

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Captives of Comfort

Imagine standing on the edge of real change – a moment when everything could shift for the better, but you’re gripped by hesitation. It’s a feeling most of us know. Whether it’s leaving a draining job, mending a broken relationship, or dropping a habit that’s been holding us back, the leap into the unknown is rarely easy. We talk ourselves out of it, telling ourselves the timing isn’t right, or that things aren’t really so bad. The truth is, it’s rarely the circumstances that trap us – it’s the comfort of what’s familiar.

Human beings are creatures of habit. We cling to routines, even when they don’t serve us. Just look at someone like Denzel Washington. He’s known for his faith, discipline, and staying grounded in an industry that can sweep people away. Denzel once put it plainly: “Ease is a greater threat to progress than hardship. So, keep moving, keep growing, keep learning.” It’s a lesson that echoes in all our lives – sometimes, the most challenging part about change is taking that first step, especially when comfort is so easy to settle into.

There’s a reason psychologists talk about “status quo bias.” We’re wired to prefer things as they are, even when change would do us good. We worry about what we might lose more than what we could gain. That’s why people stay in jobs they dislike or keep habits that drain them. The familiar – even when it hurts – feels safer than the unknown.

But what if we started to see these moments of discomfort as opportunities for liberation? Not the flashy, once-in-a-lifetime kind, but the daily, quiet kind. Think about the little things that hold us back: bitterness that lingers from an old argument, envy over someone else’s good fortune, or the pressure to fit into expectations that don’t reflect who we are. These are the chains we sometimes choose, even when they don’t fit.

Now, let me pull back the curtain a bit on a story my community reads every year. Picture this: the Jewish people had been enslaved in Egypt for 210 years – generations born and raised in hardship, never knowing freedom. You’d think the moment they were given a chance to leave, they’d run for the hills without looking back. But the story goes, when freedom finally came, they actually needed a push. It wasn’t just the fear of their Egyptian masters chasing after them; it was the pull of what was familiar, even when that familiarity was oppression. Sometimes, we get so used to our circumstances, even bad ones, that the unknown feels scarier than the pain we know.

There’s a passage in the Jewish tradition, read year after year, that tells how the Israelites had to move in such a hurry they didn’t have time for their bread to rise. The message isn’t just about speed; it’s about seizing the moment. The greatest danger wasn’t that their oppressors would change their minds – it was that the Israelites themselves might hesitate, second-guess, and end up staying put. The Sages say if they’d missed that window, the opportunity for freedom would have been lost for good.

It’s not just ancient history. In Hebrew, the word for “Egypt” shares a root with the word for “narrowness” or “constraint.” Every day, each of us faces our own Egypt – the tight spots and mental traps that keep us from growing. That’s why this story is retold so often: it’s not just a one-time event, but a reminder that liberation is an ongoing challenge.

So, what does personal liberation look like in real life? It could mean reaching out to someone you’ve fallen out with, letting go of a grudge, or choosing to be happy for someone instead of being jealous. It might be resisting an urge that’s not good for you, or simply refusing to let your circumstances dictate your worth. Freedom isn’t just about breaking big chains; sometimes it’s about letting go of the little things that hold us back.

It’s easy to go with the flow, to accept things as they are, or to give in to the crowd. But real freedom asks more of us. It asks us to look out for those who are still struggling, who may be caught in their own darkness. You can’t argue or shout someone out of a dark place. Most of the time, the best way to help is to offer a little light – a listening ear, a gentle word, or just being there.

History and tradition both remind us: the darkest hour really is just before the dawn. The trick is not to let that moment slip by. Whether it’s a big leap or a small step, the chance to break free is always closer than we think. All we have to do is take it.

Yonatan Hambourger is a rabbi and writer dedicated to serving spiritual seekers of all backgrounds on behalf of Chabad of Rural Georgia. You can contact him at y@tasteoftorah.org.

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.

