

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Cy and the Ukulele Club

On December 2, 2021 Cy Sineath and his wonderful, very talented Ukulele Club volunteered to entertain our elder residents and many friends at Brass-town Manor. They very cheerfully thrilled us all with a great medley of Christmas songs and group singing aloud. Anyone who doesn't think that over a dozen ukuleles can harmonize in an exclusive, beautiful musical interlude hasn't heard our local ukulele players.

The Veterans' Corner
Scott Drummond
USCG Veteran



Our regularly scheduled "Veterans Visitation" to Brasstown Manor concluded this year, 2021 with this excellent example of our Veterans continuum of service and caring for community and America in large part due to these volunteers with actual musical talent.

As always we have a core group of Veterans from VSOs including our American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, VFW, VFW Auxiliary, Sons of American Legion, American Legion Riders and several other Veterans from our North Georgia mountain homeland. The fellowship and camaraderie we have shared with our many elder friends at Brasstown Manor is as they say, "Priceless". There's no way I can attach all the names of our loving, caring Veterans who participate in events like this. I can however present a very minuscule introduction to Cy Sineath who leads the Ukulele Club in their musical talents. Cy is a former 1st Lieutenant United States Army, Vietnam. He was Field Artillery (King of Battle!) and spent his tour flying in an O-1 Bird dog directing artillery and air strikes. He says he wouldn't want to take the credit for being a grunt! That says a LOT about Cy and his humble admiration of those of who served and sacrificed so much as infantry soldiers. In passing, after I learned he was an officer, Cy like so many of us Veterans stated, "I'd do it all over again, if I were called upon." 'Nuff said!

Personally I am confounded and amazed at folks who have musical talent, as I have NO, ZERO, NADA abilities of this nature, whatsoever! I can barely play a radio! This little ukulele club is a mixed bag of Veterans, men and women from all backgrounds who have come together to create a very unique club for fun and entertainment of themselves and others. Cy continues with his very friendly, outgoing leadership skills in keeping this wonderful musical club organized for appearances and practice. Yes, by golly gee, in order to be able to accomplish harmonizing as a group, practice is required.

Thanks to our Veterans community and to Cy and the Ukulele Club! -Semper Paratus



Letters to The Editor

Thank God for our Military!

Dear Editor,

In response to another attack on your newspaper concerning coverage of our veterans, I just want to thank you for the great job you do covering veteran affairs.

I, like many others, fought for everyone in this country to freely express their opinions, even educated fools, cowards and criminals.

It would be nice if we could avoid getting involved in military confrontations around the world. It would be nice if we didn't need allies to secure and keep our freedom. If it were not for our first soldiers and allies like France during the Revolutionary War, we would still be a British colony.

If it were not for our military and allies during World War I, World War II, Korea, Viet Nam, Kuwait, Afghanistan and Iraq, we would be speaking German, Japanese, Russian or some other language in this country today.

The "Military-Industrial Complex" in this country allows us to live free and to sleep at night. It is controlled by something called the United States Constitution. While we haven't won a conflict since World War II, our government is still in place and I'm living free.

If anyone in our community believes you can live comfortably and safely in a country today without a strong military, I invite you to move there! If not, you're welcome (from the veterans) for the opportunity to express your misguided opinions!

Mike Roberts

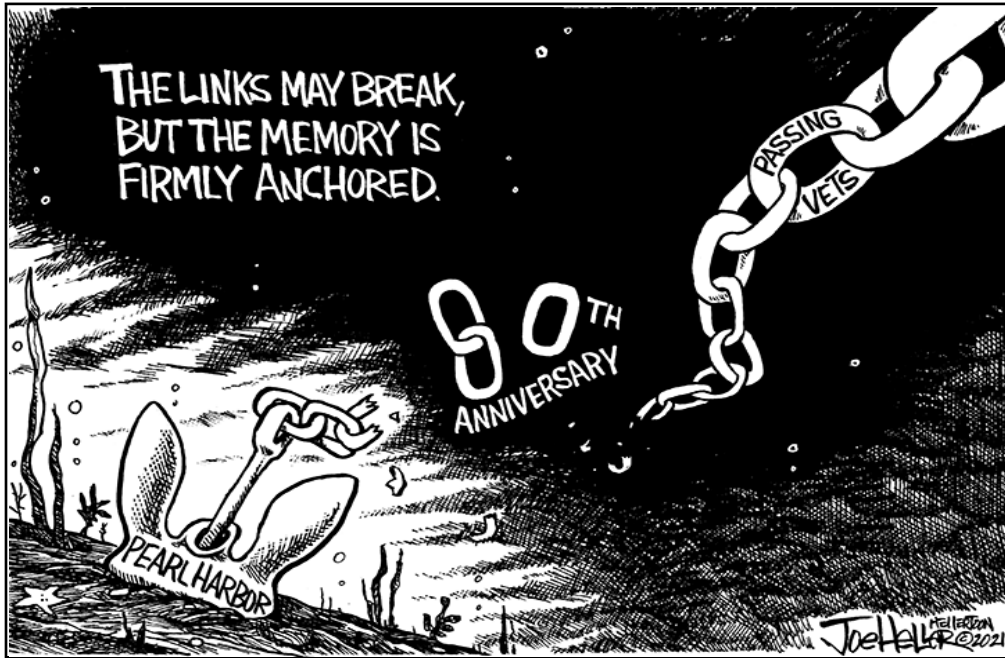
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

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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.



