

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Christmas Past

And that spirit should live on in our hearts and minds especially for a very special, unique class of citizens amongst us. They are a minority, for sure as many simple cannot and do not qualify! Today it's entirely by choice! Our servicemen and women have sacrificed from their young youthful years and many into middle age. Far too many gave their lives; far too many are hurt, wounded and crippled, and yet today for ALL OF US many are on duty, doing any assigned task or mission, any job required to maintain the security and sovereignty of our Blessed Republic. Mostly taken for granted and unappreciated. Sometimes verbally assaulted by those who simply do NOT understand the harsh reality of the world. However, minus those who sacrificed

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



Christmases and many other holidays out on patrol, maybe in combat, doing hard, stressful tasks, or even being bored out of their minds with mundane chores, we as a free people simply would not exist. FACT, NOT OPINION! So many fine men and women wearing the uniform of one of our military services didn't have the best of Christmas holidays, but these folks who have served our nation with Honor and who are serving with Honor are still OUR best Christmas gifts, not under our Christmas trees!

Therefore, please let our Veterans who have served and those who are currently serving know that you love and appreciate what they have done and are doing. They deserve "Christmas" the year 'round!

Another Christmas gift we take for granted, actually occurred on December 25, 1776, during the Revolutionary War. General George Washington and his troops, at night in the freezing cold crossed a 300 yard section of the Delaware River. Then marched 19 miles to confront a garrison of German mercenaries who were hired by the Brits to subdue our earliest American wannabes, yearning for freedom, liberty and opportunity in a new nation, unfettered by tyrannical governance. Those who sacrificed so much on that long ago Christmas defeated those Hessians which became a quick surrender as the Battle of Trenton. One week later our first Army, the Continental Army regained control with then another victory at the Battle of Princeton.

All because, from the painful birth of our Sovereign Republic we've had men and women who valued something far greater than self and were willing to sacrifice comfortable Christmas Holidays along with all the other sacrifices, resulting today so that YOU and I don't have to! We have our Rights such as Free Speech, as anything foolish or as brilliant as you could imagine. No other nation in history has preserved the Rights of Individuals as America has. That is a costly proposition by anyone's measure! And those that stood watch, stood guard and those who had to do the unthinkable and missed those Christmases at home, with friends, with family are to thank. Never forget them!

And never forget the reason for the season, and I hope everyone had a great Christmas!

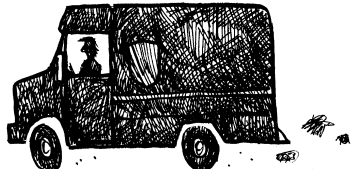
Semper Paratus

Christmas Gifts

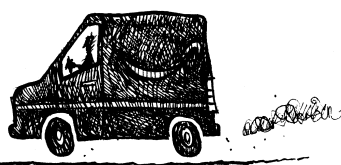
THEY MADE OVER 950 MILLION DELIVERIES THIS HOLIDAY.



THEY MADE OVER 500 MILLION DELIVERIES THIS HOLIDAY.



THEY MADE OVER 50 MILLION DELIVERIES THIS HOLIDAY.



THEY MADE ONE.



Twelve Days

I want at least twelve days of Christmas, and I'm reluctant to take down the Christmas tree and all the decorations the moment the official holiday has passed.

The number of homes and businesses still decorated the week after Christmas tells me there are others who also share in that reluctance.

Our time on this earth is fleeting. Our holidays and celebrations, our moments of vacation and renewal, are few and far between compared to the hours of work and worry we endure, not to mention the commute in between. Even the time we lay down to sleep is bracketed by the constant noise of information and drama.

Ancient societies that we consider "primitive" worked far fewer hours than their more sophisticated descendants, and they slept better.

What drives us to press our flesh to the grindstone as it strips away the days of our lives in efforts which, now more than ever, enrich the few while barely sustaining the many?

Perhaps it is the very real fear of finding ourselves adrift in a society which has replaced the cultural obligations of caring for the poor, the sick and the elderly with an institutional, governmental substitute more effective at making insurance and drug companies profitable than it is in providing quality care.

Perhaps it is the ascendancy of the competition paradigm.