Towns County Community Calendar

First Monday of each month: School Board... HS/MS Media Center	6:45 pm
Every Tuesday: Storytime for Children... TC Library	10:30 am
First Tuesday of each month: Hiaw. City Council... City Hall YH City Council... YH City Hall	6 pm 6:30 pm
Second Wednesday of each month: Board of Elections... Elections Office	4 pm
Third Monday of each month: Planning Commission... Temporary Courthouse	6 pm
Third Tuesday of each month: Commissioner’s Mtg... Courthouse City of Young Harris Planning Commission... Meeting Room in City Hall TC Water Authority Board Meeting	5:30 pm 5 pm 6 pm

Towns County Herald

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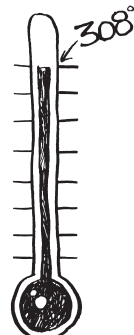
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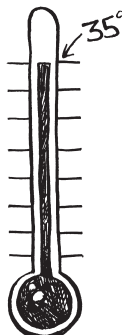
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Two Bricks Shy of a Load

Dumb as a box of rocks. A few fries short of a Happy Meal. Half a bubble off plumb. You can’t fix stupid.

When I hear some of the humorous and colloquial expressions we have for people prone to ill-considered actions, it evokes the memory of a story my dad liked to tell about his time in the Navy.

There was an officer on deck when an oil barrel broke loose and rolled down a cargo ramp. To avoid being hit by the barrel, the officer needed only to take a step to one side, but instead he ran in a straight line with the barrel close behind until he was able to jump into a cargo net while the barrel passed over him.

That officer couldn’t pull a hook out of a fish. He wasn’t playing with a full deck. He had one wheel in the ditch. We’ve seen his episode with the barrel in cartoons. It perfectly illustrates the opinion shared by the rank and file for leaders educated by institutions but not by life experience. Dad was keen on education but quick to remind us of the things you can’t learn in a book.

Dumber than a hog in a horse race. Couldn’t pour water out of a boot with instructions on the heel. Sharp as a bowl of oatmeal. Yesterday we sat in traffic outside Dillard, Georgia, and took advantage of the opportunity to review some of our favorite expressions for people who are thicker than a jug of molasses.

We forget sometimes that we are not “in” the traffic. We are the traffic. But this traffic was largely unnecessary in spite of the ongoing construction with the widening of US 441. Including the turning lane, they had 4 lanes to work with, but the northbound traffic was confined to a single lane frequently interrupted by the ingress and egress of numerous earth movers.

What we witnessed was some kind of rolling bucket brigade of front-end loaders, backhoes, and dozer loaders. They were scooping dirt from a pile on the side of the road, crossing the line of traffic and rolling up the turning lane about a half mile to cross the traffic again and deposit the dirt at another location.

I’m not a project manager, but I do know that a single 10 cubic yard dump truck will hold at least 5-7 scoops from a dozer loader of the size we saw rolling back and forth. Maybe they were reenacting that scene from Cool Hand Luke: “That ditch is Boss Kean’s ditch. And I told him that dirt in it’s your dirt. What’s your dirt doin’ in his ditch?”

We are all subject to making dumb decisions when we are in a hurry or panicked or angry. Uninformed choices or decisions based on bad information can have the same results as stupid ones. Unfortunately, we live in an age of accelerated pace, widespread anger, and bad information. There is a potential idiot hiding behind every bush or staring back at us in the mirror. Be careful out there.

Letters to the Editor

Lasting Impressions

Dear Editor,

What will be said of each of us when our journey through this life is completed? Will we be remembered for our kindness, our generosity, and our family values? Will our lives be a reflection of good morals and decision making suitable to be imitated by family and friends? A cemetery full of tombstones will become a final resting place for most of us. A piece of granite will have our name, birth date and our final day on this earth inscribed upon it. Nothing will be there to tell anyone how we lived our lives or how we treated others. Our family members and friends will long remember us for what we meant to each of them. So, while we have the opportunity, let each of us strive to be helpful, loving and kind to those around us. An old saying comes to mind, “Gone, but not forgotten.”

Gene Vickers

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

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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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Fire Ants

Fire ants are very common throughout Georgia. Thankfully, we don’t have as many in the mountains as they do south of us. However, once you experience a fire ant bite, you won’t ever forget it. Another problem with fire ants is that you rarely get just one bite. Fire ants were first reported in Georgia in the 1950s. They’ve been found all the way from North Carolina to Texas, and down to Florida. Let’s talk about fire ants and things that you can do to control them so that they don’t take over your lawn or pasture.

If you can manage to get an up-close look without being bitten and stung, you’ll see that fire ants have two nodes between their abdomen at the end of their body and the thorax in the middle of their body. Fire ants generally like to stay in open grassy areas.