Butterflies in December

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." I was sure I heard a cricket the other night, but the creek carries on conversations after dark, so I filed the thought away under "the many sounds of water on rocks." The next day a yellow butterfly circled our house and suggested that I really had heard a cricket. Tracey saw the butterfly too, or another one just like it. Later that evening there were moths around the porch light when we took the dogs out, and the day after we saw another butterfly. Butterflies in December, with crickets and moths, high on a mountain - it's not just out of season, it is a bit strange.

"This is the warmest December I can remember," said a neighbor, Pandora Pixel, host of that talking show on the Every Letter News Network, says we should panic. She interviews experts on the subject of global warming and tweets doom and despair like a virtual canary in a coal mine, with ads for stuff to buy before we die. Isn't it a strange world where "tweet" and "doom" can appear in the same sentence and nobody notices?

I'm glad our butterflies didn't appear in Pandora's back yard, but this unseasonably warm weather suggests we at least consider her opinions, and those of the people perhaps more qualified to raise an alarm. The majority opinion among scientists is that the planet is heating up, and by the way, we can't use the "canary in a coal mine" idiom anymore. It celebrates the exploitation of canaries and, more to the point, coal is a dirty word, even though the Chinese are mining more of it to get through this winter and make the solar panels to sell to the carbon hating world.

There is a minority opinion, also based on science, which disagrees about climate change, but that opinion is struggling to explain melting glaciers and, well, butterflies in December. Perhaps more important is the scientific disagreement as to the reasons for the warming, though the majority opinion holds that human activity is responsible. We can more or less disregard all political opinions on the subject, my opinion and yours as well.

It's not so much that our opinions aren't important - they are. Our opinions are part of who we are. They influence our behavior and they speak directly to our peace of mind, or lack thereof. Yes, our opinions about global warming are important - it's just that they don't matter. They don't matter because given the options we currently have as individuals, nothing we do or don't do is going to move the needle one way or the other. For example, if every American stopped driving automobiles for a year, the reduced carbon footprint would be more than compensated by the increase already baked in to the growth of Asian economies.

"But every individual is responsible for a share in the state of the planet." No argument there, but let's look at some of the options we have to reduce the impact of our share. Maybe I can buy an electric car, for example. Fine, but not everyone has an extra \$50,000 for a Tesla, and I can't afford to cover my roof with solar panels when my entire paycheck goes to the grocery store and in the gas tank. There just aren't enough rich people to save the world. Furthermore, Tesla's are not made from recycled plastic straws cooked in solar ovens. It takes a heavy industrial supply chain to provide the materials, particularly the rare earths used in batteries and electronic components, critical to the manufacture of any modern vehicle. Rare earth mining has huge ecological costs in disruptive excavation practices and toxic byproducts.

The rare earths for batteries and components, the metals for infrastructure, the asphalt for roads to transport it all, are not mined by solar excavators, processed in wind powered blast furnaces, manufactured in chocolate factories and transported in unicorn-drawn hemp fiber trailers over highways paved with good intentions. Not yet, anyway. The trouble with modern thinking is that we have become habituated to the false dilemma and the "all or nothing" proposition. We must be all left or all right, conservative or liberal, progressive or regressive, zero carbon or dead. That kind of thinking is a mouse trap with a hair trigger. Ask Europe, getting a bit chilly in the realization that "zero carbon" is a fine goal when you have enough windmills and solar panels and storage capacity to last through a cold winter - before you start shuttering your gas and coal generation.

Did I just hear a conservative chortling and turning up the thermostat? Not so fast. While the manufacture of solar and wind power generation comes at a cost to the environment that is initially very steep, a solar panel pays for its carbon within 6 months to a year, depending on where it's manufactured, and solar panels currently last about 10 years on average. The technology is improving all the time, becoming more efficient and less destructive to the environment. Hydrocarbons are solar powered too, but their cost is inflated by a "middle man" measured in geologic cycles.

It's a "no brainer." It's inevitable if we intend for our great grandchildren to survive. But it's not an instant winner lottery ticket either. It's going to take time, and planning, and setting aside politics and opinions and letting science and innovation lead. That's a tall order. I know, and it will require electing people who are not limited to all or nothing thinking or the belief that enough money and mandates will make the problem go away.

In the meantime, don't worry about what Pandora Pixel says, or anyone else trying to stampede your attention with doom and drama. Buy a solar panel if you can, and if you can't, turn the thermostat down and wear a sweater. Don't be wasteful. Don't be selfish. Use common sense. A butterfly in December is not a reason to panic, but it is an invitation to pay attention.