Whether it's millions of Asians who work like insects or Americans sinking farther into debt, we look down on cultures not so intent on world domination, which work fewer hours, take more holidays, longer lunches, more breaks - and retire at a younger age.

We consider them to be decadent, yet these "inferior" people live longer than we do and suffer less from heart disease and cancer during their longer life spans.

All too soon the work week begins after the holidays. We have to pay for the gifts we bought on credit. The pressure to buy for Christmas started in September. Black Friday mutated into Cyber Monday, then Cyber Week, then Special Holiday Savings, extended.

The smart phone that was \$899.99 before the big sale was suddenly the door buster special, only \$899.99 marked down from \$1299.99.

The holiday that invites us to replace our materialistic concerns with spiritual ones now serves to further obligate us to the material.

What can we do against the combined efforts of a materialistic civilization?

We can refuse to borrow money to pay for things we don't need but have been conditioned to want.

We can learn to want what we already have.

We can spend less than we earn and learn to save and invest wisely and dispassionately.

We can remember that we resolved to do all these things last year and try again in the next.

Surrounded by a universe of unlimited, unfathomable mystery on a miraculous world which disdains this thin veneer of human activity, we can still learn gratitude and rediscover awe, and we can leave our Christmas trees up until the needles drop off if we want to.

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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La Niña Winter

The weather around us is always changing. Sometimes the things that cause the weather to change happened a long ways away. Today I want to talk about a phenomenon called the La Niña, and how it affects the weather, and how we feel it in winter.

Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



There are many different methods that people have used over the years to try to predict how cold or how much snow winter we'll get. People have used the length of the orange on woolly worms, and the shape of persimmon seeds. The La Niña/El Niño finds its roots in a more scientific approach. La Niña means little girl in Spanish, El Niño means little boy.

El Niño is part of the El Niño Southern Oscillation, or ENSO. La Niña occurs when the Pacific Ocean water temperatures are lower than normal. El Niño means that the pacific waters are higher than normal.

As waters temperatures go back and forth between high and low, it's called La Nada. Under normal conditions, trade winds blow west along the equator. This takes warm water from South America towards Asia. To replace that warm water cold water rises from the depths. La Niña/El Niño break these normal conditions. Under La Niña, the trade winds are stronger than normal, so more warm water is pushed towards Asia. This imbalance is fixed by more cold water rising from the depths. The result is that the jet stream moves northward and weakens over the eastern pacific. Scientists don't know why the trade winds that cause the movement of water ebb and flow as they do.

NOAA has declared that we are in a La Niña winter. This is actually the second La Niña winter in a row that we've had. Meteorologists call that a double-dip. Generally speaking, La Niña winter means warmer, drier conditions in the Southeast. It doesn't mean that we won't have snow, or that we won't have some really cold and wet days. It means that the probability of those events occurring is lower. The northern half of the United State is more likely to be wetter than normal. In El Niño years, we are more likely to have more rain and colder temperatures.

Typically, an episode of La Niña/El Niño lasts 9 to 12 months, but they can last longer. Most likely, we will see the strongest effects of La Niña from January to March, but it could linger into spring.

We have the names La Niña/El Niño because South American fishermen had observed the change in water temperature in the Pacific occurring around Christmas time for centuries. They started calling it El Niño after baby Jesus. In the 1980s, scientists discovered La Niña.

NOAA tracks Pacific Ocean temperatures and will announce if there is going to be a La Niña/El Niño event. It also influences the severity of storms. La Niña usually means that there will be more hurricanes coming out of the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico.

If you have questions about the climate or weather and how that affects us contact your County Extension Office or email me at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu.

Donations Crucial to Habitat

Can you believe that 2021 is almost over? They say that the older you get, the faster time flies. It does seem so, anyway.

Here at Habitat for Humanity, Towns/Union Counties, Inc., we have fought through COVID, adjusted to having a brand-new ReStore in Blairsville, hired some great people, and formed some amazing partnerships with our community organizations.

We are so thankful for our loyal ReStore customers and donors.

Our ReStore is a part of our fundraising, but it's not the only way we raise money to build affordable housing.

