

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

# OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

## Cooking & Candle Safety

Cooking brings family and friends together, provides an outlet for creativity and can be relaxing. But did you know that cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and home injuries? By following a few safety tips, you can prevent these fires.

“Cook with Caution” Be on alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol do not use the stove or stovetop. Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, boiling, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove. If you are simmering, baking, or roasting food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking. Keep anything that can catch fire - oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels, or curtains - away from your stovetop. Cook at indicated temperature settings rather than higher settings. Regularly clean your cooking equipment so that there are no cooking materials, food items or grease accumulation. Have a pot lid handy to smother a pan fire. Do not attempt to pick up the pot or pan, it will burn your hand and when you drop it, the excitement begins when the fire spreads across the kitchen floor! Shut off the heat and cover the fire with a lid. Do not use water. It will cause splashing and spread the fire. If you have a small (grease) cooking fire and decide to fight the fire... On the stovetop, smother the flames by sliding a lid over the pan and turning off the burner. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled.

For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed. By planning ahead, you can do a lot to prevent a fire. But once a fire starts in your home, there are only three things to do: first - if you are in doubt about fighting a fire, just get out, close the door behind you, then call 911 from a neighbor's home. Do not go back into a burning building, no matter what or who is still inside!

If you think someone is trapped inside, tell the firefighters when they arrive, they are trained and equipped to go into a fire to rescue people. Firefighters' lives are also at risk in a burning building even with the proper PPE so be sure there is someone inside before you ask them to try to rescue a person. If you try to go inside to attempt a rescue, you and the trapped person cannot survive the gases, heat and smoke generated in a house fire which can kill you instantly, so do not even try a rescue no matter who is inside because you cannot hold your breath long enough to go in and come out.

Many people die going back inside a burning house to rescue a pet ... We love our pets, but they are not worth your life. Another hazard that we take lightly is candles. They create a romantic experience in a darkened house with the candles flickering all around, but think about it, they are an open flame burning around all the combustible stuff we have in our houses and as the candle melts it drops hot wax on the base which then creates fuel.

It only takes you dozing off from your romantic setting, the candles burning down and falling over onto a curtain, and you are awakened to flames, smoke, heat, and panic. Once it starts there is no going back. The fire is moving, and the damage is done. Fire and Rescue departments recommend that you use flameless candles in your home. Many of these candles look and smell like real candles. If you insist on using real candles, please make sure you: Use candle holders that are sturdy and will not tip over easily. Put candle holders on a sturdy, uncluttered surface. Light candles carefully. Keep your hair and any loose clothing away from the flame. Do not burn a candle all the way down - put it out before it gets too close to the holder or container. Blow out all candles when you leave the room or go to bed. Avoid the use of candles in the bedroom and other areas (sofa) where people may fall asleep. Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn. These tips point out things that we take for granted and assume that it will not happen to us, but the person who is homeless because of a careless fire thought so too! Think before you use fire or heat because the home you save may be your own!

For more information on cooking fires, candle safety, or any fire issue, check out [www.firewise.org](http://www.firewise.org) or [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org). Check out ChestChatt RC&D on Facebook at Chestatee Chat-tahoochee RC&D.

### 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:

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P.O. Box 365, Hiawassee, GA 30546  
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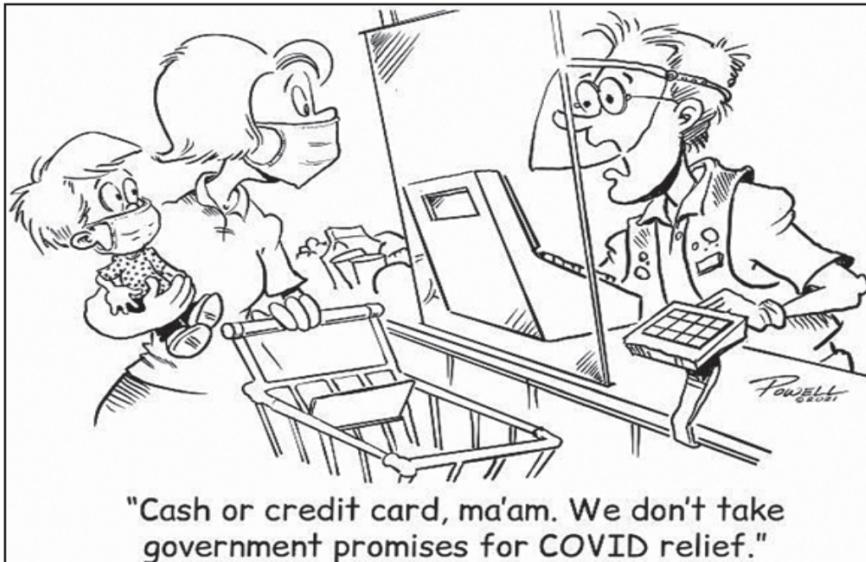
Letters should be limited to 200 words or less, signed, dated and include a phone number for verification purposes. This paper reserves the right to edit letters to conform with Editorial page policy or refuse to print letters deemed pointless, potentially defamatory or in poor taste. Letters should 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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"Cash or credit card, ma'am. We don't take government promises for COVID relief."