Away from the influence of politicians, pundits and Pandora, perhaps that butterfly also brings a message of hope. Somehow it survived multiple frosty mornings, temperatures in the 20s and the lack of a single blooming thing in sight. It adapted, and lived to enjoy the sunshine for another day. So will we.

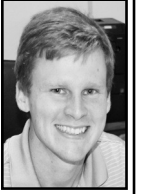
Outside The Box

By: Don Perry
worldoutsidethebox.com

Oh Christmas Tree

Having a real Christmas tree can be a great tradition this time of year. There are a number of places that sell Christmas trees here. Let's talk about selecting a Christmas tree and Christmas tree care so that you can avoid a National Lampoon Christmas Vacation type situation.

UGA extension
Watching and Working
Jacob Williams



Three trees grown in Georgia are firs, cypress, and cedar. Some things to consider when purchasing a Christmas tree are needle retention, strong limbs, fragrance, and dryness.

Before you even leave to buy your tree it's a good idea to select and measure the space where you'll be putting your tree. A good spot is away from space heaters, fireplaces, or wood stoves. Measure how high the tree can go in your house. It can be difficult to gauge if a tree

is going to fit inside when you're looking at it outdoors. Trees can appear small outside, and then seem to grow a couple of feet once you bring them inside.

When you are selecting your tree it is important to make sure that you get one that is fresh cut. A fresh cut means that the tree will be able to absorb water more effectively, and therefore not dry out as quickly. Once the trunk of the tree has dried out you can cut off the bottom 1/2 inch to establish a new fresh cut. You really don't want your tree to be dry for more than 6-8 hours. When you are purchasing the tree give the limbs a good shake and see if many needles fall off. Then grab a branch of a tree and pull the branch through your hand. Ideally you don't want to see many needles fall off the branch. Also check for off color on any of the needles. If a bunch of needles don't fall off and the needles are a good green color you know that you have a healthy tree.

A dry Christmas tree can be a fire hazard in a house. If your tree has a fresh cut it should be able to last the entire Christmas season without drying out if you keep it well watered. There should always be water in the tree stand. Keep the water level above the cut on the tree so that the cut won't dry out and your tree is continually taking up water. Drilling a hole in the trunk does not improve water uptake. Using lights that put off heat will increase the drying of the tree. LEDS are a good option to reduce heat.

There are a couple of ways to dispose of your Christmas tree. You can use them for soil erosion barriers. If you have a pond you can sink them to create fish habitat. Chipping them to use as mulch in the garden is another good option.

Real Christmas trees are beautiful and a sound environmental choice. Trees are recyclable, produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide.

We have great locations to purchase a real Christmas trees around here, and this is the time of year to shop local, so I encourage you to check them out! If you have any questions about Christmas trees contact your County Extension Office or send me an email at Jacob.Williams@uga.edu. Merry Christmas and happy tree shopping!

Habitat enjoys Christmas Season

It's finally here! The Holiday Season ... complete with our area being decorated with lotsa lights! By the time you read this, the parades for both Blairsville and Hiawassee will have taken place. I come from an area that does their parades during the day, but I really like the fact that our area does them at night, so we have the added bonus of all of the Christmas lights on the floats. It really makes us all feel as though we are living in a Hallmark Movie!

So, last weekend there were all sorts of "kicking off Christmas" events in Hiawassee, Young Harris, and Blairsville. Santa made several appearances, town Christmas trees were lit for the first time, and gingerbread villages made their appearances.

Make sure you stop by the Union County Chamber of Commerce to see their "Tour of Trees". Many businesses and organizations in the area have decorated Christmas trees, and they are set up all over the Union County Community Center. We have some truly creative individuals, as you can see by the displays! The Community Center has also put up the largest Gingerbread Village display that they have ever had. Not only are their gingerbread houses, but there is a gingerbread marina, and even a gingerbread transfer station (complete with lotsa candy "trash"). The decorations will stay up until after Christmas, so you have plenty of time to go see them. Habitat for Humanity has put up a "Habitat-themed" Christmas tree, covered with ornaments made to look like houses and tools. It even has a hard hat for a tree-topper! There is a Habitat gingerbread house there, too. It's cute, but it pales in comparison with some of the other "houses". Take the kiddos and let them see the gingerbread village. You won't be disappointed.

Don't miss "Pictures for Santa Paws", a new event, here at the Habitat ReStore in Blairsville. On Saturday, December 11, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., bring your furry friend(s) to get their pictures taken by a professional photographer, in a Christmas setting. Pictures will be uploaded to a website, and the pet parents can just download whatever pictures they would like, and have them printed. If you need to get some fancy attire for your furbaby, be sure and stop at The Farmhouse Co. off the square and pick up a new leash, collar, or scarf to make the pictures even more special. If you would like to have your pictures taken WITH your pets, that's fine, too. The more the merrier!

We are asking for a donation of \$5 for this event. All the money raised stays right here with our local Habitat, and helps us with our mission of "everyone having a decent place to live". Have a great week!

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Towns County Herald

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Copy Editor

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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 by 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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