Donations from generous people in our community are an important part of our fundraising. We use donated materials and volunteers to keep the cost of homes down, but it still takes an average of \$150,000 to build a house.

The faster we raise the money, the faster we can build another house. We coordinate several small fundraisers throughout the year.

"Share the Love with Habitat", "Pictures for Santa Paws", and "Scarecrowville" are just a few of those.

We also apply for grants and ask for donations from our local businesses. Even with our ReStore and our fundraising events, our individual donors are the cornerstone of our fundraising efforts.

And speaking of which, I just read something really exciting! First, let me make sure you know that I am NOT a financial advisor of any kind, and I would urge every one of you to consult with an accountant or a tax professional before making any major financial decisions.

BUT I just read that the IRS has changed the rules regarding deductions of charitable contributions! If you itemize your tax return, you have always been able to deduct charitable contributions, dollar-for-dollar.

If you used the standard deduction, you may have been able to write off a small, standard charitable contribution deduction (usually up to \$250).

It seems that the IRS has changed the rules, and those of you who take the standard deduction can now claim \$300 of your charitable donations, or \$600 of your charitable donations, if you are filing as a married couple! This is a big deal, because, according to the IRS website, nine out of ten people take the standard deduction.

So, if you are one of those 90% of taxpayers, you can contribute more money, and claim up to \$300 or \$600 (whatever applies to you) as another deduction.

Many of our donors wait until the end of the year to donate, so here's your chance to give to a great cause, and also get a better tax break! Our Organization is a certified 501C3 Charitable Corporation, and your donations to us qualify.

I know we are down to the wire for 2021 contributions. But there's still time to stop by our offices (connected to the ReStore at 225 Wellborn St., Blairsville, GA, 30512) and drop off a check, or you can mail it to the same address.

Just be sure to write your check before the end of the year, so even if we get it soon after the first of the year, you can use it as a deduction

Thank you for your continued support.

Habitat Happenings
Cathy Wheeler



Letters to The Editor

It's not Biden's Inflation

Dear Editor,

It's not Biden's inflation. HERE are the real facts (corona virus pandemic)! You wouldn't know that by listening to current commentary about inflation. Casual observers, economists, investors and politically biased commentators seem to agree that "higher inflation is being generated by abnormally huge amounts of government spending". When someone says "inflation is back", they are referring to rising prices.

Inflation—or the rate of change in prices over time—is not a simple phenomenon to measure or interpret. Primarily due to three different temporary factors: base effects, supply chain disruptions, and pent-up demand, especially for services. "Understanding why the rate of inflation has risen so quickly could help clarify how long the surge might last – and what, if anything, policymakers should do about it. The recent acceleration in the rate of inflation appears to be fundamentally different from other inflationary periods that were more closely tied to the regular business cycle. Explanations for the current phenomenon to date include continuing disruptions in global supply chains amid the coronavirus pandemic; turmoil in the labor markets; the fact that today's prices are being measured against prices during last year's COVID-19-induced shutdowns; and stronger consumer demand after local economies were reopened." - pewresearch.org. As far as gasoline prices in particular I offer: "Gas prices are rising due to the attempted shift to renewable energy sources, OPEC Secretary General Mohammed Barkindo. Gas prices in Europe have surged as much as 280% so far this year and are threatening to push up winter fuel bills, hurt consumption, and exacerbate a near-term spike in inflation." - CNBC. At least one thing is clear: A resurgent inflation rate is by no means solely a U.S. concern. A Pew Research Center analysis of data from 46 nations finds that the third-quarter 2021 inflation rate was higher in most of them (39) than in the pre-pandemic third quarter of 2019. Regardless of the absolute level of inflation in each country, many show variations on the same pattern: relatively low inflation before the Covid 19 pandemic struck in the first quarter of 2020; flat or falling inflation for the rest of that year and into 2021, as many governments sharply curtailed most economic activity; and rising inflation in the second and third quarters of this year, as the world struggled to get back to something approaching normal. I offer these observations and facts, not as a democrat, nor a republican, but as an observer interested in presenting a real, more fact based assessment of current conditions.

Jim Grazis

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