nightly partying in a local motel. For THREE MONTHS!

Many of the ship's crew, including officers were inexperienced at their mariner duties and had spent little to no time at sea.

The Blackthorn even had a major failure of engine/motor repair on it's initial "shakedown" cruise, after being released from dry-dock. However the seas were fair, winds were light, visibility was good, and the temperature was an excellent 61 degrees.

Afterwards it was found that the life-rafts were outdated and unusable. And emergency lighting aboard the Blackthorn was NOT functional.

The Capricorn was approximately six times larger than the 180 foot USCG round bottom buoy tender whose primary mission was ATN (Aids to Navigation), now on it's way back to home port in Galveston, Texas. These vessels are sturdy ships, for what they are designed to do, but with limitations and require an experienced crew. As an aside, I was assigned temporary duty on one of these, the USCG Pawpaw, while awaiting my slot in "A" school, 1967.

None of the deck officers on the buoy tender had ever navigated Tampa Bay.

As a result of the initial failures due to faulty repairs in dry dock the trip for all the Coasties, eager to return home to Galveston was postponed until late in the evening on January 28, i.e. darkness prevailed.

Because of the lackadaisical attitudes aboard Blackthorn motor cycles and small vehicles as souvenirs were stored on deck, and secured in what should have been watertight doorways and hatches. They were left open. There was also a failure of a navigational signal in the area of Tampa Bay near to the impact area.

Visibility by the lookout aboard the Blackthorn was obscured by a third vessel, the Kazakhtan. And upon impact the huge anchor of the Capricorn was ripped loose and came crashing through the hull of the Blackthorn into the engineering berthing area, the weight of which caused the Blackthorn to roll over and very quickly go to the ocean's floor taking most of the crew with it.

The point of this column is to shift our attention to what Semper Paratus means and to learn from history, lest we repeat same. Twenty three great young Coasties unnecessarily gave their lives and the Blackthorn lies at the bottom of Tampa Bay as her final resting place.

For a detailed and complete report go to Florida State University thesis written by Judy Kay Nunez, from which I gleaned this sad report.

Semper Paratus

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Towns County Herald

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General Manager
Editor
Shawn Henrikson
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Todd Forrest
Staff Writer
Lowell Nicholson
Photographer

Publication No: 63550

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 Hiawasse, 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, Hiawasse, GA 30546.

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