## The Passing Winds of Change

My favorite home movie presents my wife sliding down our snow covered hill on a sled, pursued by our two big-giant puppies. The big yellow one steals the hat from her head at the end of the run and plays keep away, bouncing around in the snow and snorting canine amusement. It reinforces my determined belief that humor resides at the core of our being in that spark of awareness that we share with all living creatures.

The oldest recorded joke yet discovered was found etched into a clay tablet in southern Iraq, and while our threadbare mantle of dignity prohibits us from repeating it here, the joke involves the passing of wind. It begins with "Something which has never occurred since time immemorial," suggesting that even 4000 years ago we considered humor to be as ancient as our sojourn on this earth. Humor was already old even 100,000 years ago when Throg passed wind too close to the campfire and the ancestor of the Tonight Show was born.

One of my favorite humorists was Johnny Carson. For my money he was far and away the most entertaining of the Tonight Show hosts. I haven't read his biographers, but to this day I don't know, nor do I wish to know his political affiliation, or whether he had any at all. It's simply not evident in his humor, which considered all public figures to be fair game. Carson once said, "When a comic becomes enamored with his own views and foists them off on the public in a polemic way, he loses not only his sense of humor but his value as a humorist."

Which brings us to, as Frank Zappa intoned, "the crux of the biscuit." Humor has long been an antidote to politics, but in recent years it has become a vector for that disease. The passing winds of change have blown most foul in the caustic gusts from corporate sponsored humor. You have to stretch the blanket to the point of tearing to even call it "humor." At best it vacillates between snarky and preachy and at worst, it is pure derision.

In every culture, humor has confronted the philodox, challenged the paradigm and resisted the coercive power of the state. It invites us to pull its finger. It speaks the truth and gives us our medicine as a chewable gummy bear when everyone else offers us suppositories. It challenges us to think outside the box, and it tells us the things we desperately need to hear that no one else is willing to say.

We risk losing that benefit when humor is incorporated as another cattle handling technique, and at a time when the tools for managing the herd are growing more sophisticated, we can benefit from the words of George Carlin, who devoted much of his career to showing us how to jump the fence:

"I often warn people: Somewhere along the way, someone is going to tell you, 'There is no "I" in team.' What you should tell them is, 'Maybe not. But there is an "I" in independence, individuality and integrity.' Avoid teams at all cost. Keep your circle small. Never join a group that has a name. If they say, 'We're the So-and-Sos,' take a walk. And if, somehow, you must join, if it's unavoidable, such as a union or a trade association, go ahead and join. But don't participate; it will be your death. And if they tell you you're not a team player, congratulate them on being observant."

The age of information is crowded with "So-and-Sos" urging us to join and share their opinions, and the opinion has become enshrined as a holy entitlement in a culture that is rapidly losing its sense of humor. We take ourselves and our opinions so seriously that they are the enabler of our addiction to stress and anger.

Instinctively we still seek out humor, but we depend too much on the pixel to satisfy that need. Nevertheless, there are healthier alternatives to many modern versions, and if we still have a need for them at the end of a long day, there is a vast archive available online that is devoid of the snark, derision and social engineering which permeates modern corporate offerings.

Instead of feeding arrogance and addiction, we might even begin to understand human nature better. Consider the wisdom of Barney Fife, who taught us that "His behavior patterns are a permanent fixture of his behavior. Now when you've got patterns that are ingrained, well any conflicting conflicts that you might inflict, well they can cause a traumatic trauma."

There is an even healthier alternative in the life lived off the couch and in an awareness of the irreplaceable moments of the eternal now.

God has the very best sense of humor, and if you don't believe that, you haven't been paying attention. After all, he invented puppies, and chickens, and he put the meat on the "wrong" side of our shins.

So turn off the television. Close the laptop. Put down the newspaper and grab a tennis ball. Your dog has a great joke for you.

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## Blueberry Pruning

Blueberries grow pretty well in Georgia. Rabbiteye blueberries are native to the southeast, so they're well adapted to our climate. Let's talk specifically about pruning rabbiteye berries.