Fire ants are most active when temperatures are between 70 and 85. In the fall fire ants are active because they are foraging for food. This makes fall the best time to treat them. Treatment during the spring and summer is also possible, but effective population control will be less likely. When it’s really hot during the summer time fire ants will burrow deeper into the ground, making them more difficult to treat. Treatments in the summer are best done in the morning or evening when it’s cooler.

Using a bait will be the most effective way of controlling fire ants. Amdro is the main ant bait that is used for fire ants. Broadcast the bait in a circle around each mound. It’s important to know that Amdro is not labelled for use in vegetable gardens. It has to be used in scenarios where the plants growing there are not going to be eaten, like your lawn. If a few mounds remain after seven to ten days, a follow up application of Orthene will be effective against those problematic mounds. Take a long stick and quickly put a hole in the center of the mound. Then fill the hole with insecticide to eliminate those mounds. When applying pesticides always make sure to read and follow the label.

I have also seen people using orange oil mixed with soap and other ingredients. This treatment is effective because it eats away the ant’s skin. However, it will also kill any other insects, grubs, or worms that are in its path. It could also strip away the outer layer of any roots that it meets.

There are not many biological controls for fire ants in the United States because they are an invasive species. Fire ants are native to South America and have many natural enemies there. Researchers have to be very careful about introducing a natural predator, because the effects of that introduced species are unknown on our ecosystem.

If you have any questions about fire ants and fire ant control, contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Old Myths I Have Heard

When I was a little boy I caught a toad and played with it all one morning while my grandparents were chopping weeds in the cotton field. My grandmother came over to the wagon and tractor where I was playing. When she seen me with the toad she let out a groan. I was told to let go of that toad and wash my hands. She soon had me convinced that in the next few days I would wake up with warts all over my hands. She told me we would have to go visit Uncle MC Howard who was known for being able to remove warts from people by using magical words.

I worried about them warts all that night and into the morning. Once again we went to the fields to work. I was told not to play with any toads. As I sat under the wagon with nothing to do I noticed a toad nearby. My grandmother’s words were still ringing in my ears as I looked at my hands. There were still no warts present. However, I figured since toads caused warts I’d be better off without toads. So, I squished that toad under my foot. By the time my grandparents rested for lunch I had killed four of those wart-causing toads. I thought they would be proud. But, instead my grandmother was quite upset. She told me it was a sure thing their cow would go dry. She went on to explain that if a person killed a toad intentionally the family’s milk cow would dry up and produce no milk.

I spent the whole summer with my grandparents. I checked my hands each morning, and 49 years later I still do not have warts. Also, our cow never went dry that summer. But, there was some sound reasoning behind what she told me about the toad and many other things in life. The reason she did not want me playing with toads is that one of the defense mechanisms of the toad is to urinate on the offending person’s hands. I am sure this process causes problems for a little boy whose hands are constantly rubbing their eyes and scratching their nose. What about the myth concerning the cow drying up? Well, it is just wrong to mistreat any animal. So, my grandmother was trying to show me there are consequences for my actions.

Later that summer I met some cousins from Chicago. My Papa’s youngest sister, Inez, and her husband Uncle John came to see the family and I met Johnny who was about 22 at the time. He told me about a time he had visited our family when he was about my age. He spent a few days with his Uncle Coon and Aunt Glenna, my Grandparents.

One morning he and his brother Harold went with my Dad and Uncle Bud to milk the cow. Papa had put up a young steer to fatten and our yankee cousins were told they could milk this cow. The boys asked how that was done and were told to place some sweet feed into the feed bunk. Meanwhile a bucket was to be held under the animal while its tail was to be pumped up and down like one would when pumping water from the well.

Johnny described how he held the bucket under the steer while his brother Harold tried to pump the its tail. The younger cousins must’ve been a very comical sight to their two older cousins. That young steer was bawling and the two older boys were laughing loud enough to get the attention of their Daddy. Papa walked toward the barn stopping to watch the spectacle for a minute. I can just imagine the thoughts running through his mind when he asked the two younger boys what they were doing?

Harold was the first to respond and explained that last night all of us were talking when I was asked where we got our milk since we didn’t live on a farm. He explained to his cousins that we go to a store to get our milk. “Then Paul told me that you guys get your milk from a cow.” Johnny spoke up and asked how that happened and Bud told us that we could help to get the milk this morning. He further explained, “So we have been out here trying to get this cow to stand still while we pumped its tail. We must not be doing something right because we still do not have any milk.”

As I listened to their story I wanted to tell them that one of them must’ve killed a toad.

UGA extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



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