Blueberries don't need to be pruned every year to be fruitful. However, if you start doing some cane renewal pruning every year on a mature plant the bushes will be more fruitful and have more longevity. The ideal time to prune blueberries is late winter because the plants are dormant. February is late winter for us in the mountains. Plants in their dormant state are going to be less prone to infection or stress from the pruning.

Blueberry is a multi-stemmed bush. Each one of the stems that comes out of the ground is called a cane. Cane renewal pruning is removing old canes from the plant so that there is space for new canes to grow. Ideally, under cane renewal pruning you'll remove old canes each year so that in five years all the canes on the plant will be completely different. Each year go through the plant and cut out the oldest canes that you find. Also, remove any diseased or dead canes.

Ideally, you don't want to remove more than 25% of the canes in a single year. If you have a blueberry bush that hasn't been pruned for a couple of years it may take a couple years to get it back into shape. If you have a blueberry bush that hasn't been pruned for many, many years cane renewal pruning probably isn't going to get the plants back into shape. In that situation, I'd recommend something that may seem very drastic, but is better for the plants in the end. Mow the bushes down to the ground. Mature plants will be able to take this hit, and put up new suckers, that turn into canes. This is going to give you fresh growth, and a new healthier plant. You'll go without blueberries for a couple of years. Therefore, if you have several plants that need to be mowed, you could do a couple a year, until they are all back under control.

New plants should be pruned to have the healthiest plants. Prune back 2/3 of the top growth on bare root plants, and 1/2 of the top growth on potted plants. If the new plant has many canes prune out all but 1-3 of the best looking ones. You also don't want a first year plant to produce fruit, so pick off any flower buds. If you prune plants like this the first year, the second year won't need much pruning. In the second year pick off flower buds again, and remove any diseased canes. The third year, remove diseased canes, but you can leave the flower buds on vigorous shoots. The fourth year, the plant should be able to handle full crop, but if you have some weak looking canes, thin out the buds to prevent over fruiting, which can cause permanent bending of canes from the weight.

Each year after harvest is completed cut plants back so that they don't become too tall. Tall plants are more difficult to harvest for people; bears and birds probably won't have that same problem.

If you have questions about pruning blueberries, contact your County Extension Office or email me at [Jacob.Williams@uga.edu](mailto:Jacob.Williams@uga.edu)

**Outside The Box**  
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Watching and Working  
Jacob Williams



## One Consistent Congregation

Even though this "congregation" doesn't always reside in a church, the group I reference is the most consistent one, singular group in America's history.

That group, as if you hadn't guessed is our American Veterans, faithful to and serving America in many various and asunder duties, since our creation as a Sovereign Republic.

Although there have been some "bad actors" amongst us, they represent a distinct and undesirable very small minority. The huge majority of Veterans whether inductees (drafted) or volunteers have always done their best with whatever they had at hand at the time.

Sometimes in the most difficult or even horrible conditions imaginable. Other times mundane duty. Sometimes even a fun job for young men and women. Adventures galore! It all sums up to America's security and well being.

There are no "unimportant jobs" in the military. As a group, congregation, coalition, collective, or whatever you wish to refer to our best of the best, men and women, our Veterans have never failed to come across for America. Even those that didn't want to be there. Yet there they were, and they served well!

Their sacrifices, up to and including their lives were for all of us. For America. They have been there, CONSISTENTLY!

Sadly, in these trying times we can't say the same and give those kind of accolades to the political class, who are supposed to be leaders, for America.

Include the devastation wreaked by the Communist Chinese virus which has added to the current list of difficulties for Americans.

Economic losses also hurt us as a nation. However our military forces, once again are ready, willing and able to do whatever is necessary for our country even confronted with personal threats of contracting this flu.

Our men and women in uniform have constructed temporary field hospitals and have qualified medical personnel in their midst to serve as needed in whatever mission is assigned to them.

They do it well! And will continue to do so. How America has been blessed to have those willing to serve in our Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, United States Coast Guard, and now our Space Force.

Little doubt exists, especially in the minds of our many enemies that America's existence and strength has been due to the mainstay of our military men and women. Our very survival as a Republic for almost two hundred and fifty years is exclusively their domain.

Planet Earth, inhabited by so many warlike cultures has always been fraught with war, always will be. Our military forces and Veterans are anything but war mongers, to belay a falsehood shared by the misinformed. They CONSISTENTLY do their best to protect us from war.

Never forget our military men and women, our Veterans in your prayers. Honor them and you honor our United States of America!

*Semper Paratus*

# Towns County Herald

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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.

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